"Som plåster på själen"
Om äldre män och musik som välbfinnanderesurs
av
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Akademisk avhandling
Avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i musikvetenskap,
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Opponent: Professor emeritus Lars Lilliestam
Göteborgs universitet, avdelningen för estetik
Abstract
English title: "As a patch on the soul". On older men and music as a wellbeing resource.
Örebro Studies in Musicology 5.

The purpose of the thesis is to elucidate how older men’s interest in music can be understood as a wellbeing resource. This is motivated by the potential wellbeing threats facing older men with regards to loneliness and untreated depression. These challenges are understood to be tied to norms of masculinity around emotions. Previous research has shown how engagement with music can fulfil social and emotional needs and work as a self-help technology, partly through strengthening a positive self-identity. The research question here is how music can be a wellbeing resource for older men specifically. The study is in two parts: semi-structured interviews with 15 men on their engagement with music, and a music listening group with eight (other), socially vulnerable older men, where the participants could listen to music of their own choice, with the author of the thesis as a group leader and participant observer. The scientific approach is hermeneutic. The materials were analysed thematically, with theoretical perspectives drawn from studies on men and masculinities, theories on affect attunement and Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective. The analysis shows that an interest in music can serve as a wellbeing resource for older men in three ways: First, musical experiences can offer an asylum for older men where they can connect to, experience and express, their emotional lives without jeopardising their “frontstage” performances of traditional masculinity. Through affect attunement musical experiences can contribute to both confirming and expanding the sense of self, which supports psychological needs of safety and development. Second, a sense of cultural belongingness can emerge from sharing an interest in music and collectively listening to music, also in groups where a deeper sense of personal connectedness is lacking. Third, an active interest in music, both playing, singing, dancing and listening to music, can support a sense of competence and agency amongst older men through affording possibilities to learn and share their knowledge, which fosters a positive sense of masculine identity, thereby strengthening self-respect and self-esteem. The practical implications from these results are to encourage older men to engage with music in different ways, including talking about music, learning and sharing.

Keywords: older men, wellbeing, loneliness, musical engagement, masculinities.

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