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Connectivity:

A Study in Storytelling Through Musical Means

Skriftlig reflektion inom självständigt arbete
Till dokumentationen hör även följande inspelning: **xxx**

Innehållsförteckning

Beginnings.....	3
From Texas to Stockholm	4
Yerakina	5
The Concept.....	5
The Compositions	6
Grounded.....	6
The Process.....	6
The Result.....	7
Belonging	8
The Process.....	8
The Result.....	9
Form of Balance	10
The Process.....	10
The Result.....	11
Upright	11
The Process.....	11
The Result.....	11
Night Visions	12
The Process.....	12
The Result.....	12
Here	13
The Process.....	13
The Result.....	13
Hunger	14
The Process.....	14
The Result.....	14
Weightless	14
The Process.....	14

The Result.....	15
Distance.....	16
The Process.....	16
The Result.....	17
Bookends.....	17
Reflection.....	17
Looking Forward.....	18
Appendix.....	18
Band Members.....	18
Lyrics.....	18
Belonging.....	18
Night Visions.....	19
Here.....	19

Beginnings

I like to think that life has graced me with two sets of parents. At seven years old, my mother and I packed up our life with my father and moved in with her parents Nancy and Gerald Ryan, or as I call them, “Nana and Papa.” Every night, the family took our usual assembly around the dinner table. At the head of his own handcrafted dining room centerpiece, reined my papa. Nana was to his right with a good view of our boxy television, and after my mom served the food, she stationed herself by my grandmother’s side. My seven-year-old mind methodically sat across from my mother so I could not only demand her attention, but to avoid direct eye contact with my grandfather. Papa inherited all of his family’s Irish genes, including his quick temper, Roman Catholic faith, wild storytelling, and the tendency to break out in song at any triggered memory. My younger self trembled at the thought of what Papa might have to say if I misbehaved but secretly, I clung to every piece of wisdom he imparted on me, and my heart gushed with excitement at each musical outburst.

While tinkling on the upright piano in their living room, I wrote my first composition at seven-years-old. I banged my fist on the low end to depict a horrible monster chasing after a “high-octave-oscillating-seconds” princess running at her swiftest speed to escape. Throughout my life, my mind has concocted stories about the seemingly most insignificant events: why the girl at the park was crying, why her mother wore that specific pink dress today, and of course the countless boys I considered to be my soul-mate as a teenager. Point is, storytelling runs through my veins even if I never collected them on paper. It wasn’t until later in life though, that I realized I could tell my stories through song.

Ten years later, I found myself accepting an invite to listen to one of Massachusetts’ most popular big bands by the name of “Stage Door Canteen.”

“You’re the singer!” I heard amongst the crowd’s adrenaline-induced chaos after the first set of swing. The lead saxophone player and head of the band, Roger, had seen me only the previous week singing a version of “All of Me” that only my Papa could love. Recently, I found that I had a pretty decent singing voice, and decided to try it out with my high school’s jazz band. After a few minutes of chatter, Roger asked me to join the band on the same song in the next set, to which I nervously but instantly accepted. Sandwiched between two trombonists, I fumbled my way through the chart, lost half my hearing from the trumpets blaring behind me, and was later surprised to find the company impressed. A few days later I received a call from Roger asking me to front the band full-time, and my career as a jazz musician began.

After about a year of wedding gigs, nervous attempts at improvisation, and a cross-country musical tour with the band, I began to feel myself developing a real love for this music. My high school studies were soon coming to a close, and I opened my mind to the idea of studying music at a college level. The bassist in the band, Jim Peterson heard this and graciously offered to give me lessons once a week. I enjoyed researching famous jazz musicians, learning basic theory, and compiling a list of standards for my repertoire, but the day of our lessons was always a terrifying mess. Jim wanted more for me. He not only wanted me to be a singer; he wanted me to be an artist. Every time we jammed, he encouraged me to take a chorus of improvisation to which I might try at first, but I would always end up crying and trying to get out of it. Some of his assignments even instructed me to

compose alternate lyrics to a standard, or to write a poem of some sort. I would show up red-faced and embarrassed of what I had attempted each time, but it was because of Jim's persistence that I started exploring my own creativity and gained the slightest belief that something I could create something worthwhile.

