

# How to become a guitar playing human being in the situation of ensemble courses – independent of sex

An episode of the radio show Music and  
Equality

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## Abstract

The article will shed light on both the challenges to and possibilities for growth as an ensemble guitarist within upper secondary popular music ensemble courses in Sweden. The paper is a critique of an un-reflected view of popular music as a preferred situation for musical learning in schools. It is intended both as a thought-provoking speech directed to ensemble teachers aiming for equal music education, and as a philosophical exploration of female experiences of ensemble education. The article is based on an existential–philosophical way of thinking, mainly in line with the thoughts of Simone de Beauvoir, both when it comes to the view of human beings independent of sex<sup>1</sup> and as a base for how to communicate scientific results in a sensitive situated way. Hence, the format of the article, drawing on Arts-based research philosophy, is constituted as an imagined radio show episode, including a programme leader (PL), two young female guitarists – Anna and Lucy – and one prominent philosopher: Simone de Beauvoir (SdB). The article consists of text as well as a sounding dialogue and drawings. The dialogue is based on interview material combined with studies of primary and secondary Beauvoir literature. Issues that will be explored in the conversation have emerged in an earlier study of the story of one female guitarist: an upper secondary student at a specialist music programme. Issues chosen for the current article shown to be crucial from an equality perspective are; *Transcending boys and immersing girls, the male gaze, relations to patriarchal repertoire, possible projects and the role of the teacher.*

Keywords: Arts-based, radio-show, Guitar playing women, becoming, de Beauvoir

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1 Sex is in line with de Beauvoir defined as the physical difference between males and females. Gender is something human beings become, and in this article the ambition is to start where humans are seen as equal beings, independent of physical prerequisites.

# How to become a guitar playing human being in the situation of ensemble courses – independent of sex

Cecilia Ferm Almqvist<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

The article examines the challenges to and possibilities for equality in opportunities to grow as an ensemble guitarist within upper secondary popular music ensemble courses. These courses constitute a central part of music specialist programs, open for anyone to apply for, at upper secondary level in Sweden. The contribution is a critique of an un-reflected view of popular music as a preferred informal situation for musical learning in schools, which has been accentuated by for example Folkestad<sup>i</sup>. “However, teachers might be able to create learning situations in which informal learning processes can appear / . . . / [but] I strongly question the sometimes implicitly normative value judgements underlying some of the literature and discussions, where informal is equal to good, true or authentic, while formal is equal to artificial, boring and bad”.<sup>ii</sup> Among other things, Folkestad’s critical point has made me pay attention to the risk of conservation of

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traditional gender roles in in-formal and non-formal situations in music education.<sup>iii</sup> Hence, the contribution is intended both as a thought-provoking speech directed to ensemble teachers aiming for equal music education, and as a philosophical exploration of female experiences of ensemble education.

The study is based on an existential–philosophical way of thinking, mainly in line with the thoughts of Simone de Beauvoir, both when it comes to the view of human beings independent of sex,<sup>iv</sup> and as a base for how to communicate scientific results in a sensitive situated way.<sup>v</sup> The aim was to create a situation where the reader-listener comes close to the experiences of the female guitarists, and how these experiences can be understood from an existential philosophical perspective. An important prerequisite in such a communication of results is that several senses are engaged, and that situation is possible to live. de Beauvoir underlines the importance of letting the reader to be thrown into the factual, through creating melodramatic texts. She meant that artistic forms of expressions had to be used to mediate complexity in human relational situations. Dialogic (imaginative) narratives have been used in several qualitative studies aiming to create a living situation within the field of music education.<sup>vi</sup> The wider ambition with this arts-based contribution, is to offer sounding verbal expressions, in a dialogic form, that hopefully even more increases the possibility to take the perspective of the other, and live the melodramatic situation. Hence, the format of the article is a radio show episode, drawing on Arts based research philosophy<sup>vii</sup> that encourage alternative forms of expressions is to widen possibilities for communication and meaning making, which also opens new possibilities for interpretation. In addition, that was mentioned earlier is that several human senses can be used, and that tools for understanding are influencing what is possible to understand.

