

Rhythm Masters: Developing a Master Program in Popular Music and Folk Music in Provincial Areas in Finland

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This paper reports a project organized by Sibelius-Academy Department of Folk Music and Tampere University, Department of Music Anthropology in 2008-2010. The goal of the project was to develop and implement a master program for “rytmimusiikki” (lit. “rhythm music”) in Seinäjoki, Finland—a musically active provincial area previously without music-related higher education programs. In the program, research and professional musicianship were combined in the frame of a student-centered curriculum that also emphasized active work-life connections and flexible study options. Aiming at developing a new kind of expertise in Finnish work market for non-classical musicians, the project sets out to explore the combined ideals of “researching musician” and “musicing researcher”. We will discuss the points of departure of this premise, map the developmental phases and outcomes of the project, as well as highlight some of the problems that arouse during the process. The findings of this developmental research are based on student and teacher interviews, feedback surveys and personal experiences of the planners.

Keywords: music education, popular music, folk music, jazz, musicology

Introduction

In this article, we report a case study of a project organized jointly by Sibelius-Academy Department of Folk Music and Tampere University Department of Music Anthropology in 2008-2010. The goal of the project was to plan and implement a master program for “rytmimusiikki” (lit. “rhythm music”) in Seinäjoki, a musically active semi-urban area in Finland previously without music-related postgraduate education programs¹.

The Need for a New Master Program in Popular Music and Folk Music in Finland

“Rytmimusiikki” and Seinäjoki Master Program

The term “rytmimusiikki” is used in Finnish academic culture in two ways: (1) to indicate music based on Afrodiasporic musical practices; and (2) to mark music outside Western art music or classical music—popular music, jazz and folk music (Tolvanen & Pesonen, 2010). The former reference is pan-Nordic and it often appears in connection to music schools, conservatories and universities that teach jazz and rock, Latin and other Afrodiasporic styles (Bjornberg, 1993). The latter gets its significance from dominant cultural politics in Finland, which have produced a need to identify and justify music research and music education outside the

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¹ For information about Seinäjoki. Retrieved from <http://www.seinajoki.fi/english/>

Western classical music canon (*The Memo of the Working Group of Vocational Training in Music 2002, 2002; Vision for Rhythm Music 2010, 2005*).

The latter reference is also emphasized on the Seinäjoki Master Program. The general purpose of the program is to answer to the expanding challenges of the professional field of “rytmimusiikki”. In the program, artistic and research activities intertwine, combining practical musicianship and theoretical knowledge in a unified study scheme. The program also emphasizes multifaceted professional competencies and working life orientation.

The Need for a Master Program in “Other Music”

The need for training master students in “rytmimusiikki” becomes apparent when considering the matter from the standpoint of current academic music education policy in Finland.

In Finland, publicly funded music education system is divided in two sectors: general music education and specialized education provided by music institutions. General music education takes place in schools and other institutions of comprehensive education. Specialized music institutions are located at three levels: (1) basic arts education (music schools); (2) secondary education (conservatories); and (3) tertiary education (universities of applied sciences—or polytechnics—and research and art universities)².

The most prominent Finnish university-level music institution is SibA (Sibelius Academy). Located in Helsinki, SibA also has three satellite units around the country, one of which is in Seinäjoki. In addition to traditional study programs that focus on Western classical music, “rytmimusiikki” is taught in three programs at SibA: the programs of folk, jazz and music education. While approximately 40 master-level students graduate from these three programs every year, majority of SibA students still get their degree in Western classical music. This emphasis is also reflected in budgeting: the three departments that teach “rytmimusiikki” cover only 20% of the total funding of the university (SibA, 2010).

While there is a doctoral school in the Faculty of Music Education, Jazz and Folk Music at SibA, in Finland, “rytmimusiikki” related research courses are mainly offered in the musicology departments of research universities, such as Tampere University Unit of Music Research, School of Social Sciences and Humanities³. In fact, today “rytmimusiikki” is the main research area in Finnish musicology departments—at least, if judged in terms of the amount of doctoral theses focusing on this study area (Kurkela, 2005).

Even if there has been a lack of master programs dedicated to “rytmimusiikki”, folk and popular music have been taught for years at the graduate (Bachelor) level at Finnish universities of applied sciences, or polytechnics. However, applied sciences study programs mainly focus on musical skills and there is practically no training in music research⁴.

While today almost all Finnish preacademic level music institutions teach “rytmimusiikki”, Western classical music still takes a lion’s share in terms of both yearly amount of teaching and number of students, especially in music schools. However, according to recent research, there is an increasing demand for “rytmimusiikki” in basic arts education and secondary art education (Murto & Kiuttu, 2008; Pohjannoro & Pesonen, 2009).

