



## Decades of Recorded Music for Children: Norwegian Children's Phonograms from World War II to the Present

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**Abstract:** This article presents a study of Norwegian-recorded music for children from World War II to the present, combining a historical perspective with an ethnographic approach. The underlying research has employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches, producing various data sets. The results of the data analyses indicate that the evolution of children's phonograms is characterized by some distinct genre- and style-related development features. This article describes and interprets such features in light of concepts and theories of children's culture and music sociology. It also elaborates on the emergence of a music market aimed at children, with an emphasis on phonograms. The association with the popular music industry enables an apparent contradiction, addressed in this article, between pedagogical and commercial considerations and outcomes.

**Keywords:** children's culture, children's phonograms, popular music, music sociology

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### Introduction

In research and policy-making guidelines concerning *children's culture*, the term is often defined as "culture for, with and by children" (Mouritsen, 2002). The theme of this article is children's music media, specifically phonograms for children, which might indicate that the main focus is on culture produced by adults for children to consume. To a certain extent this is true, but we would nevertheless underscore that it is not possible to examine children's culture independently, or separated from the rest of the culture. Thus, we examine Norwegian children's phonograms from different angles by combining a historical perspective with an ethnographic approach to provide a comprehensive overview of the

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evolution of Norwegian-recorded music for children from World War II to the present. Herein, we build on different sets of data, making use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This presentation elaborates on the emergence of a cultural market aimed at children, with an emphasis on phonograms.<sup>3</sup> In narratives about music for children, the ability to meet the demand for both meaning and pleasure seems to be a recurring leitmotif (Dahl, 1999; Tønnessen, 2000; see also Fiske, 1987). Hence, throughout history, contradictions have been repeatedly alleged between pedagogical and commercial considerations and outcomes. This issue is addressed in the subsequent section. The evolution of recorded music for children is otherwise characterized by some distinct genre- and style-related development features. This article describes and interprets such features in light of a few concepts obtained from theories of children's culture and music sociology. These concepts are elaborated below.

## **Children's Media Music in Light of Theories of Childhood and Culture**

### ***Music, Upbringing, and the Media***

The idea that different cultural characteristics and expressions are or should be in place for different age groups and generations is neither ahistorical nor universal. The concept of *paideia*, conceived in Greek Antiquity, refers to the upbringing, teaching, learning, and non-material cultural heritage that presupposes a distinction between children and adults in activities and knowledge level as well as the knowledge and norms passed from generation to generation. This tradition has been broken several times in Western history. For example, it was of little significance to medieval culture. According to Ariès (1962), childhood was reinvented in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries due to a new emphasis on education. This resulted in a growing separation between adult' and children's everyday lives. However—to make a long story short—what is new in the period we now examine, is that culture is mediated in new ways and that youth culture occurs as a distinct phenomenon. Both tendencies lead to new music markets for children and adolescents.

Seen from a pedagogical point of view, the rise of the mass media, which largely lies outside of educational influence and control, could represent a challenge requiring countermeasures from parents, teachers, and public institutions. For example, NRK's first radio show for preschool children, *Barnetimen for de minste* [The Children's Hour for the Smallest] (Moen et al., 1947–2014), was initiated by renowned child psychologist Åse Gruda Skard, and the initial program presenters were all preschool teachers. A similar approach was seen in the TV series *Lekstue* (the Norwegian version of BBC's *Play School*) (Sæther & Høyen, 1967–1980). The songs from the series consisted of counting songs, letter songs, songs about seasons and the days of the week, songs about emotions and various sides of life, and so forth. Apart from the deliberate inclusion of a broad range of musical genres, which can be taken as a musical aim, the music in the pedagogical TV series was primarily crafted to enhance learning in areas other than music. A selection of songs was released on records and cassettes as well. Educators and psychologists have had far less influence in the music industry in general, however. Phonograms for children are therefore often interpreted in accordance with a presumed contradiction between what is perceived as *the well-intentioned educators' culture* and *the commercial mass media culture* (see Birkeland, 1978; Dyndahl, 1986), albeit in different guises throughout the period investigated in this

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<sup>3</sup> Smith (2011) describes how the phonograph industry used spoken word records to develop a phonogram market for children in the United States in 1940–1970. He also discusses some of the arguments presented in this article, but since Smith's book is focused on spoken word genres, situated exclusively in a North American context, no more references to it will be made here.

article. In the early days, exponents of traditional children's songs would normally be considered well-intentioned educators, while the upcoming rock and pop music would be regarded as rather dubious, not least because it was closely related to what many perceived as a menacing new teenage lifestyle.

