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Handledare: ---

Emil Norman Kristiansen

# Detour

Skriftlig reflektion inom självständigt, konstnärligt arbete

Det självständiga, konstnärliga arbetet finns

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## Thesis statement

For my exam, I would like to work with my own compositions based on rhythms from all over the world, and to play those songs at a concert at KMH. My idea is that each composition, should be based on different rhythms found in folk music from Africa, South America, India and so on.

One song could be based on a rhythmic grid taken from Indian Carnatic music (Konnakol). One song could be based on the rhythms that occur in Peruvian Landao music and so on. With each composition, I'm going to write about the music tradition from the specific area, try to analyze the rhythms from a theoretical perspective and describe the compositional process. I find the research part super interesting, because I know very little about most kinds of world music. World music in itself, is such an incredibly comprehensive genre, so I will have to pick some very specific types of music, as well as geographic areas.

I have never regarded myself as a composer, and composing is a quite underdeveloped part of my musicianship, therefore it's interesting to create this challenge for myself. My idea is to use these rhythms as a starting point for each composition, and use them in a modern jazz setting, consisting of trumpet, guitar, piano, bass and drums. In that way, I'll combine researching different kinds of folk music, writing my own music and playing a concert. And maybe ultimately reflect upon how these rhythms effect my playing on the drums.

What you have just read, was my initial idea for my exam project, and what I started out working towards. But due to reasons, that I will be describing later on in this thesis, I decided to change direction. I changed my mind about the "world music" aspect of my thesis, and instead I focused solely on composing music, bringing a band together, working with my music and playing a concert.

## The term "world music"

In this thesis, I use the term "world music" as a recurring subject, and therefore it is important for me to clarify exactly what I mean with that term. So here is my understanding of the term "world music":

There is a weird contradiction in the term "world music" in my opinion. All music known to mankind is music that has evolved in the world. Therefore, one can argue that all music in our world is "world music", but I will try to be a bit more specific. World music is musical category encompassing many different styles of music from around the globe. The term has been used through recent history as a musical category including "non-western traditional music". I guess that everybody has a personal

association with the term. When I hear the term, I think of music from Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East. The elasticity and “borderless” nature of world music, makes it incredibly hard to define, or label, but the ethnomusicologist Robert E. Brown gave the best description that I’ve heard: “Local music from out there”<sup>1</sup>.

## **My musical background**

When I was 6 years old, my parents enrolled me at the local music school in Århus. The lessons there consisted mostly of basic rhythm training, singing and dancing. After two years with those lessons, I wanted to play the drums, but the music school in Århus had so many applicants for drum lessons that they created a program called “Musikkarrusellen” (the musical carousel). The program was meant to give the kids a chance to play other musical instruments than the drums, and we tried out a lot of different instruments in a year. During that year, I played upright bass, guitar, recorder, piano, violin and more, but after that, I still wanted to play the drums. When I turned 8 I finally started taking drum lessons.

I had drum lessons with different teachers for a few years, and I started playing in a rock band with my two best friends. We played songs by Greenday, Jimi Hendrix, Kashmir (a Danish rock band), and others. It was amazing!

One summer, I met Robert Fabrin, a young jazz drummer from my neighborhood. I started taking lessons with him when I was about 13 or 14, and Robert was the first teacher I had who really taught me the importance of practicing. After a few years with Robert I started taking lessons with Kristian Leth, Roberts teacher. Kristian is an active jazz drummer in Denmark, and he was sort of the perfect teacher for me back then. He was really focused on technique and control, and he was all about discipline. I remember one lesson when I came unprepared, Kristian suddenly slammed the practice pad with his sticks and started yelling at me. Kristian took the lessons very seriously, and expected me to do the same. I’m still grateful that I met Kristian at that point in my life.

A few years later, I joined Danish Youth Percussion. It was a classical percussion ensemble for 15-25-year-old musicians, funded by the Danish art council. The ensemble played modern percussion music by composers such as Xenakis, Per Nørgård and Edgar Varèse. We played a few concerts in Denmark and Sweden, but also in Beijing, China. Playing classical music was fun for a while, but I couldn’t see myself going in that direction. I wanted to play the drum set.

