

Practicing What We Preach: Elise Hall (1853–1924) and a More Diverse Saxophone Performance Curriculum

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Introduction: Why Hall, and Why Hall Now?

In the domain of music history, the incorporation of diversity is well underway, though the process is by no means universal, or complete. This article is written from the standpoint of Norwegian higher music education, where there is generally good support for diversity initiatives both from institutions and from higher-education policy, and from within broader Nordic and European contexts.¹ Music history textbooks published in the last decade usually include some white women and composers of color, although far from at a level of equality with their white male counterparts, either in number or in depth of consideration.² A century after the death, in 1924, of the renowned

1. For an overview of the important differences between musicology and music theory in Europe and North America, see Thomas Husted Kirkegaard and Mikkel Vad, “Introduction: European Music Analysis and the Politics of Identity,” in “European Music Analysis and the Politics of Identity,” ed. Thomas Husted Kirkegaard and Mikkel Vad, special issue, *Danish Musicology Online* (2022): 3–17, https://www.danishmusicologyonline.dk/arkiv/arkiv_dmo/dmo_saernummer_2022/dmo_saernummer_2022_european_music_analysis_01.pdf. The entire special issue contains examples from Europe in the light of Philip Ewell’s 2019 keynote speech at the 42nd Annual Meeting of the Society for Music Theory in Columbus, Ohio, November 7–10, and his 2020 article, “Music Theory and the White Racial Frame,” *Music Theory Online: A Journal of the Society for Music Theory* 26, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.30535/mto.26.2.4>. Each of these sources should now be read in the light of Philip Ewell, *On Music Theory and Making Music More Welcoming for Everyone* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2023), esp. chapter 4, “On Volume 12 of the *Journal of Schenkerian Studies*,” which details Ewell’s own response to the titular journal issue published against him and to the open letter of support for the same journal issue that was signed by a number of European scholars.

2. The textbook used in our institution is Erlend Hovland, ed., *Vestens musikkhistorie fra 1600 til vår tid (Western Music History from 1600 to our Time)* (Oslo: Cappellan Damm, 2013). The textbook incorporates some women composers and nonwhite musicians. For examples in English, see (among others) the *Cambridge Companions* series, which includes the

woman saxophonist and patron Elise Hall, the standard music history database in English, Oxford Music Online, still omits an entry for Hall, despite having included several of her contemporaries (e.g., Florence Price, Alberta Hunter, and Mary Lou Williams, along with other women patrons such as Isabella d'Este and members of the Medici family). Likewise, there is an ongoing trend to enhance racial, gender, and other forms of diversity in high-school exam repertoires, mainstream classical music radio, sources like Wikipedia, and of course professional performances.³ What all of these instances have in common, however, is that they insert diversity into an existing framework, without destabilizing that framework. As Philip Ewell has shown for music analysis, this insertion of diversity into the existing status quo is the white racial frame in action.⁴ This is a striking reminder of Audre Lorde's famous words, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."⁵

separate *Cambridge Companion to Women in Music Since 1900*, ed. Laura Hamer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021). For a fuller discussion of women in music history textbooks and the influence of this presence on students, see Lilli Mittner, Lise Karin Meling, and Kate Maxwell, "Arts-Based Pathways for Sustainable Transformation Towards a More Equal World," *Nordic Journal of Art and Research* 12, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.7577/ar.5159>; for a discussion of the very similar situation in philosophy, see Fredrik Nilsen, "Canon," in *Gender, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Academia: A Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Transformation*, ed. Melina Duarte, Katrin Losleben, and Kjersti Flørtoft (London: Routledge, 2023), 51–61.

3. See, for example, Nadia Khomami, "A-level music to include female composers after student's campaign," *The Guardian*, December 16, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/dec/16/a-level-music-female-composers-students-campaign-jessy-mccabe-edexcel>. Despite numerous initiatives such as wiki-editathons and International Women's Day campaigns, Wikipedia is still overwhelmingly male especially in terms of contributors but also in terms of contents. An example from Norway is Hilde Synnøve Blix, who has spearheaded numerous initiatives to include more women in and writing for Wikipedia since 2017, and in 2020 was awarded the Norsk Komponistforenings likestillingspris (Norwegian Composer Society's Equality Prize). See "Komponistforenings likestillingspris 2020 går til Hilde Synnøve Blix" ("The Norwegian Composer Society's Equality Prize awarded to Hilde Synnøve Blix"), Norsk Komponistforening, December 31, 2020, <https://komponist.no/aktuelt/komponistforeningens-likestillingspris-2020-gar-til-hilde-synnove-blix>. A final example is that international recognition schemes such as the Recording Academy of the United States's GRAMMY Awards still overwhelmingly favor men, particularly white men, despite some recent progress. See Stacy L. Smith, Katherine Pieper, Karla Hernandez, and Sam Wheeler, "Inclusion in the Recording Studio? Gender & Race/Ethnicity of Artists, Songwriters, and Producers across 1,200 Popular Songs from 2012 to 2023," Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, University of Southern California, January 2024, <https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inclusion-recording-studio-20240130.pdf>.

4. Ewell, "Music Theory and the White Racial Frame." Ewell cites Joe Feagin, *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-framing*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013). See also Ewell's book-length study, *On Music Theory*.

5. Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House (Comments at 'The Personal and the Political' Panel [Second Sex Conference, October 29, 1979])," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984), 110–13.

Hall's widespread absence from the student performance curriculum, which Jonas's project (described below) sought to counteract, relates to such diversity work in that her omission prompts us to redefine what we value in a performer of classical saxophone music (or of any music), and what inclusion and diversity mean in practice for students. That the Hall repertoire is not as technically demanding as most of the standard saxophone repertoire for advanced students is one of the (mostly unspoken) reasons why many of the works Hall both performed and commissioned do not feature in repertoire lists for auditions or qualifying exams, for example.⁶ Yet as many of us who have played or heard them can attest, the works are at least as demanding of the performers' musicality and expression as the more technically driven works commonly prioritized in the student performance repertoire.

Hall, who was born in Paris to a family who lived in Boston where she spent most of her life, died nearly a decade before a leading American orchestra first performed a work composed by a Black woman: Florence Price's Symphony no. 1 in E minor.⁷ We should not necessarily judge Hall or any historical figure by today's standards and expectations, but in order to fully appreciate Hall's considerable achievements we have to recognize her privilege and the context in which she lived, just as we (as white, middle-class, twenty-first-century authors) recognize ours.⁸ Hall was a wealthy white woman who lived and operated under segregation; commissioned music from white male composers at a time when "the West" as a concept was being concretized; and moved in elite musical circles in which people of color are noticeable by virtue of their absence from commissions, performances, and institutions.

In this article, we examine the performance and teaching implications of including Hall and the repertoire she commissioned within the modern conservatory by combining approaches to diversity work in music history and student performance-based research—specifically a student performance project pursued by Jonas that showcased works commissioned by Hall. We also contextualize these implications in the light of ongoing diversity efforts at the institution in which the project was undertaken and where we are based—the Academy of Music at UiT The Arctic University of Norway—and within the

6. For more, see Phillip Nones, "Musicians Louis-Philippe Bonin, Janz Castelo and Nikki Chooi talk about Florent Schmitt's moody, musing *Légende* (1918) and the three versions the composer created featuring solo saxophone, viola and violin," *Florent Schmitt* (blog), March 14, 2020, <https://florentschmitt.com/2020/03/14/musicians-louis-philippe-bonin-janz-castelo-and-nikki-chooi-talk-about-florent-schmitts-moody-musing-legende-1918-and-the-three-versions-the-composer-created-featuring-solo-saxophone-vio/>.

7. See Samantha Ege, "Chicago, the 'City We Love to Call Home!': Intersectionality, Narrativity, and Locale in the Music of Florence Beatrice Price and Theodora Sturkow Ryder," *American Music* 39, no. 1 (Spring 2021): 1–40.

8. For more on the necessity of accountability and the harmfulness of avoidance tactics, see Ewell, *On Music Theory*, 13, 45–46.

wider Norwegian context. To consider the extent to which broadening the curriculum in this way can have a meaningful impact on music education, we ask in particular: are we simply wallpapering over the problems of “the canon” and repertoires of “dead white men” by including prominent figures such as Hall? Or is this rather a step toward a meaningful diversification?

