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Floater

The Elusive Search For My Own Voice

Skriftlig reflektion inom självständigt, konstnärligt arbete

Det självständiga, konstnärliga arbetet finns

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Introduction

I always used to envy people who seem to be able to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to one musical idiom. Their lives, I thought, must be so much easier than the rest of ours: all their practicing, listening, composing, in fact all their creative energy focused on one specific medium.

At the same time I couldn't quite imagine what the process was like for these aesthetic puritans. Do they ever have to purposely exclude certain natural inclinations from their playing? Do they sometimes have to resist inspiration from extraneous elements in order to remain faithful to what they consider their "true calling"? Or is it possible to have parallel musical influences without them conflicting with each other? Can said influences perhaps crossbreed, stimulate each other and ultimately lead to the creation of something new and unique?

As long as I can remember, I have been very open and susceptible to various types of music. Since I started playing guitar at the age of eleven I have gone through a number of stylistic phases. Though for each year that has passed since then my focus has become more specific, more deliberate. I only play music where improvisation is a central theme, and since early high school, jazz has been the foundation for everything I do. Still, I sometimes can't help but feel lost and creatively disjointed. As is the life of many jazz musicians, I often find myself jumping from playing with swing orchestras, to free jazz collectives, hardbop small groups to jazzpop singer/songwriters. And sometimes in the middle of it all I can find myself asking the somewhat existential question: "Who am I? Where do I fit in in all of this?" Even though everything I do is greatly rewarding in different ways and I love all these different types of music with a passion, I still long to find something in my musical expression that unmistakably reflects who I am, something that will shine through regardless of context or situation. What I'm searching for is my own voice.

Perhaps I have an over-fixation when it comes to genres and styles: after all, it's all music, right? This may be true, but I know for a fact that many other musicians can relate to this dilemma and that it is a common source of disillusionment, especially amongst jazz musicians. Furthermore I have a strong feeling that this "dilemma" can be turned in to something positive. The reason being that anyone who is drawn to a wide variety of musical expressions has a plethora of material to research and draw from when it comes to creating something personal and unique. It gives you the possibility to analyze in a dynamic way what you really like, what really speaks to you, beyond superficial genre limitations.

In my research I have chosen a few musicians who have quite different stylistic expressions but who all have in common that they are and have been huge influences on me. I have analyzed and studied these personal heroes not only theoretically, but also in a more abstract way and subjectively in relation to each other. I have also tried to analyze my own cultural preferences in a wider context, not only limiting myself to music. This thesis is in other words an introspective look into my own musicality and creativity and has led to many interesting discoveries regarding my taste, my artistic decisions and who I am as a person. I have spent countless hours studying, composing and most importantly self-reflecting. The result has been many new compositions (different from anything I had previously written), the creation of a new group as well as so many new exciting ideas about how to get in touch

with my own artistic voice. I hope you will find something relatable, inspirational and useful in the following pages.

Conception

I remember a quote from my mentor and one of my major role models, the great saxophonist Joakim Milder: “if you can’t find the music that you want to hear, you have to make it yourself”. It stuck with me and inspired me both in the compositional process throughout this thesis but it also played a roll in motivating me to apply to the master program in the first place.

A cold winter’s day during my final term of my bachelor’s I found myself sitting in the school’s library contemplating whether or not I was going to continue studying at KMH on an advanced level. I certainly had the drive and ambition to go on with my musical studies but when I thought about potential subjects for artistic research I kept hitting a wall. I had already spent three years of my life soaking up as much information as I possibly could, practicing all hours of the day and, whenever I found the time, composing. The thing I wanted to gain the most was not a specific musical ingredient: I needed perspective, time to self-reflect, and ultimately increased self-awareness. What I was searching for wasn’t primarily extraneous, I believed it in a way to already exist within in me. Somewhere amongst all the knowledge I had attained over the years I knew there was something unquestionably “my own”, something personal. At the risk of sounding pretentious, I really felt like I had an aesthetic vision that hadn’t yet been allowed to bloom because I was constantly prioritizing my studies and my development on my instrument (which often consisted of playing other people’s music).

I assumed this must be a common feeling for many newly graduated KMH students (not to mention any student finishing a degree in the arts) so I browsed through the library’s section of master theses to see if anyone had written about this subject. To my surprise nobody had covered this topic, other than as a very peripheral side note. I read many great essays, among them Torbjörn Ömalms work “Ödesbygd Musik”¹ and Juan Patricio Mendozas “Punto y Linea”², and they both dealt with what seemed to be a popular theme: going back to your ethnic roots in order to create something new. But what I was looking for was an introspective search rather than a historical and cultural journey.

My first reaction was a feeling of disappointment since I was hoping to find some answers to these very complex questions I had started to formulate, but the feeling was immediately followed by a eureka moment. This was my subject and it was terra nova, perhaps not for all of mankind but at least for the master thesis section at KMH’s library and certainly for myself. I felt inspired. The words of Milder echoed in my head. I decided then and there that I

¹ Ömalm, “*Ödesbygd Musik – Att gräva där man står*”, KMH, 2012.

² Mendoza, “*Punto y Linea*”, KMH, 2013.

was going to apply to the master program.

Purpose

My main ambition with this thesis has been to work out a way to get in touch with my inner musical voice. It has also been to analyze my aesthetic preferences and dwell deeper into some of my primary musical influences. I wanted to write and perform new music with a new band where every component had been carefully evaluated so as to reflect my personal musical taste. Subsequently, I wanted the resulting thesis and music to be able to function as a springboard, an inspirational starting point for anyone contemplating personal expression and struggling with the creative process. Ultimately I wanted to create a thesis that I would have had value reading two years ago, prior to embarking upon a master program.

Questions

The questions I have been trying to answer are:

How can you develop methods for finding your own musical expression?

What are some of the challenges in trying to forge very different musical influences into one coherent form of expression? Is such a process desirable and/or necessary?

What draws me to certain types of music/art and can I through self-reflection and analysis crystalize what it is I want my music to sound like? What are the benefits of such a process from a practical artistic perspective?

Artistic Research and My Method

The following quote is taken from Anette Arlander's chapter in "Method-Process-Reporting (on the method of artistic research)"³ and it describes artistic research in a way that appeals to me:

"Artistic research is often 'a tapestry-like weave of many factors – the read, the known, the observed, the created, the imagined and the deliberated – where the author does not so much strive to describe reality but to create a reality for her work with its own laws.'"

When I started my masters, my initial method was very concrete. I intended to do a thorough study of three musicians/composers that deeply inspire me yet who at the same time differ from each other stylistically. The musicians I chose were pianist Paul Bley, saxophonist Lee Konitz and composer Billy Strayhorn. The idea was then to compose music in the tradition of each respective musician and finally write a number of compositions that combined elements of all three musicians at the same time. It was an unusual approach for me and the formalness and structure of the method was unlike anything I had previously tried before in terms of composing. In a sense this approach was a type of experimental research. I was curious to find out what would happen if I tried to combine my various influences in a very systematic way. My hope was to create something personal and unique that somehow summed up all my musical ambitions. Another quote from Arlander:

"According to Nevanlinna, artistic research cannot be an exact science, but it could nevertheless be experimental. In experimental research a question is investigated with the help of an experimental arrangement. The initial questions and works in artistic research could be compared with this: we ask, we do and then we write out what the dialogue between questions and works produced."

In my case, my initial method yielded mixed results. I never completed the project because halfway into my masters I reached a point where I was convinced that the method was hindering me more that it was inspiring me. I believe there were several reasons for this:

- The method presupposed that I had chosen musicians that individually inspired me in a profound way. The problem was that even though Lee Konitz was a major inspiration for me, I was equally inspired by similar musicians from the same school of playing, such as Warne Marsh and Lennie Tristano. Likewise Paul Bley was one of my heroes, but it was his playing on Carla Bley's compositions that I liked the most and some of my favorite albums featured him as a sideman on Jimmy Giuffre's recordings. In other words, trying to compose music based on the chosen individuals felt limiting and I wasn't quite getting at the essence of what I wanted to produce.
- I couldn't seem to integrate the style of Billy Strayhorn with the overall aesthetic I was aiming for. I finally realized that it was because it wasn't the right choice of

³ Various authors, "Method-Process-Reporting. Articles, reviews and reports of the ongoing development of artistic research", AR Yearbook Swedish Research Council, 2014.

musician for me. Even though I idolize Strayhorn's music greatly, his style was so distinct that it simply was too hard to combine with the other music I was studying without it seeming like it had lost its essence. My compositions couldn't blend the influence, like a human body rejecting an incompatible transplant. I experimented with trying some other options for a third musician but nothing seemed to fit.

- I realized that I'm the type of person who needs to draw from many different sources in order to feel creative and even though it was an interesting process, it ended up being a bit too rigid, at least for the purpose I had set out. The point was to find my own voice and it wasn't happening with the method I had chosen.

However, the process itself was still very fruitful. Partly just from the amount of self-reflection that was involved in choosing musicians, the studying of their music and the deciphering of what it was within the music that spoke to me. The newly gained knowledge that artistic research with a very static premise isn't a process that suits me was also an important lesson. But most importantly, a lot of concrete material arose as a result of the various studies I had done. I put together a lexicon of phrases and ideas that symbolized what it was about Konitz and Bley that appealed to me (available in its entirety in the appendix of this essay) and several compositions were the direct product of the material I collected there. I learned a lot about emulating rather than copying and about being inspired by something in a subtle, more general way. In other words, my initial method was certainly beneficial, it just wasn't the complete answer. It was merely a piece of the puzzle in this abstract journey.

The following description, again from Arlander, sums up my applied method quite accurately.

"Many artistic researchers borrow qualitative methods with close ties to phenomenology, hermeneutics, ethnography, or narrative methods, action research and so on. This is convenient in situations where the artistic work is carried out at the beginning of the process and the questions have changed over the course of that process. Artworks can then be converted into data, material to be studied, instead of research results, and qualitative methods can be used to analyze documentation of the creative process, like data from interviews, for example. However, one can question whether this is artistic research in its true sense. The situation where an artist ceases to be an artist on completing a work, and turns into a researcher analyzing the work, has been criticized. To a certain degree this turn is, however, unavoidable, being precisely what reflexivity is about. Stepping back from the work and critically analyzing what one has done usually forms an important part already of the regular artistic process. The trick here is to find a rhythm where one alternates between creativity and critical reflection."

Although phenomenology and hermeneutics aren't particularly prevalent in this thesis, the reflexivity that is described by Arlander certainly applies. It is an art to be able to create and reflect at the same time and sometimes the two things can seem as diametrical opposites to each other, as is the case when your reflective side prevents you from creating and makes you question yourself instead. The effect can sometimes be paralyzing. So it is a very difficult task, especially because, as I mentioned earlier, my aim has been both to create new, personal music but also to impart whatever gained wisdom I have from the experience to colleges and whoever else that might find the topic interesting. This is a common ambition within artistic research and Arlander concludes the chapter with the following quote:

"If we agree with Feyerabend that all methods that lead to knowledge are allowed, it is clear that artistic working methods can be as good as any other methods, as long as they are articulated sufficiently clearly. And then the crucial question concerns the purpose. Do I apply these methods to create an artwork, an ambiguous and paradoxical entity, or do I do it to create some form of knowledge, understanding or insight that I can share with others and

let others build on? I believe the majority of artistic researchers would choose to answer: Both."