Current research also reveals that in Finland, more “rhythm musicians” are trained at conservatories and

² A thorough description of Finnish music education system can be found from *Finnish Music Quarterly*, 3/2006.

³ Retrieved from <http://www.uta.fi/laitokset/mustut/english/>

⁴ For example, the music programs of Metropolia, Helsinki University of Applied Sciences. Information of these programs can be obtained from <http://www.metropolia.fi/en/degree-programmes/culture-creative-industries>.

polytechnics than in music schools. The educational structure with a bulge at the secondary and tertiary level resembles the population pyramid of the post-industrial countries (see Figure 1). However, there are only a few possibilities for the “rhythm musicians” to continue their studies in university level, and this perhaps explains the reason why many of them prefer to develop their competencies informally and in-service (Tarvainen, 2006; Kurkela & Tolvanen, 2005; Tolvanen & Pesonen, 2010; *Development Program of Rhythm Music*, 2009, p. 11.) In classical music, with most music training taking place at primary level, the situation resembles the population pyramid of the developing countries.

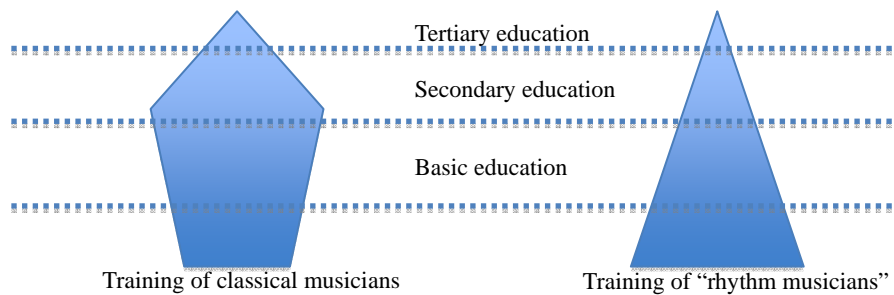


Figure 1. “Rytmimusiikki” and classical music training in Finland.

While there appears to be an open market for higher-level training in “rytmimusiikki”, it has been argued that Finnish universities train too much postgraduates in music (Musiikkialan Ammatillisen Koulutuksen Työryhmän Muistio, 2002, p. 5; Hanhijoki, Kantola, Karikorpi, Katajisto, Kimari, & Savioja, 2004, 2009; Karhunen, 2005, p. 67). However, it also seems evident that there is a significant difference between training professionals in classical music and in “rytmimusiikki” (Ilmonen, 2003). The work market for the Western classical music has been framed by the publicly funded “steady jobs”, but there are only a limited number of available positions. In “rytmimusiikki”, the work market is wider and more flexible, providing opportunities to work rather than established positions (Virkkala, 2006, p. 4). Hence, increasing training in “rytmimusiikki” might not influence the work market of the Western art music at all: “Rhythm musicians” simply do not seem to compete for the same jobs as “classical musicians”.

To sum up, at present, there seems to be a clear demand for educating musicians and music teachers competent in “rytmimusiikki” at postgraduate level in Finland. It was partly to fill this demand that Seinäjoki master program was established.

Seinäjoki as the Location of the Program

With its rapidly increasing number of inhabitants (pop. 57.000 in 2010), Seinäjoki is one of the fastest growing semi-urban centers in Finland. Located in Western Finland as the capital of the Southern Ostrobothnia Province, Seinäjoki is an area known for its active music and entrepreneurship scenes. People interested in “rytmimusiikki” are also familiar with the city, because of its two big music festivals, Provinssi rock and Seinäjoen Tangomarkkinat (lit. “Seinäjoki Tango Market”) that bring tens of thousands of visitors to the vicinity every summer.

Seinäjoki was chosen as the host location of the new master program for several reasons:

(1) In 2005, “rytmimusiikki” was accepted as one of the areas of emphasis in Seinäjoki municipal strategy. The strategy painted a vision of Seinäjoki as an internationally acclaimed center for “rytmimusiikki” in the year of 2012 (Rytmimusiikin Kehittämisohjelman, 2009). Seinäjoki was judged a potential context to establish this

kind of center, because of its lively network of “rytmimusiikki” related musical societies and institutions. There are a high number of active musicians working in the area, and Seinäjoki offers a business friendly environment for music-related entrepreneurship;