A similar antagonism was continued and further reinforced by cultural pessimist Neil Postman, who argued in his book *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1982) that there was no longer such a thing as traditional children's songs in the media. He saw this as a sign of both childhood juvenilization and infantilization of adulthood in the modern Western world, meaning that children cross into the adult world and adults cross into the child world. On one level, the otherwise meritorious research on children's own culture (i.e., the culture *of* children), inspired by ethnography and anthropology, has also led to a hermeneutics of suspicion in the interpretation of culture *for* children, and particularly of media products aimed at children.<sup>4</sup> However, there are several recent examples of research putting the child at the center, while also elucidating children's extensive dealings with modern music media (e.g., Bickford, 2011, 2017; Vestad, 2013). Nevertheless, in a pedagogical sense, the contradiction between education and entertainment still seems to be emerging as a valid way to grasp and categorize different aspects of children's musical culture, for example in contemporary textbooks on children's culture (e.g., Jæger & Torgersen, 2016).

### ***Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism and the Pop-Rockization of Musical Cultures***

Regev's (2013) concept of aesthetic cosmopolitanism presented a considerably more optimistic view of the proliferation of media and popular culture than some of the views examined above. From the perspective of late modernity, he discussed the global *pop-rockization* of music in terms of the exponential growth of pop-rock styles and the hybrid tendency within pop-rock music to merge and fuse with other styles and genres. He also noted the general trend among musicians and producers to adopt and implement creative practices associated with pop-rock, making pop-rock aesthetics a dominant global force in today's music. Building on Hebdige's (1990) statement that, in late modernity, "everybody is more or less cosmopolitan" (p. 20), Regev developed the notion of aesthetic cosmopolitanism. This notion analyzes pop-rock as a prime instance in the sense that this extensive, diversified field of popular music forms a common ground on which different social groupings around the world share aesthetic perceptions, expressive forms, and cultural practices. Hence, he refers to processes of the sonic embodiment of pop-rock styles and vocabularies.

While Regev's focus is naturally centered on the time-space dimension of aesthetic cosmopolitanism, similar perspectives may also be very productive when applied to other sites of cultural studies. In this context, it appears reasonable to apply an analogous mind-set to intergenerational relationships. There might be as much diversification and variation along this axis as within the global diversities described in detail by Regev. However, another quite distinct common ground has been established today for children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly in terms of popular music perceptions, expressions, and references. This does not mean it no longer makes sense to distinguish between music for different age groups or that particular music types no longer exist for children. In this context, it means there is no longer a one-to-one relationship between musical genre/style and age/generation. Thus, Corsaro (2005) argued that children always take part in two cultures—children's and adults'—and that these are intricately interwoven in different ways. Based on Regev's concepts, one might argue

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. that Mouritsen (2002) and Rasmussen (2001) referred to the fairly common characteristics of media producers, such as *the bad guys* and *child molesters*, respectively.

that pop-rock constitutes the warp of today's intergenerational fabric—or, rather, that it forms the current cosmopolitan *lingua franca*. Moreover, this state of affairs has come about, as Rasmussen (2001) described, due to the technologization of children's culture in relation to the media's presence in everyday life. Another factor the author discussed was the de-traditionalization and differentiation of childhood in the sense that relationships between children and adults have become more flexible and dynamic than before and that they operate in many different venues. Some such venues include homes, institutions, leisure activities, and the media—and also, as we shall investigate in more detail, our recent history.