In the following chapters I will present various methods of aesthetic self-reflection, descriptions of what I learned from my courses at KMH as well as playing outside of school, transcribed material from a few of my principal influences, the conception and development of my new compositions and lastly the recorded final product. I hope you find something helpful amongst this varied collection of material.

My Aesthetic

Floater

For the longest time I had this interesting yet frustrating perception of my own aesthetic. It existed in my consciousness both as something crystal clear while simultaneously remaining utterly elusive. A metaphor for what I was experiencing came to me one day: floaters. It is the name we have given the small, transparent floating objects that we can perceive in our eyes. I write perceive because even though we are fully aware of them, when we try to focus our vision and observe them they seem to move out of our line of sight, remaining undistinguishable. This is precisely how I used to feel about my own aesthetic. Even though I had a strong conscious perception of what it was, as soon as I tried putting it into words or even into musical notation, the results never satisfied me because something important had been lost in translation.

I used to feel a great deal of reluctance towards the verbalization of this experience, my thought being "why is it important to get all of this on paper, I know what I feel and that is the only thing that matters, right?" But I realized that the resistance I felt was due to three factors: laziness, a sense of hopelessness in the face of a seemingly impossible task, and probably most decisively fear that whatever I ended up finding out about my own aesthetic wouldn't correlate with the image I had of myself. I believe that there often is a discrepancy between what we are and what we aspire to be and for that reason it is important to often ask ourselves the question "who, in fact, am I?" and try to answer it as honestly as possible. The concept of honesty is often cited as being of paramount importance in music (and all artistic practice), but I think every person needs to go through their own process of defining what that really means. For instance, a fundamental question that could be useful is: *What music do I like?* If another musician asks you that question you might have a few stock answers prepared, but ask yourself, what does most of my music listening actually consist of? And what does most of my playing consist of? Are the answers to all of these questions compatible? If not there might be a difference between how you like to present yourself and how you actually feel. I think it's particularly easy to want to present yourself in a more interesting way when you're studying in a school environment where the pressure of being perceived as hip and unique is probably greater than anywhere else.

Getting back to the concept of the Floater I'd like to point out that it *is* possible to view one of these fleeting squiggly lines. Using advanced modern cameras we can reproduce the images we see in our eyes. And I think it's similar when trying to observe our own taste and aesthetic: it's not impossible, it just requires some different methods and an increased

analyticity. In the next section I'd like to present some ideas that can be used to achieve that goal.

Mindmap

We had a compulsory course on artistic research which ran throughout the course of the masters program. The first assignment that our teacher Sven Ahlbäck gave us was a mindmapping exercise that I found very interesting and which turned out to be extremely useful. We were told to bring five recorded examples of different pieces of music that we found particularly interesting and present them for the class. I chose:

- Paul Bley Trio – Floater⁴
- Lennie Tristano - East Thirty-Second⁵
- Paul Hindemith –Kleine Kammermusik, Op. 24, No. 2: I. Lustig⁶
- Billy Strayhorn – A Flower Is A Lovable Thing⁷
- Cecilia Persson – Amble Sinfonia⁸

We played the music for each other and discussed briefly what we liked about it. After that we were given another assignment: to listen to the music that we had chosen and to write down, without judgment, whatever popped into our heads. The following words express what I perceived when I listened to the coincidentally named Floater performed by Paul Bley Trio: Deep, Groove, Architecture, Structure, Chaos, Texture, Madness, Erratic, Tranquility, Lyricalness, Tension.

The next step was to divide the words into the following categories:

- Technical Prerequisites/Setting
- Technical/Performance Qualities
- Musical Qualities
- Expression
- Contextual Aspects

⁴ Paul Bley Trio, "*Footloose!*", Savoy, 1963

⁵ Lennie Tristano, "*Lennie Tristano*", Atlantic, 1956

⁶ Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet, "HENZE: L'autunno / HINDEMITH: Kleine Kammermusik", BIS, 1996

⁷ Billy Strayhorn, "*Piano Passion*", Storyville Records, 2005

⁸ Cecilia Persson, "*Open Rein*", Hoob Records, 2014

- Values

An interesting thing that you immediately notice is what type of things your mind reacts to when listening to music. I for instance realized that I hadn't written a single word about the technical prerequisites behind the music or how it was played but that I had listed lots of abstract ideas and feelings which the music conjured up. This varied greatly between each student in our class. The next step was to purposely and analytically try to list words in all of the aforementioned categories. For the Lennie Tristano recording I came up with the following:

Technical Prerequisites/Setting:

Piano trio (piano, bass, drums)
Recorded in a slow tempo, then sped up

Technical/Performance Qualities:

Tuning a little bit lower than 440
Fast tempo
Minor tonality
Variation on 32-bar form ("Pennies from heaven" in C minor)
Piano soloist, bass and drums accompaniment
No theme, starts directly with solo

Musical Qualities:

Swing feel with quite even eighth-notes
Highly chromatic
Steady dynamics
Clear articulation
Low register
Staccato piano playing
Unexpected chordal playing
Ritardando/Accelerando (micro-timing)

Expression:

Dark
Intense
Energetic
Complex
Spontaneous
Controlled/Erratic
Humorous/Serious

Contextual Aspects:

Train
Flow

Spiral
Architecture
Stretching

Values:

Swinging
Hypnotic
Engaging
Challenging
Fascinating

At this point I was discovering new things within the same music I had previously listened to a thousand times. The next step was to write about more abstract terms which the music evoked, such as: emotions, behavior, room and colors, texture and form. I wrote the following about the Hindemith piece I mentioned earlier. I should mention again that all of these descriptions are very stream of consciousness and unedited.

Emotions:

Anxious and searching but with a playful mysticism.

Behavior:

Prancing, searching, running. Complex melodies performed with an ease and sense of purpose that make them accessible despite their cerebral quality (introvert material played extrovertly?) Dialogue between the various voices. Conjures an image in my mind of a mad scientist arguing frantically with himself.

Room and Colors:

I see a thick forest with roots and branches that stretch out and intertwine with each other. Small, brittle branches blend with large, thick trunks. The forest is dense but light still seeps through. A lot of green, mostly light green and brown leaves on the ground.

Texture:

Stabile, yet fragile. Both soft and sharp.

Form:

Reoccurring themes with variations in tonal series, register instrumentation etc. Many highs and lows in terms of dynamics: an odd dramaturgy. Ensemble performance combined with certain solo passages.

What I liked about the assignment was that it was something I and probably most other musicians never would take the time to do, even though you gain so much more insight into yourself and who you are. Sometimes just being in touch with what you really like and what you're striving for can maximize your practicing and listening just by token of the fact that

you can hone in purely on what you wish to do yourself.

Once we had deconstructed our chosen songs in this meticulous way, the last part of the exercise was to go through what we had written, discover reoccurring themes and to expand on them. The objective was to try to find out what it was we liked and didn't like about those themes, as well as what we could learn from them. This was very useful in helping me define some major keystones in my aesthetic preferences. With this method of deconstruction in mind I went on to analyze other things which I had been working with, for instance a catalogue I started a couple years back in which I notated musical ideas that for one reason or another caught my attention. I finally came up with the following topics consisting of a few oppositional terms:

Light vs Dark (emotional)

A very fundamental concept that seems to permeate everything I'm drawn to creatively is emotional nuance. When reading literature I'm rarely interested in the obvious protagonist, but rather the more complex character that can't easily be defined in terms of morality. To me, beauty in art isn't necessarily a recreation of a picturesque landscape but perhaps a more indefinable object that forces you to find the beauty within it. I like things that don't exist on an obvious black and white scale, I like a certain type of vagueness, mysticism, a searching quality. In music, this ambiguity can manifest itself in so many interesting ways. There is something deadly serious in the deliberateness of Lennie Tristano's "East Thirty-Second", like an unstoppable train powering towards you, yet at times the phrasing is so unusual and quirky that you can't help but laugh. In Jimmy Giuffrè's music from the 60's, form and chaos mix in the most elegant fashion, simultaneously cerebral and intuitive. And in Billy Strayhorn's many timeless ballads, romance can exist without a shred of superfluous sentimentality. This is something that is incredibly important to me.

Soft vs Hard (sound)

This may be one of most challenging qualities for me to describe, which is ironic since it's something that I have a very strong sense of and immediately recognize when I hear it. Being aware of what you consider to be "good sound" is one thing, but trying to convey it in a descriptive way that reflects your own perception is almost impossible. There are so many subtleties that help to create this personal taste and it is truly infinitely subjective. Also, sound is such a broad term which encompasses endless elements. That notwithstanding, I will give it my best effort.

To begin with, I appreciate an acoustic foundation. This means that the music can have many different components and instruments within it but the overall feeling must be one of an acoustic sound. This means for instance that I'm drawn to the upright bass, guitars without effects and natural sounding saxophones. I like to listen to music that when I hear it, regardless of the circumstances, I feel like I'm in an intimate room listening to the group. I appreciate softer dynamics. I like warm tones. I like space for the music to breathe so that the subtle details can be perceived. In fact, I think in a lot of ways my ideal is close to a chamber music setting or the cool jazz of the 50's such as Warne Marsh and Gerry Mulligan. However, as I mentioned earlier, there must be contrast and nuance. I don't like sloppiness, I like clear articulation and clarity in phrasing. I like to feel direction in the music, even if the person(s) leading isn't always sure where they are heading. I admire precision and the ability to finalize ideas with unquestionable confidence. In a soloist, I appreciate someone who can sing with their instrument, that is to say someone who plays lyrically and has access to a sense of

bucolic bluesiness. If I had to choose one word to summarize the feeling I get when I hear something that to me has good sound it would be “organic”. Someone who has an organic sound is someone who knows exactly what he or she wants to say and has nothing impeding them: no crippling aspirations to sound like anyone else, no fear of reactions from other people, no nothing.

Even vs Uneven flow (time)

I am without a doubt a fan of the rhythmic language of traditional jazz (what I refer to when I write traditional jazz is music with clear roots in swing or bebop and music from the time period of their conception). It’s unpredictability, flexibility and multifacetedness all make it very stimulating and no other musical language has the same visceral affect on me. I find for instance that the flow that can be achieved through long swung eighth-note lines is incredibly enjoyable, the state it creates is intensively meditative. I like how jazz rhythms can create contrasting emotions of being both energetic and engaging, yet at the same time cool and casual. For a long time I used to fight my natural attraction to this rhythmic style, for fear of sounding antiquated and unoriginal when writing tunes in 4/4 time signature and wanting a lot of walking bass in my tunes. But by now I have come to accept it as an unavoidable part of who I am as a musician and I embrace it instead. I like a fairly straight swing feel, in theoretical terms when the relation between the eighth notes are quite even. Especially in terms of a rhythm section I look for a beat which is light and bouncy, yet still grounded and reliable. I like there to be space in the groove and have it be relaxed but with a lot of subtle information (such as small dynamic and rhythmic variations).

There is another type of flow which I find very appealing and that is typically found in music that is classified as being more free and rhythmically irregular. I find that certain free-improvised music without a steady pulse can have a fascinating momentum which differs from the more traditional definition of swing by being less cyclical and more oval. It generates a type of energy and has a type of friction which is compelling to me.