The episode includes a programme leader (PL), two young female guitarists – Anna and Lucy, who have never met before – and one prominent philosopher: Simone de Beauvoir (SdB). The dialogue is a result of a phenomenological-hermeneutical analysis of interviews with two former students at a specialist music upper secondary program, where ensemble playing was a central course.<sup>viii</sup> The analysis resulted in five themes, that together describes the phenomenon of becoming a guitar playing woman, namely *Transcending boys and immersing girls, the male gaze, relations to patriarchal repertoire, possible projects and the role of the teacher*. In the created dialogue the words of the interviewees themselves have been adjusted only to suit the dialogical form. The themes are developed in relation to philosophical concepts, defined and investigated in primary and secondary de Beauvoir literature.<sup>ix</sup>

### [The radio show<sup>3</sup>](#)

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PL: Welcome to this episode of Music and Equality, where we invite people from the areas theory, philosophy and practice to discuss current themes and engaging questions. Today we will have a conversation about female experiences of participating in ensemble education in upper secondary school specialist programmes, drawing on Simone de Beauvoir's theories about sexual difference and the concept of situation. Earlier research shows that Mme de Beauvoir's theories can help to explain – and provide means of change for – situations where there is a risk that traditional gender roles will be conserved. Her phenomenological philosophy offers help in understanding the paradoxicality of the human condition – the condition of having to exist as both singular and universal, as concrete and spiritual,

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3 To listen to the show click the blue heading “The radio show” while connected to the internet

as finite and infinite and as separate from and bound to other human beings at the same time. According to Mme de Beauvoir's 'poetics of subjectivity', the expressive possibilities of a situated autobiography can make it possible to reveal such fundamental ambiguities of human existence.<sup>x</sup> A majority of gender studies in the field of music education are based on the performative theory of Judith Butler,<sup>xi</sup> another non-essentialist, but constructionist, philosopher. Butler's view of the body in relation to sex differs from that of Mme de Beauvoir.<sup>xii</sup> Mme de Beauvoir, states that repetitions and habits are stratified in the body as experiences, and that human beings are able to make choices in a situation. Butler on the other hand, sees the body as an effect of a discursive process of materialization,<sup>xiii</sup> and this is why it is interesting to have Simone de Beauvoir here today. In this episode we will touch upon themes as transcendence and immanence, to understand expected behaviour among girls vs. boys, the male gaze that also can explain why girls feel evaluated and judged, we will talk about girls relations to patriarchal genres, and how girls can be encouraged to run their own musical projects. Finally we will come into the role of the teacher in ensemble education. We now welcome Anna, and Lucy, and last but not least Simone de Beauvoir.

SdB, Anna, Lucy: Thank you!

PL: Lucy is twenty years old, she finished upper secondary school one year ago, and her main instruments were electric guitar and trumpet. Before she started her upper secondary studies, she was enrolled in a music programme, including ensemble playing, at a lower secondary school. During the last year, she has studied gender theory, worked with different temporary jobs, played in different bands, and released her first EP with her

own band. Anna is twenty-five. She too has studied at a music specialist programme in both lower and upper secondary education. Her main instrument is electric guitar, her second is classical guitar, and she also plays violin and electric bass. After secondary school, Anna studied for two years at a folk high school, specializing in rock music; she also completed four years of a five-year music teacher programme. She had one semester of sick leave, caused by high pressure and stress. Anna has played in several band projects connected to her education. And; Simone de Beauvoir, we are so glad that you are able to join us, and we invite you to introduce yourself and, briefly, those aspects of your theories that you think are relevant to our subject today.

SdB My view of the difference between men and women is not radical, instead I see men and women as variations of human embodiment. So, otherness is not, as I see it, something essential, but merely different starting points.<sup>xiv</sup> Both men and women are able to cope and be active, but in each situation some behaviours are expected, and conserved, or reacted upon related to sex – actions that have been symbolized and then layered, and are still preserved today.<sup>xv</sup> Women are expected to behave immanently, and men transcendently. I encourage all human beings to use their agency, to be active ‘doers’, and not passive sufferers or adaptive beings. Instead they should help each other to become equal through action.<sup>xvi</sup> I think it is really important for all human beings to be directed towards projects, to extend their bodies, and to be transcendental. There are historical explanations of traditional behaviours and expectations, which can’t be compared to those of other historically oppressed groups. The subordination of female human beings comes from the need for them to be ‘at home’ for continual child bearing and breast feeding, while men had to risk their lives in hunt and

