

Summary

In the autumn of 1934 programmes dedicated to teaching of singing were introduced in the Swedish School Broadcasting. In the following decades, right up to the 1960s, these "singsongs" were the most popular of the programmes broadcast by this official institution. In 1955, when interest was at its peak, they were followed by approximately 800,000 school children, i.e. 85–90 per cent of all Swedish elementary school pupils.

This study gives an account of the development of these "School Broadcasting Singsongs" and demonstrates how they both qualitatively and quantitatively reflected the changes simultaneously occurring in Swedish musical and – in a broader perspective – social life. The study is a part of the interdisciplinary research project "Välfärdsstat, medier och modernisering" [Welfare state, media and modernisation], dealing with the history of educational programmes on Swedish radio and television. The project looks into the pedagogical efforts of these media and how they have influenced the development of the Swedish welfare state and the modernisation process. These issues also determined this study. Thus, the study examines how the development of the Swedish School Broadcasting's singing programmes in the years 1934/35–1968/69 can be related to the concepts of welfare state and modernisation. The school year 1968/69 was chosen as the terminal point for this study as the Swedish School Broadcasting in 1969 stopped broadcasting specific teaching of singing programmes, replacing them with programmes where music in general (singing, instrumental music, theory of music etc.) was taught.

The aim of the study is to answer three questions:

– In what way are "the School Broadcasting's singsongs" linked to the process of national integration, manifested in Sweden from the early part of the 20th century?

– In what way do "the School Broadcasting's singsongs" reflect the Swedish welfare state's ambition to assimilate groups with different cultural backgrounds?

– In what way are "the School Broadcasting's singsongs" related to the modernisation project, the main driving force in the transformation of Swedish society from the 1920s?

The empirical material, collected from the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation's archives of programmes and documents, demonstrates how the singing programmes were actually designed. It is supplemented with interviews with school radio teachers and producers active in the 1950s and 1960s. Another important source is the printed programmes containing lyrics and music to all the songs taught and broadcast. From a survey of all these programmes, published 1934/35–1968/69, a database was established for the 1,680 songs presented by the Swedish School Broadcasting. For each song information on the composer, the author of the text, the words of the first verse, the broadcasting date and the teacher was collected.

Right from the start in 1934 the singsongs were a popular feature of the Swedish School Broadcasting's activities. Teachers usually found it difficult to teach the compulsory subject of "singing". The broadcast singsongs proved very helpful to them both as guidance to their teaching and in their choice of songs. Up to 1945 about 10 programmes per school year were broadcast. The number of programmes per year gradually increased to about 80 by 1965/66. At first the programmes were not age specific. The increase of the number of programmes is principally explained by the gradual introduction of different programmes for different age groups. By 1965/66 every form, from the first to the fifth form, had its own series of programmes, and programmes for the senior level of the *grundskola* and for the upper secondary school were broadcast as well.

With the growing number of broadcast singsongs came a widening of the song repertoire. Up to 1945 it consisted mainly of "adult songs". The most frequent categories were travelling songs, patriotic songs, folk ballads and religious songs (principally hymns). After the war there was a pronounced broadening of the repertoire. Songs were taken from the repertoire of children's songs that had grown steadily since the turn of the century, from composers like Alice Tegnér and Felix Körling. The school radio teachers also actively searched for suitable songs in a new repertoire of children's songs composed by, among others, Lennart Hellsing, Knut Brodin and Gunnel Linde. Distinguishing features of this repertoire are lyrics with a modern touch as to the words and subjects while the melodies are often drawn from the common repertoire of European folk ballads. The school radio teachers also encouraged composers of art music to write new children's songs. From the 1960s there is an ambition to use songs for the purpose of training a specific musical element, for example pitch control or experience of rhythm.