My Aesthetic Goal

So once I had established these qualities which I gravitated towards, I tried applying them to my other cultural preferences. During the course of my masters I have spent a lot of time watching movies, going to art galleries and reading books. It has really aided in strengthening my aesthetic vision and in getting in contact with my cultural preferences and what I want to project through my music.

Using all these various ingredients, a vision slowly appeared. I saw warm, soft, pastel colors. Irregular shapes obviously organized, but unclear in what order and why. There was something free and unruly in this vision yet at the same time peaceful and sympathetic. Something dark and mysterious yet flowery and light. The image it conjured up was very similar to a painting of one of my favorite painters, Hilma af Klint.



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Realizing this visual representation helped me strengthen my aesthetic goal. A number of other visual representations that seemed related appeared: the floating camera scene in Andrei Tarkovsky's "Stalker", the meditative art-installation "Gravity Be My Friend" by Pipilotti Rist, the mystical writing of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. They all had been favorites of mine and I felt a correlation between them and what I wanted to produce. They helped me point out what it was I wanted from my musical influences: I wanted the openness and spontaneity of my free jazz heroes, I wanted the understatedness and sophistication of my cool jazz role models, I wanted the darkness and ambiguity of some of the modern composers of the 20th century. I wanted to create something which to me was both beautiful, exciting and pensive, I

⁹ Klint, "De tio största, No 2, Barnaåldern", 1907.

wanted a lot of things, but now I had a framework upon which to build ideas on, a yardstick I could keep coming back to and compare with my current work and see if I was still on the right path or if I had strayed.

The Essence Of The Artist – Copying The Right Things

As I mentioned, at the beginning of my research, I chose several musicians whom I greatly admired and wished to emulate. I started compiling a list of musical phrases from each of the musicians, based on countless hours of listening through their discography, in order to pinpoint some of their musical mannerisms. The two artists I focused on primarily were saxophonist Lee Konitz and pianist Paul Bley. They are two amazing improvisers who both have a very unique way of playing with many interesting similarities and differences. During the process of transcribing, organizing and learning music by Konitz and Bley I realized that it wasn't merely the specific notes that were important to me but the combined effect of what they played, how they played it and most importantly what effect that created and how it affected me. So I was determined to not simply create a bank of classic trademark phrases which could be read as an instruction manual, but to choose examples that spoke to me personally and categorize them in a way that mirrored what I liked about their playing. So the following should be read as a subjective dissection of two highly idiosyncratic improvisers, not a definitive guide to mimicking their styles.

Lee

I first started listening to Lee Konitz seriously when I started college. I was introduced to his playing through my guitar teacher at the time, Håkan Goohde, who always seemed to know what to play for me to catch my interest.

There is a great book about living legend Lee Konitz which was released 2007 and is named "Conversations On The Improvisers Art"¹⁰. It features interviews with many famous musicians who have worked with and/or been influenced by Konitz, as well as musings with the man himself. The book starts with a lovely quote by Konitz: "That's my way of preparation – to not be prepared. And that takes a lot of preparation!" This sums up the essence of this unique alto saxophonist to me: always spontaneous, always unpredictable and always improvising in the truest sense of the word. Konitz at the same time possesses an uncanny ability to create beautiful melodies with logical, interesting structures, a feat obviously only made possible through intense practice.

¹⁰ Hamilton, *"Conversation on The Improvisers Art"*, The University of Michigan Press, 2007.

Konitz is an American saxophone player who broke through on the jazz scene in the 1940's. He was a disciple of pianist Lennie Tristano and was part of the so-called "Tristano School" which featured musicians such as genius tenor player Warne Marsh. Through this collaboration as well as with his association with other contemporary musicians such as Gerry Mulligan, Claude Thornhill and most prominently Miles Davis (on who's album "Birth Of the Cool" he was featured at the age of 22), he became a leading figure in the Cool Jazz movement. Cool Jazz was softer and in some respects more sophisticated than other jazz at the time and was popularized in the 50's. Even though he came from a stylistically rigid school of playing he has taken many interesting risks throughout his career, playing in unexpected constellations from Charlie Parker tributes to free form improvised playing, always searching for something new. To this day he remains compelling and contemporary in everything he does.

Below are some musical examples taken from a variety of different records, together with some analysis.

Encircling and Chromaticism

One of the things Lee Konitz is particularly good at is creating tension and release in his lines by using chromatic approach notes above and below the targeted note (also called encircling). This is a common tool in jazz improvisation, but few people have so creatively made use of the technique as Konitz, who can make simple melodies sound very fresh. The effect to my ears is one of temporary suspension, ambiguity and ultimately pleasing release once the line is resolved. Here are a few examples of this technique:



From the album "Lee Konitz meets Jimmy Giuffre" and the tune "Everything I've Got Belongs to You". It's a short phrase that Konitz uses as a pickup. Notice the delayed resolution of B natural (the #5) in the second bar, followed by an approach note from below resolving to Bb (the natural 5), simple yet effective. To me Konitz time and sound is the epitome of cool and the way he hangs on that B is just wonderful.



On a recording of the tune "All Of Me" from the album "Inside Hi-Fi" featuring Konitz on tenor, he plays a phrase then mirrors it a perfect fifth up using the same descending chromatic phrase (starting on beat 2 in both the first and the second bar), creating what I like to think of as a rhyming quality. I think that good musical improvisers and good poets/writers have a lot in common. The ability to rhyme musically is something I have thought a lot about. To me it

simply means duplicating something you just played without using the same notes, but rather the cadence and the intention of the line. Konitz is a master at this.



This is also from a recording of “All Of Me”, from one of Konitz penultimate albums “Motion”. I listened to this CD every day for a whole year and I still find new gems every time I listen to it. Notice how Konitz uses a Ab diatonic pattern but evolves it in the second bar to create a subdominant minor sound over the II-V, finishing off with some encircling notes around the D natural and finishing on the third of Ab.

Long Lines a.k.a. “The Tristano Line”

A big part of the Tristano school was being able to play long, chromatic lines and Konitz did this with unbelievable clarity. To me the flowing quality that these extended phrases creates is captivating, meditative and structurally beautiful, like impressive architecture rising in unexpected ways towards the sky. The fluidity is amplified in Konitz playing because of his relaxed sound and phrasing, which is both warm and soft and clear and articulate at the same time.



Here is an example from “I Remember You” also off of “Motion”, which is an excellent source of Konitz long line playing. There is a very enticing mix of close, small interval chromaticism and more open sounding triads, which creates a nice push/pull effect within the line.



Also from “I Remember You”. A pattern based around thirds followed by a chromatic phrase, once again mirrored in another key directly after, creating a rhyming effect. I think there is something very pleasing about a line that maintains its curvature and shape even when the harmony changes.



There aren't many examples of Konitz playing over a simple blues form but here is one from Lennie Tristano's "Live at the Confucius Restaurant 1955" called "Confucius Blues". This cascading descending phrase uses some unexpected chromaticism, first with the natural and #4th, then with the flat and natural 7th before resolving neatly to the root of the I7 chord. Konitz can play lines which make you hold your breath, by creating tension and then offering an unexpected resolution.

The Unexpected Melody

One of my favorite qualities with Konitz is his ability to never go for the obvious melody. His style is so distinct yet he will very rarely play clichés or preplanned ideas. It's as if, and I have heard interviews with him which strengthen this assessment, that as soon as he plays something he recognizes he'll go somewhere else. This is obviously the result of decades of devotion to the art of improvising. I'd like to present some different strategies I think Konitz uses to achieve this unpredictability and originality in his playing.



Rhythmic Displacement, the concept of moving a musical idea to different places in the beat, is something that the Tristano school put a lot of emphasis on and developed greatly. It can be a disorienting method but Konitz always does it with such ease and confidence. Just look at how he plays the first eight bars of the classic standard "All The Things You Are" (from the album "Konitz meets Mulligan"). The melody is there, but almost all of it is in a different place than what is commonly played. Some musicians use this technique as a gimmick, simply to force variation into the music, but I never get that feeling with Konitz. It always feels completely organic, and in service of the melody.

Paul

The first thing I ever heard by Paul Bley was his iconic solo on “All The Things You Are” from Sonny Rollins “Sonny meets Hawk!” from 1963 and it was a game changer. His harmonic concept and rhythmic feel was to my ears some of the freest playing I had ever heard. Not in the sense that it was the most avant-garde (even though it was very much so for its time) but rather because it sounded like he could in a completely uninhibited manner move in and out of consonance and dissonance, rhythmical precision and ambiguity, jazz tradition and a more modern concept. I had never heard anyone play in and out of the chords in the lyrical way that he did. I was blown away and started listening through his eclectic recorded output with spellbound fascination.

Canadian born pianist Paul Bley moved from Montreal to New York in the 1950's. He was barely in his twenties given the opportunity to work briefly with Charlie Parker, Lester Young and Charles Mingus. After a historic recording with Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry he soon became a key figure in the free jazz revolution. His first wife was the amazing composer Carla Bley, and during the early 1960's he worked in a pioneering free jazz trio with Jimmy Giuffre and Steve Swallow. He is an enigmatic musician with a schizophrenic discography, playing with a wide array of musicians in countless different settings. The common denominator: an uncontrollable creativity, restlessness and sincerity in everything he does.

To try to sum up such a versatile musician using a few musical examples is an impossible task. Once again, these following excerpts illustrate just some of the ideas that I have picked up on in this musicians' playing which I appreciate and recognize as defining of his voice.

Leaps



Bley will often throw in large intervals in his playing as in the two examples above from “Syndrome” from the album “Footloose!”. The major seventh is an interval which he uses a lot and not only in passing but repeatedly and with emphasis. The minor second interval followed by a major seventh, as in both of the examples above, is an idea I’ve noted him using many times. I think it creates a dramatic sense of disjunctionment and it can really open up more linear playing and give a feeling of space within a line.

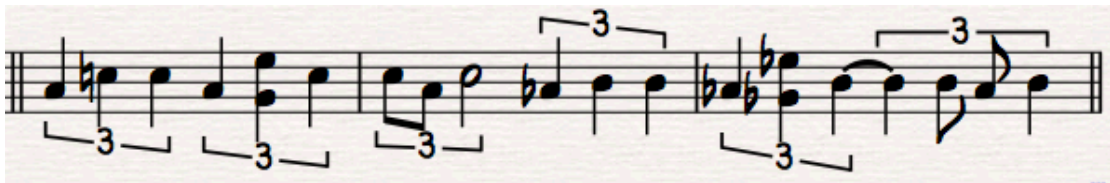
Douplestops



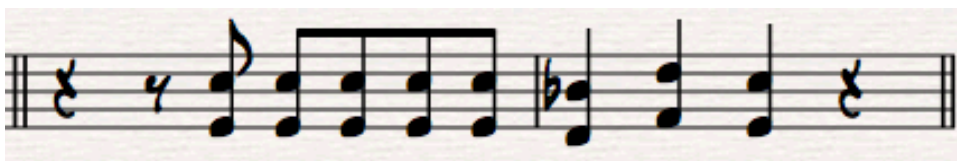
Playing two or more notes at the same times in a linear fashion is sometimes referred to as a Doublestop. Bley uses it frequently. The sixth seems to be a favored interval when doing this as in the example above (also notice the leap once again).