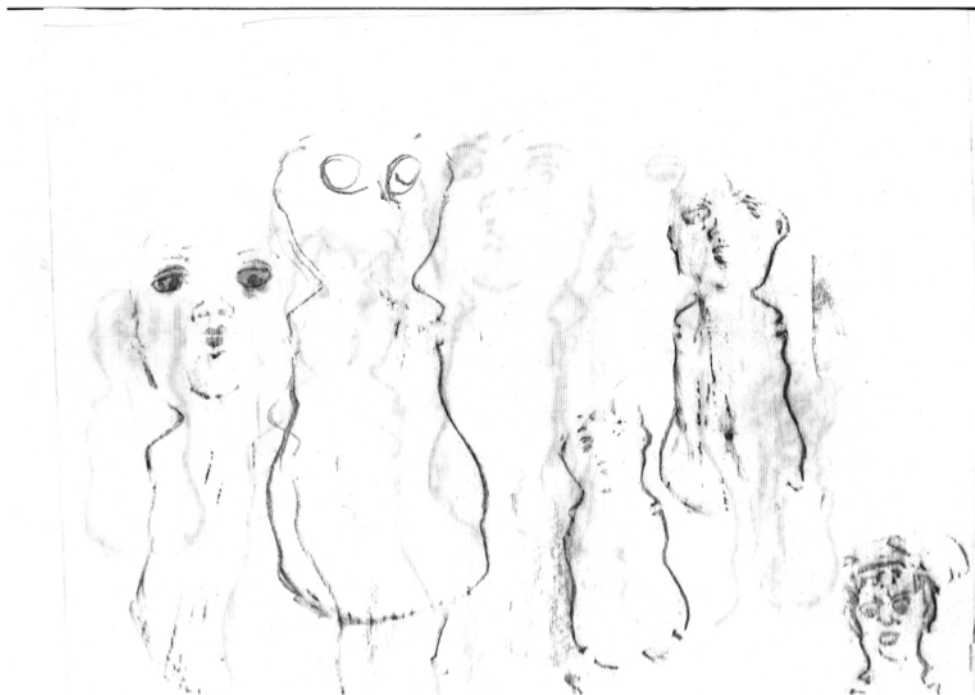
war. The latter functioned as transcendental activities that gradually accrued symbolic values – values that have been (and still are) conserved and layered, by both men and women, and other genders. To give birth was, of course, also a way of risking one's life, but rather than an active choice, it strengthened the realm of immanence, as it was seen as a consequence of a 'natural' life.<sup>xvii</sup>

PL: I guess playing electric guitar can be seen as a transcendental symbolic activity that has been layered and conserved as traditionally male, based on your theories Madame de Beauvoir!?

SdB: That is possible. But it is also important to keep in mind the concept of situation.<sup>xviii</sup> My aim was to shed light on patriarchal structures, and how they limited female actions. I view female biology as an obstacle to be surmounted rather than a fixed destiny, and I underline possibilities. I stress the body as a 'situation' rather than a 'thing', by which I mean that biology cannot be understood outside of its social, economic and psychological context. Hence, biology alone is insufficient to explain why women are constituted as the Other; situation can be defined as a constant process of becoming.<sup>xix</sup>

PL: Thanks so far. One aspect that became obvious in the earlier study I mentioned, when we began, is that different roles appear in the ensemble situation. Would you like to say something about that Lucy or Anna?





### *Transcending boys and immersing girls*

Lucy: When I started upper secondary I had really high expectations about ensemble playing, which is a course with a responsible teacher, and I looked forward to playing with other skilled people. But I was disappointed, as some people just took for granted that they could sit in and play their instrument, that they were the best and should have all the solos. I don't think they understood that we were all there to play together, and the teacher didn't underline that either. It was like the teacher took a step back, like the ensemble course was seen as an informal situation, where we played popular and jazz music in the way musicians do outside school.

Anna: Yeah, I recognize that, some people really wanted to be seen and heard; but I wanted to lift others, even if I also wanted to be seen as good and to play solos. I wanted everyone to have equal opportunities. But people thought more about themselves, as if only they themselves should be heard. And yes, the teacher was rather peripheral.