## Children's Phonograms Through the Decades

### *The Early Years (1945–1959)—Traditional Children's Songs and Jazz*

With regard to children, Norway was not really a media society until after World War II. One important reason for the new post-war situation was that the public service broadcaster, the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK), reestablished the pre-war family show *Barnetimen* [The Children's Hour] (Johnson et al., 1946–2010). This show was a weekly broadcast dedicated to children, for whom listening to the radio show every Saturday soon became a national ritual (Frønes, 1994). Another important aspect was that in 1947, NRK started daily radio services for preschool children—the abovementioned *Barnetimen for de Minste*—in which some popular artists of the day such as multi-artist Thorbjørn Egner, author-singer-songwriter Alf Prøysen, and children's book author Anne-Cath. Vestly gradually became hosts. However, it is important to note that a good deal of their popularity was founded on their appearances in radio broadcasts for children. Furthermore, toward the end of the 1940s, for the first time, gramophone recordings aimed at a Norwegian child audience began to emerge. Among these were Alf Prøysen's children's songs as well as humorous skits and comedy sketches made by the cabaret artists of the era. The children's music market continued to evolve during the 1950s, with a growing number of phonogram releases, primarily within what is perceived as the genre of traditional children's songs.<sup>5</sup>

A shift toward contemporary popular music<sup>6</sup> took place when the first major Norwegian child star entered the stage. In 1955, just before rock and roll hit Norway, eight-year-old Lille Grethe [Little Grethe (Nilsen), later known as Grethe Kausland] released her first record, gaining huge popularity. The single *Teddybjørnen min/Cowboyhelten* [My Teddy Bear/The Cowboy Hero] sold over 100,000 copies and became a big radio hit. At the age of twelve, Lille Grethe had released ten records and starred in five movies. It is remarkable, however, that even though she was a child star, her musical style was much more influenced by the popular music of her parents' generation, namely jazz, than by the upcoming rock and pop music. Eggum, Ose, and Steen (2005) asserted that, despite her girl's voice, Lille Grethe

<sup>5</sup> There will in general be a large degree of intersubjective consensus within a particular culture about what constitutes a traditional children's song. In the Norwegian context, it may be represented by famous and beloved authors and songwriters such as Margrethe Munthe, Thorbjørn Egner, and Alf Prøysen. The songs should also be adapted to the children's level of perception and ability to sing it themselves. Reimers (1983) argued that a song must *speak to* children to be a children's song, while Ruud (1983) simply described such songs as "simple harmonic and rhythmic music in a major key" (p. 75, our translation). The musical scores for these kinds of children's phonograms would normally be traditional and straightforward in the sense that they consist of acoustic instruments with a subordinate function in relation to the singing (see Dyndahl, 1986, p. 79ff).

<sup>6</sup> In this context, we include jazz in the concept of popular music, although this might be seen as a somewhat controversial stance (see DeVeaux, 1999).

was swinging like a grown-up jazz singer. This may be seen as an early example of Regev's (2013) aesthetic cosmopolitanism that "similar bodily experiences of music among generations of devoted fans and casual listeners around the world" (p. 26) become individually personified—in this case, as African-American stylistic idioms being embodied in the voice of a young Norwegian girl. Thus, perhaps one should consider the child stars' seemingly feigned adult gestures not as simply mimicking grown-ups but rather as aesthetic and cultural efforts to materialize new sonic textures and vocabularies. Regev referred to Latour (2005) and his actor-network theory in relation to sonic materiality, and especially to the notion of *actants*,<sup>7</sup> or objects that mediate "new ways of experiencing the body, new styles of consciousness and modes of embodiment, new designs of the public musical sphere" (Regev, 2013, p. 177). The concepts of sonic materiality and actants apply to recording, production, and playback technologies, in addition to the sound of musical instruments, including the processed voice. The latter phenomenon is probably more accentuated in later popular music productions, but it is nevertheless necessary for the new sonic vocabularies to be digested and integrated by many members of the particular cultural community before the actants' functions can be fully realized. Regarding Norwegian phonograms for children, the process of introducing new sonic vocabularies started with Lille Grethe.