The following year I was accepted to the vocal jazz program at the University of North Texas¹, where I picked up a ukulele for the first time. Even though I had no idea of the notes I was playing, suddenly words and music started pouring out of me. I brought the songs to a group of fellow musicians, and for the first time in my life, my stories manifested through music. My first song told the story of a little bird who had all the potential in the world, but needed to collect her confidence to sing her melodies. It's still my mother's favorite of my tunes. Ukulele in hand and friends at my side, I found the courage to start creating and the musical knowledge to execute it properly.

Upon reflection of these past four years in jazz school, the most important lesson I have gained is the confidence in myself to create music, craft lyrics, and arrange the tunes so that each part of the composition tells its own unique story. The skills I have attained in my studies have equipped me with the tools to express myself through my music, and my broadened horizons and travels have fueled me with the inspiration to continue to develop my unique musical voice.

From Texas to Stockholm

Denton, Texas produces a whirlwind of bebop, odd-time signatures and enough "hip" and "heavy" jazz cats to take over the entire jazz hip-hop scene. At the University of North Texas, the vibrant colors of the city seemed to separate and melt into black and white concerning the study of music. In hindsight, I have learned in my travels that the education system in the United States feels a need to produce hard fact. This means that when studying the arts, the students are told that their art is right or wrong. There is no interpretation, there is only testing and grading. I can honestly say that I would not be where I am today without the knowledge provided to me by the University of North Texas. I continue to believe that it is important for aspiring musicians and artists to learn the fundamentals of their craft, but in my sophomore year at UNT, I felt a need for change. Some artists find tough love to be inspiring and the feeling of inadequacy drives him or her to greatness. For me, the failed Charlie Parker transcriptions and ii-V speed-drills only painted my perception of myself as a small personal failure. I decided to explore for a semester, and expand my horizons overseas. A few friends had studied at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm and recommended that I apply for their study abroad program.

Little did I know that when I arrived at Kungl. Musikhögskolan, I would be filled with so much inspiration that it seemed like I wrote music every spare moment just to rid myself of all the emotions that bubbled inside me. Arriving in a place where I knew nothing of the language or had no common relations, piano quickly became my closest friend. Together we fumble through stories of worlds turning upside-down, heartache, homesickness, but ultimately finding strength. I could not let these new discoveries in myself fade away. At KMH, I found myself inspired after nearly every class I took. I ran home and explored new types of music, and found myself hearing details woven into recordings that I had never previously heard.

¹ **University of North Texas:** Public University founded in Denton, Texas in 1890

Before I knew it, a few months of study turned into an entire academic year. Later, I would make the bold decision to end my time at the University of North Texas, and finish my bachelor's degree in my newly found home of Stockholm.

Each of these schools proved essential in my growth as a musician. Gaining a new perspective and approach to music genuinely fueled my passion to expand my knowledge, create, and polish my own style and voice. Suddenly I not only identified as a jazz singer, but a composer and artist. The switch to incorporate "arranger" into my title was soon to follow.

Yerakina

The summer following my first year at KMH, I jumped in a car with my newly found Swedish best friend and travelled across the United States. Fully stocked with my mom's chocolate chip cookies and brand new CDs, we set out on our 4000-mile journey to explore, learn, grow... and to pick up my cat in Denton, Texas. After what seemed like our 700th listen to Justin Timberlake's "Don't Stop the Feeling," we decided it was time to put on one of our new, shiny, *signed* Banda Magda² CDs entitled, "Yerakina." From the absolute first second of exotic accordion and tinkling bells, my entire view on music changed. As each song unfolded, I heard stories in timbres I had never experienced; with instruments I had never even heard the name of. Soon I realized that the stories I heard were not even of my own language, but of Greek, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. The stories that clouded my vision of the roads unfolding before me were all manifested by the *arrangements*. The horns, strings, voices, hammers, and claps all intertwined to paint remarkable landscapes when words fell short. This was an entirely new concept to me. Being a total Joni Mitchell³ junky, the words primarily functioned as the focal point and emotional drive of the songs I listened to, and the stories I wrote. For the first time in my life, I found myself crying over bass hits, swelling accordions and the interplay between a violin solo and horn-padded backgrounds. This was the moment I not only realized I was a true music dork, but that the arrangement of a tune can make or break a song. I decided to revisit all of the songs I had written in the past year and reshape them into living moments, where each element of the song can tell a story of its own. This became the basis of my final work.