After a year or so, I started at MGK (Musikalsk Grundkursus). MGK is a three-year program for young musicians, provided by the local music schools in all the biggest cities in Denmark. The program consists of classes such as ensembles, instrument lessons, piano lessons, ear training, rhythmic training and music history. I went to MGK and high school simultaneously, so I think that those three years were similar to the education that one would get at a Swedish Musikgymnasium.

<sup>1</sup> <http://cwm.illinois.edu>

The summer before I started at MGK (Musikalsk Grundkursus), my father and I went to see Joshua Redman Trio live in Århus Musikhus. The concert really amazed me, and most of all, I was floored, stunned and totally impressed by this drummer that I had never heard of: Greg Hutchinson. At that time, I was really into hip-hop as well as jazz, and Greg seemed to be a living combination of beautiful sound and technique. He had a fat backbeat and extremely swinging jazz playing. I think that concert was, and is, one of the most influential and important concerts that I have ever experienced. I later contacted Greg, and had a couple of private lessons with him, as well as one with his former teacher Kenny Washington.

After my studies at MGK, I began at Skurups Folkhögskola. My time at Skurup was a great learning experience for me, and I had a lot of time and resources to really dig deep into jazz. The environment was motivating and inspiring. And being surrounded with like-minded jazz enthusiasts 24/7 was great! I spent two years at Skurup and went on to study jazz at Kungliga Musikhögskolan in Stockholm, where I'm now working on my examination.

## **Planning:**

I had been thinking about my exam project for most of my third year at KMH, but it was quite late that I figured out exactly what to do. I knew that I wanted to play a concert with my own music, and I knew that I wanted a concept or a certain approach. I didn't decide on what concept to go with, until a few days before the deadline. I asked the band members one by one. I knew that I wanted Anton and Samuel in my band from the start. We had been playing for a while, as a piano trio and as the rhythm section in Nick Klamann Quintet. I really enjoy playing with those guys, and they are easy to work with. I was unclear about the setting though, and it took me a while to settle on trumpet and guitar, as the other instruments in my band. I ended up asking Morgan and Henning to join the group at the end of January 2017. I decided to have two chordal instruments in my band because it allows for new possibilities, in terms of different constellations within the same band. With this quintet, I felt like we could experiment with the constellation a lot. With 5 musicians playing, there are so many different options and so many different duos, trios and quartets within the same orchestra.

Most importantly, I choose the musicians because of personal reasons. I like them, and their playing – and I could easily imagine these guys playing my music. We rehearsed four times before my concert.

In terms of planning, booking rooms at KMH and those things, I found it quite simple to organize the whole thing. Another thing that I had to deal with, was that I went to an audition at Manhattan School of Music in New York 2 days before my concert, and I had to deal with a bit of jet lag the days before and the day of my concert.

## **The band**

Henning Ullén – Trumpet

Henning and I met at the end of my first year at KMH. He had been studying a year at Berklee College of Music and moved back to Stockholm just before I ended my first year. We both lived at Lappis (Stora Lappsjärnsberget, Stockholm) at that time, and we talked a few times on our way home. I often asked about his time in Boston, and it seemed that Henning and I had a lot of mutual idols in the Jazz world.

Henning struck me as an incredibly motivated, talented and hardworking guy. I really liked his playing as well as his style as a composer. During my second year at KMH, we rarely spoke. We jammed

occasionally but we didn't hang out a lot. In the fall of my third year at KMH, Henning and I had ensemble lessons with Martin Sjöstedt, and during those lessons, I had a chance to play more with Henning and that was when I decided to ask him to join my band.

### Morgan Hultgren Wörn – Guitar

Morgan and I met at KMH during my first year. We had a lot of mutual friends and I liked him instantly, but it took a long time before we really became friends. During my third year, we started jamming and hanging out a lot, and we seemed to have similar daily routines, so we often met at the school. I like Morgan's playing a lot, and his playing really evolved with the music throughout my project. In the end, I was very satisfied with having asked him to join the band.

### Anton Dromberg – Piano

Anton is my oldest friend in this band. We both started Skurups Folkhögskola at the same time (the fall of 2012), and we began at KMH simultaneously as well. Ever since Skurup, he has sort of been my go-to piano player, we have played in many different bands and situations together, and I always enjoy it. Also, I love talking about music and about playing with Anton, and I have come to value his opinion a lot. He's very opinionated and it seems that he's more focused on the emotional and expressive side of improvising, as oppose to the technical and skill based side of things – this is quite rare to find, in musicians of our generation. He strikes me as a very sensitive musician, in the sense that he is incredibly aware and present when he plays. After rehearsals, he often makes remarks about the dynamics, the tempo or how it felt to play a specific song. Also, he seems to have a great sense of how to shape the music, and a will to take the music in a new direction. Besides this, Anton and I both play in Nick Klaman Quintet.