(2) SibA has been operating in Seinäjoki since 1991, both in terms of Junior Academy (nuorisokoulutus) and continuing education. Seinäjoki University Consortium⁵ has also hosted several SibA-based research projects, including a project for developing analysis equipment for sound research, a project for developing folk music in the area, a project focusing on the history of local dance music and an adult education program for “rytmimusiikki” (Kurkela & Tolvanen, 2005, p. 19);

(3) Seinäjoki educational system offers a fertile ground for instruction in “rytmimusiikki” at preacademic levels of education. For instance, Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences⁶ has a program of cultural production that organized specialization studies in rock production in the academic year of 2006-2007, the first of its kind in Finland. Since 1990, Seinäjoki has also hosted Rytmi-instituutti (“Rhythm institute”) and “an organization of research and training... that works on the principle of a privately funded music institution”⁷ (Kurkela & Tolvanen, 2005, p. 19) The main goal of the institute is to coordinate basic education of “rytmimusiikki” in the area. Moreover, since 2006, Seinäjoki has hosted Louhimo (“quarry”), an educational Network aiming at “providing all children and young people positive experiences of (“rhythm”) music and developing continuous growth of eager musicians and bands from novice to professional level”⁸ (Kurkela & Tolvanen, 2005, p. 19). Thus, at the time of launching the new master program, “rytmimusiikki” related instruction had been present locally in all three levels of public education: basic, secondary and tertiary;

(4) As mentioned, Seinäjoki has an active network of music-related businesses and enterprises. In 2009, municipal development program for “rytmimusiikki”, it was highlighted that enhancing co-operation between public and business sector is crucial to achieve the strategic goals (Rytmimusiikin Kehittämishjelma, 2009). Academic institutions were encouraged to develop new models for educational programs in “rytmimusiikki” that build on the networked resources present in the area. The employers were also invited to participate in the process of renewing the professional studies, keeping an eye for the changing demands of the working life—a strategy by no means common in Finnish academic music education (*Development Program of Rhythm Music*, 2009).

The Points of Departure of the New Master Program

In the planning documents of the Seinäjoki master program, four ideas were reported as its main points of departure (Kurkela & Tolvanen, 2005; Tarvainen, 2006):

(1) The most important point of departure for the new program was to establish a dialogical relationship between art and research by training “researching musicians” and “musicing researchers” (Kurkela & Tolvanen, 2005, p. 16). The SibA coordinated National Doctoral School of Folk Music and Popular Music had shown that artistic practice and research work could meet productively in higher education. This idea was now further developed at master level;

(2) The program was designed to cross borders of academic music education. The curriculum was to cover “rytmimusiikki” in an extensive sense, emphasizing its variety of genres and styles;

⁵ Retrieved from <http://www.seinajoen yliopistokeskus.fi/english/universities.php>

⁶ Retrieved from http://www.seamk.fi/in_english.iw3

⁷ Retrieved from <http://www.rytmi-instituutti.fi/>

⁸ Retrieved from <http://www.louhimo.com/>

(3) The program was to emphasize historical perspective. The goal was to create a scholarly atmosphere that would encourage the students to develop an active interest in the history of “rytmimusiikki” as a general ingredient of their expertise;

(4) The program was to be based on as realistic view of the work market as possible. A central goal was to expand the program from traditional performer and/or researcher training to cover a variety of skills needed in media industry and music business.

Implementation of the First Course

Planning

The planning of the program involved co-operation between the two host universities, other educational institutions and affiliates in the business sector. The division of labor between the contributing universities was that SibA was to take care of the economic administration and establish an infrastructure for the program, while Tampere University was to be responsible of the realization of instruction and recruiting of the teachers.

To help with planning, an investigation was made of the context, training needs and general possibilities of “rytmimusiikki” based training at postgraduate level (Tarvainen, 2006). The investigation report referred to the previously mentioned general imbalance between the training volumes in classical music and “rytmimusiikki”. The conclusion of the report was that there was a specific demand for new regional postgraduate program that would train professionals capable of multitasking in different areas of “rytmimusiikki” (Tarvainen, 2006; Kurkela & Tolvanen, 2005, p. 15). It was anticipated that the “Rhythm Master” graduates could work in “musical organizations, production companies, as journalists, musicians and researchers, in adult education, as entrepreneurs, consultants, managers, etc.” (Tarvainen, 2006, pp. 10-11).

The students for the Seinäjoki program were to be recruited from the graduates of Finnish university music and musicology programs. This presented a challenge for designing the curriculum, for studies had to be adaptable enough to cater for the interest of both groups, with different prospects for employment. As it will be seen, this was also one of the most critical factors in developing the program further.