Lucy: One problem was that I was used to being rather good at music, and I wanted good grades. And as the teacher wasn't present when we practiced, many people didn't do anything. And I played 'third' guitar, and then it seemed like I didn't do anything. So, I arranged the song. I didn't want to enter the scene and play something that sounded bad. That's embarrassing. So, that arranging was not just to put it together, but, to create something good. Unfortunately that wasn't valued, nor noticed. The ones who only sat in and played in the end, they got good grades too, and more cred.

Anna: I took the role of leader as well, to make it all function, gathered the horde, helped others et cetera, even when there was a teacher present. And as we didn't have any bass-player, I often changed instrument to make the ensemble complete; one of the other guitarists refused to do that. I don't know, I adapted to the others, the guys, I wanted to be good, and have all the others as friends. I thought most things were fun, but anyway ...

PL: Simone de Beauvoir, can you see any reasons for why this is happening?

SdB: What I have seen, is that female actions always are related to male-determined norms, which may explain why you two take on tasks that the male participants do not. Also, according to my analyses, women are shaped by society to grow towards marriage, where they are expected to take care of the family and household. Hence, they are encouraged to learn many things superficially, which makes them abandon their personal

interests more easily than men. Even if societal attitudes toward couples and marriage have changed since my investigation was conducted, differences in how deeply young people engage in their interests remain relevant.

Lucy: Another aspect of that is that my mates and I struggled to get the teacher to understand what we actually did. Sometimes we told him: ‘Just so you know, that was me who put it all together.’ There were too many guitarists as well, and I was encouraged to play trumpet instead – not so suitable in Abba or hard rock. So, since I didn’t dare ask for a solo, I played fourth guitar in that genre, and then I had no opportunity to show my skills.

Anna: I think we led the way in deciding what we played and who should play what to a rather high extent. Yeah, and that’s why I played the bass a lot. But I felt that I claimed my space anyway,<sup>xx</sup> I had my guitar solos and all of that. I was rather firm when it came to that. I didn’t want to be lousier than anyone else. I wanted to show what I was able to and so on. I had a little of both.

Lucy: I understand. But I think that a girl often gets a more responsible role, and you had that as well. For me it wasn’t possible to just slide around, because I wasn’t that skilled. And to be rather good at many things didn’t count in the same way.

Anna: Yeah, it was actually a lot of pressure to have both roles ... And, the others also got used to having someone who fixed things; they could relax and trust the good result anyway.

Lucy: And know that they’d have good feedback as well

Anna: At the same time as I thought I showed my skills by contributing to the

group, I kind of liked the role of the leader as well. But why did I?

SdB: This is interesting. The taking care of ‘the family’ at the same time as the male human beings perform transcendental actions can be seen, as I mentioned, as old behaviours that have become symbolic. It seems like playing guitar solos is a symbolized male action. Adapting has been a way for women to relate to ‘male’ transcendental actions that have been layered and conserved for a very long time. To both run your project and think about ‘the whole’ at the same time is connected to ambiguity, the balance between freedom and responsibility.<sup>xxi</sup> To take care of both your own freedom and others’ is an important goal, but that is something all students should learn in school, and such processes should be encouraged and led by the teacher.

Lucy: I’m impressed by you, Anna – that you had the courage and strength to claim that space. I thought that if a girl came in and rocked the floor of the guys, it would be seen as strange: ‘Doesn’t she have a life? Has she been sitting at home and practising every night?’ We were expected to be with friends all the time, to hang out together in the weekends.

Anna: But I did that too. And I had practised four instruments, and had good grades in all subjects, and I never shirked.

PL: Do you have any comment upon this Mme de Beauvoir?

SdB: It seems that you behave immanently, and might avoid a transcendental way of being. To some extent, you claim your space, in the factual situation, not least you Anna, but to me it seems that you take much to responsibility for the whole, and forget your own project. But, as I have said many times, to transcend and run projects demands that all individual see each other as free human beings. It seems like in this ensemble situation, both male and

female students are hindered by being oppressors and oppressed in un-reflected ways,<sup>xxii</sup> and that should be a huge challenge for the teacher to loosen up.

PL: This is really interesting. I suppose one aspect of that could be to create an environment there all students run their musical projects openly and become them selves in the social setting. But, I would like to talk a little bit more about practicing and being good at your instrument. What do you say Lucy?



*The male gaze*

Lucy: Where did you practise Anna?

Anna: At home. I didn't want anyone to hear.