### Samuel Löfdahl – Bass

Samuel is one of my dearest friends in Stockholm. He is such a funny and positive guy, and it's always a pleasure playing and hanging out with him. He's a phenomenal bass player on the upright as well as the electric bass, and he spreads a very positive and relaxed atmosphere during rehearsals. We've been playing a lot since I moved to Stockholm in all kinds of situations. Although we play a lot together, it seems that we haven't really checked out the same kind of music. Samuel regards himself as mainly an electric bass player, and I'm not familiar with so much of his favorite music and many of his musical influences. A lot of fusion bands from the 80's, and musicians such as the bass player Gary Willis and Marc Johnson. Samuel is also a part of Nick Klaman Quintet, and in that group we have worked a lot with our interplay and groove.

## **My initial idea and my expectations:**

In the summer of 2015, I was a student at Vallekilde Summer Sessions, a Danish course for professional jazz musicians. Danilo Pérez (Panama) was a part of the faculty, and he had ongoing lessons with an ensemble during the week. At the end of the week, the ensemble played a concert to display what they had been working on during their time at Vallekilde. They played a suite that Danilo had written called "Suite of the Americans". The three-piece composition was based on different grooves or rhythms found in Latin America. Actually, I didn't think about this concert for a long time, but when I started thinking about my examination project, I came to think of Danilo's Suite of the Americans. To my knowledge, the suite had not been recorded, and I don't remember the music well

enough to draw specific ideas from it. But the idea of creating new music based on old folklore was something that really stayed with me.

There were many aspects of my initial idea, that I found intriguing. First of all, I'm interested in world music, and thought that the research part of the project would be really cool and fascinating. Also, I thought that my explorations with world music would give my thesis a more academic touch – which I liked. Second of all, I thought that a very specific idea or concept would inspire me to compose, and that a limitation like this would work as a catalyst for the creative process. I thought that the whole writing process, would proceed rather easily, compared to my earlier experiences with composing. I thought that if I had a specific idea from the beginning, that the whole composition would just build itself upon that. Maybe I was naive, but that was not the case!

## **The compositional process, and why I decided to change course:**

When I began composing music for my concert, I gradually realized that I had to go about it in a new way. My composing process proceeded like this:

I spent hours on Google, YouTube and Spotify, searching for music that had grooves or rhythms that I could base my composition upon. I started out searching for native African music, but gradually I started listening a lot to African pop and afro beat musicians such as Fela Kuti (Nigeria), Brice Wassy (Cameroon) and Amadou et Mariam (Mali) Although I love the music, it never really sparked that “thing” that I was looking for. The process went on like this: I found a song or a groove that I liked, and began to imagine or hum a melody that would fit the groove, I would write the melody down in Sibelius, and within a short time I began to feel stuck, bored and completely uninspired by my work. The song “Sketch No. 1” is an example of that. We even rehearsed it once, but I decided to let it go and to focus on some of my other songs instead.

I gave myself this challenge because I wanted to develop my skills as a composer, but it felt like I was in over my head. I realized that I don't have the skills or the experience as a composer to undertake a massive work load like this. At the same time, I still wanted to write my own music for the concert. Regardless of whether the music was written with a world music influence or not, I still wanted to compose, and to improve my composition skills

Therefore, my initial idea, and my entire examination project had to change course. Instead of having a project based on world music, I focused on writing, arranging and being a bandleader for the band that I had put together. That turned out to be plenty of work in itself. The compositions that I wrote for the project were much less dogmatized and conceptual, instead they were written with the specific band members in mind.

In hindsight, my lack of inspiration probably had to do with my specific workflow. Recently, I had a conversation with the trumpet player, composer and arranger Ann-Sofi Söderquist about this. Ann-Sofi mentioned how she often feels limited and uninspired when she works with Sibelius. In her opinion, a music program like Sibelius can kill the composer's musical imagination, and should therefore only be used for the last part of the writing process. Her suggestion was to exclude Sibelius from the actual creative writing process, and only use it for editorial purposes such as notating, layout, correcting and so on.