Another examples of Double Stops, also from “Syndrome”. I think there is something inherently groovy in these simple rhythmic phrases.



A very approximately notated example from the album “Emphasis” with Jimmy Giuffre and Steve Swallow. Here the double stop only appears in passing.



The sound can be very joyful when used in a consonant context. This is an example from the aptly named album “Mr Joy”.

Eruptions

Bley has an explosive quality in his playing. He can erupt into spontaneous bursts of sixteenth notes, in a passionately free manner, at the most unexpected places.



Here is a pentatonic phrase from the Ornette Coleman blues composition “When Will The Blues Leave” from “Footloose!”. The notation is very unprecise and it would require a super computer to calculate exactly what Bley is doing. The important thing is the intent. To me it sounds as if he’s just throwing something out there, a carefree action, almost like an involuntary impulse.



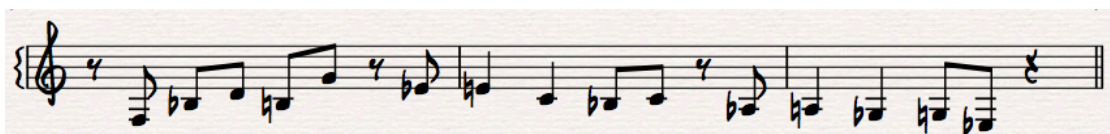
On paper it looks so incredibly insignificant, but this tiny phrase reoccurs so many times in Bley’s playing. There is no point analyzing it since it’s so short and ambiguous, but I still feel like there is something quintessentially Bley in these eight notes. I’d like to make a quick point: when picking out defining motifs from a musician, it can be useful to look for small fragments like this. Compare it to learning a new language: to speak fluently you need to know short words so that you can construct and connect sentences. It’s the same with music.



Another bluesy phrase from the aforementioned “When Will The Blues Leave”.

Quirkiness

There is a strangeness to Bley’s playing which is one of the main reasons why I love his music so much. A complete unpredictability which seems to come from him playing things that sound like they have an obvious direction but then turns out to be a curveball.



Take this phrase for instance from “King Korn” off of the album “Footloose!”. It starts out in

a Bb tonality, then directly to G, glides seamlessly into C7 and finishes in what could either be F7 or Eb7. It's like a rollercoaster ride in a three bar statement.

In this example from "Latin Genetics" from his duo album with Gary Peacock named "Partners", Bley establishes a quite traditional blues phrase but then takes it into outer space by going from a F blues scale to what would appear to be some type of G altered tonality. I feel like there is a lot of humor in Bley's playing, a comic sense which is neither sarcastic nor glib, but playful and searching.

Both Bley and Konitz were musicians I considered myself relatively well acquainted with before starting my masters. Over the past two years I've realized how little I actually knew. When I chose to research them it was for the combined reason that I really liked their playing and because I considered them contrasting influences. Bley is certainly more recognized for his free playing and his milestone recordings with various free jazz icons and Konitz is famous for his cool jazz contributions from the 50's. But I have found through my research that they both have had long, prolific careers during which they have ventured into many different musical areas. They both have roots in traditional jazz but have throughout their careers explored all types of playing, from bebop to free form. In fact, I even discovered that they have appeared on a few albums together and performed together on several occasions, particularly the last 30 years. In "Conversations On The Improvisers Art" Paul Bley is one of the interview subjects and the two musicians give each other great praise in their respective interviews. All these discoveries and insights have been very rewarding for me because they have affirmed my belief that I'm drawn to a certain type of aesthetic. There are of course differences in Bley and Konitz playing, but more interestingly there are many similarities: their devotion to always playing the unexpected, their ability to create ambiguity while maintaining a sense of direction, their devotion to creating convincing melodies, their humor, their seriousness, their beauty, their weirdness and most importantly their desire to improvise in the word's truest meaning. These are all qualities I am aiming to bring out in my own music.

I think the process of analyzing, transcribing and documenting one's musical studies is crucial for getting to the core of what draws one to specific ideas and ways of playing. I think that should really be the driving force behind wanting to learn other musicians' mannerisms and playing techniques. As I see it, the goal is not to copy another musician just because you think they're good. It should come from a desire to want to recreate the way they stir up various emotions within you, be it in the specific way they order notes or something more general like their timing or the sound that they produce. With that approach it is possible to emulate other musicians' playing without being at risk of becoming a copycat, since it's not purely the notes themselves, but their implication and the way they affect you that is the focal point. After this process I felt like I had a new, extensive library of concrete theoretical ideas as well as more abstract concepts to inspire me, both as an improviser and as a composer.

New Music – Inspiration, Conception, Persistence

Even though I altered my method of composing, the compositional aspect was still at the heart of my project. I am convinced, and many great musicians will attest to this, that one really discovers a lot about musical expression through composition. As Wayne Shorter says: "composing is improvisation slowed down"¹¹. There is so much time compared to regular improvising to evaluate, rework and contemplate one's ideas that upon completion, what you have produced can be like a distilled version of your entire musical being. The drawback is that the process can be incredibly time consuming, especially if done infrequently. During my masters I've really tried approaching composing as a skill like any other that demands practicing. In the following section I write about the courses I chose and some of the teachers I studied with. My curriculum choice was primarily to improve as a composer and to work on improvisational elements that I wanted to feature in my music.

¹¹ Shorter, "The Saxophone Journal", Volume 16, Number 4, Jan/Feb, 1992.

Courses

Free Jazz Theory (Klas Nevrin)

This unusual course was one of the first I had when I started my masters. I never missed the opportunity to take one of Klas Nevrin's classes since I knew from experience that they are consistently brilliant. In this course we traced the history of free jazz from its earliest predecessors to the incredibly multifaceted means of expression it has become today. Fortunately for me our assignments were based around compositional exercises and were thus highly applicable to my work. Every week we would be given a new musician, all of them icons who had played a big roll in the development of free jazz. We were then asked to compose a piece using specific restrictions that were pertinent to that musician's style. The restrictions mainly dealt with form but sometimes also harmonic material and rhythmic aspects. An example, is an exercise in writing in the style of Ornette Coleman (translated by me from Swedish):

A) Write a two voice melody (it may be unison in certain sections) with the song "Congeniality" as inspiration. The melodic material should utilize some type of free tonality, with a melodic progression that for example uses chromatic modulations rather than functional harmony. Mix contrasting rhythmic phrasing (straight eighth-notes/quintuplets etc.) and tempo-shifts (indicate using words or metronome speed; may also include ritardando and/or accelerando).

B) Write something about what the bass and drums should play in different sections in relation to the melody (Accompaniment? Walking? Unison with one of the voices? Contrasting rhythms? etc.)

The challenge of this assignment lies in creating a free tonal sound through strong melodies. This can be achieved by for example using a tonal material which is reminiscent of that which we are familiar with from jazz standards, but which simultaneously lends itself to a freer polyphonic interaction without a given chord sequence. This differs from a modal sound in that you don't have to return to an established primary scale and by the fact that you can use chord based melodies in a more free way instead of trying to avoid them.

I found the process very stimulating for a number of reasons. Firstly, it forced you to be productive and not second-guess so much when composing. There simply wasn't time to write a masterpiece every week so our objective was instead just to get it done. Secondly was all the ideas that emerged from these exercises. Even though most of the compositions were only very rough sketches, there was usually at least one idea within every song that was worth saving and polishing. The third, and most important insight came from the last assignment, which was to write your own instructions for a composition in another musician's style. The parallels between this and what I wrote about in the previous chapter are obvious. I ended up writing an exercise based on Carla Bley which had the following guide lines:

A) Write a relatively short melody (no more than about 20 bars) using a free tonal approach but have it focus around a number of different tonal centers. Create a melody with an uneven number of bars, so that the melody starts and stops at unexpected places. Try to incorporate doublestops in the melody, preferably in a diatonic fashion.

B) Have the form be theme-solo-acapella bass feature-theme and end with an unexpected

coda that is a variation on the theme.

The challenge in this assignment lies in creating a melody which is ambiguous and unpredictable and that has a lot of information to draw inspiration from for a solo despite being quite short. In other words, quality over quantity.

The assignment was great for helping me get better at identifying what is unique in a musician's style. It even helped me finish a composition of mine which I wrote as a tribute to Paul Bley (you will find it described in greater detail later in this essay).

Overall the course gave me a greater understanding of free jazz history and most importantly how many different types of free jazz there is. It really opened me to start thinking less in terms of genres and more along the lines of "what ingredients do I want in my music?" It was a refreshing realization that free jazz really is as free as the title suggests. You have all these different parameters to work with (time vs rubato, tonal vs atonal, loud vs soft dynamics) and they can all be combined in countless ways.

Free Tonal Improvisation (Fredrik Ljungkvist)

I had a strong desire to play more free tonal music when I started my masters. Even though I had been delving deeper into avant-garde jazz the past few years, I didn't have any larger ensembles where I could try new ideas and explore free tonal improvisation. Ljungkvist's course was a great outlet for that purpose. Within this large ensemble which featured piano, guitar, bass, drums and several horn players (including Ljungkvist himself) we would practice spontaneous improvising using different exercises. The objective was usually to shift focus from our often too tonal-centric mindset and think more in terms of how we can create variation using other musical parameters such as dynamics, intensity and sound. Listening and reacting were also central themes. A classic exercise could use this premise for instance: two people, no more, no less, have to play at all times. If someone stops, someone else has to jump in. If too many people happen to play at the same time, someone must immediately take the initiative or back down. What you play in this scenario isn't as important as *that* you play. I felt like my general ability to listen was enhanced through these group exercises.

Once again to my good fortune, personal composition was incorporated into the course. We were encouraged to bring our own written material to the classroom to play with the ensemble. It could be a rough sketch or a finished composition. Furthermore we were told to try to write something which had a graphic layout instead of using traditional musical notation and to use a blank piece of paper without any lines or staves to write on. For me it was a new approach, even though I was familiar with the technique I hadn't tried it. The results were interesting. In some ways it opened up my compositional approach and I certainly wrote things that sounded very different from what I had written in the past. In other ways it was limiting. Since you're working with a new language with new possibilities, you're bound to fall into some generic sounding ideas at first, clichés if you will. It takes a while before you really learn to utilize the benefits of a more graphics based style of writing.