Lille Grethe's recordings can be characterized as mainstream or swing jazz, and she was accompanied by experienced jazz musicians. Regev underscored that for the collective cultural transformation indicated by aesthetic cosmopolitanism to come about, musical genre and style are important pivot points. It is therefore essential to clarify how we understand these categories. However, it may be difficult to make clear-cut distinctions between musical genres and styles. A widespread belief is that genre is a more comprehensive classification than style. Thus, genre normally refers to a shared tradition or set of conventions, which may consist of several subgenres that in turn may be comprised of numerous styles, contents, and musical techniques. Regarding the concept of musical style, Stefani (1987) explained this concept as "a blend of technical features, a way of forming objects or events; but it is at the same time a trace in music of agents and processes and contexts of production" (p. 13). Consequently, a musical style partly consists of sonic components, while simultaneously being inevitably situated within a discursive genre community. Hence, as regards both genre and style, Walser (1993) argued that "genre boundaries are not solid or clear; they are conceptual sites of struggles over the meanings and prestige of social signs" (p. 4). Furthermore, Walser stated that "the details of a genre and its very presence or absence among various social groups can reveal much about the constitutive features of a society" (p. 29).<sup>8</sup> Thus, it seems clear that there are close links between musical genre, style, and aesthetic cosmopolitanism. Such relations will be further discussed in the following paragraphs.

### ***The Formative Period (1960–1985)—Pop Music Enters the Stage***

The above genre and stylistic ties to jazz were broken with the next generation of Norwegian child stars. Even though the rising talent Wenche Myhre signed her first recording contract in 1960 at age 13, she soon appeared to be more of a teen idol and pop artist than a child star. Her early recording story tells

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<sup>7</sup> Latour has borrowed the notion of actants from Greimas (1983), who referred to integral structural elements upon which narratives such as storytelling revolve.

<sup>8</sup> See Dyndahl, Karlsen, Nielsen, and Skårberg (2016) for a more detailed discussion of musical genre and style. In addition, it would be interesting to discuss whether the category *children's music* belongs to genre and/or style or if it might be more fruitful to describe children's music as a discourse (as ideas about children's music) on a general level. It is our intention to further this discussion in the future.

how the child artists from then on tended toward pop music. This also applies to Anita Hegerland, debuting as a recording artist at the age of eight in 1969. Much like Lille Grethe and Wenche Myhre, Anita Hegerland personified the child stars' close relation to contemporary vocal conventions—this time, however, with a distinct singing style typical for the Scandinavian middle-of-the-road pop of the 1960s. In addition to the aforementioned processes described by terms from the actor-network theory, the sonic corporeality being materialized in her early recordings provides for references to the *geno-song*, or materiality, of vocal bodily communication. These references are highlighted in Barthes' seminal essay "The Grain of the Voice" (1977). In this essay, Barthes describes the *geno-song* as the space where significations germinate from the materiality of the singing, forming a signifying play with the embodied sound-signifiers of the—in this case, recorded—song. The *grain* is "the body in the voice as it sings" (Barthes, 1977, p. 188), through which the listener attunes herself or himself to listen to her/his own relation to the body of the person singing. Barthes designates this relation as an erotic one. We do not want to underestimate children's sexuality and the eroticization of the child, including in relation to popular culture (Kehily & Montgomery, 2009). However, within the scope of this article, it is perhaps just as reasonable to emphasize what Regev (2013) considers both individual and overarching sonic embodied experiences. Children who are set to sing on recordings often express what Barthes describes as a grainless voice, which is not really steeped in the body—sounding "all air, from the lungs" (Barthes, 1977, p. 183). Yet child stars give vocal body to "the sounds of pain, lust, ecstasy, fear, what one might call inarticulate articulacy: the sounds, for example, of tears and laughter" (Frith, 1996, p. 192), as these modes of expression are embodied in the popular music tradition. In terms of aesthetic cosmopolitanism, Anita Hegerland's records also proved to have appeal far beyond Norway's borders. Hence, she soon became an international child star, ending up as the best-selling Norwegian female solo artist of all time. In this context, it is also worth noting that her debut was an album release (Hegerland, 1969). During the late 1960s, the LP record or album gradually replaced the single, making it the most common format for recorded music between the early 1970s and the early 2000s. The change also affected the children's music market significantly. What is more, from the 1970s, the affordable compact cassette became an important and widespread format, not least for children's music. One reason for its popularity was that the cassette was particularly easy to operate for the very youngest.