In addition, to aid the planning of the program, a survey was made of the music students in higher education in spring term of 2006 (Tarvainen, 2006). The survey revealed a clear interest in “rytmimusiikki” based master level studies among the graduate students. Moreover, it indicated a strong need to have more working life related courses in music programs. The survey was also filled by a small group of music professionals. The latter elaborated on the need to establish connections with the working life: They recognized as key competencies in the field the ability to participate in teamwork, project management, pedagogy, creative thinking and marketing. All these study areas were incorporated into the new master program (Tarvainen, 2006, p. 13).

Entrance Tests

In order to choose a representative group of students to the first course it was decided that a specially tailored entrance policy would be needed. It was required that all applicants had previous studies in ethnomusicology, or in other disciplines that would guarantee basic research skills needed in studying the master level. All students were also required to have previous music studies or evidence a “sound hobbyism in rytmimusiikki” (Tarvainen, 2006, p. 7).

To examine both research skills and musicianship, the applicants were tested in two phased entrance

examinations. In the first phase, the research skills were measured with an essay based on reading tasks. The essays were then used as a criterion to select the applicants for the second phase. Ten of the original 15 applicants were called to the second round that included both a musical test and an interview. The musical test consisted of a solo or ensemble performance of two pieces of popular music or folk music chosen by the applicant: These were to be performed live without notation. The applicants were also encouraged to perform their own music, either live or as recordings. Some of them took this opportunity to evidence their songwriting skills. The interview targeted the students' motivation to study in the program: Their commitment was taken as central criteria for selection.

On the basis of the entrance test, nine students were chosen to the first course—five through SibA and four through Tampere University. Of these nine students, eight began their freshman year in fall 2008 with the aim of graduating in two or two and half years as “Rhythm Masters”.

Curriculum

The curriculum of the new program reflected the above-mentioned four general points of departure. In specific, six learning outcomes were judged as important (Tarvainen, 2006):

(1) Research skills: The students should be able to gather data, to write and understand musical notation and to have skills in music analysis, scientific thinking and writing of research texts, as well as in research methodology;

(2) An understanding of the “rytmimusiikki” field in Finland: This includes practical musical experience, knowledge of “rytmimusiikki” of today and in the past, its different production processes and its work market situation;

(3) Skills in making “rytmimusiikki”: The student should possess composing, songwriting, singing, playing and production skills;

(4) Ability to combine research and artistic skills: The student should be able to utilize her musical competence in scholarship and approach her own music-making analytically;

(5) Multiple work market competencies: These included team work and communication skills, project skills, and ability to cope with different situations and tasks in the “rytmimusiikki” field, to work as free lancer or as entrepreneur, to refine one's skills and ideas in practice, to act independently and with initiative in the field and to network and create connections to working life;

(6) Qualifications to continue studies in terms of scholarly and artistic maturity: The student should have sufficient research and musical skills to begin her doctoral studies.

As it can be seen from the syllabus (see Appendix A), curriculum included courses in all of these areas. Historical/theoretical and musical production related studies had approximately the same amount of credits. The students had relatively few optional studies for a master program, and almost half of the credits were allocated for research and project studies.

Teaching and Studying in the Program

As indicated above, the pilot class was rather small, comprising only of eight students. The rationale of beginning with a small group was to create team spirit and encourage positive study atmosphere. The students were to be taught in a manner that built on the cognitive diversity of the group. Every student was to bring her previous knowledge and skills to learning situations to amplify shared knowledge construction (Tarvainen, 2006).

Studying in the program was to be realized in terms of collaborative learning. This was taken as a fitting

approach, because it was assumed that working in different phases of “rytmimusiikki” production should be based on teamwork. In teaching, the point of emphasis was in dialogue between the teachers and students and within the student group. The educational goal of emphasizing dialogue was to develop critical thinking and argumentative skills (Tarvainen, 2006).

Recognition of prior learning was an important factor in differentiation of the studies. As the program utilized each student’s existing knowledge and skills, it required careful coordination in terms of study plans. Thus, individual study planning was used to determine the optimal study paths and evaluate how the studies progressed. Individual study plans were also used to help the teachers to differentiate within specific course units, e.g., by presenting individualized reading tasks to the students with different backgrounds (Tarvainen, 2006).

The teaching staff of the program consisted of one responsible lecturer as the main teacher, a professor, a planner and a number of part-time teachers⁹. The students met with the main teacher on a daily basis and the teacher also worked as their main tutor. The professor was largely responsible of the research studies. The part-time teachers taught a variety of courses, usually commuting from other localities for the contact lessons.