When Ann-Sofi and I had this conversation, I was pretty far ahead in my exam work, and I had already changed my mind regarding the influence of world music in my compositions. I really recognized a lot of what she said, and it almost felt like she was describing my personal writing process. After that conversation, I began to compose in different ways. Instead of working with Sibelius, I started working with Logic instead. It's still a music software program, and one could imagine that it wouldn't make much of a difference to simply change the music program, but it did. The actual sounds of the programmed instruments sound so much better, and I felt more free to just write what I felt, without thinking about the notation. Also, I just sat down by the piano, and tried to come up with ideas. After a while, I started writing music, just for the sake of writing. My idea was that I would write a sketch and then later on, change the feel or the groove into something that would sound like

African music. That never happened though, but I ended up feeling rather satisfied with some of the sketches. Following, is a description of how I composed **two** of my songs, “Kingsgarden” and “Further”.

## Kingsgarden - The compositional process

There was one song that I did manage to compose with an African groove as my starting point. But the final result is so far away from my starting point, that my initial influence wouldn't be the least evident to the listener. Here I have described the entire process from the idea to the live version:

There is a video on YouTube with the American drummer and teacher John Riley<sup>2</sup>, explaining a special kind of 12/8 groove. The rhythm originates from North Africa (Morocco or Nigeria), and it has a very special “non-western” feel to it. I transcribed the groove back when I was studying at Skurup, and I've had lot of fun with it since then. In the video on YouTube, John clarifies why the groove sounds so “odd”. The beat in 12/8 can also be regarded as a 4/4 groove divided in triplets. Normally, in swing - or triplet based music, the placement of the subdivisions often sounds like an up-beat going to a down-beat. The beat essentially consists of the first beat that lies in unison with the pulse, and the third triplet beat that gives the groove the “swing or the shuffle factor”.

This groove, that John demonstrates in the video, is basically developed around the first and the second triplet beat. That is what gives the groove this “off-putting” and weird sensation. In the western world, we've been exposed to so much swing and shuffle music, that when we hear two triplets in a row, we immediately perceive the first beat as an “anticipation beat” leading up to the downbeat. The beat almost sound like a “flip-beat” that sort of gives the illusion of the pulse being on the second triplet beat. But there are other reasons to why I find this groove so interesting. The groove begins with a hit on the snare, so not only is the triplet groove displaced from what we normally hear, but the backbeat is on one, as opposed to two and four.

So, during my before mentioned “writer's block”, I thought of this groove. I began to practice the groove again, and experimenting with a few different things. I started playing the groove in 16th notes instead of triplets, and that sounded quite cool. For some reason, I found this alteration a little less complicated and a little more “musically approachable”. I found it easier to go in and out of the groove when I was improvising, and it felt more accessible in general. I programmed the beat (in the 16th note version) into Logic, and began to write a melody. Within a few minutes, I had written the A section of the song that I later called “Kingsgarden”. I called the song “Kingsgarden”, because the melody (beginning with a major 6th interval) reminded me of a song, that an old friend of mine wrote. His name is Rasmus Kongsgaard, and Kongsgaard translates into Kingsgarden.

Quite early I realized, that the “Nigerian Flip Beat”, that I had programmed for the song, sounded disturbing and a bit too complicated, so I ended up deleting the original drum beat. I wanted the musicians to improvise as freely and relaxed on this piece as possible, and I just couldn't see that happening when the groove was so complex.

At that time, I was really inspired by a song called “Doubt”, by the American saxophone and bassoon player, Ben Wendel. The melody and the harmony is very pure and simple, and it almost sounds like a children's song. The song has a long and varied bass line that is unison with the piano, and it sort of gives the song a contrapunctual feel. The song is very spacious and ambient and I love the vibe of the tune. Even though the song is so simple the first bar of the A section is a 9/8 bar. It subtly throws off the listener, and creates a bit of rhythmical tension in an otherwise straight forward and simple song.

I felt really inspired by not only the composition in itself, but also the interplay within band. After the theme, the band goes into a collective improvisation and they almost share a solo. Instead of one

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nG9egP1AvEU>

soloist improvising through the entire song form, the musicians play short phrases and melodies, creating a common solo part. The pianist Gerald Clayton and the saxophonist Ben Wendel goes in and out of each other's solo. One thing that I find remarkable, and something that I didn't notice at first, is how the piano player keeps quoting the melody when the saxophonist solos and vice versa. I felt so inspired by the piece, that I stole several ideas from it.