This article uses a mixed-methods approach to combine artistic-research methods with research into the diversification and decolonization of advanced conservatory education, particularly conservatory performance and the teaching of music history, through the case study of an extracurricular student performance project on Hall’s saxophone commissions. As a final-year BA student performer and a tenured full professor of music history at UiT, we weave together and place equal weight on performance practice and musicological methods of working and writing in order to highlight the importance of students, their reflections, and their everyday experiences in and as a result of curriculum changes that are geared toward increasing diversity and setting in motion decolonization in both performance repertoire and the classroom.⁹ Thus there are two voices writing here, with two different professional

9. This is part of a broader program of research and curricular redesign at our institution and beyond in Norway and Europe. Peer-reviewed results so far include Kate Maxwell and Sabina Fosse Hansen, “Decolonizing Music History in Scandinavia: Reflections from the Chalkface,” in “European Music Analysis and the Politics of Identity,” ed. Thomas Husted Kirkegaard and Mikkel Vad, special issue, *Danish Musicology Online* (2022): 107–14, https://www.danishmusicologyonline.dk/arkiv/arkiv_dmo/dmo_saer Nummer_2022/dmo_saer Nummer_2022_european_music_analysis_06.pdf; Mittner, Meling, and Maxwell, “Arts-Based Pathways”; Kate Maxwell, “Excellence,” in *Gender, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Academia: A Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Transformation*, ed. Melina Duarte, Katrin Losleben, and Kjersti Flørtoft (London: Routledge, 2023), 108–17; and Lise Karin Meling, Petter Frost Fadnes, and Lilli Mittner, “Decolonizing Higher Education: Rationales and Implementations from the Subject of Music History,” in *MusPed: Research: Vol. 6. Explorative Perspectives in Music and Education*, ed. Ola Buan Øien, Solveig Salthammer Kolaas, Michael Francis Duch, and Elin Angelo (Oslo: Nordic Open Access Scholarly Publishing, 2023), 171–98. In terms of artistic methodologies, Jonas is part of the Erasmus+ Voices of Women project led by Bettina Smith and coordinated by the University of Stavanger. For more, see “Voices of Women (VOW),” University of Stavanger, updated March 25, 2024, <https://www.uis.no/en/research/voices-of-women-vow/>. See also Lilli Mittner and Anne-Lise Sollid, “Voices of Women: Et kunstnerisk prosjekt finansiert av EU i programmet Erasmus+ 2022–2024” (“An EU Erasmus+-financed Artistic Project”), *Podium* 15 (2023): 32–35, <https://uit.no/Content/801718/cache=1674821968000/Podium%20%2315%20web.pdf>. The theoretical foundation for the academic work here is built on that of Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); as well as her *Feminist Killjoys* (blog), updated July 10, 2024, feministkilljoys.com. Research also draws on Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016); and relies heavily on the scholarship by Philip Ewell cited above. Ewell makes a direct appeal to students to make their voices heard, a call to which we respond in this article by giving the student perspective and artistic reflections an important place. See Ewell, *On Music Theory*, 265.

backgrounds and ways of working. Rather than subsume the artistic voice into a standard academic voice, which we feel would result in a downgrading of the performance side of the work, we have at two points in the article chosen to highlight the voice of the performer. Readers will notice changes of tone in the two reflection sections of this article; while unconventional, we found this shift necessary in order to fully integrate the student voice and the student performance perspective into the narrative. It is also inevitable because the performance-based work was carried out by an undergraduate student who is still in training and is here presenting his first independent performance project.¹⁰ This inclusion of the student voice as equal to that of a more experienced researcher (who is not a professional performer) is not only in keeping with our ambition of “doing diversity,” it is also a vital part of what is known as “learning for sustainable transformation”: an integrated approach to learning and teaching that challenges the reproduction of discriminatory power relations that exist in academia and beyond (here, the professor-student hierarchy, and the hierarchy, at least in Norway, between “academic” and “artistic” research).¹¹ The inclusion of the student voice here and elsewhere is thus a necessary part of the process of “decolonizing” the curriculum (use of this term in this context

10. As another example of a music performance project that sets artistic research and academic research on an equal footing, though without involving students, see Hilde Synnøve Blix and Geir Davidsen, “Divergent voices—Different dialogues in the artistic research project *Wikiphonium*,” *Research Catalogue*, 2015, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/56371/56372>.

11. On “doing diversity,” see Sara Ahmed and Elaine Swan, “Doing Diversity,” *Policy Futures in Education* 4, no. 2 (June 2016): 96–100, <https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2006.4.2.96>. For an overview of learning for sustainable transformation, see Katrin Losleben, Filip Maric, and Rikke Gürgens Gjørum, “Learning for Sustainable Transformation,” in *Gender, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Academia: A Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Transformation*, ed. Melina Duarte, Katrin Losleben, and Kjersti Flørtoft (London: Routledge, 2023), 261–70. The Norwegian segregation between “academic research” and “artistic research” (“kunstnerisk utviklingsarbeid,” here translated as “artistic research,” which is also the phrase used by the signatories of the the “Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research,” 2020, <https://aec-music.eu/publication/vienna-declaration-on-artistic-research/>) can be seen, for example, in the fact that it has only recently, since 2018, become possible to obtain a PhD in artistic research in Norway, and artistic research is not funded by the Norwegian Research Council but rather through a separate institution. See Direktoratet for internasjonalisering og kvalitetsutvikling i høgare utdanning (Directorate for Internationalization and Quality in Higher Education), “Den norske modellen” (“The Norwegian Model”), evaluation report, Oslo: The Norwegian Artistic Research Programme, 2017, <https://diku.no/rapporter/den-norske-modellen>. In addition, artistic research outputs (artworks, recordings, written reflections, and so on, along with textbooks and critical editions in all subject areas) are not classified as “academic” research outputs, and therefore do not receive the same professional recognition and (financial) reward. See “Reporting Instructions (NVI),” Current Research Information System in Norway (Cristin), updated September 18, 2023, <https://www.cristin.no/english/resources/reporting-instructions/>.

will be addressed more fully in the third section of this article).¹² Likewise, a student project that focuses on Hall troubles hierarchies yet further in that it places this patron and performer on an equal, if not greater, footing in relation to the music that she commissioned. Yet this is not unproblematic. Hall herself benefitted hugely from the colonial societal structures of her time, and came from a family that took pride in their role as “colonists” in the United States.¹³ She moved in elite, white society, and all of the music she commissioned came from white male composers. Any work on Hall must therefore embrace what Donna Haraway calls “staying with the trouble”: an acceptance of discomfort; a loss of (white) innocence; and an openness to new ways of thinking.¹⁴

The methodology employed for the student performance project discussed in this article was based on Bjørn Kruse’s *Den tenkende kunstner* (*The Thinking Artist*).¹⁵ Adopting a multidisciplinary lens, the book explores different facets of the creative process with a particular focus on reflection across the arts. For Jonas’s project, Kruse’s thoughts on drama and improvisation are particularly relevant, especially what Kruse frames as the drama of the moment in improvisation, and how this can be learned from and refined through reflection.¹⁶ This is a theme that returns in the reflections presented here, which as we will see pertain to both improvisatory work and the performance of notated concert music (i.e., the Hall repertoire). It also merits noting that the performance project incorporated compositional work, for instance a set of variations that Jonas composed on the folk tune “The Blue Bells of Scotland.” This intertwining not only of different aspects of the (student) performative self, but also of different parts of the curriculum (performance, composition, improvisation,

12. Other recent peer-reviewed texts in music that feature the student voice as coauthor(s) in diversity work include Travis D. Stimeling and Kayla Tokar, “Narratives of Musical Resilience and the Perpetuation of Whiteness in the Music History Classroom,” in “Decolonization,” special issue, this *Journal* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 20–38, <http://www.ams-net.org/ojs/index.php/jmhp/article/view/312>; Maxwell and Fosse Hansen, “Decolonizing Music History in Scandinavia”; and Kate Maxwell, Sabina Fosse Hansen, Jonas Eskeland, and Giovanna Alves dos Santos, “Studentar som endringsagenter” (“Students as Agents of Change”), *Podium* 15 (2023): 28–31, <https://uit.no/Content/801718/cache=1674821968000/Podium%20%2315%20web.pdf>.

13. See Adrienne Honnold, “Exhuming Elise: Rehabilitating Reputations,” in *The Legacy of Elise Hall: Contemporary Perspectives on Gender and the Saxophone*, ed. Kurt Bertels and Adrienne Honnold (Leuven: University of Leuven Press, 2024), 81–102, esp. 88.

14. Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016). Haraway’s term *tentacular thinking* is also appropriate here for how Jonas entwined Hall into his project: it is the broad idea of thinking *with* different elements (e.g., people, places, flora, fauna, things) “in generative joy, terror, and collective thinking,” Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 31.

15. Bjørn Kruse, *Den tenkende kunstner. Komposisjon og dramaturgi som prosess og metode* (*The Thinking Artist: Composition and Drama as Process and Method*) (Oslo: Fagbokforlaget, 2011).