Lucy: Neither did I. And the practise rooms at school even had windows, you were totally exposed. My mates and I wanted to handle our parts when we came to the ensemble. We only wanted to perform when we really knew the music.

PL: Could you please develop this a bit?

Anna: I would never have practised in public. It felt so embarrassing to make a mistake. Even in the ensemble lessons. I mean, some people sat in the spare time room and played for themselves, or with a group around them.

Lucy: I know, so nerdy, and unsocial, I would never have done that. But something is wrong when you go to a specialist music programme, and you don't want anyone to hear your practise. Boys didn't seem to care so much.

SdB: How come that still in the twenty-first century, women accept and confirm behaviours that diminish their bodies, and in this case musical bodies? What would happen if you were demanded to be viewers, not only the ones who are seen?<sup>xxiii</sup>

PL: What do you think Anna, did the boys feel that they were viewed by you in the same way?

Anna: No, I practised "far too much" to be the best from the beginning; the boys more like took it as it came. And they did not care so much about grades in the other subjects either. They could skip a History lesson and play the

guitar instead.

Lucy: Yeah. I also think that sitting in the spare time room and playing the guitar is about styling. I would never do that either. I think I am good at playing the guitar, but not in the right way. In a way that is worth styling. And it made me nervous to think that someone might hear me handling something badly.

Anna: At the same time, it was important to show that you could play hard and advanced things, like jazz solos over complicated chord progressions. To show your skills. In the lessons and concerts.

Lucy: Yes, that's why you practised. To get confirmation from the others – that they should think I could do something (without knowing how much I'd practised). It was important that the teacher gave me good cred in front of the boys, so they understood that I could do something, otherwise it was kind of meaningless.

SdB As I have said before, 'Woman is determined not by her hormones or by mysterious instincts, but by the manner in which her body and her relation to the world are modified through the action of others than herself'.<sup>xxiv</sup> I mean that whatever human beings perceive, including other people, is rendered as an 'object' of their gaze and is defined by them – the viewer. Applied to men's perception of women, the very concept of woman becomes a male concept: woman is always 'other' because the male is the 'viewer': he is the subject and she the object – the meaning of what it is to be a woman is defined by men. This could be useful when it comes to understand how you present yourself and what that may lead to. The risk that gender roles will be conserved in musical learning within these settings become obvious. As I said, the male gaze, among other things, creates the

difference between a female body and a woman, in the situation, in the continual process of becoming.<sup>xxv</sup>

PL: So, why is this so hard to change? And what are the specific conditions of the situation in upper secondary programs?

Anna: In secondary I started to think it was very hard to perform, I had high expectations of myself. And it was not about the teacher's reactions, but about what the other skilled instrumentalists thought. And, in the guitar world, this is very much about playing nice solos. Fastest, and most beautiful. That's the way of showing your skills.

Lucy: I recognize that so well. I didn't like their musical taste or expression, but the common view was that jazzy licks and scales were valuable. I am not interested in that, nor do I think it's beautiful or anything. But anyway, that's the group of people you want to impress. And their feedback makes you feel good or bad. I really wanted them to say that I was good.

SdB: This is worrying, and I recognize it. If you search for yourself in the eyes of the other, through the taken for granted male gaze, before you have given yourself a shape, you are nothing. You will achieve a form only if you look out at the world from yourself through love and actions.<sup>xxvi</sup> But as I said earlier, in an unequal society females are always forced to relate to predetermined patriarchal norms and structures.

PL: So, it seems that something is connected to the choice of content here, and also what is seen as valuable musical knowledge.





### *Relations to patriarchal repertoire and agreements*

Anna: To be good at music in upper secondary was to be a very skilled instrumentalist in specific genres. To improvise over complicated harmonies was good. So, to care about the whole, and to handle many things was a minus. To do both was really exhausting.

Lucy: No, it wasn't cool to be caring, it was cool to be a nerd. And the nerds were expected to play solos. And to like the Beatles and aim to do something beautiful in a simple way, was not appreciated. It should be complicated; 'Wow, the metre is changing'.

Anna: It was also hard for me to really be a member of the group I played with at

that time. They all liked Toto, they were actually very much into Toto, and of course I could play that as well, I liked a lot of music, but it wasn't my favourite. That was that year, my bad luck. I could come with suggestions, but as there were four of them and one of me, they had many more accepted suggestions, so to speak. But, my interest was music from the seventies and blues, so that was to some extent approved, something rather close to jazz.