The Concept

For my final exam, I decided to use all my knowledge harvested through my travels, schooling, and experiences to finally harness my creativity. I would experiment with different instrumentations, timbres and grooves to produce compositions and arrangements personal and strong enough to speak vibrantly in every aspect. Over the next eight months, I would write my first string quartets, play with varying sound palates, and experiment with some of those instruments I couldn't pronounce the name of. I sought to add layers that would each buttress the meaning of the composition in their own way. Sometimes, this would mean

² **Banda Magda:** New York Based Band founded by Greek born composer/ performer Magda Giannikou

³ **Joni Mitchell:** (born November 7th, 1943) canadian-born singer/songwriter

stripping down the arrangement to have less, and finding a way to keep the music interesting in a small instrumentation. In a 2003 biography called “Woman of Heart and Mind,” Joni Mitchell relates her musical process to a film production. A composer forms an idea and setting, the scriptwriter develops characters and language, and the director sets the mood and backdrop while the actors present the emotion and story.

While I felt confident in my emotional delivery on stage, the final project of my bachelor’s degree was to encompass all the elements of a creative musician. This included the formation of an idea, a meditation on lyrical substance, and the woven scenery of the arrangement. In August 2016, I set out to manifest an expression of myself through every musical device I had acquired in my four years of musical studies.

The Compositions

I decided to rearrange seven songs that I had written in Stockholm in the previous year. Some of the songs I tinkered with the groove and harmony, others I added different layers of horns, voices and/or strings, and one song I changed completely. Throughout the process I was inspired to write two more compositions, which completed my set for my exam concert on March 8th, 2017.

Grounded

The Process

This song was written in collaboration with one of my good friends in Texas named Chris Petro. It was the first time I had ever collaborated with anyone in the writing process, so it ended up with him writing the chords and main riff and myself writing the melody and lyrics. The original groove was more fluid and swingy like the chorus exists now, but I became inspired by Andy Allo’s ⁴ “People Pleaser” to write a more stagnant, abrupt groove. As readers can gather, my music notation was not very proficient at the time. Instead of dotted eighth notes, my naivety led me to write the main riff as eighths tied to a sixteenth, creating a bit of confusion among players.

GROUNDPETRO/ CURRAN

ELECTRIC GUITAR

Original Groove and Instrumentation

⁴ **Andy Allo:** (Born January 13, 1989) American Hip-Hop singer and composer

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system features a B♭ Trumpet part with a 'HARMON' marking and a Tenor Saxophone part with a 'FLUTE' marking. Both parts are marked 'LAY BACK'. The Tenor Saxophone part includes a 'MED' marking and a sequence of chords: E MA7, E9, A MA7, A MI6, G#7, E MA7, E9, A MA7, A MI6, G#7. The second system continues the 'LAY BACK' instruction for both instruments with the same chord sequence.

New Groove and Instrumentation

Later, after gaining more experience, and learning more about big band arranging and instrument doublings, I decided to experiment with different timbres within individual instruments. I found that I liked the pairing of flute and trumpet with a Harmon mute, so I used it as a basis for building the main riff, which was previously played by guitar. Later, the arrangement evolves for open horns dancing between staccato and legato background parts and the main focus. I decided to add background vocals after the horns were written to add more of a legato flow that is not found in any other instrument. I found in rehearsal that the new written figure was much easier to understand. I became more confident in the new groove, but became less confident about how easily the two horns tuned together.

The Result

I learned very quickly in the process that the groove can be hard to sell at the slower tempo I want it. The rhythm section has to be extremely tight and the horns have to be aggressive on their attacks for the groove to work. The energy can deflate very easily without a certain concentration. I tried to work on this with rehearsals, but I sensed that energy was lacking due to end-of-the-day rehearsals. On the concert, the tempo is a bit more brisk than I would have liked it, but I think as the song progresses, everyone gains some more momentum. I do wish that the swing on the choruses laid back just a little more, and the piano had gained the energy it deserved. Then again, being the first song of the concert, maybe it had the amount of energy to greet our audience.