16. See Kruse, *Den tenkende kunstner*, 47–50.

interpretation, music history), formed the basis of the performance project. What can an advanced student learn from the Hall repertoire? How can the process of engaging this repertoire be integrated into their broader learning and development as an independent artist? How can Hall's music be presented to different audiences? The public performances that resulted from the project, which will be discussed in more detail in the reflection sections of the article, were presented in both conventional institutional settings at the conservatory where we work (e.g., masterclasses and recitals), and for broader audiences (e.g., performances for wider university events and a lecture-recital at a conference). A public orchestral performance was also planned but was unfortunately canceled due to an insurmountable practical hurdle.

Five sections follow this introduction. First, Jonas shares reflections on his background as a saxophonist and on his first serious engagements with, and questioning of, the standard performance repertoire within a Norwegian context. We then explore some of the literature on diversity, decolonization, "excellence," and "the canon" as it pertains to the topic at hand, along with other theoretical aspects on which this article's research was based; we offer these reflections from a Norwegian (and European) perspective. Next, we provide more reflections from Jonas focused on the music commissioned by Hall and that he performed during senior recitals and other events. In the discussion section, we consider the challenges faced, the limits of what we can do, what we have learned from this work, and its implications for future developments. In our conclusion, we reflect on Sara Ahmed and Elaine Swan's calls for "living" and "doing diversity."¹⁷

Opening Reflections from Jonas: His Background as a Saxophone Performance Student and Questioning the Repertoire

I played saxophone in school bands and community music school, with some youthful shyness leading my social and musical curiosity toward the internet. Like many interests cultivated through introversion and over a computer, I became immersed in online culture relating to the saxophone and its music. I must have seen and heard—or at least tried to see and hear—every video on YouTube about the saxophone. I could look up recordings, and even scroll through videos of the pieces I played that incorporate scores. Even before I had a devoted teacher to guide me through the history of the saxophone, I was accumulating all the saxophone knowledge I could via online sources. I was curious to learn more about the pieces I played and to listen to others who played them;

17. See Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*; and Ahmed and Swan, "Doing Diversity."

I became fascinated by renowned saxophonists' versions of famous works due to their high standards of technique and levels of artistry.

A high number of views on a YouTube video does not guarantee its quality or importance, but for an unendingly interested audience member it is nevertheless a tempting indicator. However, at some lucky moment before complete saturation in digital entertainment and collapse of concentration and meaning, I began pursuing more formal knowledge. I wanted to find out about certain pieces played by, for example, Arno Bornkamp of the Conversatorium van Amsterdam and Claude Delangle of the Conservatoire national supérieur de musique et de danse de Paris, who are the personal heroes of many a teenage saxophonist. What were these pieces they were playing, which, with their French titles, lush orchestration, and mysterious character, sounded so different from the music I was used to playing as a teenager in Norway?

In reading the introductions and program notes for recordings and videos, I began to notice the occasional mention of a certain name. My first impressions were that Elise Hall was typically referenced for her gender, but occasionally mentioned as a saxophonist as well. I had to dig much further into web articles, blog posts, and books to sate my almost unending curiosity about her (Hall's Wikipedia article, often a first port of call for students and many others, during my teenage years and still at the time of writing, consists of three lines and the names of five men).¹⁸ But these specks of knowledge and opinions soon started to weave together and form a story in my mind—a story of the most interesting kind, where every new fact raises more questions.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit when I was in my second year of studies at UiT The Arctic University of Norway. During that time, I grew very fond of the

18. Some examples from my early investigations include James Bennett II, "The Incredible Story of Elise Hall's Saxophone and Debussy's Trainwreck Commission," New York Public Radio, WQXR Editorial, August 31, 2017, <https://www.wqxr.org/story/incredible-story-elise-hall-saxophone-and-debussys-trainwreck-commission/>; Kurt Bertels, "World's First Concerto for Saxophone Found after 117 Years," Classical Performer, February 13, 2019, <https://classicalperformer.com/winds/woodwinds/saxophone/world-first-concerto-for-saxophone-found-after-117-years/>; Harry R. Gee, *Saxophone Soloists and their Music, 1844–1896: An Annotated Bibliography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Paul Harvey, *Saxophone*, 2nd ed. (London: Kahn and Averill, 1998); Wally Horwood, *Adolphe Sax 1814–1894: His Life and Legacy* (Baldock, UK: Egon, 1983); Richard Ingham, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Kenneth Radnofsky, "Some Thoughts on Elise Hall and Musical Life in Boston," 1978, available online, https://www.kenradnofsky.com/perform/longy_3_12_00.html; Lee Patrick, ed., *The Raschèr Reader* (Fredonia, NY: Daniel A. Reed Library, The State University of New York at Fredonia, 2014); Eric Bromberger. "Debussy 'Rhapsodie for Orchestra and Saxophone,'" program notes for October 5, 2007, recital with the San Jose State University Orchestra, Dale Wolford (website), uploaded January 10, 2007, <http://dalewolford.com/page5/files/cee278dce9f18972fa7047b9267da9b5-3.html>. The Wikipedia entry in English is "Elise Hall (musician)," updated November 6, 2023, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elise_Hall_\(musician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elise_Hall_(musician)).

conservatory library. After recently finishing military band service with orders, drills, and stomping, it seemed to be a treasure trove of sheet music just waiting to be explored. These pure intentions led me to the shelves of what music was already there, but also to the request form for ordering what one would want available on those shelves. Here, with incredible gratitude for the privilege, I spent the pen ink generously. Over the years I have ordered and played much music that was new to me, but always kept an interest in music written for the saxophone when it was first invented. After all, the library was for the old things, and the internet was for the new—or at least that was the way I saw it.

The concertos of Lars-Erik Larsson, Alexander Glazunov, Jacques Ibert, and Frank Martin, popular works which saxophonists and audiences alike often consider to be monumental, were of course there, and had to be played, not only for my own pleasure and desire to challenge myself during the lockdowns, but also because they are part of the standard performance repertoire that I was expected to master during my studies. These are works that require an advanced level of technical and musical ability, but it was nice with some social distancing and enforced free time to dive deeply into the big works. With the new publication by Schott, I was lucky that a quintet of students and teachers joined me in performing the *Hymne sacré* that Hector Berlioz adapted for a sextet of Adolphe Sax's instruments in December 1843. This is believed to be the very first music written for saxophone.¹⁹ This felt like a milestone in my studies of the earliest available saxophone repertoire, but what would come next?

As research has shown, for students studying in peripheral regions or outside of large cities, the power of definitions and the choices made in light of those definitions can hugely impact small communities.²⁰ We are all connected to the internet, but studying and partaking in a performative art form is massively impacted by the traditional definitions of value decided at distant institutions. However, I moved to Tromsø to study an international trade, music, with the saxophone as my main instrument, and the classical repertoire and interpretive performing arts as my career goal. And I have felt confident that I could trust my teacher and community to nurture a traditional skill applicable

19. For a discussion of Berlioz and the saxophone, including the *Hymne sacré*, see Stephen Cottrell, *The Saxophone* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 104. See also Patrick, ed., *The Raschèr Reader*, 41, 150; Jean-Marie Londeix, *150 Years of Music for Saxophone: Bibliographical Index of Music and Educational Literature for the Saxophone, 1844–1994 (150 ans de musique pour saxophone: répertoire général des oeuvres et des ouvrages d'enseignement pour le saxophone, 1844–1994)*, ed. Bruce Ronkin (Cherry Hill, NJ: Roncorp, 1994), vi; and Horwood, *Adolphe Sax*, 167.

20. For a fuller discussion of this matter, see Paul Benneworth, Kate Maxwell, and David Charles, "Measuring the Effects of the Social Rural University Campus," *Research Evaluation* 3, no. 4 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1093/reseval/rvac027>.

for cooperating with the common understanding of the practical principles that art lives by around the world.

“The canon” must always be up for factual and reflective criticism, and as I mentioned above, the Hall repertoire (that is, the works she commissioned for saxophone and orchestra, most of which she also performed) was not part of the music I was exposed to in my studies before I took that initiative myself. I am therefore glad to be reflecting upon my experiences and studies of the major works (such as the concertos mentioned above), composers, and performers of historical note, confident that I can criticize the problematic tendencies that a somewhat insulated community can perpetuate if not called out for it. I have enjoyed the freedom to choose whether to adhere to the canon or not, and to (re)define it for myself (with guidance from teachers and colleagues willing to discuss it). This is a freedom I can hardly imagine my study and practice without, but I speak from a privileged position of willfully pursuing it, and from the privileged position of having—or being given—the resources to do so. Also, I recognize that I have not always had, and might not always have, this freedom.