PL: Is there any comment upon the different choices appearing here?

SdB: This is complicated. If a female human being engages in and likes something that is accepted, as I can imagine a musical style might be, she can be seen as a masculine woman (and by that risk to be unaccepted as a woman). on the other hand, if a female human being goes into another area or style, she can be seen as a feminine, less valued musician. Both ways are, as I see it, influenced by relations to the agreed-upon male values.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Lucy: In my experience the teachers liked those kind of set musical styles as well. You were trained and measured in relation to that all the time. Not only in ensemble lessons.

Anna: I know. Prestige music. With male instrumentalists as role models. And all instrument pupils were boys, other than me.

Lucy: As I said, I always played third or fourth guitar, if I didn't play the trumpet. And it was also always decided beforehand, who should play the solo. There was no talk about taking turns, or that more than one could train the solo, and I didn't dare to say anything.

Anna: I think I was treated like the others, or maybe I claimed that place. Of course, the first comment was always; 'Oh, how fun that you are here and

that you play the electric guitar'. One strange thing though, was that because there were so many guitarists at the school at that time, I got a classical guitar teacher. Also, because I had only had my dad as a previous teacher. So the first years I just had classical guitar lessons. And that was a totally new instrument to me. Interesting and also a bit fun. But strange. One other guy had this teacher, but all the others got electric guitar lessons.

SdB: This is an example of the way intertwinedness of body and mind helps to explain women's oppression. Women do not choose to think about their bodies and bodily processes negatively; rather they are forced to do so as a result of being embedded in a hostile patriarchal society. Through my historical phenomenological investigation,<sup>xxviii</sup> I found that women have been deported from the common world to their immanence. I once expressed it as 'if you showed her the future, she wouldn't have to be established in the present'.<sup>xxix</sup> So, therefore, women must be encouraged to run their own projects.



### *Possible Projects*

Lucy: Strange, that you got a classical guitar teacher; what kind of future does that suggest? Again it's about adapting, and to accept, and even like, the situation. I felt that no-one was really interested in what I wanted to do, what music I liked, or what my goals were.

Anna: I didn't even think about that. I thought everything was fun. Almost.

Lucy: But there were things we didn't do. Like playing guitar in the spare time room, and things just we did do, like arranging the songs, or playing missing instruments. I'm not sure if that was what we really wanted.

Anna: No, and we weren't often able to play the music we liked, or even encouraged to state our musical taste. But we were young also.

SdB: I think the way forward for women is to pursue autonomy through self-affirming work, and be aware of their situation by connecting to other women. Women should not relinquish their moral freedom and passively accept the secondary status offered to them by patriarchal society, even if this is not the easiest route, because it enables women to avoid the struggle implicit in human encounters and forging an authentic existence.<sup>xxx</sup>

Lucy: But you dared to claim your space, Anna.

Anna: Yes, but it had its price, and I also adapted, unconsciously, to the agreed values and expectations. We didn't primarily use our secret practise time to improve the skills we ourselves appreciated. We used it to be able to impress the nerds.

Lucy: To do what you want demands that you know what you want and dare to make mistakes. In public maybe.

Anna: And to feel that it is meaningful and cool. I think that the fact that I was rather alone to continue with a 'male' instrument in upper secondary gave a good feeling; 'This is cool, and I want to be good at it'.

Lucy: Yes, and for me it must have some meaning. Scales and licks didn't have any meaning for me. Instead, if I needed something more complicated to express what I wanted, I learnt it. And lately I have been much more clear when it comes to what I want, and then I can tell people how I want it to sound, and look like, and so on. In school I didn't want to be the leader, I had to in order to succeed; but now I want to lead, and that's a completely different thing. It's on my own terms.

Anna: I know. And even if I knew that I wanted to play solos and so on, I was very pressed, by the reactions. But now I can say: 'Let's do it'.

Lucy: I think you have to believe in yourself, and play without the need of boys' confirmation. It took time for me to decide to have my own band, and decide to record an album. I didn't have that plan, I just wrote some music. But now, as it has started, it is so fun, to decide myself. To mix and produce the music. To decide about the image. Totally different from school. But it is really strange to be written about as a guitarist. I think I still don't define myself as that.