I did however come up with two ideas which were fun and exciting to try out. The first thing I did was a type of small group arrangement of modernist composers Charles Ives "An Elegy To Our Forfathers". For this composition I used standard notation, however only as a means of listing a number of ideas. In fact there were seven layers of ideas which I had extracted from the Ives composition and I intended for all of them to be played in different tempos. The

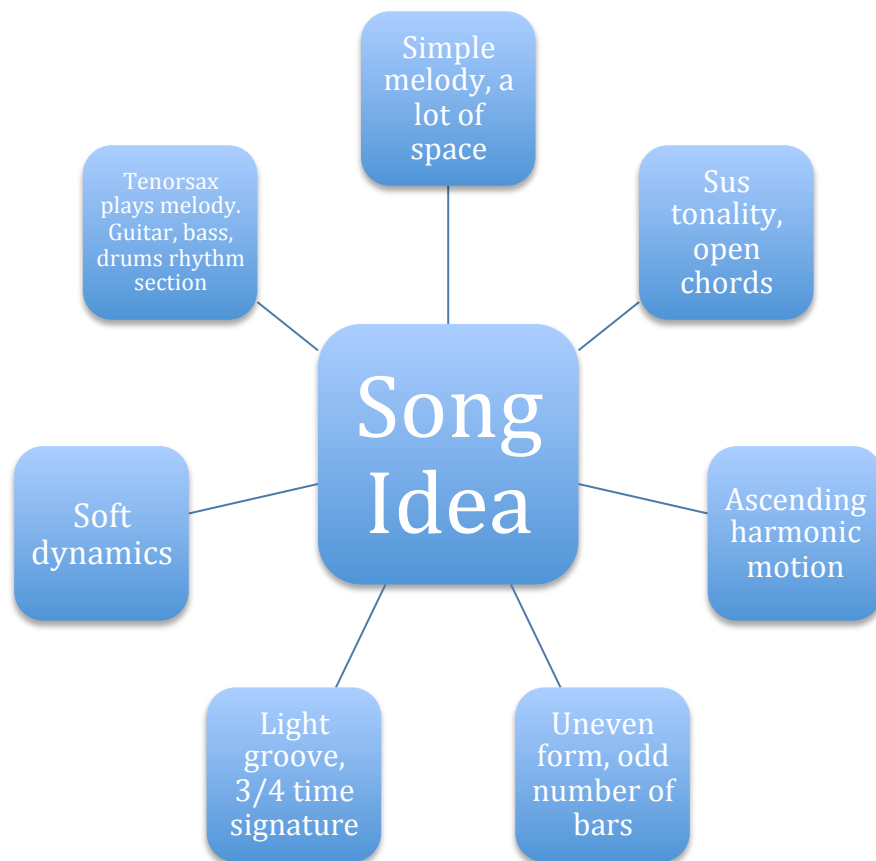
drums served a quite traditional time keeping function but on top of that a coherent type of chaos was formed with the bass playing a ostinato with the bow, piano and guitar playing harp-like quartal harmonies in different speeds and registers and the horn section performing various themes together. I really liked the sounds that emerged from this idea and the method of thinking in terms of layers was inspiring.

My other composition was even more of an experiment. I made an attempt to create a musical representation of one of my favorite stories that a friend of mine once told me. It involved a wet night out on the town and finished with a nightmarish bus ride in which my friend kept falling asleep on the bus and waking up at the same exact place where his trip had begun. Using an opened envelope from the Swedish bus company SL (in which was a paper explaining that they wouldn't reimburse me for my taxi fare, even though my bus failed to show up) I started drawing sketches of the story as I remembered it. I presented it to the ensemble and was relieved that everyone approached it with an open mind and didn't immediately dismiss it as being a joke. After some short explaining of the drawing we played it. The song was performed as a collective with everyone playing all the time and was built around different sections, one utilizing a traditional walking swing beat, played quite fast and atonally (extended techniques were encouraged), the other being a soft, low dynamic interlude in which everyone floated around a C major tonal center in rubato. It had a nice dramaturgy to it. Even though it was hard to play it with full sincerity (mostly because my drawings looked like something a five year old had done and people kept cracking up) I really liked the idea of a reoccurring time based idea which was complemented by rubato interjections. This inspired a composition which I later wrote called "Distractions" (described in greater detail later in this essay).

Individual Composition (Örjan Fahlström)

As I mentioned, to improve my composing ability was one of my main goals in doing my masters. I chose a composition course which featured one-on-one lessons with Örjan Fahlström. It proved valuable and even though Fahlström and I have quite different aesthetic sensibilities I have great respect for him as a composer.

The first thing we talked about was how to get passed writers block. At the time, I don't think I had even reflected upon this as something you could work on to get better at. Every time I had reached an insurmountable hurdle while composing, I would simply put the song in a drawer and usually forget about it. Fahlström talked about how once you get inspiration (and he believes that you don't have to wait for inspiration to come, almost any material can be used as a starting point for a composition if you have the right tools to develop it) you should try to make a mindmap. This mindmap should include your desired result regarding all the tangible qualities that you can work with in composing, such as melody, harmony, rhythm, form, sound, dynamics and instrumentation. When you break things down in this fashion it forces you to make an active choice about different variables so that instead of experiencing a general feeling of not knowing how to continue, you can pinpoint what area you haven't figured out yet and work from there. I applied this to an idea for a tune that I had, later naming it "It Is Lighter Than You Think" (inspired by a quote from composer John Cage) and it is featured in the appendix of this essay. My mindmap ended up looking something like this:



I was also given assignments in analyzing form and was given a couple of modern big band arrangements by Maria Schneider to go through. The music itself didn't speak to me, but the concepts that Fahlström highlighted in them were useful. He talked a lot about the desirability of variation and that it's not necessary that everybody starts playing something different all at once. We talked a lot about musical layers that overlap and how it can be an interesting resource and from that point on I started experimenting a lot more with composing directly in my notating software. That way I could have an overview of different sections in another way and not be limited by what I could play or hear.

Fahlström taught me the importance of persistence in composing. He once said: "time is needed for music to become music". I realized that often I hadn't been tenacious enough in my pursuit to finish songs. Compared to practicing on my instrument, which was something that I could spend limitless hours doing, composing somehow was only given a limited amount of time before I deemed it to have reached a point where nothing more could be done. At times I would even feel that I was wasting my time, that my time would be better spent just practicing on my instrument rather than staring at a half finished piece of sheet of music. But Fahlström insisted that composing is one of the most valuable activities a musician can work on, since it activates so many different musical skills. He really made me start viewing composing more as a craft than something purely spiritual and in my case that was good because I needed to undramatize the whole process in order to become more productive.

I must however also say that I really didn't care for all the concepts that were presented to me but found that equally rewarding. I learned, when forced to write in more cerebral, formulaic ways that although interesting, the results never seemed to resonate with me emotionally.

Often when I came up with an idea I was encouraged to develop it in as many ways as possible. I did it for the sake of practice, but in the end what was left on the paper was my initial idea. I guess what I learned is that I'm drawn to simplicity in composition, I like forms that don't offer variation only for the sake of variation. I like there to be one decipherable message in every song. Composing is a very personal process and for me, if my incentive to write doesn't come from wanting to tell a story in some way, I'm not likely to finish a tune, and if I do, I'm not likely to see it be performed.

Teachers

Cecilia Persson

One of the first people I knew I wanted to take lessons from at the beginning of my masters was the brilliant composer Cecilia Persson. She is a pianist that leads her own group which consistently receives the highest praise and awards from the jazz community for her forward thinking and original music. I was very happy when she expressed enthusiasm towards taking me on as a student, since it isn't something she normally does.

We talked a lot (at my initiative) about her music and I got to look at her scores. She incorporates free playing in very creative ways in her music so it was exciting to see what her scores actually looked like. A very interesting discovery I made was that for some of her songs where I had expected some directives to the musicians, either in terms of what techniques to use or just general mood or emotions to try to bring out, there were none. In many cases it was completely improvised and the score only featured an elongated empty bar to illustrate that it was an improvised section. Persson explained this as being the result of choosing musicians very carefully. She knew that the people she had in her group were improvisers of such a high order that they would instantly know what type of playing would benefit the composition. She would even have the specific musicians in mind when writing certain songs. This stuck with me and proved influential for me when I subsequently put together a band and composed music for it.

Over the course of the term we talked about many different things regarding various ways of thinking when composing but perhaps the most important lesson that I learned from Persson was the importance of deadlines. She told me how she would purposefully take on huge projects in which she would have to write for large orchestras in short amounts of time just to motivate herself, because she knew she needed that push to be productive. So right off the bat she told me to bring in two new songs to the next lesson. Just having somebody I highly respect set a concrete goal like that was great for my creativity and productivity. During the time I studied with Persson I wrote six new tunes, all of which are featured later in this essay. I didn't write all of them from scratch, in fact most of them were half finished. But the combined inspiration I got from her in conjunction with the deadline she set made me finalize all of them without second-guessing as much as I usually would have.

David Stackenäs

In a lot of the new music I was composing there were sections which included free improvisation, sometimes more sound oriented than anything else. I felt like I needed some

new ideas on how to approach this type of playing on my instrument so I turned to the guru, guitarist David Stackenäs.

We had a series of informal meetings in his rehearsal space where he had set up various guitars, guitar pedals and different objects which he utilized in his playing to create interesting sounds. We played together and afterwards he would demonstrate and explain his arsenal of both gear and techniques. I found his teaching to be wonderfully informal and unpretentious. I find that a lot of people perceive musicians who work with free improvisation as being overly academic and stiff but my experience is quite the opposite. In fact I think there are few scenes in which people are as open to being influenced by different things as in the free improvisation world. Very rarely do I feel judged for being a fan of traditional jazz by free musicians, but when I express my interest in free music to jazz traditionalists I'm often met with skepticism.

Stackenäs would show me how various objects could be used to create noises on the guitar, such as a modified electric hand fan used for creating a constant tremolo and clips attached to the strings to create a metallic sound, as well as extended techniques for guitar like scraping the pick against the strings in different ways and using harmonics to create overtones. During his demonstrations he never seemed to attempt to make the process more remarkable than what it was. I really liked the way he demystified the whole process and his approach was obviously just one of a person who was attracted to certain sounds and had worked very litigiously to develop them. He really is a master at what he does and I'm thankful for the insight he has given me. Afterwards, I felt much more confident in performing free improvised music.

Joakim Milder

One of my favorite teachers who I always try to work with as soon as an opportunity arises is professor Joakim Milder. Since day one at KMH he has been an inspiration to me and I am very happy to have had so much time to talk and play with him over the last few years.

I had a number of lessons with Milder at the beginning of my masters as well as a couple more sometime into my second year. Initially, we would mostly just sit and talk. I would open up about issues I had been having in terms of writing, putting together a group and above all feeling torn between different genres. I think there are very few teachers who you can just sit and talk with and really feel like it gives you great insight but with Milder that has always been the case. You can tell that he always listens to you intently and doesn't give you a prepared answer, and his knowledge is so broad and his experiences so varied that he'll give you insightful input regardless of the topic. On the subject of feeling schizophrenic about having different musical interests, we talked about having a creative and unprejudiced approach regardless of the situation. I guess just from having a chance to ventilate and discuss my worries, a lot of my previously perceived anxiety about the issue vanished. I started thinking of myself as *one* musician who can just in the same way as a person can be happy or sad or can play an up-tempo song or a ballad, can play traditional jazz or free improvised music. My essential conclusion was the realization on a deep level that it's all just different flavors and it's all music.

We also discussed my problems in assembling a group that had all the qualities I was looking for. He pointed out the destructiveness and unproductiveness that can result in always looking for the perfect group. It's usually an impossible task and therefore endlessly time consuming, time that would have been much better spent creating instead. This also applies to writing. It's hard to conclude when a song you have been writing is actually finished. There are always small things to tweak and improve but at some point you simply must try it out and be

prepared that it might not be successful. In general I have managed over the past two years, thanks to hard work, taking chances and speaking more openly with my fellow musicians and teachers, to defuse a lot of subjects that could have previously been quite unnerving to me.