Lessons From the First Course

Student Feedback

In addition to the formative evaluation and informal evaluation during the courses, the program was assessed after two-and-half years of studies. This summative assessment was mainly based on student questionnaire that produced both quantitative and qualitative data.

The first part of the questionnaire inquired general information: gender, age and former preparation of the students. The age of the students was between 29 and 40 (mean 32) making the first class in average older than usual student groups in performance or musicology graduate programs. Of the eight students, four were female and four male.

The former preparation of the students seemed to be in general what was sought for. Seven of the students had bachelor degrees and only one had master degree. However, the original aim of recruiting an even amount of bachelors from research and music programs was not met. Six of the students had graduated from universities of applied sciences, and only two had bachelor from a research university (as mentioned, one of them also had a master). Interestingly, of the six applied sciences graduates, four had a pedagogical bachelor degree, even if the master program was not targeted for music teachers.

After filling the first part of the questionnaire, the students were asked to evaluate the program in terms of its main points of departure. They were to give each point of departure a Finnish school grade from four to 10 (four being the worst, 10 the best), judging how they judged these four thematic areas to be met in the training program. There was no big difference between the resulting grades: All thematic areas were judged in average with the grades between seven and eight minus. The best grades were given to the area of historical consciousness (mean 7.88), the worst to the dialogue between art and research (mean 7.0). No student rewarded any of the areas with full 10, but no one gave the grade four to any of the areas either. The general grade for the program was a seven plus (see Table 1).

⁹ Twelve such part-time teachers worked in the program. They taught songwriting, music and media, music business, musical production, musical workshops, arranging, and gave instrument lessons.

Table 1

Student Evaluation of How the Main Points of Departure Were Met

	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Mean
Plurality: Training has supported my understanding of “rytmimusiikki” across the genre lines.	0	1	0	3	3	1	0	8	7.38
Historical consciousness: The training has paid attention to the history of sound, styles and performance practices.	0	0	0	2	5	1	0	8	7.88
Dialogue between art and research: Artistic and research approaches have met in training in a fruitful manner.	0	1	3	1	1	2	0	8	7
Working life needs. Training has targeted working life.	0	1	2	1	2	2	0	8	7.25
Total	0	3	5	7	11	6	0	32	7.38

The next question involved a list of statements (in total 29) about the master program and studying in the program (see Appendix B). The respondents were asked to judge how true they held these statements using a Likert scale from 1 to 5.

In the results, the lowest points were given to claim, according to which the program constitutes a consistent whole (mean 1.5), as well as to claim, according to which the program included sufficient amount of practical musical studies (mean 1.5). Perhaps, one of the most important results were that the students judged the general statement “the training program fulfilled my expectations” only with the mean value of 2.38, with no student giving this statement their full support and as many as five disagreeing with it. The claim about the success of the dialogue of art and research got the mean value of 2.88, with half of the students disagreeing. The students agreed mostly with claims related to individualization of the studies (mean 4.5), the claim that the program develops independent thinking (mean 4.38) and the claim related to sufficient support given to the research studies (mean 4.0). In general, the results seem to imply that the students saw the merits of the program more in research related than music related courses. This was also supported by the qualitative data.

In the qualitative part of the questionnaire, the students were first asked to reply to the five open questions:

(1) In what profession do you see yourself after five years?

Three of the students saw themselves working as teachers. Significantly, nobody mentioned working in music business or in other non-performance music related jobs. Three mentioned the possibility of working as musicians. Only one mentioned any musical genres in his/her reply;

(2) What has been the most central benefit of the program to your professional competence?

Here, the students listed many kinds of benefits, including development of musical and research skills, with an emphasis on musical and music-related issues. Songwriting was mentioned two times;

(3) What is the most important area to develop in the program?

Here, the students were clearly agreeing on the need to have more transparent plan of the curriculum. There was also one indication that the courses could have more practical orientation;

(4) What is the most serious shortcoming of the program?

Here, the answers reflected those of the former questions, supporting the conclusion that as a whole, the program did not succeed to provide the students with a sound and well-planned coursework;

(5) Who do you think this kind of a program should be targeted on in the future?

The students seemed to agree with the general goal of the program, which was to contribute to the postgraduate studies in Finnish music “rytmimusiikki” education by offering a set of courses aiming at providing a picture of a field in flux. There was also one mention about the course not being targeted primarily on musicians

wanting to develop their practical abilities, but rather, catering for other music related jobs.