Belonging

The Process

Christmas of 2015, I took the opportunity to meet my extended family in Ireland and stereotypically “retrace my roots.” What I did not realize was that this experience would actually profoundly determine how I view myself and my decision-making. Upon meeting people who acted, spoke and thought similar to me, I found that if I instantly liked them then that love should also be extended to myself. Furthermore, I met a cousin who travelled the world studying ideologies, -isms, and viewpoints, and realized that the most important way to live is to simply do what makes one happy. I adapted this mode of life, and realized what my path had in store for me. I came back to Sweden a woman full of confidence and determination to stay in Europe and explore my musical capabilities. This change in perspective inspired me to write “Belonging.” I realized that my harmonic knowledge fell a bit short due to my beginner piano skills, so I sought out the help of one of my best friends. I found upon first listen to KMH pianist William Benckert, that his harmonic ideas paralleled the emotions I wanted to convey in my music. I showed him a few songs of the sound I was after, and he almost immediately started vamping between two chords that sounded like the excitement and nervous energy bubbling inside a travel-hungry Jess. Once our melodic and harmonic ideas were set in place, I began to think about the rest of the arrangement. Since the song reflected my time in Ireland, I wanted an earthy feel in the percussion with preference toward the Irish bodhràn, a circular hand drum covered in cloth that is beaten with a wooden hammer. Since no bodhràn players existed at KMH, I instead turned my focus to congas. Secondly, for the chorus I decided to have a feature for Irish tin whistle but again, since KMH understandably has no Irish folk department, I substituted this part for the flute. The strings came later, as I felt the arrangement needed more texture. I based my arrangement off of the emotional response I took away from Debussy’s⁵ “La Mer.” The strings sought to resemble the swelling of the ocean, and my use of a pizzicato figure and timely entrances attempted to emulate this effect.

The image shows a musical score for four string instruments: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The score is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The first two staves (Vln. I and Vln. II) feature a melodic line with a 'Pizz.' (pizzicato) marking above the first measure. The Viola and Violoncello staves feature a sustained, low-frequency harmonic line with a 'Pizz.' marking above the first measure. The score is divided into four measures, with the first measure containing the main melodic and harmonic material.

⁵ **Claude Debussy:** (August 22nd, 1862 – March 25th, 1918) French Composer of the impressionist movement

Some String Figures in Belonging

Lastly, for the concert I asked my Irish friend Aingaela to play first violin and take a folky fiddle solo mirroring the main melody of the chorus to fully capture the spirit of Celtic music.

The Result

The string arrangement for this tune ended up becoming my favorite of the three that were written. I felt it captured the emotional vibe I sought after. The congas and piano ended up being a nice pairing in the beginning, but I think the time naturally sits at a slower tempo when I want it to be a bit more up-tempo. In the concert, one can hear my lack of breath-support due to my nervousness, but I calm

The Result

Originally this tune was written for only percussion, did not include drum kit, and was written to be recorded with overdubs. I also suggested we do this song a few days before the concert, so the result ended up being a bit more sloppy than I anticipated. Still, with only a few run-throughs I enjoyed the inclusion of this song in the set list, as it's the first song I ever wrote without lyrics, and in a minimalist style compared to the rest of my compositions. I was surprised to find that the range that I wrote for the melody was almost out of my singing capability, which shows my focus on the composition itself rather than my part in it. Again, my nervousness and lack of breath support lead to a sloppy, unsupported lead vocal performance.

Upright

The Process

The point of this arrangement was to really push the limits on the normality of instrumentation. Originally this song was arranged for drum kit, bass, piano and violin. I decided to revisit it and completely change the vibe. I was inspired at a Jazz Manouche⁹ jam session, when a Nyckelharpa¹⁰ player joined in for a bebop tune. The sound of the Nyckelharpa and nylon-string guitar in unison was a unique, exotic flavor to my sound palate. I decided to re-arrange the groove in a flamenco style. It would feature the bass alone, as the lyrics are an illusion to a broken upright bass, and then delve into a written interlude featuring the Nyckelharpa and flamenco guitar. I wanted to add to the organic flavor by introducing clapping as a change in percussion, and to have crunchy voicings for the background vocals.

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Acoustic Guitar (Ac.GTR.), Voice (Vox.), and Double Bass (D.B.). The score is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 7/8 time signature. The Acoustic Guitar part features a complex, rhythmic melody with triplets and slurs. The Voice part consists of a few notes, including a triplet. The Double Bass part provides a simple harmonic accompaniment with notes and rests, and includes chord markings: B^b A^b and C_{M7}. The score is numbered 62 at the bottom left.