During the whole period of 1945–1968/69 folk ballads is an important category in the Swedish School Broadcasting's repertoire. Generally, before the war only Swedish, Finland-Swedish and German folk ballads were sung on the radio, the German ones always having been translated into Swedish. In the post-war years the repertoire was gradually widened to include songs from many other languages. Songs from Norway and Denmark, in Swedish translation or in the original, became more common and were soon followed by English, French, Spanish and Italian folk ballads. In the 1950s Negro spirituals and east European and Russian ballads were included in the repertoire as well. From the 1960s just about the whole world's treasure of folk ballads is represented in the Swedish School Broadcasting's singsongs.

A large proportion (about 20 per cent) of the songs presented by the School Broadcasting up to the 1970s was taken directly from the art music tradition. One third (33 per cent) could be classified as belonging to a tradition "in between", i.e. art music in a revised and simplified version. This is evident in the practice of composers of

children's songs, such as Alice Tegnér and Felix Körling, or ballad writers, like Carl Michael Bellman and Evert Taube. Almost half of the repertoire (just over 45 per cent) had its origins in the popular oral tradition. A very small proportion (scarcely one per cent) was taken from the field of popular music.

The absence of popular music in the repertoire reflects a deliberate attitude of the school radio teachers to keep the repertoire "clean" from the commercially successful song genres which after the war attracted an ever-increasing audience, not least among young people. To representatives of the School Broadcasting, and teachers in general, these genres – popular songs, jazz, blues and rock – were musically and culturally inferior. Every effort should be made to keep them out of the repertoire taught at school.

As early as in the 1930s the Swedish School Broadcasting's singing lessons became an important part of the field of musical education in Sweden. Many school radio teachers played vital roles in Swedish musical life. Through their programmes they could not only propagate more modern training methods but also influence the views on the status of singing and music as subjects in the curriculum. From the 1940s the School Broadcasting's teachers disseminated their knowledge of teaching of singing and music all over the country through the so called "Tonika Do method", which was replaced in the mid-1960s with a method inspired by Carl Orff. In the former method many elements were based on contemporary research on child psychology, for instance the importance of play for the children's emotional, motoric and mental development. The Orff method focused more on the need for systematics and progressiveness in children's musical development. Another important aspect of the Orff method was the emphasis on music's own sign system – musical notation – as something to be acquired by every child at an early age. Musical literacy should not be an élite privilege. Thus, the method corresponded well with the radical efforts at democratisation made in Sweden in the 1960s. The new systematically and progressively arranged teaching media produced by the School Broadcasting at this time reflect the technological views on education gaining ground in the 1960s.

Other teachers employed by the Swedish School Broadcasting had a considerable influence on how the subject of music came to be designed in the new 1969 curriculum for the nine-year compulsory school. Using their experiences in the School Broadcasting and the contacts thereby established with teachers all over the country, two school radio teachers, Bengt Olof Engström and Ingemar Gabriellsson, worked out a syllabus for music which remained in force for several years to come. Through their efforts the subject of music was widened to contain training in all forms of music; school children should not only learn to sing but also to play an instrument, improvise, and compose, and they should also acquire a knowledge on the theory of music (notation, harmony etc.) and the history of music. While such a widened education of music had been a (formal) fact since the 1955 curriculum for the new compulsory school, it was only with the work of Gabriellsson and Engström that this reform came into existence. It was also thanks to Gabriellsson and Engström that the outmoded traditional songs lost their compulsory position in the curriculum. In 1942 the Swedish School Broadcasting had actively supported the introduction of this repertoire through a governmental ordinance, and now it contributed to its disappearance.

The great interest in the School Broadcasting's activities demonstrated by teachers all over the country can be explained partly by the inability of the teachers' training colleges to fully satisfy the requirements for a relevant teaching of singing and music, partly by the importance attached to singing in Swedish society at this time. Children who didn't learn to sing at school were excluded from many situations where singing played a vital role. They were also denied the opportunity to develop their emotional and creative capacities in an important aesthetic field.