Notwithstanding the format they are recorded in, we have complete data for album releases of Norwegian children's music from 1960 to 1985, showing, among other things, the development and distribution of genre and style categories during this period (Dyndahl, 1986). This predominantly quantitative material, consisting of 368 releases in all, demonstrates, on the one hand, the tremendous growth in the supply of phonograms for children during these years. In the period from 1960 to 1969, a total of 21 albums were released in Norway. From 1970 to 1974, there were 80; from 1975 to 1979, there were 86; and from 1980 to 1985, there were 181 releases. In other words, one can argue that the children's music market increased in parallel with the growth in prosperity in Norwegian society. On the other hand, the material also shows that substantial genre and stylistic diversification occurred during the period under consideration. We have already mentioned the traditional children's songs as well as jazz and pop music, the latter genres being introduced by child stars. When it comes to the overall distribution of various genres throughout the period, the material shows some clear trends, especially regarding the three most predominant categories:

*Traditional children's songs* (see footnote 3) was the dominant category in the 1960s, representing over 75% of all released titles. However, throughout the 1970s, the percentage dropped steadily, ending

up at only 16% of the released productions in the early 1980s. *Pop-rock*<sup>9</sup> exhibits the opposite trend. In the 1960s, this music represented a modest share of 4.8% of all releases (i.e., Anita Hegerland's abovementioned album) but increased steadily from 1970 to reach 33.1% in the early 1980s. At that time, it became the most prevalent category of all. In addition, an increasing variety of pop and rock subgenres and styles appeared in productions aimed at children during the period. *Records and cassettes with mainly verbal content* (e.g., stemming from radio, television, film, or theatre) show the same tendency through the 1960s and 1970s but end slightly lower than pop-rock in the early 1980s, at 28.2%.<sup>10</sup>

Three-fourths of all released titles in the period are represented by the three previously mentioned genre categories. Within the remaining quarter, the following categories arrived at an average distribution for the entire period as follows: *Western classical and contemporary art music* constituted 1.9% of all titles; *acoustic folk music* (inspired mostly by the Anglo-American folk and singer-songwriter tradition)<sup>11</sup> accounted for 5.2%; *jazz music* represented 3%; *music from other countries and cultures*<sup>12</sup> totaled 1.4%; and *children's singing games, riddles and rhymes, etc.* amounted to 3.5%. The final category, showing a steady upward trend from its first entrance in 1973, is *religious records and cassettes for children*—religious herein exclusively implying Christianity. Such phonograms were becoming increasingly prevalent and represented 10.5% of the total number of released titles in the early 1980s. In musical terms, this tendency is comparable to the material in general, meaning that the genre evolution gradually shifted its center of gravity from traditional children's music to pop-rock.

In many ways, this period may be said to represent the formative stage of Norwegian children's phonograms. The important diversification of genres from mainly traditional children's songs into the variety of genres that has survived nearly unchanged occurred during this period. The only remaining genre—according to what Tagg (1982) labels as an axiomatic triangle consisting of art, traditional, and popular music—was *Norwegian traditional and folk music for children*, which arrived in 1985 but too late in the year to be included in the above data. However, from then on, there was a gradual and increasing occurrence of releases belonging to this category as well. Consequently, recorded music for children reached a level of diversity and variety that provided the full musical diet required by the norms prescribed by the Norwegian culture at this time.

The period also includes the development from the first attempts to introduce pop-rock into children's music until this music became the dominant genre of children's phonograms. This phenomenon occurred within the career paths of individual artists, too. For instance, the most successful artists of Norwegian children's music in the period, the duo Knutsen og Ludvigsen, were acoustic folk troubadours when they first appeared in *Barnetimen for de Minste* in the 1970s, but eventually they

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<sup>9</sup> In accordance with Regev's (2013) terminology, we use *pop-rock* as an overarching category for all subgenres and styles that can be interpreted as belonging to this genre complex, despite the genre's sophisticated interpretation in many music studies.