The Result

This song ended up being my favorite in the whole concert. I love how the arrangement turned out, and how the instruments sounded together. The voices had

⁹ **Jazz Manouche:** A form of jazz born in the 1930s by guitarist Django Reinhart, commonly referred to as "Gypsy Jazz"

¹⁰ **Nyckelharpa:** Traditional Swedish instrument, played with keys and bow

a hard time finding my notes for their parts in rehearsal, but the result was worth it. The timbre of the Nyckelharpa, guitar, and voices sounded so amazing with the clapping. I think it can be difficult for everyone to keep clapping on different rhythms at the tempo I set, so that part sounded a little frantic. I was impressed by the groove produced by the band. In rehearsal, I presented a recording of a Paco de Lucia¹¹ song as an example and we spent the first chunk of rehearsal trying to apply it to the song. The Nickelharpa-player, Petrus Dillner interpreted my melodies with his own voice and ornamentation that fit the style so well. I was happy that I could include a traditional Swedish instrument into my set, and to make it flow with my personal sound as a testament to my time in Stockholm.

Night Visions

The Process

Night Visions was another revisited song about inner demons. Originally written as a reggaeton¹², I had the idea to transfer the syncopated groove to the string section to play pizzicato.



The image shows a musical score for the piece "Night Visions". It consists of four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The Violin I, Violin II, and Viola parts are marked "Pizz." and play a syncopated, rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Cello part plays a simple, steady bass line of quarter notes. The score is divided into four measures.

To give it a toy-box sound, I used glockenspiel as an added texture. I also decided to add a section in the middle for some free, and out improvisation to add to the creepy vibe. I had written the first draft of the string arrangement during the summer of 2016. Generally, at the time I would write my lines with a melodic approach, and hope that the harmonies worked together. After meeting with my arranging tutor, Torbjörn Gulz, and strengthening my knowledge of blocked chords, my second edit and refurbished voicings of the strings suddenly started to make sense.

The Result

Although I loved the texture of the strings playing the pizzicato groove, I realized very quickly that it was extremely difficult to get classical players to play a groove like this tightly in time. Most of the rehearsal was spent trying to get the rhythm solid, and ended up with a decision to have the drums keep time over them. This

¹¹ **Paco de Lucia:** (December 21st, 1947 –February 26th, 2014) Spanish guitarist who influenced the “New Flamenco” genre

¹² **Reggaeton:** Musical genre originating in Puerto Rico during the late 1990s. It is influenced by hip hop and Latin American and Caribbean music.

was due to my over confidence and inexperience writing for strings, and ironically not realizing that this is not a commonly played groove in the classical world. So between glockenspiel, rhythm section, and strings this opening section ended up being a bit sloppy on the concert. I was very happy with this arrangement though. I believe the textures blended together in such a beautiful way, and really conveyed my conflict of innocence and chaos in the lyric. At this point, my voice really started to become strong. The improvised part became everything I needed it to be. I felt that I could let all my nerves go and it seemed that the rest of the band felt the same. The time in the strings wasn't so important in this section since the time faltered everywhere. I think this arrangement was most intricate of all, where the parts worked together with a sense of the most unity.

Here

The Process

During Gun-Britt Gustafsson's songwriting class, guest-instructor, Erik Gadd gave the students an assignment to write a partial song, in order for us to receive feedback in the song's infancy. While sometimes songs seem to pour out of me, this one felt like pulling teeth. I sat at the piano and recorded myself singing stream-of-conscious thoughts, at Gadd's suggestion. From this, I took away the phrase "Take it All" and started to write a story juxtaposing two sides of a conflict with the phrase "So I found" and "So you found." I tried the new groove of a slow, soulful 6/8, and realized that the groove and harmony alone was not enough to make for an interesting composition. My chorus, unlike all my other songs, resided on one word rather than a phrase or idea. Gadd thought that my idea could be molded into a more fluid conception. He told me to develop my story more, and clarify exactly what I was trying to convey. In addition to this, he suggested that I play with different layers to enliven the composition. I decided to add horns playing a line of 4 over 3 on the chorus to give it a texture change, and methodically scheduled instrument entrances to enhance interest level. The addition of the vibraphone was a last minute decision.