At the end of the questionnaire, the students were asked to reflect freely on their present feelings about the training, the goals and working methods, and to their own studying, elaborating their earlier answers. Seven students replied to this part. One of them merely mentioned that she had not been present in the first term. The remaining six wrote widely on a variety of issues related to the program. In these writings, five dominant themes emerged:

(1) Working life prospects.

The students seemed to appreciate the working life connections of the program and saw it as beneficial in providing positive influence on future working opportunities:

The training provided a lot of content that related directly to the working life, etc..

(2) Studying in the program.

Almost all of the students discussed the difficulty in combining studies and work, and one especially lamented the long journey to school. In fact, several of the students opted to live in another place during their studies, commuting to Seinäjoki for their contact lessons and lectures:

It was harder than the author thought to combine work and school and occasionally the author did not have as much time to study as he would have liked.

(3) Plannedness and consistency of the program.

As in the quantitative part, several students emphasized what they saw as insufficient planning and inconsistency of the studies. None seemed to appreciate the original idea of building study plans flexibly during the studies. This may reflect the fact that most of the students had been used to very school-like studying, with clearly arranged schedules:

For the author, the red thread of the training remained blurred. Many classes were but occasional entries into a certain theme and the whole remained fragmentary.

(4) The relationship between art and research studies.

While lamenting the small amount of practical musical studies, students seemed to appreciate the supervision and understand the role of the research studies in the curriculum:

Simply put, the author has been disappointed in content related to making music, analyzing and playing, but he have been satisfied with content related to research and writing, because he is inexperienced in those.

(5) Teacher recruiting.

Acknowledging that it is not easy to get visiting experts to Seinäjoki, several of the students also felt that teaching was uneven in quality and that the use of the visiting teachers was not optimal.

Teacher Feedback

The main teacher was also asked to reflect on the pros and cons of the first course after reading and commenting on the student questionnaire. The teacher focused on very similar themes than the students, listing the following points as main problems of the first course:

(1) The problem related to the previous preparation of the students.

As indicated above, it was expected originally that the master program would interest both university and polytechnics graduates. However, the first class comprised more of polytechnics graduates than of students

accustomed to research studies. The main teacher felt that this caused problems in the research studies:

Unlike, we expected the program interested primarily graduates from polytechnics, whose readiness to research-focused studies was in average weaker than of those who had studies in university.

According to the teacher, the students also had very different musical preparation profiles:

The scale of the musical skills of the students was too wide in order to realize ensemble playing reasonably.

A further problem was related to the working life connections of the students. Several of the students were working full time aside of studying in the program. According to the teacher, this influenced their motivation in certain subjects:

The life situations of the students did not make it possible to arrange studying based on collaborative (learning). In case of several students, work and family life prevented taking part in regular contact teaching. Collaborative learning may work with students who are beginning their university studies, but not with those in the master level.

(2) Problems related to curriculum and pedagogy.

The teacher judged the curriculum to be too extensive for the two-year (or two-and-half-year) schedule of the master program:

The curriculum is too wide and heterogeneous to be realistic. It is a combination of musician and researcher training. However, two years is too short of a time to develop both musician's and researcher's readiness.

According to the teacher, the pedagogical ideas of the first-round program were not sufficiently developed:

We did not reflect on the nature of the training program sufficiently. Combining of theoretical and practical knowledge would have required more thorough pedagogical meditation. The concept of "researching musician" and "musicing researcher" written in the curriculum is still at the level of the idea, without clear pedagogical reasons and didactic program.

(3) Problems with the locality.

Despite of Seinäjoki being judged to be a fertile ground for developing this kind of a master program, the teacher indicated that:

The study path leading to master program is weak in Southern Ostrobothnia. It is mostly based on the music training of Seinäjoki polytechnics. This makes it very hard to recruit local student material suitable for training based on collaborative learning. Because of the family and work related reasons, in the postgraduate phase, the willingness of the students to move to another locality because of the studies is weaker than of those that are beginning their (bachelor) studies.

In general, the main teacher saw the small academic community of Seinäjoki region as a problem to the research-based studies, and discussed this in tandem with the student's previous preparation in academic studies:

Because there is no other university level teaching (in rytmimusiikki) in Southern Ostrobothnia, the students compare their training to their previous training in polytechnics or to their own teaching in folk high schools or polytechnics. This causes distortion in the expectations and evaluations of the students to the training program.

(4) Teacher recruiting.