But in that I define the canon as somewhat abstract—I am certain the definition changes in every practice room, concert hall, and conservatory around the world—I am confident that members of the saxophone community can elevate each other by respecting the individual’s choice to adhere to the loosely agreed upon canon, change it, or abandon it, as students, musicians, artists, and teachers. However, I must argue for the richness of a shared history as instrumentalists, for we do have in common that we can teach each other what we know. And I trust in what I know of my dear instrument’s history, because the people who have helped create it have engaging stories that travel the globe and inspire further. The stories we share help define us, not just for who we are, but for who we can be in the future.

In my opinion, it is therefore time to include Elise Hall in the canon in order to cement the historical repertoire foundation as the shared heritage of saxophonists worldwide. There was music written and played for the saxophone before her, but if my experience is typical of that of a saxophone performance student, then the neglect of her accomplishments in the long and messy development of the saxophone’s possibilities for inclusivity and progress has gone on for far too long. History is important to all of us, and to the people who are yet to be born, and this history includes the history we have not yet told. Even if the next generation chooses to abandon the canon and history, let it be because that history was entirely available to them, and disseminated broadly.

Literature Review and Terminology: Decolonization, the Student Voice, Excellence, Music History, and the Canon in Relation to Elise Hall

The equal inclusion of the student voice in this article is part of the authors' broader commitment to diversity and decolonization. Decolonization as a concept goes beyond that of diversity. Whereas diversity is about increasing and expanding representation of different groups within existing structures, decolonization is more concerned with rebuilding those structures. As Ali Meghji, Seetha Tan, and Laura Wain put it,

Part of the reason why decolonizing the curriculum is so different to merely diversifying is because decolonizing knowledge involves a radical critique of epistemology. . . . This is because decolonizing involves a fundamental engagement with how colonialism and colonality shape the practices of knowledge production, the classification of knowledge, and the hierarchies and schemes by which knowledge is valued.²¹

It is diversity work to include Elise Hall and the music she commissioned in the curricula for saxophone performance or music history, whereas it is decolonization work to consider how the very structures of the curricula that we teach reflect a hierarchy of knowledge. In this case, Great (White, Male) Western Composers and their Works are at the top of the hierarchy due to colonial efforts to impose European/Western culture on colonized peoples (in Norway, for example, this includes the Norwegianization of the Sámi people that continued into living memory). Were we to overwrite Jonas's voice in this article, we would be perpetuating a "colonialist" epistemological hierarchy that sets the experience of the student below that of the established researcher. Student involvement is essential to decolonizing the curriculum: not only are students the curriculum's end users; they are also dependent on their learning for their future careers. While the need to meet industry expectations, such as having certain standard works (e.g., those often used in audition contexts) in a student's performance repertoire, can sometimes be a barrier to decolonization efforts, "decolonizing knowledge must be understood as an ongoing process rather than something that has a finite end."²² Decolonization is thus not something that one institution can achieve on its own, nor is it something that can happen quickly. Involving students and their interests in the process

21. Ali Meghji, Seetha Tan, and Laura Wain, "Demystifying the 'Decolonizing' and 'Diversity' Slippage: Reflections from Sociology," in *Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization: Practical Tools for Improving Teaching, Research, and Scholarship*, ed. Abby Day, Lois Lee, Dave S. P. Thomas, and James Spickard (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2022), 32.

22. Meghji, Tan, and Wain, 44. For reflections on student resistance to decolonization, see Maxwell and Fosse Hansen, "Decolonizing Music History in Scandinavia."

not only complicates epistemological hierarchies and sets an example for future generations; as Dave S. P. Thomas has shown, it also incorporates what he calls an “assets-based approach” to the teacher-student dynamic that challenges “normalized epistemic racism/sexism.” He writes,

An assets-based approach to staff-student relations promotes capacity and connectedness and builds social capital through the use of students’ pre-existing knowledge, skills, and lived experiences. . . . The assets-based approach serves to redress the legacy of epistemic racism/sexism and the apartheid in knowledge by legitimising the “outsider” perspective. . . . This has also proven to be an essential strategy in the co-creation of knowledge by enabling a shared vision and understanding of positions of inclusion and exclusion through the employment of liminal perspectives. Therefore, an assets-based approach to developing staff-student relations requires power-sharing and a reimagining of students as co-producers of knowledge in order to realise new intellectual dispositions.²³

Cocreation and sharing power with students, both in our work on Elise Hall and in broader work on the curriculum, represent epistemological decolonization in action, in the contexts of saxophone performance, music history, and music as a discipline.

Nevertheless, “decolonization” is not a universally implemented concept. Even in the two quotes above, both of which are from an edited collection with “decolonization” in its title, only the sociologists Meghji, Tan, and Wain use the word explicitly. Likewise, two of the authors whose work forms the backbone of our thinking on music, Philip Ewell (music theory) and Sara Ahmed (philosophy and gender studies), generally do not use the word “decolonization” (though they do both use “colonial”).²⁴ In contrast, this **Journal** published a special issue in 2020 entitled “Decolonization,” which has been central to our

23. Dave S. P. Thomas, “Pluralised Realities: Reviewing Reading Lists to Make Them More Culturally Sensitive,” in *Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization: Practical Tools for Improving Teaching, Research, and Scholarship*, ed. Abby Day, Lois Lee, Dave S. P. Thomas, and James Spickard (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2022), 120–21.

24. Ewell, in “Music Theory and the White Racial Frame,” states that “the fact that many of the ideas from functional tonality appear in so many of the world’s musics is a direct result of the power of colonialism and hegemony.” In *On Music Theory*, Ewell employs Ibram X. Kendi’s use of the term *antiracism* (and close siblings, such as “antisexism”). See, for example, chapter 5, “On Music Theory’s Antiracism”; the table on 267, where Ewell contrasts “Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion” with “Antiracism/Antisexism,” and example 4.1, on 134, where Ewell presents Kendi’s definitions of segregationism, assimilationism, and antiracism. While “decolonizing” is used by Ahmed, she does not define it in any of the works we cite here. In the introduction to their edited collection, editors Melina Duarte, Katrin Losleben, and Kjersti Flørtoft acknowledge that “decolonization” is an important lacuna in the volume. See the editors’ “Introduction,” in *Gender, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Academia: A Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Transformation*, ed. Melina Duarte, Katrin Losleben, and Kjersti Flørtoft (London: Routledge, 2023), 9.

use of the term here.²⁵ Likewise, anthropologist Gloria Wekker employs the term *decolonial* and deems it necessary for her concept of “white innocence” because it prompts a (sometimes uncomfortable) critical reflection on race.²⁶ For Wekker, white innocence is a comfortable shield (perpetuated by institutions, countries, and so on) behind which white people hide in order not to confront the everyday and normalized racism that people of color face. For instance, the quotation in the title of the first chapter in Wekker’s book, *White Innocence*, is, “suppose she brings a big negro home,” a joke made by a well-known celebrity (speaking as a father talking about his daughter) on a television show in the Netherlands that was not considered racist or problematic among mainstream audiences upon the show’s airing.²⁷ With this and other examples, Wekker shows how small societies that are dominated by a Christian ethic of innocence and putting others first (Wekker’s primary example is her home of the Netherlands, but Norway would certainly make the list) consider themselves to be aware of and have suitable legislation in place to make racism illegal, such that for white people the problem has gone away and therefore does not require (their) attention.²⁸ The concept of white innocence thus resonates with Meghji, Tan, and Wain’s imperative that, in order to decolonize, it is important to “look for links even if you were not taught them yourself.”²⁹ For us as authors of this article, decolonization calls upon both educators and students to be critical and open minded about ideas and concepts they might not previously have considered. This is why not just the US sociopolitical context of Hall’s time but also both decolonization and diversity are essential frameworks for any consideration of the music Hall performed and commissioned.

After presenting the artistic side of our work at the Voices of Women conference in Groningen in December 2022 (as discussed in the next reflection section), Jonas was warned in the discussion against the dangers of idolizing Hall. At the same time, the success of and demand for his performances of excerpts of the repertoire she commissioned testify not only to his skills as a performer and presenter, but also to the audience’s fascination with Hall’s story and “rediscovery,” particularly given that 2024 is the centenary of her death. If we are to take seriously Donna Haraway’s point that “it matters what knowledges know

25. “Decolonization,” special issue.

26. Wekker, *White Innocence*, 175n1. For a fuller discussion of Wekker in terms of decolonization and music, see Maxwell and Fosse Hansen, “Decolonizing Music History in Scandinavia.”

27. The episode is cited in Wekker, *White Innocence*, 33–35. The show in question is *De Wereld Draait Door* (which Wekker translates as “The world keeps turning”) and it aired in November 2008.