The Result

As I suspected, the first rhythm rehearsal proved my theory of a lacking composition. We spent our time working on our inner divas, and thought hard about dynamic changes. When the band could sell the tune in it's bare bones, the addition of horns and vocals only functioned to stimulate further expansion. On the concert, it seemed that the composition kept it's momentum all the way through. Upon listening, I don't think I agree with the decision to use vibraphone, and would have preferred a more stationary harmonic pad. I found that I had trouble with the key change on the bridge song, reminding me that I should also think about my self in the writing process. Concerning horns and vocals, the layering really affected the energy and changing vowels in the background lyrics added a different feel to each chorus. The tempo was a bit faster than was comfortable to phrase my lyrics in a soulful way, but that was also my fault in count-in. The dynamic changes were so delicately executed, and the song rendered so much character.

Hunger

The Process

In contrast to the last song, Hunger was born out of my complete emotional outrage over the political state of my country¹³. In an effort to cleanse myself of my negative restlessness, this song flowed out of me with surprising ease. Being my most recent song, one can see musical growth and maturity through my harmonic choices and comfort singing in an odd-time signature. I decided that the concert was in need of a song with only rhythm section, so this was my effort to arrange a song in an interesting way without any added textures. Instead of a written interlude, I decided to direct a time change into 4/4 from 7/8 by conducting in the middle of my scat solo. The band came up with the bass line in the 4/4 change during rehearsal. The ending figure was written to be a drum solo, but the band agreed that we should end on the main riff. This song needed a bit more rehearsal than the rest to find stability, but in the end we came to a comfortable conclusion.

The Result

On the concert, I was impressed by how well the groove sat in 7/8. I found myself very nervous during my improvised solo, so it turned more into wailing than any profound musical phrasing I could brag about later. I ended up forgetting to sing a figure I had written for myself in unison with the piano to cue a new section, and even forgot some of my own lyrics. It seemed that the rehearsal time paid off, because my band followed me through all my worst mistakes and form faltered. I actually considered this to be my worst performance of the show, but a lot of the audience members told me that it ended up being their favorite composition of the night. So I suppose that the energy from everyone involved and the emotions conveyed were more important in the end.

Weightless

The Process

At the time of this song's creation, I was studying a lot of Wayne Shorter's music. I learned Kurt Elling's¹⁴ full vocalese to "Night Dreamer" and learned to play

¹³ Election of Donald Trump as President, November 2017

¹⁴ **Kurt Elling:** (Born November 2nd, 1969) American singer/ composer and lyricist

McCoy Tyner's voicings for the song on piano.

260

Night Dreamer

Wayne Shorter

(Intro) E_{MI}^{11} G_{MI}^{11} $D^{7(alt)}$

(solo pn. fill) (pn. L.H.)

Med. Jazz Waltz
 $\text{♩} = 128$
 (add bs. & dr.)

(pn.) G_{MA}^7 F_{MI}^7 E_{bMA}^7 $D^{7(+9)(+5)}$ (etc.)

[A] G_{MA}^7 F_{MI}^7 E_{bMA}^7 $D^{7(+9)(+5)}$ G_{MA}^7 F_{MI}^7 E_{bMA}^7 $D^{7(+9)(+5)}$
 (trp. w/ ten. 8va b.)

G_{MA}^7 F_{MI}^7 E_{bMA}^7 $D^{7(+9)(+5)}$ E_{bMI}^7 A_{b9}

E^{13}_{SUS} F^{13}_{SUS}

G_{MA}^7 F_{MI}^7 E_{bMA}^7 $D^{7(+9)(+5)}$ G_{MA}^7 F_{MI}^7 E_{bMA}^7 $D^{7(+9)(+5)}$

Solo on [A]
 After solos, D.S. al Coda

Wayne Shorter's "Night Dreamer" New Real Book 2

I used these voicings with a different bass note to construct a new composition. When the song was written, I originally wrote it with a single violin playing a countermelody. I later decided that I would like to rearrange the song for a string quartet. Since I had never previously written for multiple strings, I sought out my violinist friend, Aurélien Trigo for help. He played through the tune and suggested variations for my original violin's countermelodies. After suggesting some tips on how to harmonize the lower parts, he introduced me to other string techniques such as tremolo and glissando. After our session, I spent about two months constructing the voicings for the three lower strings.