PL: This is fascinating and gives hope. How can this be encouraged earlier Mme de Beauvoir?

SdB: There is no place for waiting for any human being, you must create a place through transcendence, you must have your own projects, where you create your own place through actions. If you wait for other human beings to give you a place, there will be none.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Anna: Oh, I want to have a band as well. I know more what my music is now. I decided to go to a rock programme for two years, and played very much, and then five years of music teacher education. Also a lot of playing. And I've found that older students are more mature when it comes to giving space to others. I write a bit, but there my expectations become a hindrance again. We'll see if I have time when I start work. But something I will do at work is to be an active role model.

SdB: You have to go for what you are interested in and happy about. When I was active as an artist, women were not expected to do expensive art, you should live a bohemian life, and it was agreed upon that literature was a good choice for female artists. Women were also expected to set their own interests aside, to prepare for family life, as I mentioned earlier. So I agree, it is so important that you have your own musical projects.<sup>xxxii</sup> Female human beings should run their own projects, experience freedom. I wanted to open up a space for such freedom to flourish. All situations should be places in which young female human beings can be comfortable, joyous and proud, in their bodies. Where they no longer see themselves through others' eyes, and thus are free to define their bodies for themselves, in the space of freedom. Hence, freedom is not something that human beings have, but a continual movement in relation to others. Freedom widens itself through others' freedom, which implies that the freedom of others must be respected and encouraged.<sup>xxxiii</sup> For example the teacher must respect the students' freedom.

PL: The importance of role models appears clearly, and the question is how female guitar student can be offered contact and interaction with active guitar playing teachers and established musicians. I interpret this as you, Mme de Beauvoir, among other things, underline the role of the teacher, when it comes to encourage girls to actively and in aware ways use their freedom. So, Lucy and Anna do you have any more thoughts about the teacher?

### *The role of the teacher*

Lucy: Yes, I think the teacher is really important, in many ways. For example as a role model.

Anna: I agree, I think that one reason there are few female instrumentalist students, and many female singers, is the lack of role models. I had my dad, in a way, he wanted me or my brother to be a rock musician, but there were no female instrument ensemble teachers at my specialist programme; they worked with choir, and accompanied the singers on piano now and then. So, when they taught ensemble they couldn't give any instrumental or technical advice: 'I don't know how to handle the amplifier'. So, I think, just by being there, I can inspire girls to play ensemble instruments.

Lucy: Yes, the teachers at my programme used to play together each time a new genre was introduced. And even if singing wasn't the first instrument of the female teachers, they sang, and they sang well enough. Only once in three years did I see one of them play the bass. The skilled (male) instrumentalist teachers, though, were admired by the nerds.

Anna: I think, there was really a difference between the sexes when it came to approaches towards ensemble teaching.

PL: This is sad, even if its understandable how this is steered by gender structures, developed over long time. What could be done to change this?

Lucy: I think teachers, both male and female, really have to encourage girls to practise and be nerds. Not put more pressure, but show that it is accepted for girls to be a nerd. Because the 'will' to adapt, to be with friends, is strong. But if there were more female and male nerdy role models it would make a change. I think more girls would think; 'Wow, I also want to be as good as that'. So, I think you are really, really important, Anna.

Anna: I also have to show that I like to play guitar, when I work as a teacher. And that there are lots of possibilities. I also think that it is important that teachers create spaces in which it is okay to make mistakes, for everyone. So we can change the feeling that 'I have to handle everything before I perform'. So it becomes allowable to be heard practising.

SdB: This is really important. Role models have to be aware of the values they mediate through action, not just through existence. It is important that females use their bodies in varied ways, and not just repeat expected actions if conservation of traditional behaviours is to be avoided.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Lucy: I also think it's important that a teacher is curious about what each student wants, to be open to various genres and different ways of showing skill. They have to be more interested in the students' musical styles than in their own.

PL: It seems like that demands openness and awareness<sup>xxxv</sup> and braveness.

Anna: Another thing is the need for the teacher to help the students give each other space. This seems like something that comes naturally when we get older, but I think ensemble students have to learn it earlier, and the teacher



is important in this.

Lucy: Yes, and also to be engaged when it comes to changing roles: that everyone should do everything. I mean, play solos, arrange the music, play fourth guitar, play the bass, etc. I know that is possible, as it functioned well in lower secondary. The teachers think that upper secondary students are adults, but they aren't.