In chapter 4 of the study the development of secular and sacred singing in Swedish society is discussed. With new currents gaining ground in child psychology from the 1940s there was a wider understanding of how early practising of music and singing could contribute to the development of personality. But teaching of singing was

also important in preparing children for an adult life where singing still played a vital role. This chapter demonstrates how a Swedish community singing movement, inspired by German models, grew strong in the 1930s and later on, during the war years, became a unifying force with the values of the Swedish Nation and Swedish nature in focus. The compulsory teaching of a number of well-known traditional songs mentioned above was a direct effect of this movement. The chapter also contains a brief survey of the development of organisations and associations in which singing in unison played a vital role, for instance the Swedish Church, the Free Churches, the Labour Movement, the temperance movement, the scout movement and other youth organisations. Church attendance, both in the Swedish Church and in the Free Churches, continued to be high for the most part of the period. In the 1960s attendance fell, but obviously this didn't reduce the teachers' interest in teaching singing. In the Labour Movement and the temperance movement, however, singing in unison lost a good deal of its appeal as early as the 1950s.

From the 1950s interest in choir singing grew all over the country. One explanation why Sweden today is one of the most outstanding "choir countries" in Europe might be the good foundation for teaching of singing created by the Swedish educational system in the years after the Second World War. Obviously the Swedish School Broadcasting can take part of the credit thanks to its large-scale achievements in the sphere of singsongs and musical programmes in the 1950s and 1960s.

In the final chapter of the study there is a discussion of the School Broadcasting's influence on the processes of national unification, cultural integration and modernisation in Sweden in the years 1935-1970. The singing programmes had a unifying function in smoothing the most conspicuous dialectal peculiarities, and disseminating a repertoire of songs to be performed in the same way throughout the country. As to cultural integration the School Broadcasting's singing and music programmes paved the way for the idea that all children in the educational system should develop their

musical capacities in a broad sense. Before the 1955 school reform pupils in elementary school were only taught *singing*, while pupils in secondary grammar school and upper secondary school were taught *music*, which included singing but also theory of music, history of music, and furthermore individual lessons in instrumental playing if desired. In the curriculum for the new comprehensive school/"grundskola" the subject was called music, the aim being that it should give the same all-round musical competence as the one offered by the old elite schools. In the years before 1955 the School Broadcasting facilitated this widening by supplementing the singing programmes with more general music programmes designed for elementary school. After 1955 this tendency of widening the subject was even more pronounced in the School Broadcasting's activities. One important conclusion drawn in this final chapter is that the Swedish School Broadcasting in certain respects played a decisive role in changing the status of singing/music in the educational system from a subject working as a distinct class marker to a subject offering all pupils the opportunity of developing their musical gifts.

On many levels the development of the Swedish School Broadcasting's teaching of singing in the 35 years studied here reflects the modernisation of the Swedish society during this period. A case in point is the growing professionalisation of singing and music as a school subject, involving the development of a more autonomous field of music pedagogy. The Swedish School Broadcasting's teachers play a vital role in this process. Another case of modernisation is the shifting emphasis in the School Broadcasting's activities from teaching a distinct cultural heritage in the field of singing – the country's treasury of songs – to training skills and developing musicality. A closer look at the song repertoire propagated by the School Broadcasting demonstrates the winds of modernisation. At first mostly Swedish songs (patriotic songs, folk ballads, local songs) are taught, but after the war the School Broadcasting's programmes introduced new songs, partly adapted to different age groups, partly reflecting other, non-Swedish, musical traditions. Opening up to

distant musical cultures in Latin America, Eastern Asia and Africa in the 1960s, the absorption in Swedish history stemming from the 1930s came to a definite halt.

The Swedish School Broadcasting's singsongs also demonstrate the simultaneous existence of forces trying to put a brake on modernisation. While containing the signs of modernisation mentioned above, the song repertoire could be considered such a conservative force. The content analysis of the 1,680 songs included in this repertoire show that the occupations and working environments represented in the songs belong to times long past. The songs give an anachronistic picture of gender roles, family life and housing environment. Furthermore, the idyllic tone characterising a large part of the songs provides opportunities for escaping from the noisy and conflict-ridden aspects typical to modernisation projects. A final restorative force was the teachers' unyielding resistance to the modern rock and pop music that the listeners to the School Broadcasting opened their ears to from the 1950s.