28. See Wekker, *White Innocence*, 18–20 and chapter 1, esp. 33–35.

29. Meghji, Tan, and Wain, “Demystifying the ‘Decolonizing’ and ‘Diversity’ Slippage,” 43.

knowledges,”³⁰ then, in order to decolonize knowledge and knowledge-making processes vis-à-vis the Hall repertoire and the student performance curriculum more broadly, we also need to reflect critically on notions of “excellence.” *Excellence* is a term used ubiquitously in academic, performance, and other contexts. Nevertheless, as a concept it has been shown to favor colonial power structures and, when used as a measuring tool, to reward low-risk, often monodisciplinary work that fits into preexisting and established norms.³¹ We cannot know if Hall’s performances were “excellent” according to modern-day standards of virtuosity (they were highly acclaimed at the time³²), but the stories we tell of her fit into deeply held beliefs about who we are as a society and how we want to think of ourselves as progressing.

Hall’s position as a white woman accords with the (white racial) frame established in Western music performance and music history, though she may tick the diversity boxes by dint of her gender and disability (she suffered from hearing loss/deafness). In other words, her presence within curricula does not fully disrupt the (colonial) status quo. It is noteworthy, however, that the misogynistic and ableist assumptions about Hall that have tended to pervade discussions about her are now being exposed. The traditional story, first relayed by Debussy’s biographer Léon Vallas in 1932, is that Hall’s doctor husband encouraged her to take up the saxophone to counteract her hearing loss.³³ Although contemporary accounts of Hall tend to omit deafness from their analyses, Adrienne Honnold has recently observed that, while her “musical hearing” was not affected, “by the time she stopped performing publicly in 1920, [Hall] was almost completely deaf, because of her age.”³⁴ Honnold also notes that, when Hall’s deafness (or “medical issues”) was indeed discussed in mid-century accounts, her disability was presented hand in hand with misinformation about her, including a perceived lack of technical skill.³⁵ Debussy’s misogyny toward “the saxophone lady” (as the composer called her in a letter) “with her pink dress and ‘ungraceful instrument’” (as reported by Vallas) has been perpetuated through the years.³⁶ Discussion about her deafness is thus

30. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 35.

31. For a fuller discussion of the implications of “excellence,” including a reading list and questions for reflection, see Maxwell, “Excellence.”

32. On Hall’s acclaim, see Andrew J. Allen, “‘Incomparable Virtuoso’: A Reevaluation of the Performance Abilities of Elise Boyer Hall,” in *The Legacy of Elise Hall: Contemporary Perspectives on Gender and the Saxophone*, ed. Kurt Bertels and Adrienne Honnold (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2024), 29–56.

33. Léon Vallas, *Claude Debussy et son temps* (Paris: Alkan, 1932), 161–62.

34. Honnold, “Exhuming Elise,” 91.

35. Honnold, 85, 100n11, 100n12.

36. Quoted in William Henry Street, “Elise Boyer Hall, America’s First Female Concert Saxophonist: Her Life as Performing Artist, Pioneer of Concert Repertory for Saxophone and Patroness of the Arts” (DMA diss., Northwestern University, 1983); and in Allen, “Incomparable

part of the intersectional demeaning both of Hall's performing abilities (she was, after all, the first woman to perform with the Boston Symphony Orchestra) and her commissions.³⁷

That Hall, by virtue of her whiteness, can be made to fit into the canon is not intended to undervalue utilizing Hall in efforts to diversify or even decolonize the curriculum (the same could be argued, and not necessarily unproblematically, for other wealthy female patrons and/or performers from any historical era, be it Isabella d'Este, Lili'uokalani, Catherine de' Medici, Kōdai-in, Christina of Sweden, or Elizabeth I of England, to name but a few). Rather, it is to recognize that we (re)write history to shape the needs and values of our own time, and that those needs and values are often not as neutral as we would like to think they are. As performers, educators, and historians, we also need to remember that there are underappreciated historical figures whose efforts may be worthy of our attention, but receive far less. When promoting Hall, we need to keep asking ourselves, as we did in the introduction to this article: why Hall, and why Hall *now*?

We are privileged to work and study at an institution (the Academy of Music at UiT The Arctic University of Norway) and in a country that support work such as that reported in this article. Initiatives in recent years include the Research Council of Norway's earmarked funding for projects that focus on gender balance; one such project ran at our institution, in Tromsø, from 2015–18.³⁸ In 2020–21, the Academy of Music reworked its compulsory music history and analysis modules to better reflect recent changes in the disciplines, a process which involved students, professors, and management, and which has had important repercussions for the local community in which students play an active role.³⁹ More recently, our institution was part of the international

Virtuoso," 30. The gendered reception is problematized in Sarah V. Hetrick, "He Puts the Pep in the Party': Gender and Iconography in 1920s Buescher Saxophone Advertisements," in *The Legacy of Elise Hall: Contemporary Perspectives on Gender and the Saxophone*, ed. Kurt Bertels and Adrienne Honnold (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2024), 128.

37. The new book, *The Legacy of Elise Hall: Contemporary Perspectives on Gender and the Saxophone*, ed. Kurt Bertels and Adrienne Honnold, is thus particularly welcome for overturning these views, and we would like to thank the editors for their comments on an earlier version of this piece. On performance with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, see Allen, "Incomparable Virtuoso," 44, 54n64.

38. See "Programme on Gender Balance in Senior Positions and Research Management," The Research Council of Norway, Forskningsrådet, 2024, <https://www.forskingsradet.no/en/financing/what/balance/>. The project's results (many of which are in Norwegian though some are in English) can be viewed at the project's web page in The Research Council of Norway's "Project Bank," 2019, <https://prosjektbanken.forskingsradet.no/project/FORISS/245487>.

39. The process of reworking the curriculum is described in detail in Maxwell and Fosse Hansen, "Decolonizing Music History in Scandinavia." For a discussion of the impact of students and their learning in small or isolated communities, such as Tromsø, see Benneworth, Maxwell, and Charles, "Measuring the Effects of the Social Rural University Campus."

European Union Erasmus+-funded Voices of Women project (2021–24), in which both authors took part.⁴⁰ Yet despite all of the work on raising awareness (and still more diversity work that space does not allow us to detail here) that has taken place in Tromsø, microaggressions still pervade. During the time spent preparing for this article, for example, we witnessed the Academy of Music’s all-male electric guitar class together with their male teacher play a concert of popular music entirely written by men, and the local professional big band played a concert of music entirely by men, with an all-male, all-white lineup, including a male soloist—to name but two examples.⁴¹ Colonialist notions of excellence and “epistemic racism/sexism and the apartheid in knowledge” go hand in hand.⁴²

Lastly in this section on terminology, we must address the construct of “the canon.” Firmly rooted in the white racial frame and colonial epistemologies, the canon should be recognized as such. Our colleague in Tromsø, the Norwegian philosopher Fredrik Nilsen, frames the construct of the canon as follows:

The concept of canonising refers to the process of constructing the body of figures and works which one must know, read, and teach to be considered educated and knowledgeable in the field. The concept stems originally from the Roman Catholic Church where it refers to the official declaration of dead persons to be saints, as well as the selection of religious texts that comprise holy works.⁴³

It is easy to see the parallels with music here, and indeed with the Western “imaginary museum of musical works” (as Lydia Goehr calls it) that we as authors, and presumably many readers, have grown up with.⁴⁴ As Nilsen explains, “the criteria for quality and inclusion into the canon itself were established and developed inside the male-dominated tradition. Therefore, we often see that only women who thought and wrote in the same or similar manner

40. The project’s web pages are still updated regularly by members of the team. See Voices of Women, 2024, <https://site.uit.no/vow/>.

41. “Lunsjkonsert med utøvere fra Musikkonservatoriet” (“Lunchtime Concert with Performers from the Academy of Music”), concert listing for November 3, 2022, Tromsø internasjonale kirkefestival (Tromsø International Church Festival), Tromsø Domkirke, <https://www.tikfestival.no/program-2022/>; “Tromsø Storband og Mathias Heise” (“Tromsø Bigband and Mathias Heise”), concert listing for August 14, 2022, Tromsø Jazz Festival, Storgata Camping, <https://www.tromsojazzfestival.no/program-2022/heise-tromso-storband>.

42. Thomas, “Pluralised Realities,” 120.

43. Nilsen, “Canon,” 51.

44. Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). See also Ewell’s discussion of the terms *western* (which he does not capitalize) and *the canon* in *On Music Theory*, 47–48.

as the canonical male philosophers are included” (if they are included at all).⁴⁵ Again, we can see and hear clear parallels with the Western musical canon: while diversified to some extent in recent decades, the canon includes only those who fit most neatly into the established norms that have been most universally accepted. Cases in point include Fanny Hensel, some of whose compositions signed with her initial and maiden name, Mendelssohn, were thought to be those of her brother; virtuoso pianist Clara Schumann, whose compositions easily fit within the Romantic paradigm; and Germaine Tailleferre, embraced as one of “Les Six.” Hall does not overturn the status quo. But as a patron and unpaid performer, she is less easy to shoehorn into “the canon” given its clear focus on professional composers. Including her in repertoire lists and curricula therefore calls into question the canon as an epistemological entity—always mindful that such inclusion is only a part of an expansive process, since no single figure (or educator, student, or institution) can achieve or even symbolize lasting change on their own.