I took this arrangement to Torbjörn a few months later, and he helped polish my many harmonic mistakes. As a result, the string parts were very easily read, at his suggestion of bowings and articulations.

The Result

The only problems I encountered in the string parts were the glissandos in the first chorus, and the section's difficulty in tuning the main phrase to perfect fourths.

2 WEIGHTLESS

B D MA^b E 2UG² B MI⁹ D MA^b E 2UG² B MI⁹

Main Phrase of Weightless

4 WEIGHTLESS

D G MA⁹ D MA^b G MA⁷⁽⁹⁵⁾ A MA¹¹

THERE'S NO TIME FOR LOOKING DOWN

Glissandos in Weightless

The incorporation of Axel Fagerberg's percussion added a lot of color to the arrangement. Since this song had been played many times by everyone else in the band, rehearsal time functioned as more of a basic run-through. This resulted in his entrances and exits to be disconnected. On the concert, the time began to rush after the first chorus in reaction to the strings' entrance. I responded with an attempt to phrase my words slower during band pauses, but my sturdy band kept their previous pulse. In general, the song worked very well, with just some minor mishaps that could have been prevented with another rehearsal and less nerves.

Distance

The Process

Distance was the first song I had written at Kungl. Musikhögskolan, and the first song I had written at the piano. When I brought it to my singer/songwriting class I

basically had bass notes, and sometimes even a third for a chord voicing. A fellow singer by the name of Christopher Lennerbrant believed in the song so much that he offered to sit down with me and help me figure out the chords. Bringing his guitar along, we jammed on the tune until we found a good basic harmony, and even a main hook melody. I wanted to write a song in the style of Bruno Mars's "Uptown Funk," in which the chorus is played by horns, and lyrics are added on top later.

Next, I brought a very simple arrangement for tenor sax and trumpet to the band where the horns usually rest on 3rds and 7ths or in unison. With some suggestions from trumpeter Erik Tengholm, the arrangement turned out a complete dynamic piece with a lot of groove. In rehearsal, we debated whether the song would flourish better with Nord¹⁵ or piano, and I faltered a bit in explaining the groove to the band. Eventually, we all agreed on a certain rock groove with Tobias Johansson on the Nord.

The Result

Right from the start, bassist Samuel Löfdahl and Tobias Gräns launched into a more swinging funky version of the tune than we had previously rehearsed. Axel's cabasa and congas launched the swing groove farther. I ended up loving this more than the straight groove that it was written in. Gaining confidence playing with each other over the previous few weeks allowed us to have a lot of fun with our last tune and try new things. Everyone seemed to be jamming rather than performing at an exam concert, which was a better ending to the show than I had ever imagined. On an objective note, the bridge was written for only voice, drums and Alf Carlsson on guitar. Alf played this section a bit more sparsely than I had hoped, but it still worked. I was also surprised that someone other than myself had cued the ending. I became accustomed to signaling the last note, so when the song ended I felt a bit awkward. Overall though, I thought the last tune and concert was a huge success. I couldn't help but grin at all the work I had just accomplished, and be so proud of all the amazing musicians who brought my compositions and arrangements to life.

Bookends

Reflection

From my start to finish, this Bachelor's degree in Jazz Studies has been an amazing journey. To empathize with the terrified 18-year old jazz singer, nervously roaming the halls of UNT on her first day completely baffles the confident woman writing this paper today. Through countless lessons in music theory, ensembles, tunes, ii-Vs, and experiments, I have emerged at the end of my path an artist. I am now certain that I could not have reached this point without my experiences at both colleges I have attended. The University of North Texas gave me the tools to read, write, and become a professional musician. Kungl. Musikhögskolan provided me with the opportunity and inspiration to transform my knowledge into artistry. KMH's emphasis on projects forces everyone into the roll of a bandleader, leaving them to think about the music they want to present. In gaining this perspective,

¹⁵ **Nord Keyboard:** Swedish-made electronic synthesizers, founded in 1983

students leave the school ready to continue their journey toward their own personal sound. I was granted at KMH, the opportunity to present a set of all original music for my final exam concert, and instruments of all types can do the same. Yes, UNT manufactures high-quality musicians, but when the students stumble into the Texas heat, they often find themselves at a loss of what they can do next. In Stockholm, the starting-level is so high, that I would not have even been able to pass an entrance exam without my time in Texas. So through a conglomerate of educational ideals, I have emerged balanced between the two, ready to continue my work.