Like the students, the teacher also reflected on the availability of part-time teachers:

The teacher situation in Southern Ostrobothnia is difficult. Because of this, it was very hard to arrange personal instrument teaching. We had to seek for teachers elsewhere, which made the studying of those living in Southern Ostrobothnia harder. The degree of the students from (SibA) includes 30 study points (ECTS) more than that of Tampere students, and the difference was probably supposed to be covered with instrument teaching. To organize the latter was a problem to students living in Seinäjoki. Moreover, (workshop) teachers had to be recruited elsewhere, which made it difficult to plan the program.

(5) Developmental ideas.

Like the students, the teacher also listed ideas of development of the upcoming course. These ideas were mainly related to curriculum and recruiting of the students. In terms of curriculum development, the teacher suggested that:

The training should be more clearly based on development of either musician skills or expertise. Because it is practically impossible to arrange master level musician training in Seinäjoki, the focus should be in developing expertise and the theoretical knowledge and the application of knowledge required by it.

In terms of whom the program should be aimed at, the teacher proposed that:

The program could be deliberately targeted as a further education course on music educators graduated from polytechnics, as these were in the majority in the first course. The training would emphasize advancing expertise and pedagogical preparation in "rytmimusiikki" instead of development of musician skills... Because music educators seem to be rather well employed, the training should be realized as blended learning, in which contact teaching, Web-based teaching and different literary, theoretical and analytical tasks would alternate. Contact teaching could center on weekends, when also teachers living elsewhere would have better opportunities to participate.

Another option would be to target the training primarily to bachelors from research universities as planned originally. The difference compared to traditional master program based on reading exams and writing the thesis would be the contact periods, the function of which would be to offer a support and peer groups for studying. Contact teaching would not comprise the most central content of the coursework. However, there would probably emerge a problem in that we would not get enough bachelors to apply. This was proved by the first entrance exams.

Conclusions and Future Prospects

The experiences and the feedback summarized above indicate that the original idea to combine musical training and research training turned out to be quite problematic. The students on the first course had varying musical and intellectual backgrounds. For music graduates, research skills proved to be challenging: This was especially the case with the graduates from polytechnics, who had only a limited amount of knowledge on scholarly issues and research.

In the case of students with research university background, the question was reverse: How to guarantee the needed musical and music-related studies in restricted time limits? It should be remembered that Finnish research university programs do not usually enjoy the privilege of extending the studies over 2.5 years. At SibA, the prolongation has been justified with the extra time needed to finish one's instrumental studies. However, it might be asked whether it is viable to offer instrument tuition in a master course dedicated to research, despite of the well-intended idea of training researcher musicians. This pilot project suggests that master level training programs in "rytmimusiikki" should focus either on musical skills or on research skills, not on both.

When writing this report, the next round of the "Rhythm Master" program has already begun. In light of the experiences, so far the following preliminary outlook on new ways of realizing the curriculum may be highlighted:

(1) Distinctive changes were dealt with organizing contact teaching in Seinäjoki. Because nearly all

students in the first course had tight bonds with working life, many of them could not commit themselves to weekly contact tuition. The absences turned out to be a major factor in decreasing the study motivation of those who participated the classes. This problem was solved by organizing contact tuition in three weeks intervals, each period lasting three days. As a result, the attendance numbers increased substantially and there were no absence problems in the second course;

(2) More attention was paid to how research studies were organized. As in the first course, the background of the students in the second course was quite diverse: Some had bachelor degree in musicology or related research subjects, and the rest had only a scarce idea about methodological issues or scholarly writing.

In the new course, planning of the master's thesis in connection to intensive methodological studies begun already in the very first contact learning session. Research issues were discussed continuously during the autumn semester. As a result, all the students had by the end of the first year found a reasonable and clearly defined subject for their thesis. Furthermore, concentration on research issues created a didactic focus that had been more or less lacking in the first course. Every student is now aware that the main point of "rytmimusiikki" master program is the combination of study of music and research of cultural issues and that the other parts of the curriculum are closely related to music research;

(3) There are still some issues in the training program and organization that wait for further development:

(a) The use of distant learning methods and practices is insufficiently utilized so far. By applying information technology in organization of flexible online and hybrid courses, the lack of competent teachers in the area could be relieved, students would have better possibilities to network with experts of "rytmimusiikki" field. There have been indications from Finnish music education programs that open and semi-open online and hybrid learning environments can enhance the networking and collaborative learning skills of students that live away from the studying locale (Salavuo, 2006);

(b) Coordination of the studies with the students' working life experience could be more thoroughly planned. Again, the students' various backgrounds make this goal quite challenging, since in practice, every student has her own tailored study program. However, because the number of students is small, with the aid of personalized study projects, their working life experiences could be better combined with the general aims of the "rytmimusiikki" master program.