<sup>10</sup> Due to the digital media evolution that occurred later, a share of this category (defined by sonic materials and contents other than the musical ones) ended up becoming part of the literary genre *audio books*.

<sup>11</sup> This is an example of how the designation of genres and styles may change over the years. Later, the folk genre would most likely have been categorized as a subgenre within pop-rock, similar to pop, rock, country, funk, hip-hop, and so on. However, in this period, acoustic folk music for children was still so closely associated with the pre-electric period of Bob Dylan and other folk singers that it would have seemed incorrect to categorize it as pop-rock.

<sup>12</sup> In retrospect, this category exhibits certain ethnocentric and *Othering* tendencies because, for example, the Sámi music was included in it. After this period, we see that Sámi music for children was included in several other genre categories, but here the majority lies within pop-rock.

became pop artists (see Dyndahl, 1986, p. 190ff). Their position is also interesting because they crossed the boundaries between music for children and music for adults to a greater extent than most other artists did. Last but not least, this period represents the start of what seems to be an ever-expanding variety of pop-rock subgenres and styles aimed at the child audience. What happened in the following period was that, in short, the main trends continued. Some of them were reinforced, and some were met with certain counter-tendencies.

### ***Continuity, Consolidation, and Change (1986–2016)—Popular Music Diversification***

To examine the development in this period, we used several kinds of sources (i.e., bibliographic and phonographic archives and indexes, websites, media players, and streaming services). However, our overview is, first and foremost, based on Vestad's (2004, 2013) qualitative and ethnographic data. We obtained this data through interviews and fieldwork among preschool children's families and caretakers, examining the use and function of children's phonograms. In general, these sets of data show that on a discursive level, both traditional children's songs and diversity within the pop-rock genre are now accepted as legitimate categories of children's music, which means their presence is not questioned—and sometimes not even specified.<sup>13</sup>

However, some parental informants reported that it was no longer easy to obtain recordings of traditional children's songs. They complained that the music industry seemed to give priority to pop and rock at the expense of other productions. Several style idioms of pop-rock music have also been used to annex and subjugate almost every other genre, including traditional children's songs. Consequently, this genre has often been "rewrapped" into pop-rock's domain.<sup>14</sup> Some of the most beloved Norwegian children's music artists have constantly moved back and forth in the borderland between these genres. The best example is probably singer Maj Britt Andersen, in close collaboration with musician and composer Geir Holmsen and lyricist Trond Brønne. Conversely, traditional children's songs have been passed on in the guise of a revival of time-honored values and notions of authenticity, exemplified by album series such as *Alle Våre Barnesanger* [All Our Children's Songs] (Dalbakk, 2005–2006) and *Våre beste barnesanger* [Our Best Children's Songs] (Sørensen, 1990–1998). Something similar can be seen with classical music, where, in particular, Norwegian actress Minken Fosheim fronted a variety of titles presenting composers such as Bach (Fosheim, 2006) and Grieg (Fosheim, 1997), accentuating what must be described as traditional notions of *The Man and His Work*. Contemporary art music for children, however, was not widespread during this period, although there were occasional exceptions, such as the album release *UNOF—Minuetto Libero* (2013), consisting of Norwegian works for children and youth orchestra.

The pop-rock genre has become even more dominant in the past three decades, with an increasing number of subgenres and styles applied. Newer subgenres such as hip-hop have arrived on releases for children—for example, as a spin-off product of the TV series *AF1 (Alle for En)* (Halvorsen & Sarnes, 2008), first shown on NRK in 2008. At the same time, some subgenres have found it more difficult to establish themselves within a legitimate children's culture. Heavy rock was one of the few genres that some of the interviewed parents and kindergarten staff explicitly described as inappropriate for children,

<sup>13</sup> For a further discussion of children's caretakers' everyday legitimation of children's music, see Vestad and Dyndahl (2017) in this issue.