Later on, once I had assembled my group and written my music, Milder sat in and listened to one of our rehearsals. We didn't have much time to discuss the music unfortunately, but it was still nice to get a chance to play some of the things for him which had been the subject of our discussions for so long.

The Compositions

Now that I have expounded upon my aesthetic goals and the new knowledge I have acquired during the course of my masters, I'd like to present my compositions. You will find the sheet music for the songs in the appendix at the end of this essay.

Montreal

This is the only song that I included in this project which was written before I started my masters. It has certain qualities which made it still feel relevant, as if it could be a logical part of the timeline of my aesthetic evolution. It was one of the first songs that I wrote that opened up for a more free tonal approach, even though it has a clear tonal center and can be approached in a diatonic fashion.

The song itself is a kind of homage to the French-Canadian eccentricity. I am half of dual Canadian-Swedish nationality and I have a lot of relatives in Montreal, a city with a thriving cultural scene and a unique atmosphere. The theme in the A-section is a bit awkward, almost with a tinge of irony and it is contrasted by a forceful beat on the two and four by the bass and drums. In the B-section the bass walks and the song opens up harmonically (there is even a little hint of the Canadian national anthem in bar 29). After a break a Tristanoesque phrase is played collectively and the rhythm section returns to the figure from the A-section. What I like about the song is that it has a built in tension that stems from the static, relentless accompaniment of the bass and drums combined with the solo-improvisation which almost inevitably is influenced by the odd phrasing of the theme. Also, I and the other soloist trade 8 bars with each other until finally ending somewhere together. Building towards a climax using these parameters usually results in something unusual.

Ghosts

The main idea for this song came to me a long time ago but it wasn't until halfway into my masters that I managed to finish it. I made many attempts in the past and I even completed a few versions but I never felt satisfied enough to the point that I wanted to play them. The reason I struggled as much as I did was because I really liked the repetitive figure in the beginning of the song and I found it hard to write something that, to my ears at least, felt good enough to match the original idea. I remember finally finishing the song, not with a "eureka!" moment but rather with a feeling of solemn defeat, like I was accepting that I would never really find that continuation I had been looking for. For that reason I named the song "Ghosts", because it haunted me for a long time.

Bucky

A kind of tribute to one of my heroes: Paul Bley. I got the initial idea after spending a long time listening to Bley's album "Footloose!". I would record myself doing some improvisations in the style of Paul Bley's playing and Carla Bley's compositions and one of the recordings ended up containing some of the melodies later used in this song.

This is the composition I mentioned earlier that I finished using Klas Nevrin's assignment. Setting time limitations was something that both Örjan Fahlström and Cecilia Persson advised me to do whenever I didn't know how to continue with an idea and that's exactly what I did this time and it turned out to be just what I needed to finish the song. The title was originally "A Belly Up", an anagram for Paul Bley, but after reading an interview with bassist Bob Cranshaw in which he mentioned that Bley had the nickname "Bucky", I changed it. There was something rural in a Wild West kind of way about that name and I thought it fitted the song's character very well.

Blues Nostalgique

A blues I wrote which lacks most of the traditional blues qualities. Melodically it is built around a series of more or less unrelated triads, a couple unexpected breaks and an ornamentation that has a light touch of baroque. The theme ends with a two beat bar which contributes to creating a cyclical feeling of no start or end, quite similarly to Ornette Coleman's "Congeniality" or "Blues Connotation". I like the ambivalence and the mysterious character that the song has which is amplified when you try playing it with the blues in mind. To me that mix is like an alien object landing in our very familiar backyard: it's a curious collision.

Distractions

A consistent message that is interrupted several times by short sections of interjections. The theme is played until you reach a certain point where it is as if the musicians' thoughts trail off, before starting over in a new attempt to tell the whole story. More of the theme is played at each repeat. I wanted the song to have a distinct cool jazz vibe, and with some modifications and without the freely improvised sections the song would have sounded a lot like something out of Gerry Mulligan's repertoire. But it is precisely that meeting of worlds which I like so much, the soft, restrained sound combined with elements of free improvisation.

Kullerbytta

This is a song I wrote when studying with Cecilia Persson. As I mentioned earlier, she stressed the importance of deadlines when composing. Once I was supposed to write a new song for my lesson with Persson but found myself the night before looking down into my notebook of ideas and realizing I had nothing.

I sat for hours trying to come up with something. At the time, pianist Lennie Tristano was occupying a lot of space in my head, but I didn't really have any desire to write a song in his style. So I started playing some melodies which reminded me of Tristano but rubato and with

no particular chord progression in mind (at first in any case) and eventually I had a melody. It was a winding, slippery theme with a couple areas where the bass had a freely improvised feature. When performing the melody I noticed how some phrases felt natural to play slower and others faster in a very elastic way, which gave me the idea for the title of the song (which means summersault in Swedish) and also influenced how we later played it. I think a subconscious influence was Paul Motian's songs "Owl Of Cranston" and "Abacus" which have a lot of parallels, modally and structurally.

Escape to La Paloma

I wrote the first part of this song (until bar 13) a cold winter's day in my apartment in town and the second part came to me during the summer while I was sitting composing in an old cottage in the Swedish archipelago. It wasn't until after I had finished the second part that I realized that the two ideas fit together like a puzzle, as if I had asked myself a question earlier that year and was now answering it. To me it is a happy song with a sense of longing which contains a few quirky details such as the #9 and b9 in bars 24 and 25, that act like small dark clouds on an otherwise clear blue sky. I remember listening a lot to Bill Frisell and Claude Thornhill when writing this.

Waves

During the last year of my masters I went on a three-week holiday to India. I didn't bring my guitar and it was the longest time I had ever gone without playing since I picked up my instrument at the age of 11. It was a refreshing experience and even though I barely even listened to music during the trip, a lot of ideas for songs came to me and when they did I scribbled them down on various napkins, maps and whatever else that I had at my disposal. One of these sketches resulted in a composition I later named "Waves". I wrote almost all of it while traveling and it was the first song I wrote where I had my musicians' individual sounds in mind while composing. I thought a lot in terms of layers and tried to create a weave of phrases that together would make up a collective musical montage, with the bass figure as my starting point. It's a compositional method that I rarely use and I doubt that I would have written this song had it not been for the circumstances and the fact that I didn't have an instrument to rely on. The inspirational landscapes of south India certainly played their part too. Another source of inspiration was from my fellow classmate and bassist Niklas Wennström's music. I had the pleasure of playing some of his compositions with him on several occasions during our time together at KMH. His master's thesis¹² is an intriguing study in West African rhythms and the songs he wrote for that project exhibited a fascinating use of rhythmic counterpoint where every band member played different, contrasting rhythms.

Reflections

When looking over my new compositions I notice so many different traces of all the things I have studied the past few years. For instance specific compositional techniques, such as the layered compositional technique of "Waves" which was inspired by both Cecilia Persson and Örjan Fahlström. Some of the larger aesthetic elements that I wanted to project are also prevalent, like the elements of Light vs Dark which is present in most of the songs but maybe

¹² Wennström, "Subsaharkestra – Rytmen är min melodi", KMH, 2015.

most notably in “Kullerbytta” and “Escape to La Paloma”. I find the dreamlike ambiguity of some of my favorite painters like Hilma Af Klint in “Ghosts” and “Distractions”. I also find that very specific melodic and harmonic material which I have studied, has later reappeared in my music, like the Konitz/Tristano quality of “Montreal” and the Paul Bley influence of “Bucky”. I think my new compositions were the result of a combination of having gained an increased knowledge about composing, new inspiration from transcribing music that speaks to me and above all having a clear concept of what I wanted to express aesthetically.

A side note is that virtually all my new songs have solo forms that are very open, either based around a few chords, one chord or none at all. This was a conscious decision because it gave me a freedom to improvise on the songs using both a traditional jazz vocabulary and/or a free harmonic approach. Along with allowing me freedom, it also forced me to play fewer clichés since there was little to relate to harmonically. Thus I spent a lot of time just trying to figure out what I could extract melodically from the themes that I had written and then trying to improvise using that whilst always maintaining the original mood of the piece. It is both an inspiring and challenging way of playing and for it to be interesting you need to listen carefully to your fellow musicians. The results can vary greatly from performance to performance and I like the unpredictability that comes along with that.

A New Group – A New Sound

The process of putting together a new group was a work in progress from day one of my masters. I tried playing my compositions with a number of different musicians and that, together with the self-analyzing I was doing and the new music I was writing, helped me determine what I was looking for in my band members.

To start off with, I wanted a small group. At first I was thinking quintet with guitar, tenor saxophone, piano, upright bass and drums, but after listening to some sessions I had done without piano I realized that I really liked the openness that came from having guitar be the only harmonic instrument in the group. After deciding that quartet was the right constellation, I set out some other parameters for the qualities I was looking for in the other musicians. For one, I wanted them to be well versed and have a deep appreciation for both traditional jazz as well as free improvisation. I was also looking for musicians who were understated and had a lot of subtlety in their playing and a general dynamic range that was wide but tended to gravitate towards the softer side. I wanted distinct voices, people who are instantly recognizable. From my tenor player I needed a cool tone that had a slightly classical flavor. I wanted him/her to have a tone reminiscent of my idols from the fifties like Warne Marsh and Lee Konitz but with a more modern harmonic concept. From my drummer I needed someone who could play a very comfortable swing groove with a lightness and a rhythmic flexibility, but who also was imaginative in creating different sounds and playing rubato. The same qualities which I looked for in the drummer were also relevant for my bass player, but on top of that I wanted someone who was skilled at playing lengthy free improvised sections unaccompanied (since some of my compositions required it).

After some trial and error I found musicians who fit my requirements perfectly. The first member I chose was drummer Andreas Pollak, a person with whom I had played often with during my time at KMH and felt like I shared a lot of aesthetic sensibilities with. He has the rare combination of being able to play with a very swinging time feel and improvise with an interesting jazz vocabulary while also possessing a free approach to creating sound on his instrument which is magnificent. Over the past few years I feel like we have developed a

slightly telepathic way of playing with each other which I don't take for granted. The next member was someone whom I had played with a number of times and had always admired since the first time I heard him, saxophonist Linus Lindblom. I think Linus has the most beautiful tone and vocabulary on his instrument out of almost any sax player in Sweden and his style both as an improviser and a composer is highly refined. The last member, the bass player, turned out to be the hardest spot to fill. I tried my music with a lot of bassists whom I love and they all sounded great, but only one had the whole package that I was looking for and that was Vilhelm Bromander. Vilhelm is one of the leading voices on the Swedish free jazz scene and he has a passion and an unlimited amount of creativity which he brings to every song and every playing situation. He also has some contrasting sensibilities which work very well in the group: he takes a lot of initiative and has an energy in his playing which really gives the music a push and makes it live.

Rehearsing

When we started rehearsing I felt a rush of excitement. I felt that the sounds that were being produced, right from the start, truly reflected the ideal I had imagined. I purposefully avoided telling them too much about my project, the reason being that I was worried that they might misinterpret my description of what I was going for musically. My reflections regarding my aesthetic weren't as articulate at the time and even with the best explanations there is always room for misunderstanding when it comes to verbal depiction. Instead, I relied on the fact that I had spent a lot of time choosing musicians and felt confident that they would catch on quickly to the music. To my great pleasure it turned out that they really did.