Anna: I agree, but I also think, as we were younger then, and hadn't established instrumental identity, it was easier. So, independent of sex, all instruments were possible to try and play. Gender structures were not so explicit.

Lucy: Alright, then it's important to keep that feeling in upper secondary. Not everyone has been through lower secondary music programmes, where you learn to take turns. It is important that everyone dares to do anything. The teachers have to create space, and engage in group dynamics. Otherwise, it is up to the students to claim their own space; and at this stage they shouldn't need to do that.

Anna: Yes, they have to be more engaged when it comes to who plays what, and when, not only care about practical musical things. The goal should be that everyone can play together on the same grounds. Sometimes it would be useful to divide into single-sex groups. And to explore other role models in music history for example.

Lucy: Yes, so future female guitarists learn to play guitar and run their own projects, instead of learning how to climb back.

Anna: Or instead of learning how to be an adapting leader.

PL: Mme de Beauvoir, do you have any final comments on what Lucy and Anna have said about the teacher's role?

SdB: The female body is both positive and negative, and women are both oppressed and free.<sup>xxxvi</sup> A female body is the site of this ambiguity, for she can use it as a vehicle for her freedom, to transcend her situation, and feel oppressed because of it. There is no essential truth of the matter: it depends upon the extent to which a female human being sees herself as a free subject rather than as the object of society's, or the male, gaze. In female bodily development, each new stage is experienced as traumatic and demarcates her more and more sharply from the opposite sex. As the girl's body matures, society reacts in an increasingly hostile and threatening manner. The process of 'becoming flesh' is the process whereby one comes to experience oneself as a sexual body being exposed to another's gaze. I think this might influence the way female instrumentalists behave and experience themselves in such a situation, influenced by patriarchal norms, as ensemble playing education. And, to come back to the role of the teacher, it becomes incredibly important to be aware of how female students are seen and see themselves, and to offer alternative gazes or mirrors.

PL: In such settings it is interesting to view instruments and music as extensions of the body.<sup>xxxvii</sup> From a situational view it seems that the musical body is shaped by a plethora of perceptions: if we feel bad about it, it becomes a 'bad thing'; if we feel good about it, it becomes a 'good thing'. But the way we think about it is not a matter of free choice unless we live in a society that gives space for that kind of transcendence. So, I suppose there are several music educators listening to this show, and therefore I want to draw some implications for music education from what you have said. As I see it, the teacher is really important, and I suppose that one task for ensemble teachers is to encourage all guitarists' projects in ensemble education through activity, to encourage both transcendence and immanence among

all pupils, on equal grounds.

SdB: Human beings strive, by nature, to extend themselves. That kind of extension is an aware activity, related to immanence, which is a passive repetition. Basically, each human existence is at the same time transcendence and immanence. To be extended it has to be preserved, and to stretch towards the future it has to interact with the past, and when it interact with others, it has to confirm itself to itself. This is a real challenge, as development of equal possibilities for musical learning is not taking place in a vacuum. To transcend is to go beyond given circumstances, conditions, and the situation that a human being exists within. And whose responsibility is it that all students get the possibility to proclaim their individuality, and independence, on safe grounds, in the ensemble education, without losing contact with the past? One prerequisite for possibilities to transcend is the body, one of the factualities of each situation. It is of great importance that music teachers see all students as musical bodies, and not as female and male bodies. The latter is connected with a risk, that hindrances, that are not factual, but created by gender structures, influence what is possible and encouraged in the situation.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

PL: Yes, that seems to be so important, that the students are seen as human beings, independent of sex. Hence, it should be important to create an atmosphere where students don't care about the gaze of others, but take responsibility for their own freedom, as well as for others'. As a basis for that, it is crucial that teachers encourage all pupils to think about their own visions of ensemble playing and ensemble music, to make learning and growth meaningful. It is important that both pupils and ensemble teachers learn to take responsibility for the parts and the whole in ensemble playing so a variety of new role models and equal instrumentalists dwell in the

world of ensemble music. This means that using popular and jazz genres and connected forms and values, in an unreflected way, and step back as a teacher, is not possible, if we are heading towards a more equal music education and society. Thank you so much for being here, Mme de Beauvoir, Lucy and Anna.

SdB, Lucy and Anna: Thank you. A pleasure.

## About the Author

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