Space does not allow for a full overview of all of the other literature that provides the background to Jonas’s project and our joint thinking on Hall, diversity, and decolonization, but there is some recent work that is particularly relevant to the Nordic/European context in which we study and work. The furor over Philip Ewell’s keynote address at the 2019 Society for Music Theory conference and his 2020 article on the white racial frame in music theory was somewhat watered down by the time it reached Europe.⁴⁶ However, Ewell’s arguments resonate with a broader trend in European and Nordic research in music—and beyond—that actively seeks to open up academic fields and institutions to greater diversity. While the European Commission’s requirement that proposals for research funding address diversity and gender aspects is one broad example,⁴⁷ a more local (for the authors) and specific call for an increase in diversity is represented by the Norwegian Research Council’s

45. Nilsen, “Canon,” 52. For the classic essay in art history, see Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” *ARTnews*, January 1971, uploaded May 30, 2015, <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/retrospective/why-have-there-been-no-great-women-artists-4201/>.

46. See Colleen Flaherty, “Whose Music Theory?” *Inside Higher Ed*, August 7, 2020, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/08/07/music-theory-journal-criticized-symposium-supposed-white-supremacist-theorist>. Ewell provides an overview of what happened and a response in *On Music Theory*, chapter 4. It may entertain readers—and, we would like to think, Ewell—to know that in Kate’s copy of his book this chapter bears the stains from where their reaction to reading caused them to spit out their tea in horror.

47. See various European Commission guidelines, for example Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (European Commission), “Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans,” Publications Office of the European Union, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/876509>.

funding programs “Balanse” (Balance) and its continuation “Balanse+,” which seek to finance research projects to investigate and promote gender balance in senior research positions.⁴⁸ In a similar vein, the recent special issue of the journal *Danish Musicology Online* (cited above) sought to address the issues raised by Ewell from a European and especially Nordic perspective.⁴⁹ That this impetus is set against the background of what Wekker has called “white innocence,” particularly with regard to the smaller countries of Northern Europe, only serves to strengthen Ewell’s broader arguments and to reiterate the need for the decolonization work we have already outlined.⁵⁰

Considerable work has been done on diversity and its broader implications within the realm of music education in the Nordic countries, particularly as it pertains to artistic research. A recent issue of *The Nordic Journal of Art & Research*, for example, considers each of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals through the lens of artistic research and education.⁵¹ Following the completion of a Balanse-funded project, our colleagues in Tromsø, Hilde Blix and Lilli Mittner, published their findings on gender balance in Norwegian artistic institutions, which showed that there is a clear minority of women in senior positions.⁵² Likewise, a recent article on the status of gender equality and representation in arts education considers the situation in which current European music students find themselves: there is a standard, white- and male-dominated “Music History” that they learn; then, alongside it, there are “The Books About Women.”⁵³ In other words, from the student perspective, it is almost as if there are two different music histories running in parallel—an official version, and an alternative that includes (white) women and marginalized groups.⁵⁴ As long as the inclusive version remains the “alternative,” i.e., unincorporated into mainstream textbooks or school curricula, the default history will remain

48. For more, see “Handlingsplan og utlysingsplan for BALANSE+” (“Action Plan and Plan for Calls for BALANSE+”), Norges forskningsråd, October 5, 2023, <https://www.forskningradet.no/finansiering/hva/balanse/handlingsplan/>.

49. See Kirkegaard and Vad, “Introduction.” As previously noted, this special issue now has to be seen in the light of an open letter to Ewell signed by a number of European academics, a letter we only became aware of thanks to reading Ewell’s *On Music Theory*, 169–74.

50. Wekker, *White Innocence*. See also Maxwell and Fosse Hansen, “Decolonizing Music History in Scandinavia.”

51. “Aesthetics and Ethics: Arts Education as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development,” ed. Mette Bøe Lyngstad, Rikke Gørgens Gjørsum, Lise Hovik, special issue, *The Nordic Journal of Art & Research* 12, no. 2 (2023), <https://journals.oslomet.no/index.php/ar/issue/view/497>.

52. Hilde Blix and Lilli Mittner, *Kjønn og skjønn i kunstfagene—et balanseprosjekt (Gender and Beauty in the Fine Arts: A Project of Balance)* (Tromsø: UiT Norges arktiske universitet, 2018), <https://munin.uit.no/handle/10037/16593>.

53. Mittner, Meling, and Maxwell, “Arts-Based Pathways.” See also Ewell’s discussion of representation in music theory textbooks in English in *On Music Theory*, 37–45.

54. This situation is hardly unique to music disciplines. For an assessment in the field of philosophy, see Nilsen, “Canon.”

overwhelmingly white, male, and Western. As Samantha Ege puts it, “there is a silent ‘male’ that precedes the word ‘composer.’ . . . [T]here is also a silent ‘white’ that usually precedes the word ‘women’ and, consequently, the phrase ‘women composers,’ particularly in US-centric discourse.”⁵⁵ This silent “white male” default, which is also true in Europe where discourses of white innocence prevail, is only visible if we care to look. But to look requires uncovering uncomfortable realities not only about one’s own learning and teaching, but also about the institutions we work for, the academies we study in, and the music we love. We offer the final words in this section to Meghji, Tan, and Wain:

Decolonizing the curriculum requires us to substantially rethink what counts as knowledge, which forms of knowledge we value, and which knowledge-producing methods (for example, proverbs) need to be incorporated back into our curricula in order to avoid continuing the project of Western epistemicide.⁵⁶

Intermission: Jonas’s Reflections on his Artistic Project on Elise Hall

I have found great inspiration and success working with Elise Hall’s repertoire. For the fall semester of 2022, I decided to work on a project on the Hall repertoire and present her story and excerpts of long impressionistic melodic lines from the works by Florent Schmitt, Claude Debussy, André Caplet, Léon Moreau, and Vincent d’Indy. To further develop this idea of performing excerpts of the works written for Elise Hall with a historical and stylized performance approach, I added some pieces around them to contextualize this development in historical saxophone performance for general audiences. I find it most efficient to add one piece of solo music that displays the saxophone repertoire prior to Elise Hall’s innovative commissions, and one that showcases much later developments in the solo repertoire for saxophone, yet still with a trace of this expressive nerve present. Feeling the audience become silent in the room after my saxophone has finished a haunting solo has given me a lot of satisfaction as a performer, since for most of the audiences I played for, it was their first meeting with the Hall repertoire.

It is an unfortunate sign of the times that Hall’s story seems to be dependent on her male family members and the composers that she commissioned, but her connection to these people has ensured that historical information about her life has been preserved. I can only criticize this so much, as searches of the legacy of the composers she worked with, as well as her husband Richard

55. Ege, “Chicago,” 2.

56. Meghji, Tan, and Wain, “Demystifying the ‘Decolonizing’ and ‘Diversity’ Slippage,” 40.

Boyer Hall and her relative the US president Calvin Coolidge, have brought me valuable aspects of her life that I might not otherwise have known about. Yet this material merely tells us of her position in a patriarchal society; it does not tell of her musical entrepreneurship. Just as she commissioned works from certain composers in a particular style and form for her use as an individual performer, so have later artists also come to be very individualistic and soloistic over time in their commissions and performances. Piecing together the list of her commissioned works and performances, it is the music, her instrument, and her self that come through; I am left with an impression of a distinct and personal artistic vision, even one hundred years after her death. Elise Hall's taste shines through, in her love of the distinct French impressionistic style that led her to strive to be a part of such orchestral tone poems. Hall stands out as a lover of her time's modern innovations in instrument making and musical aesthetics, and her efforts to combine her instrument with the orchestral palette leave a lasting impression of her dreamworld on modern listeners. Building on this, in my project I aimed to present her as an innovator of something that sounded new. The project of performing these works shed new light on Hall as an impresario and on her vision.

