



From combating to supporting pop music

The paradox of municipal music
education in Sweden 1940 to 2000

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At the end of the 20th century, Sweden was the third biggest exporter of pop music in the world



The success was explained as a result of the development of municipal music schools during the last 50 years

But – those schools were once started in order to combat popular music!

How come they now qualified as the main promoters of pop music?



My aim is to explain this paradox. I will do it along two lines of argumentation:

- Municipal music schools have indeed changed **from** being institutions that first of all supported classical art music **to** becoming schools with very tolerant views on popular genres.
- This change is interesting per se. I will give you some answers to how the change came about.
- There are also other explanations to the success of Swedish pop music on the export market.
- The reasons to why they were left out and "forgotten" in the governmental report that draw attention to the music export from Sweden is part of the problem/paradox.

My results rely on an all-inclusive study of music education in a middle-sized Swedish town – Växjö – during the period 1945–2009

Start of music schools in the 1940s

- Were set up with the aim to teach young people to appreciate more valuable music (i.e. Classical) than the popular music of the entertainment industry
- Musicians/music teachers from institutions with traditional music practices (gymnasiums, the state church, military bands, teacher's training colleges etc) were hired as teachers

A new cultural policy was introduced by the Socialdemocrats from around 1975.

Two important goals:

- Bring [“good”] culture to the broad masses
- Reduce or prevent the negative effects of the market economy

When implemented the new policy meant:

- An expansion of the municipal music schools
- An increase in the education of music teachers with four new schools added to the two schools that existed in 1975

The recruitment of students to the educational schools for music teachers had to change in order to fill the new places. And there existed already a "pool" of musical knowledge:

Since the 1940s private firms had arranged music courses on instruments used in popular genres: accordions, guitars, percussion, keyboard etc.



The largest firm – Hagström's music – ran a music school all over the country 1945–1983





Lagstrom DRAGSPEL



Hagström's started to cooperate with several of the associations connected to the popular adult education movement in the 1950s. Study circles arranged by the latter had state funding.

Study circles in guitar, keyboard, brass instruments and percussion gave elementary tuition to play an instrument.



In the study circles it was easy to meet like-minded who wished to form a band.



The adult education associations have since the 1980s provided well equipped studios where bands can rehearse and learn how to compose, mix and record music.

Sweden's success as an exporter of pop music can be explained by



Sahara Hotnights



- The growth of municipal music schools from 1945 that for several reasons adopted to more popular music genres from around 1980.
- The existence of private commercial music school's 1945–1980 that specialised in popular music.
- The cooperation between commercial music firms and the adult education movement from the 1980s and on.