Looking Forward

Upon reflection of my final exam concert at Kungl. Musikhöskolan, I have many goals to look forward to. My first task is to continue to expand my knowledge of harmony, and incorporate more complex chords into my compositions. Secondly, I realize that each part of my arrangements I add is almost like a different character talking over the others. In the future, I would like my instruments to have a dialogue with each other, buttressing the other's arguments. My horns act as more of a call-and-response, voices are usually an undertone, and my strings follow after their first violin captain. I would like to eventually challenge these roles I have cast to each of my main characters, and challenge my instruments to become a unique attribute to the music. After KMH, I will continue to expand my musical palate to incorporate other colors, and gravitate more toward my individual sound. Through the process, I heard a lot of my listeners tell me that my music sounds like my personality. I am inspired to continue that work, and let my organic self flow into my audience's ears and hearts. I will continue to write my stories, and hope that my music reflects the chapter of my life that I currently reside. My Bachelor education has provided me the first steps of becoming the artist I intend to be, and I will continue to use these tools to recount every step of the journey.

Appendix

Band Members

My band for the exam concert on March 8th, 2017 was comprised of myself on vocals, Tobias Johansson on piano, Alf Carlsson on guitar, Samuel Löfdahl on bass, Tobias Gräns on drumset, Axel Fagerberg on percussion, Erik Tengholm on trumpet, Martin Wirén on flute and tenor saxophone, Terese Evenstad and Aingeala De Búrca on violin, Isabelle Martin on viola, Erik Elvkull on Cello, Arnar Ingi Richardsson, Lili Holényi and Anna Lindahl on backing vocals, and Petrus Dillner on nyckelharpa.

Lyrics

Belonging

*Guided to a northern shore by kin before,
She fastens on her wings.
Longing for un-resting solidarity,*

Engines start to sing.

*Insecurities ignite her brain,
Wondering just why she came
To a place where no one knows her name
To find...*

*Rubber soles meet busy roads of cobblestones,
Wandering through a dream.
Welcomed by the twisting of a foreign tongue,
She comes and goes unseen.*

*Crowded bags become a home,
Wandering this way alone.
Heart is pounding love for what's unknown
And what she'll find.*

*And with spider-webs wrapped 'round her fingers,
She weaves a story of her own.
Spinning corners of this life together
To entangle and to grow.*

*Strange to be so far from there this time of year
From those who love her most,
But bonds are bound with unrelenting fortitude
And hold from long ago.*

*All around the table sing
Melodies she's held within
Suddenly she knows just where she's been,
And she finds love.*

Night Visions

*Sitting in the dark and rowdy corners of her mind.
Carrying the lullabies that left her there in time.
Watching the moments fly like origami birds,
that leave a single paper cut and wish to go unheard.*

*But these night visions, creeping out her spine
Waken the bells that soft and dimly chime.
If she can find a way out she can keep the noise away.*

*Caught in her love again,
her seems are pulling; fraying slowly.
Wrapping around her curls, and laying her to dream.
Caught in a lonely heart, her fears of breaking, a steady beating,
forces a way into her dreams.*

*Pounding on these concrete walls to chip away the fear.
Bloody knuckles cease and fall, the cracks all disappear.
Some nights she thinks she sees a light that's creeping through.
Too slow the process goes, shadows back in view.*

Here

*So I found my way back to the girl I used to be.
The city lights uncovered what I'd been blind to see,
And as your walls shifted, I felt it in my bones
that now I don't wanna go home.*

*Take it all,
Take it all from me.
Take your side
And leave me be.
Take it all
Take it all from me,
Cuz I'm the only one, and all I really need is just to be here.*

*So you found your way to a girl you think you need.
Runway lights uncovered what we'd been blind to see,
And in my persistence met only by resistance
I find my heart is now compelled to roam.*

*And I can do this on my own, oh yes I will,
But it's crazy how a love so strong can disappear.
Now it's time for moving on from you dear,
So keep on smiling with her, I'll be here.*