Works commissioned by Elise Hall in Jonas's project performances			
Composer	Title	Year	Place of performance in Jonas's project
Charles Martin Loeffler	<i>Divertissement Espagnol</i>	1900	Score studied, in need of editing; to be performed in the future
Paul Gilson	Concerto no. 1	1902	Performed solo excerpts at the 2022 Groningen Voices of Women conference
André Caplet	<i>Légende</i>	1903	Performed with the Arctic Philharmonic on March 24, 2023
Vincent d'Indy	<i>Choral Varié</i>	1903	Performed solo excerpts at a lecture-recital for the Centre for Women's and Gender Research at UiT. September 23, 2022
Charles Martin Loeffler	<i>Ballade Carnavalesque</i>	1903	Performed with students from the Academy of Music in a chamber project, 2022
Claude Debussy	<i>Rapsodie</i>	1903–8	Performed solo excerpts at a publicly streamed concert in April 2021
Florent Schmitt	<i>Légende</i>	1918	Performed at final Bachelor of Arts examination (recital) on June 8, 2023
François Combelle	<i>Fantasie Mauresque</i>	1920	Performed in a masterclass at the UiT Academy of Music, 2021

Works commissioned by Elise Hall in Jonas's project performances			
Composer	Title	Year	Place of performance in Jonas's project
Léon Moreau	<i>Pastorale</i>	unknown	Performed solo excerpts at the 2022 Groningen Voices of Women conference and at the Faculty Research Day, Tromsø University Museum, October 2022
Other works included in the project performances			
Aina Helgeland Davidsen	<i>SÅRT</i>	ca. 2019	Performed solo excerpts at Faculty Research Day, Tromsø University Museum, October 2022
Jonas Eskeland / trad.	<i>Variations on "The Blue Bells of Scotland"</i>	2022	Performed solo excerpts at the 2022 Groningen Voices of Women conference and at a UiT lecture-recital in September 2023
Jonas Eskeland / trad.	<i>"Sven i rosengård"</i>	2022	Performed as part of Interpretation module at the Academy of Music, in 2022, and at the Faculty Research Day, Tromsø University Museum, October 2022

Table 1: Works commissioned by Elise Hall in Jonas's project performances

Even before delving into my project on Hall, I often played music from her lifetime. I performed the flute solos of Debussy's *Syrinx* and *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* on both alto and soprano saxophone in masterclasses, concerts, and professional performances. The feedback on these was especially valuable when performing from memory, and especially when I played *Syrinx* offstage (as per the instructions in the score). This is the kind of intensely musical and sometimes theatrical work that I believe can define artistry; the intensity or calmness when you stand alone on stage, the shape and scope you give it, what you take and give, from your own perspective.⁵⁷ I may perhaps not play these solos by Debussy for the rest of my career, but I know for certain I will keep with me the lessons I have learned about drama and playing in the moment. Preparing the *Légende* by Florent Schmitt in fall 2022 for my end-of-semester exam built on everything I had learned previously about playing this repertoire, and I had to take this learning much further when developing the interplay with the very complex piano part: score study and learning from memory are imperative, but reaching a satisfying flow in the music requires experience and the development of an intimate understanding of each other's phrasing.

57. Bjørn Kruse speaks about the "something else," which is what I try to describe here from my experience of it. See Kruse, *Den tenkende kunstner*, 49–50.

The demanding rehearsals of *Légende* took some serious dedication from my duo partner, who is a professional pianist at the conservatory, so in comparison playing short excerpts in commissioned solo presentation-performances at events for the university was a relatively easily accomplished task. Inspired by the work of Sigurd Raschèr, hearing the orchestral landscape even in a piano reduction, and developing a comprehensive understanding of the pulse and expression of the music, are what lifted my solo performances to an advanced level.⁵⁸ As a talkative and passionate performer, when performing chamber music I have often been asked at short notice to give some verbal introduction or presentation of what my ensemble will be playing. Presenting just a small introduction for context before performing the excerpts of this work has been a challenging distraction to overcome.

When I presented my work at the Voices of Women conference in Groningen in December 2022, I chose an excerpt from one of the works Hall commissioned, Léon Moreau's *Pastorale*, even though I had only received the sheet music shortly before traveling to the conference. The opening of the first movement looked straightforward enough, although the piano transcription I received had only high B and B-flat octave trills as accompaniment. As the day approached the nerves crept in, and I had to muster a serious mindset for giving this opening the concentration it needs to deliver the melodic motifs and lines convincingly. In the twenty-minute conference presentation format, I could only give a taste of the work I presented, and I decided that, to play the excerpts I had chosen in a memorable way, I would emphasize the lingering sound and expressive lines, as if to promise and entice with more of the work than is readily heard on just the solo instrument. Using the lack of an orchestra to my advantage, heavily stylizing the performance expression *lontano* (meaning to play as if from "far away") was crucial for me to pick up this new piece for an ongoing artistic performance setting.

Additionally, I was inspired by a concert at the conservatory where the newly appointed trombone professor played a riveting set of variations over the folk tune "The Blue Bells of Scotland." He made the case for this traditional style of virtuoso playing, which in my opinion has developed into a prioritization of virtuosic technique over musicality or artistic integrity. Later, I discussed with him how this approach to a soloistic aesthetic survives in our respective instrumental communities in light of the technical demands of competition requirements and ambitious performers trying to prove their technical prowess. Without taking a stance on whether less technically demanding works should remain at the center of instrumental wind performance, I decided to write a small solo variation over this same tune.

58. The inner workings of the musician's mind are mentioned several times in his writings. See for example the passages in Patrick, ed., *The Raschèr Reader*, 14, 19, 43, 119.

It was a fun challenge to write something for myself, for although my arrangement has a clear-cut form, I always enjoy changing it a little whenever I play it. One of the core strengths in my saxophone technique is a confident command of the saxophone's upper register, which is not often employed in early solo pieces. There is no good reason for this; Jean-Georges Kastner states in the first instrumentation treatise mentioning the saxophone that Adolphe Sax early on commanded a range of more than three octaves.⁵⁹ So there is in fact nothing more traditional than "playing above the keys," as the inventor himself displayed and, although in this case it was mostly motivated by fun and ability, my soloistic artistry strives to honor that principle.

These variations on variations served as the grand opening to get the audience's attention in my performance-presentations of Hall excerpts, to demonstrate my technical facility, and to showcase the artistic capabilities of the saxophone. With fast rushes and flamboyant vibrato, this virtuosic spectacle ensures attention from the audience as I prepare to present the real treat: the longing, expressive lines from the complex textures of the Hall repertoire. Then, if the audience seemed to expect more flashiness, I would simply leave them wanting more and let them sit in the reflective ambience that the impressionist music leaves ringing in the room. I found it very effective to add this contrast to my program.

Another piece in my program is the solo piece for alto saxophone, *SÅRT*, by the Norwegian saxophonist and composer Aina Helgeland Davidsen. This came to mind when focusing on a performer with a strong intention to shape the repertoire that defines their artistry, for Davidsen regularly programs and performs saxophone music by women composers (including nonwhite women composers). *SÅRT* is an unmistakably modern piece, but it does not lean too heavily into clichés or tropes outside its core character of longing and hurt. I therefore added this to my program-presentations to showcase a variety of performer-driven repertoire that can tell new and more inclusive stories of the saxophone's history and development, not with subjectivity, edge, or critique, but by consciously adhering to the narrative abilities of the instrument.

The last example I want to mention in my solo-artistic methodology for this project is another arrangement/composition I made for myself. My rendition of "Sven i rosengård" was developed for the interpretation class module at the conservatory. This medieval ballad from Sweden is a tragic story told in a lamenting melody over six verses. A tale as old as time, possibly originating from the biblical story of Cain and Abel, it has ethereal longing, hurt, and regret

59. Jean-Georges Kastner, *Supplément au Traité general d'instrumentation* (Paris: Prilipp, 1844), 39. See also Stewart Carter, "Berlioz, Kastner, and Sax: Writing for and about the Early Saxhorn and Saxophone," *Historic Brass Society Journal* (2018): esp. 66, <https://doi.org/10.2153/0120180011004>.

as its themes. Adapting this for saxophone was futile without singing at least some of the verses to cast the music in the right light, and my adaptation in fact called for a different stage setting than any other piece I have played. In it, I cast myself as the singer, with a colorful tool for brooding interludes ready in my hands. Tackling the ominous, loving, and thunderous range of moods in Schmitt's *Légende* helped me find a center and personal expression to this song which I embellished with singing, together with advanced performance techniques on the saxophone including circular breathing, saxotrustet (playing without the mouthpiece, as if playing a ram's horn), and saxokaval (also without the mouthpiece, as if playing a ney).

The Hall performance project was therefore a chance for me to expand my own performance abilities well beyond the standard conservatory repertoire for performance students. Through my engagement with the music she commissioned, together with an open mind and open ears for connecting what I heard and learned in the academic setting to what I played and showcased through the project, I was able to both bring the Hall repertoire to a wider audience than through standard student performance settings (e.g., by performing at university events and at the Voices of Women conference), and to broaden my own learning and artistry in all areas of my degree. This was not without its problems, though, as will be discussed in the next section.