<sup>14</sup> An early example of this is the album *Rocken Bom og Andre frå Songboka Mi* [Rocken Bom and Others from My Songbook], released as early as 1983, which includes traditional songs for young children, rearranged and recorded with the help of prominent members of the Norwegian pop-rock and studio elite from that time.



although some of them also embraced this kind of music, arguing that children's music in general tended to be too gentle and boring. Regardless of motive, such music has seeped into children's culture anyway. An interesting Nordic example of exchanges between children's culture and the general media culture is represented by the Finnish heavy metal group Lordi, who won the Eurovision Song Contest in 2006 with the song "Hard Rock Hallelujah" (Lordi, 2006). Lordi is known for its band members wearing monster masks and using horror elements on stage and in music videos. The band soon became popular among children—so popular, in fact, that its lead singer, Mr. Lordi (Tomi Petteri Putaansuu), complained, "Now all the magazines in Finland are printing Lordi masks for children" (Bilefsky, 2006). Notwithstanding, in 2009, Lordi's popularity inspired other Finnish musicians to form the power metal band Hevisaurus, aimed specifically at a child audience. Similar to Lordi, the musicians are masked, but in this context they wear dinosaur and dragon costumes. Hevisaurus has released seven albums, which have sold over 170,000 copies in Finland. The band also won two Grammys for the Best Music for Children in Finland and Argentina. Today there are Hungarian, Spanish, and Swedish versions of the band concept (Hutchcraft, 2015). Generally speaking, in today's media world, recordings for children cover most genres and subgenres that exist in the music market. Although the children's music market is less clearly divided than the market as a whole into particular artist and audience segments, there are at least traces and hints of most stylistic expressions present.

It has often been difficult to draw a precise line between children's culture and youth culture.<sup>15</sup> For instance, since the 1990s, compilation album series such as *Hits for Kids* (Askersrud, 1998–2016) have been offering top chart pop music for a young audience. Throughout the history of pop-rock music, some artists have aimed at both children and teenagers, but this situation seems to have intensified in recent decades. Some examples are international artists such as Aqua, Justin Bieber, and Isac Elliot, not to mention Norwegian performers such as The Blacksheeps and Marcus & Martinus. Additionally, from 2006, the NRK, in cooperation with other Nordic public broadcasters, has contributed to incorporating children's culture in a popular musical framework, as is the case with the songwriter/song contests MGP Junior Nordic and the Junior Eurovision Song Contest. Another interesting aspect of the interactions between child and adult culture is that, in recent years, creating children's music has attracted so-called credible musicians normally associated with alternative or underground scenes far from the field of children's culture. Perhaps the most reputable example of this is the band Meg og Kammeraten Min [Me and My Buddy], which was formed by singer-songwriter and producer Martin Hagfors along with Håkon Gebhardt, former drummer of the psychedelic rock band Motorpsycho and banjo player in the International Tussler Society. These artists' credibility, stemming from other (in this case, hipster-oriented pop-rock) styles, might be one of the reasons their releases for children have received much more attention from music critics than children's phonograms usually do. Thus, it is not so much about the differences between popular music and other forms of music as it is about distinctions and struggles between subgenres and styles taking place within the field of pop-rock itself.

In addition to the genre-related aspects, there are other interesting trends that affect Norwegian recordings for children. Pedagogically oriented music, or music and lyrics designed to educate children in knowledge and/or morals and ethics, holds a strong position in children's music. This will be further discussed elsewhere in this issue,<sup>16</sup> but some significant examples of this trend are phonogram releases stemming from TV series for children such as *Blekkulf* (Bergström, Sundby, Golimo, & Jacobsen, 2012),

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<sup>15</sup> Bergman (2003) noticed that 13-year-olds, although they are teenagers, listen to children's music. This break with the productions' intended audience is important and should be an object for further research. However, this investigation and the associated discussion fall outside the scope of this article.