When writing the sheet music for my compositions I tried to keep a balance of having a clear version of the song yet without dictating too much how each musician should play. Once we started playing the songs and I felt the connection I had hoped for, I was very open about getting feedback from the other musicians. They all had positive things to say and contributed with excellent constructive criticism and ideas. The thought occurred to me that a few years ago I probably wouldn't have been able to be as open about receiving pointers, simply because of the fact that I wasn't confident enough in my writing. I would have basically ended up accepting almost any suggestion I was presented with (assuming it was from someone whom I respected) without much second thought. Now however, it was a great asset. We met quite infrequently, about every other month, but when we rehearsed we would play through any new material I had as well as old songs that we had previously played. I felt the rehearsals were always focused and productive. Before we were going to record in the studio we rehearsed a little bit extra and decided some specifics like who was going to solo on which songs and in what order.

In retrospect, one thing I'm very grateful I did was record a lot of our sessions, especially the first time we played together. This gave me a chance to return to what my original idea with every song had been and also how the other musicians reacted with it *prima vista*. For instance, some songs started sounding different after a while and most often it would without a doubt be for the better. Sometimes however, a song could feel harder and harder to play the more we played it. In those cases it was a great asset being able to go back to that first recording and be reminded what the spontaneous reaction to the song had been. Such was the case both for small details like a section being played with the bow on the bass instead of pizzicato and also more crucial points like the tempo of a song gradually becoming slower over time. I used a Zoom H4 portable recording device to record our sessions.

Recording

The recording process unfortunately started off with some major compromises. My first thought was to record with guitarist and sound engineer Mattias Windemo. I had heard a recording a friend of mine had done with him and it sounded amazing. In addition, when my friend told me about the conditions they had recorded in (a cabin in the north of Sweden with microphones strategically placed in different places to eliminate the need for headphones and other obtrusive objects) I was hooked. This would of course cost money, so I applied for a grant that was specifically aimed towards ensembles that wanted to record. To my disappointment we didn't get it. So my plan B was to record at school in the concert hall called Lilla Salen. It's a spacious room which would give the recordings a natural acoustic sound, as well as making it easy for us to have eye contact like in a live playing situation. Once again, to my dismay it turned out after we had booked the recording date and the day of the session was coming up, I found out that that particular concert hall was going to be used that entire week for new students auditioning to the school. I had to settle for the school's regular studio, a tiny dark room with a complete lack of acoustics which gives you a feeling of the atmosphere compressing you to a diamond whenever you play in it. It was quite far from my original plan. We took some measures to make it more natural and relaxed, but even with various creative positioning of walls to separate sound we ended up still needing headphones. Despite these circumstances we managed to remain very focused and ended up doing at least two or three takes on all of the eight songs. We got through them all, but I can't say that the pleasurable, creative energy that we had had during rehearsal was palpable in this playing situation. Our experience was that the sound was hindering us to react naturally to each others impulses. To be honest, the whole process was a bit disheartening.

However, as is often the case, when I listened to the recordings afterwards, it didn't sound as bad as it had felt. In fact, some takes were quite good. Certain songs lacked the right level of energy and others just had some minor mistakes in the themes. But most of it was, though far from perfect, quite enjoyable to listen to. It also pleased me to notice that some of the material that I had transcribed from Konitz and Bley appeared spontaneously in my improvising. For example, the Konitz phrase from "Everything I've Got Belongs To You" appeared in a slightly altered form in my solo on "Escape to La Paloma" and I used a few of the phrases from Bley's "When Will The Blues Leave" in my solo on "Bucky".

I spent a lot of time listening to the songs (which are featured as an appendix to this essay if you care to listen to them too) and found that there were moments where my aesthetic was staring back at me through the music. It was a bit shrouded and unclear, but still, it was there. In some way it felt like a momentous achievement, like I was close to reaching my goal. I felt like I had finally created something which felt unmistakably like "me".

Concert

My graduation concert marked the premier, both for the new band I had assembled, as well as for the featured compositions I had written. When choosing a venue an important criterion was that it be a place which wasn't a conventional venue for jazz music. The school seemed

too mundane since I had already performed there so many times throughout my bachelors and all the traditional jazz venues bore too many associations to prior musical experiences and stylistic niche. I wanted a place to perform in which felt neutral, like a blank canvas for me to project my own vision onto and where I could make sure that everything was arranged according to my liking. I found an ideal collaborator in a small gallery called Kulturfyren on the peninsula Skeppsholmen in the middle of Stockholm. Their main room was white and empty, had a capacity of 100 people and just outside was the Baltic Sea and the beautiful Stockholm surroundings. I came by with my guitar before signing a contract with them and tried playing in the room. The acoustics felt suitable to my music. It was quite roomy, with wooden walls and floors and a high ceiling with tiny spotlights normally used to light artwork on the walls. They told me they didn't often have musical performances and were enthusiastic and very amicable throughout the process of arranging the concert.

The turnout to the concert was very satisfying. A varied mix of friends, families and colleagues as well as a few teachers attended. We performed two sets of music and afterwards Joakim Milder led a short interview with me where I got to discuss some of the central themes of my thesis.

The performance was fun and felt very relaxed. I had expected to be more nervous since it wasn't only new music which I had written being performed for the first time, it was music which was supposed to reflect my own aesthetic and, by extension, me as a person. The intimateness of the whole concept had begun to dawn on me a few days before the concert. But when it came time to play, the sole feeling was one of relief, realized through the sensation of finally getting to perform this music which in a sense had, up to this point, only existed in closed rehearsal rooms and in the written world of my academic endeavors.

The performance went well and I received some very positive feedback from an enthusiastic audience. To my great delight a lot of people commented on the music's distinct sensibilities and many people said that they thought it reflected my personality in an honest way. Milder also attested to this and commented on there being a distinct "Brottness" to the music. This, more than any other superlative I could have received, was very satisfying to hear and really gave me a sense of achievement, like I had accomplished what I had set out to do. I also felt proud for having performed this music without adhering to any of the expectations that I suspect might have been present in the room. Since the audience consisted of a variety of different people whom I knew from different situations, I knew that some people would recognize me for playing a certain way and others would expect something quite different. Again, to my pleasure people of all creeds and stylistic preferences seemed to find redeeming and interesting qualities in the music. It gave me a sense of confidence in believing in my own aesthetic vision, that it had value also in the eyes of others and that my efforts spent creating something personal was recognized and appreciated. The whole event was over within a few hours but it had been a milestone for me as a musician, a very rare and rewarding experience, as if for only a short moment, the floater came in to full focus and was perfectly observable.

Summary

I was going through my various notes, diaries and assignments that I had written over the past two years, in order to gain some perspective on how my project and even my own personality had developed in the course of my masters. It's funny how artistic research works: you start off in one place and after a couple years of intensive studying you can find yourself somewhere else entirely with a whole new set of experiences and a completely different mindset.

Rereading the introduction to this essay, mainly written at the beginning of this program, I find it somewhat hard to believe that the words are my own. The anxiety that I felt as a result of my disorienting self-perception seems so dramatic to me now and I realize it was a more acute issue than I perhaps had even realized. I can now however say that, mainly because of having done my masters at KMH, a lot of the questions I was struggling with at the offset I no longer feel burdened by. This is due to a number of reasons and realizations which I have had throughout the course of this education.

For one, I have gained a great deal of confidence by putting together a band, writing for it and having it be so personal and close to my heart. It functioned as a stabilizing anchor in my everyday musical practice. Even though my masters project has been my primary focus the past two years, I have of course parallel to that played with a lot of different bands and listened to all kinds of music. But no matter what tangents I went on, playing with other bands and playing other peoples' music, I always knew I had my own project which I would come back to and that knowledge alone gave me a sense of direction and purpose in everything I did. Also, being able at all times to remind myself of the questions I had been working on trying to answer in this essay also helped me gain perspective on what I was doing, for what reason and how it affected me.

My attitude of experiencing my various influences as a tangled ball of yarn has shifted to that of a creative mosaic. There are difficulties in fusing different inspirational sources and you may find, as I did, that some things just aren't compatible. It requires a lot of trial and error, self-reflection and a continuous process of gaining new knowledge, but in the end I think it is the only way we can create something unique and personal.

I think the overriding wisdom I drew from this soul-searching project was this: everything I create, everything I listen to, everything I play, it's all me. I may write music which I experience as more original and personal, but even when I compose music that sounds like it comes from another era, it is also emblematic of my musical expression. We as people have a great need to compartmentalize everything in our surroundings and a lot of musicians seem to find it of grave importance to define what stylistic camp you belong to. But it's important to remember that we are all human beings and humans are complicated, multifaceted and complex, so it is only natural that this should be reflected in our artistic expression. This also means accepting the fact that you probably won't be able to be the world's best bebop musician and at the same time be the most interesting free improviser, since they are two different idioms that both require severe dedication. But I believe that music is a more rewarding activity if your aim isn't to be the "best" within a certain style, but rather when your goal is to be the best at expressing exactly what it is you wish to express and that probably involves listening to and playing whatever inspires you. I feel confident that I have made great advancements in this area and it has led me to create music which is more

personal and sincere. This brings me to the conclusion that, yes, it is possible to develop methods for finding your own musical expression.

From a practical artistic perspective, I think I have developed two important new skills as a result of having worked on defining my aesthetic. One is my ability to express emotions through my music. I've become very aware of how different musical ideas and sounds affect me and from learning that I feel like I now can utilize that in my own creativity. I've had a wider scope than simply focusing on writing music that sounds interesting: I've wanted it to resonate emotionally within me on a deeper level. Of course, different people are moved by different things, but I think the right place to start is to create something that has an affect on you and if it does, chances are that there are other people in the world who might have a similar experience.

I also feel like I have for the first time created a body of work which feels cohesive. All the music that I have written for this project could, and one day I intend it to be, featured on an album because there is a common theme in the music, a shared aesthetic. I have in fact started writing music recently for a new project with a very different stylistic approach, and that music also feels like it is conceptually coherent. Once again, I think that because I have been concentrating on more general elements that I am drawn to in music, my new compositions are united by those themes rather than for instance specific genre-related aspects. This means that I can now write a song which is very clearly rooted in traditional jazz and also write something much more avant-garde and they can both include the same aesthetic qualities and be part of a mutual aesthetic vision.

I'd like to conclude with a more general reflection. There were some moments during my masters when I questioned the whole concept of artistic research. I felt at times that I was so caught up in analyzing everything that I almost forgot to just experience and enjoy music. I was also worried that my whole approach was too cerebral and that the result would sound ostentatious and contrived. After all, it isn't often you hear about many of the truly great innovators finding their voice through a calculated, academic method. But I think there is a great danger in letting that lead you to believe that having a distinct voice is a God-given gift and some people just have it. Every artist has something unique to say and has to discover his or her own way of finding a personal expression. There are however many roads to that destination. Perhaps you need to spend several years standing alone on the Williamsburg Bridge, like Sonny Rollins, practicing and reflecting. Or maybe you need to travel back and forth across an entire country like Jack Kerouac, as illustrated by this passage from the introduction to his book "Dharma Bums":

"The true story of postwar America in all its speed, tomfoolery, and sorrowfulness, Kerouac believed, could only be told as interior monologue and confession. Once unleashed by 'one hundred percent personal honesty', in Kerouac's now-famous phrase, the inner self would discover its own art from; it had taken him fifteen years, he estimated, to tap and train his own voice."