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Appendix A: Course Syllabus

Master's Degree in Rhythm Music (120 ECTS)—Programme Structure

- A: Orientation studies (10 ECTS)
- A1. Planning of studies (1 ECTS)
 - A2. Group work skills (3 ECTS)
 - A3. Project skills (3 ECTS)
 - A4. Academic writing and thinking (3 ECTS)
- B: Ethnomusicology and rhythm music (19 ECTS)
- B1. Ethnomusicological study (6 ECTS)
 - B2. History of rhythm music (5 ECTS)
 - B3. The field of rhythm music today (5 ECTS)
 - B4. Philosophy and aesthetics of music (3 ECTS)
- C: Performance and compositional skills (19 ECTS)
- C1. Singing and instrumental studies (6 ECTS)
 - C2. Improvisation and rhythmic skills (3 ECTS)
 - C3. Compositional and song lyric studies (5 ECTS)
 - C4. Arranging and notating (5 ECTS)
- D: Production skills (16 ECTS)
- D1. Studio work and producing music (4 ECTS)
 - D2. Marketing of music and musical services (4 ECTS)
 - D3. The labor markets of rhythm music (4 ECTS)
 - D4. Business and freelancer skills (4 ECTS)
- E: Optional studies (6 ECTS)
- E1. Music and body (3 ECTS)
 - E2. Music cultures of special groups (3 ECTS)
 - E3. Pedagogical skills (3 ECTS)
 - E4. Music and new media (3 ECTS)
 - E5. Advanced studies in performance and compositional skills (3 ECTS)
 - E6. Advanced studies in production skills (3 ECTS)
- F: Exercise work (10 ECTS)
- F1. Project 1 (10 ECTS)
- G: Master's thesis (5 + 15 + 20 ECTS)
- G1. Master's thesis seminar (5 ECTS)
 - G2. Master's thesis, practical part (Project 2) (15 ECTS)
 - G3. Master's thesis, written part (20 ECTS)

Appendix B: Student's Evaluation of the Statements of the Program (n = 8)

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Artistic and research perspectives were united in the program.	0	4	1	3	0	2.88
My earlier studies provided sufficient basis to study in the program.	0	1	0	3	4	4.25
I have been able to utilize my previous work experience in the program.	0	2	0	3	3	3.88
I have been able to choose courses from other universities or open university.	1	2	3	0	2	3
I have been able to plan my studies according to my own study interests.	0	2	0	5	1	3.62
As such (2/2.5 years) the training is suitably long in relation to its contents.	0	1	2	1	4	4
Ethnomusicological emphasis is suitable for studying "rytmimusiikki".	0	0	1	7	0	3.88
The program has met my expectations of a master level musical university training program in music.	1	3	3	1	0	2.5
The program has given a clear picture of the history of "rytmimusiikki".	0	3	1	3	1	3.25
Training has helped me to understand the production processes of "rytmimusiikki".	0	2	2	4	0	3.25
I have learned to compose and write songs in the program.	0	1	3	4	0	3.38
Songwriting and/or composing belong to the qualifications of "rhythm musician".	0	1	0	4	3	4.12
Training has provided me with multiple capabilities to work in the professional field of "rytmimusiikki".	1	1	2	4	0	3.12
Training has provided me with sufficient capabilities to further studies in the "rytmimusiikki" field.	0	1	4	2	1	3.38
I could apply to doctoral studies in the future.	0	0	1	4	3	4.25
The program has supported my independent thinking.	0	0	1	3	4	4.38
The program has developed my argumentative skills.	1	0	0	6	1	3.75
I have received peer support in my studies from other students.	0	1	1	3	3	4
Feedback has been collected of the training.	0	1	0	5	2	4
I feel that I have been able to contribute to realization of how training was organized.	0	2	2	2	2	3.5
The projects finished in the program are significant in terms of my future employment.	0	1	4	3	0	3.25
The program constitutes an integrated whole.	4	4	0	0	0	1.5
I have been taught sufficient musical skills in the program.	4	4	0	0	0	1.5
I have had enough support for writing my thesis in the program.	1	0	1	2	4	4
It has been possible to finish courses in independent manner, for instance to compensate for absences.	0	0	0	4	4	4.5
There is a lively and rich "rytmimusiikki" scene in Seinäjoki.	0	1	1	4	2	3.88
I have been satisfied with the teacher choices.	1	1	2	4	0	3.12
The training program fulfilled my expectations.	2	3	1	2	0	2.38
I was able to participate in the training actively.	0	1	3	2	2	3.62
Total	16	43	39	88	46	3.45