<sup>16</sup> See Vestad and Dyndahl (2017) in this issue.

focusing on environmental protection, which was broadcast by the NRK from 1991 to 1995, and *Sesam Stasjon* (the Norwegian co-production of the Children Television Workshop's series *Sesame Street*) (Skeie, Gran, & Høyen, 1991–2000). Other examples include *Jul i Blåfjell* [Christmas in Blue Mountain] (Hagen & Ringen, 1991) and *Jul på Månetoppen* [Christmas on Moon Hill] (Hagen & Ringen, 1999–2002), also broadcast by the NRK. Along with environmental issues and questions of tolerance and diversity in a multicultural society, these series address topics such as longing and belonging in terms of adoption, divorce, and death. On the other hand, there are also examples of what might be called an anti-pedagogical attitude in Norwegian recordings for children. These embrace less politically correct music than the above, allowing for *poop, pee, and fart* humor and nonsensical entertainment. However, the contradiction between pedagogical and anti-pedagogical perspectives constitutes a consistent dichotomy in the culture *for* and *with* children (though possibly not as much in the culture *of* children).

Another trend that has strengthened considerably in the recent period is the tendency to divide the children's music market gender-wise. In general, producing otherwise identical items that are equipped with specific color markers for boys and girls has been a profitable way of reaping great rewards from the youngest consumers. In the music market it may seem nearby to associate such phenomena with the most commercial music, i.e. popular music. However, the ways children's music has been gendered go beyond the specific genres involved. There are examples of gender-specific music from several categories. One example that exceeds the phonogram as a medium is the multinational *Barbie's Animated Films*, in which the iconic (in this case, computer-animated) Barbie doll stars in several video films. These films include, among others, *Barbie in the Nutcracker* (Hurley, Durchein, & McCaron, 2001) and *Barbie of Swan Lake* (Hurley, Wilder, & Hudnut, 2003), both of which are partially based on Tchaikovsky's ballet scores.

This leads to the final condition worth mentioning here, which is that children's phonograms have always been deeply involved in multimedia connections with other modes of expression (e.g., children's radio shows, television series, and Disney movies). Some specific examples have also been mentioned above. Moreover, the tendencies toward intermediality and multimodality have expanded, not least regarding the use of global video-sharing websites such as YouTube, the involvement in game music, and so on. In addition, the medial development of phonogram production, distribution, and consumption is striking. Beyond the changing formats we have already mentioned, production has changed its character due to the apparent democratization of recording technology. In addition, distribution is now characterized by the flexibility afforded by digital downloads and streaming, and consumption has become even more mobile and independent of location than before. The consequence is that taking part in the mediated children's culture means something quite different today than gathering around the radio each Saturday at five o'clock as was done 70 years ago.<sup>17</sup>

## Closing Issues

As described in this seven-decade review of Norwegian phonograms for children, several features of the evolution strongly resemble aesthetic cosmopolitanism, especially in terms of pop-rockization. The question is whether this convergence is an expression of children's culture being entirely subsumed by society's overall structures or one of childhood operating according to certain assumptions and in certain ways within and beyond these structures. To answer such a comprehensive question, more extensive research is required, but from an ethnomusicological point of view, Nettle (2010) argued that understanding the ways a culture transmits itself—and thereby how its new generations are socialized

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<sup>17</sup> See also Vestad (2015) in another issue of this journal.

into the values, norms, and social dynamics that form essential cultural prerequisites for historical and social development—is crucial for understanding the culture in mind. He therefore emphasizes the importance of studying the ways people are encultured into a particular musical culture. To become a part of society and find one's position in it, children must be socialized into its societal structures; at the same time, they need to learn which areas of aesthetic and cultural experience are socially available and malleable. The twofold malleability of both individuals and culture, however, shows that these issues exist in the tension between socialization and subjectification (Biesta, 2014).

Moreover, these perspectives challenge the distinction between culture for, with, and by children, just as they raise questions around whether adult socialization might also depend to some extent on children's culture, and not just vice versa. However, if so, this is not considered culturally decadent in the way Postman (1982) presents it in *The Disappearance of Childhood*. Rather, it is an example of how both adults and children always take part in different-age cultures and that these are intricately interwoven in different ways—in this case, made possible by the particular aesthetic cosmopolitanism that tends to exceed the generational boundaries. Late modern childhood—within which intergenerational music and cultures obviously represent distinctive signifying practices—provides a crucial venue for these important pieces of work, both personally and socially. And this is both playful and deadly serious.

## Author presentation

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