Or perhaps you will find the answers you are looking for from studying a master education at a music college. Regardless, I think the important thing is not to trivialize these feelings.

Too many musicians lose their inspiration and will to play as a result of loosing touch with what they enjoy in music and what they want to project. I think if I had pursued a career in music directly after my bachelors I would have felt disillusioned within a number of years because I would have lacked a strong sense of self-identity. For that reason I am very thankful I got a chance to do my masters at KMH and attain new important information, both theoretical and relating to myself.

Knowledge is always better than ignorance and you can't solve any problems by avoiding them. If there happens to be a person reading this who is in a similar situation as I was that day in the library, contemplating whether or not to continue studying, I strongly advise you to be persistent. The search for personal expression is elusive but in the end, if you keep at it, it is very rewarding and utterly necessary for the evolution of your musical ability.

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Appendicies

Transcriptions

Lee Konitz Lexicon

Paul Bley Lexicon

Compositions

Montreal

Ghosts

Bucky

Blues Nostalgique

Distractions

Kullerbytta

Escape To La Paloma

Waves

It Is Lighter Than You Think

TRISTANO/KONITZ/MARSH IDEAS

A musical score for a single melodic line, likely for a piano or guitar. The score is written in treble clef and consists of eight staves of music. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The music is characterized by complex, chromatic melodic lines with many accidentals. The staves are numbered 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, and 33. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals, creating a dense and intricate melodic texture.

1

5

9

13

17

21

25

29

33

2

37

41

45

49

53

57

61

65

68

71

75

The musical score consists of ten staves of music, numbered 37 through 75. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Triplet markings are present above measures 49, 65, and 75. The score is written for a single melodic line.

78 3



Musical notation for measures 78-81. Measure 78: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), quarter notes G4, A4, B4, C5. Measure 79: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb), quarter notes B4, A4, G4, F#4. Measure 80: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), quarter notes E4, D4, C4, B3. Measure 81: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb), quarter notes A3, G3, F3, E3. The system ends with a double bar line.

82



Musical notation for measures 82-85. Measure 82: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb), whole note B3. Measure 83: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb), quarter notes A3, G3, F3, E3. Measure 84: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb), quarter notes D3, C3, B2, A2. Measure 85: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb), whole note G2. The system ends with a double bar line.

PAUL BLEY IDEAS

A musical score for a single melodic line, likely for a flute or saxophone. The score is written in treble clef and consists of 31 measures. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into systems of two staves each, with measure numbers 6, 9, 13, 16, 20, 23, 26, 28, and 31 marked at the beginning of their respective staves. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over a bracket) in measures 10, 11, 12, 20, 21, 22, and 23. The score ends with a double bar line in measure 31.

MONTREAL

ALEXANDER BROTT

B♭maj7 **B♭°**

BASS + DRUMS PLAY ON 2 AND 4

5 **(A)** **B♭maj7** **B♭°**

9 **B♭maj7**

13 **B♭maj7** **B♭°**

17 **B♭maj7**

(B) BREAK

21 **E/G♭** **G♭/A♭**

WALKING...

25 **E♭13** **D7(♯9)** **Gm°**

29 **Cm°** **B♭maj7** **Cm°** **B♭maj7**

2 33 $\text{Db}7(\sharp 11)$ $\text{B}7(\sharp 11)$ $\text{F}^{13}(\flat 9)$

37

41 IN TIME, UNISON FINE

44 $\text{Bb}^{\text{ma}}7$ Bb^{o}

SOLO, CUE TO A

GHOSTS

RUBATO

ALEXANDER BROTT

Am⁹ Gm(maj7)

5 Am⁹ Gm(maj7)

9 Am¹¹ Ab7(^{#11}/₅) F^{#m}7(b6) Gmaj7(^{#9})

13 Am¹¹ Ab7(^{#11}/₅) F^{#m}7(b6) Gmaj7(^{#9})

17 Cmaj13 Am¹¹ D7(SUS4) Cmaj13 Am¹¹ Cmaj7(^{#11}) Bm¹¹

BUCKY

ALEXANDER BROTT



2 21 

25 *RIT.* 

BLUES NOSTALGIQUE

ALEXANDER BROTT

Measures 1-4 of the piece. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is 4/4. The notation is in grand staff. Chords indicated below the staff are: Bb (measure 1), F7 (measure 2), Gbmaj7 (measure 3), Gm (measure 4), Bb (measure 5), and Eb7(#5) (measure 6).

Measures 5-8 of the piece. The key signature is B-flat major. The time signature is 4/4. The notation is in grand staff. Chords indicated below the staff are: Bb (measure 5) and Gm (measure 6).

Measures 9-12 of the piece. The key signature is B-flat major. The time signature is 4/4. The notation is in grand staff. Chords indicated below the staff are: Cm7 (measure 9), F7(#11) (measure 10), Bb (measure 11), Gm (measure 12), Cm7 (measure 13), and F7 (measure 14). The piece ends with a double bar line.

Measures 13-16 of the piece. The key signature is B-flat major. The time signature is 4/4. The notation is in grand staff. The piece ends with a double bar line.

DISTRACTIONS

ALEXANDER BROTT

Abmaj9 D7(#9) Dbm(maj13) Ab B° Db9

5 FRITT Abmaj9 D7(#9) Dbm(maj13) Ab B° Db9

9 Ab B° Cm7 F7(#9) Bbm7

13 Eb(sus4) FRITT Abmaj9 D7(#9) Dbm(maj13)

17 Ab B° Db9 Ab B° Cm7 F7(#9)

21 Bbm7 Eb(sus4) Dm7(b5) Dbm6 Ab/C B°

25 Bbm11 A7(#9) FRITT Abmaj9 D9(#11)

29 Dbmaj7 Emaj7(#5) Abmaj9 D9(#11) Dbmaj7 Emaj7(#5) Abmaj9 D9(#11)

33 Dbmaj7 RIT. Gb9(omit3) Ab(#11)

KULLERBYTTA

RUBATO

ALEXANDER BROTT

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29

Chords: G, D, G, D7, G, Em, Am, D, G, C, B, C, Db, Bb, G7(#5), G, D, G, C, Em, Am, D, TUTTI...

ESCAPE TO LA PALOMA

RUBATO

ALEXANDER BROTT

2 37 $F^{maj}7$ E_m7 D_m7 $C^{maj}7$ BREAK $G7(\sharp 5)$ C^6

41 SOLO ON A, CUE B (A) C^6 (B) $B\flat7(\sharp 11)$

45 C^6 $B\flat7(\sharp 11)$

49 $A\flat7(\sharp 11)$ F/G C^6

53

WAVES

♩=180

5

9

13

17

The musical score for 'WAVES' is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked as ♩=180. The score consists of five systems of staves. The first four systems (measures 1-12) feature a bass line and a drum line. The fifth system (measures 13-16) introduces a piano part in the treble clef. The bass line is composed of eighth and quarter notes, while the drum line features a mix of eighth, quarter, and half notes. The piano part consists of chords and single notes, primarily in the lower register.

21

25

29

33

37

41

4
45

System 45-48: This system contains measures 45 through 48. It features three staves: a treble staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C), a bass staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C), and a percussion staff. The treble staff has a whole rest in measure 45, followed by eighth and quarter notes in measures 46-48. The bass staff has a half note in measure 45, followed by eighth and quarter notes in measures 46-48. The percussion staff has a whole rest in measure 45, followed by eighth and quarter notes in measures 46-48.

49

System 49-52: This system contains measures 49 through 52. It features three staves: a treble staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C), a bass staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C), and a percussion staff. The treble staff has a whole rest in measure 49, followed by eighth and quarter notes in measures 50-52. The bass staff has a half note in measure 49, followed by eighth and quarter notes in measures 50-52. The percussion staff has a whole rest in measure 49, followed by eighth and quarter notes in measures 50-52.

53

System 53-56: This system contains measures 53 through 56. It features three staves: a treble staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C), a bass staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C), and a percussion staff. The treble staff has a whole rest in measure 53, followed by eighth and quarter notes in measures 54-56. The bass staff has a half note in measure 53, followed by eighth and quarter notes in measures 54-56. The percussion staff has a whole rest in measure 53, followed by eighth and quarter notes in measures 54-56.

57

61

65

6
69

Musical score for measures 69-72. The score is in 4/4 time and key of A major. Measure 69 shows a whole rest in the Treble staff, a whole rest in the Piano staff, a whole note in the Bass staff, and a drum pattern. Measures 70-72 continue the drum pattern. Measure 72 has an asterisk above the final drum hit.

73

Musical score for measure 73. The measure contains a half note A, a quarter note B, a quarter rest, a half note C, a quarter note D, a quarter rest, a half note E, and a quarter note F.

77

Musical score for measure 77. The measure contains a half note A, a quarter note B, a quarter note C, a quarter rest, a half note D, a quarter note E, a quarter note F, and a quarter note G.

81

Musical score for measures 81-84. All staves are marked with a double bar line and a repeat sign, followed by four measures of diagonal lines, indicating a repeat or a placeholder for a specific musical figure.

85 7

This system contains measures 85 through 88. It features four staves: Treble, Alto, Bass, and Tenor. All staves are in the key of D major (indicated by two sharps) and contain rhythmic notation consisting of continuous eighth notes. The system concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots on all staves.

89 Cm⁶

This system contains measures 89 through 92. It features four staves: Treble, Alto, Bass, and Tenor. All staves are in the key of D major. Measures 89 and 90 are marked with a 'Cm⁶' chord symbol above the Treble staff. The rhythmic notation consists of continuous eighth notes across all staves. The system concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots on all staves.

93

This system contains measures 93 through 96. It features four staves: Treble, Alto, Bass, and Tenor. All staves are in the key of D major and contain rhythmic notation consisting of continuous eighth notes. The system concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots on all staves.

8

97 G#7(SUS4) G7(#9)

G#7(SUS4) G7(#9)

G#7(SUS4) G7(#9)

G#7(SUS4) G7(#9)

101

IT IS LIGHTER THAN YOU THINK

ALEXANDER BROTT

Chord progression and measure markers:

- Measure 1: F#7(SUS4)
- Measure 2: G#m7(b5)
- Measure 5: F#/A#
- Measure 6: Bm6
- Measure 9: C#m11
- Measure 10: Dmaj7(#5)
- Measure 13: Ebm11
- Measure 14: Eb7(#9)
- Measure 15: Emaj7
- Measure 17: A7(#11)
- Measure 18: Emaj7
- Measure 21: A7(#11)
- Measure 22: Emaj7
- Measure 25: Gmaj7(#5)
- Measure 26: F#7(SUS4)
- Measure 29: G#m7(b5)
- Measure 30: F#/A#
- Measure 33: Bm6
- Measure 34: C#m11
- Measure 37: Dmaj7(#5)
- Measure 38: Dmaj7(#5)/E
- Measure 39: FINE