Discussion: The Limits of Decolonization and Student-Led Work

Even with the backing of a higher-education institution that encouraged a student performance project such as that described here, it should hardly be surprising that getting away from established module curricula—and above all, establishing new (or, at least, revised) attitudes surrounding progressive approaches to curricula and repertoire—is not easy or quick. It takes more than a small number of students and faculty to overturn long-held traditions and beliefs. Expectations from examiners and existing professionals—the world into which students will graduate—have to be met and catered to if individuals' careers are not to be sacrificed on the altar of change. While those of us privileged enough to be established in the workplace can strive for a different and better future, the upcoming generation still has to contend with the status quo in its present form upon entering the workforce. Unfortunately this is the reality, albeit to different degrees, in both the contexts of performance and music history as we discussed in this article.

Doing diversity requires living and acting with diversity as a constant question, with the voice of conscience constantly speaking up, constantly reminding us to be willing to acknowledge mistakes and learn from them. This mode of questioning is, as Ahmed calls it, “studious”: she asserts that “to become a

feminist is to stay a student. This is why: the figures of the feminist killjoy and willful subject are studious.”⁶⁰ We propose, in a related vein, that one of the ways forward in the project of doing diversity is student-led work, which requires the support of both faculty and institutions. One practical challenge faced by Jonas, however, was insurmountable within the constraints of a standard degree program, and this would likely have been the case whether at undergraduate or postgraduate level: even with considerable financial backing from a national Norwegian funding agency, securing the orchestral parts for Jonas’s performance project proved unrealizable precisely because of his student status, since, as a student, the rules dictated that he was refused permission to hire orchestral parts, despite having been granted the money to do so. There is a clear parallel here with Hall’s situation that would be laughable if it were not so frustrating: she had the money, a high position in society, and widespread support from the Boston classical music scene, but it took her more years than a student today has to spend on a degree program to receive and perform the music she commissioned.⁶¹

Student-led work, however well supported, by its very definition favors the few. In his performance documentation and reflections, Jonas is aware of his own privilege as a student in Norway, as we have seen. The prevailing attitude in Norway is that our country is the ideal place to live in part because there are equal opportunities for all; to question that attitude is to challenge the status quo.⁶² And yet, of course, the reality is not so black and white—or even (given the Norwegian context) “rødt, hvitt og blått” (“red, white, and blue”), as we say.⁶³ Norwegian children’s music education is primarily offered outside of compulsory school and, while the municipal *kulturskoler* (community music schools) are subsidized by the local authorities, and many authorities do have funds available to contribute to the costs of cultural activities for children, lessons still cost money and waiting lists can be long. In addition, while instruments can be

60. Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, 11.

61. The most famous example of this is the Debussy *Rapsodie pour orchestre et saxophone*, which took eighteen years (and two paychecks) to complete. What’s more, Hall never publicly performed this most famous of the pieces she commissioned. For more, see Honnold, “Exhuming Elise,” 89.

62. This idealized view of Norway is explored more fully in terms of white innocence and decolonization in Maxwell and Fosse Hansen, “Decolonizing Music History in Scandinavia.”

63. These are the colors of the Norwegian flag, referenced in the title of a well-known and beloved song, “Norge i rød, hvitt og blått” (“Norway in Red, White, and Blue”), composed during the Norwegian resistance to the Nazi occupation, and often sung and/or marched to on Norway’s national day (May 17). On the national day, which celebrates Norway’s first constitution in 1814 and was an important step toward independence, everyone wishes each other happy birthday (“gratulerer med dagen”). Today, the festivities and parades are usually geared toward celebrating multiculturalism: for example, everyone wears their national dress, whether it is the Norwegian bunad, the Sámi kofka, or the traditional dress of another nation.

hired at an extra cost, there are fees for taking part in local ensembles outside of the music school. Even in a society where class division and disparities in income are perhaps not so stark as in comparable Western countries, music and arts education are not universally available. As Ahmed has shown, privilege has a habit of reproducing itself, usually unintentionally, and often through institutions.⁶⁴ Our experience speaks to this unfortunate truth. The makeup of the students and faculty at the conservatory where we study and work does not (yet) reflect that of the general population in Norway: there is a majority of cis-gendered men among both faculty and students, and the numbers of people of color (whether students or university employees) are very low.⁶⁵ Student-led work, for all its positive aspects, takes place against this backdrop.

Who, then, is left behind in our decolonization efforts? Students who have less time and energy to devote themselves to similar such performance projects and applying for funding are obviously not intrinsically less capable than Jonas, but often have different life experiences, backgrounds, health reasons, and so on that may prevent them from prioritizing special projects. As a professor of music history, Kate has met resistance (though the people involved would perhaps not see it like that) when trying to implement decolonization efforts within music-historical practice, both internally and outside of the conservatory itself.⁶⁶ The figure of the “killjoy,” as identified by Ahmed, comes to embody the problem herself: by pointing out the problem, you become the problem.⁶⁷ It therefore seems easier to deal with (or silence) the killjoy than to address the systematic inequalities she points out—an obvious analogue, as we have seen, to the white racial frame and Wekker’s “white innocence.”⁶⁸ There is also a limit to decolonization efforts in the classroom. The new music history module designed according to decolonization principles, which first ran at UiT in fall 2022, sees the majority of students clearly enjoying new ways of thinking, and yet those who are less comfortable stretching their established horizons have been less prone to engage with the materials. While these results are unsurprising, they are nonetheless disappointing, since the module, materials, and teaching were designed to be accessible to all backgrounds and levels of ability and interest.

64. Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, 125–26. See also the tests and information available at “Project Implicit,” accessed November 30, 2022, <https://www.projectimplicit.net>.

65. The numbers are so low, in fact, that we deliberately do not include statistics here, as they would compromise anonymity.

66. We are not able to give more details here than found in Maxwell and Fosse Hansen, “Decolonizing Music History in Scandinavia,” for the sake of anonymity of those involved.

67. Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*. This is a notion that recurs repeatedly in the book (and with she/her pronouns), esp. 33–37.

68. See also the discussion of Wekker in Maxwell and Fosse Hansen, “Decolonizing Music History in Scandinavia.”

Conclusion: Doing Diversity

Ideas from Ahmed's *Living a Feminist Life* have been prominent throughout this article. The word that we would like to focus on in our conclusion is her first: *living*. Students are key here; however, students cannot do the work that we promote in this article on their own. It is not just a matter of support, or even of money: to point out invisible structures such as the white racial frame whenever they are in action, and to be the killjoy where necessary, requires a constant and conscious effort to ask questions. Such an enterprise requires more than individuals and individual promises: it needs people on a collective scale to permanently live and implement the diversity (and ultimately decolonization) that we are working toward. It is often a thankless task (which is not the same as unrewarding), and it is rarely easy.⁶⁹

While musical performance is only one of the career paths available to students upon completing their studies in our degree program, it is often prized as the ultimate goal. Indeed, other career options tend to be relegated or downplayed.⁷⁰ Such prioritizing of received notions of “excellence” in music-performance education is one of the ways in which conservatories can become competitive and toxic. In addition to harming students, this established agenda impedes diversity work and decolonization by perpetuating existing epistemological hierarchies.⁷¹ Likewise, music history has tended to prioritize the composer—before which a silent “male” and silent “white” is presumed, as Ege points out⁷²—over all other ways of musicking. The entirety of musical works attributed to the legacy of Elise Hall is not likely to be performed or recorded, but uncovering more about her can reveal more music left behind in a long line of yet-to-be-recorded works still to be added to the saxophone's history and repertoire. Some prominent performers and researchers with the means to pursue the process of rediscovery have enjoyed the privilege of presenting their work primarily as traditional manifestations of musical excellence—that is, as (generally white and/or male) performers playing music by dead, white, male composers. This misconstrual cannot be left undiscussed if we are to reconcile

69. An example of one frustration in this regard took place during the webinar “Oublions le passé, fêtons ce doux moment!": Encountering the Other in the Operatic Canon,” University of Leeds, December 8, 2022, <https://lahri.leeds.ac.uk/events/oublions-le-passe-fetons-ce-doux-moment-encountering-the-other-in-the-operatic-canon/>. Around thirty minutes into the discussion, an uninvited speaker joined unprompted, positing strong antidiversity sentiments, including some racist turns of phrase. He then interrupted the webinar on two further occasions. The YouTube streaming of the event can be accessed via the link above.

70. See the discussion of such relegation in Tanja Orning, “Professional Identities in Progress—Developing Personal Artistic Trajectories,” Research Catalogue, Norwegian Academy of Music, 2019, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/544616/544617>.

71. See Maxwell, “Excellence.”

72. Ege, “Chicago,” 2.

Hall's legacy with the criteria of value that are prevalent in the performing arts today. Including Hall in the saxophone performance repertoire and in the music history classroom is a crucial step forward—as is including the student voice in publications, recordings, and performances.