The overall vibe and atmosphere of the song, and a "wave" of 16th notes with mallets going up and down in dynamics, found its way into my song, the idea with the unison bass and piano lines framing the harmonic movements and lastly, how I instructed the band to improvise on the piece. I wanted the band to play a collective solo on the form, and I told the members that the melody could be quoted at all times. Also, I told them to think of a cloud, and to think texturally. The band responded really nicely to my instructions and the music instantly went in the direction, that was hoping for.

## Kingsgarden - The rehearsal

All the songs that I've written while studying at KMH, have been quite arranged and thought through before the first rehearsal. I normally wrote specific parts for each instrument, and spent a lot of time working on the notation and layout to make it as easy accessible for the given musician as possible. There are a few advantages with this approach. For instance, the notes speak for themselves and I don't have to instruct too much before we can begin to play. Also, my expectations wouldn't differ too much from the final musical result. But in some cases, I find that a very specific and challenging arrangement can become a musical obstacle more than a contribution. Here is a short anecdote that explains my point:

During my second year at KMH, I applied for a jazz program in Washington DC, called Betty Carter Jazz Ahead. The audition for the program was to write, arrange and perform our own music. At that time I didn't compose a lot, and I didn't really know how ambitious I could be in terms of musical difficulty. I ended up writing three songs for a jazz quartet featuring saxophone, piano, bass and drums. Two of the songs were fairly simple.

The last song that I wrote for the audition, was a song in 9/8 called "Ode to J.T." - The song was a homage to the British pianist and composer John Taylor, who died a few weeks earlier. John had written a song called "*Amleside*" that featured an intro, with a bassline in 9/8. I stole that specific bassline, and based my entire composition upon it. Throughout the melody of my composition, I also wrote a piano part consisting of half notes, played on top of the bass line, creating a 4-bar long polyrhythm. My idea was to have different layers of note values creating a really interesting groove. Needless to say, the song was rather difficult to play and a real challenge for the band, including myself.

After a lot of rehearsals, we recorded the music and the result was fairly good. We played the music as it was written, and as I had imagined it from a drummer and composer point of view. I transmitted the music, but I didn't get accepted to the program. After a while, I listened to the song once again, and the only feeling that I got from listening to it was "Wow, we made it through the song". Because of the difficulty of the composition, none of us in the band could improvise freely, everything sounded pretty good and pretty boring at the same time, and none of us played with the same creativity or conviction that I knew we could. That recording session was really an "eye-opener" for me. A composer's epiphany you might say.

I was so focused on writing something hip and challenging, that I forgot about everything else. We didn't play very dynamically, and it was hard to play spaciouly and to change the note value during a phrase. That is what I mean when I say that a specific arrangement can become a limiting or in the worst case, a killing musical factor. After all, the purpose of an arrangement should be to contribute to the song, and to the musician's creativity. This is why I didn't want to write an arrangement for "Kingsgarden". Instead I had some ideas that I wanted to try out at the rehearsal.

The first time we played the song, I suggested that we should loop the A part, but without the melody. As soon as the melody enters, the song form starts. I told the band that they should feel free at all time to follow their instincts, and play whatever they heard. The melody could be quoted at any time, and they should not be concerned with an ordinary "solo form" - meaning that everybody in the band could start and end a solo at any place in song form. I told Morgan to think about big soundscapes and use a lot of guitar effects. As I mentioned earlier, I wanted to create a spacious and transcendent atmosphere in the song. I wanted to capture a certain vibe in the song, and I found it much easier to talk about my intentions instead of writing out the specific parts. I think that we captured my idea quite well at the concert, and I'm really satisfied with the composition as well as the performance of the song.

## Further - The compositional process

The song "Further" was the third song at my concert.

Ever since my high school years, I've been a fan of the Vijay Iyer Trio. The band features one of my all-time favorite drummers Marcus Gilmore, who I've been following and listening to thoroughly since the first time I heard him. The Vijay Iyer Trio mostly work with Vijay Iyer's compositions, but they also cover music by artists such as Michael Jackson, John Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, M.I.A., Billy Strayhorn, Ronnie Foster and many more. In an interview, Vijay talks about the band:

"Back in the 90's I had another trio - we were trying a lot of different things with rhythm, and was very spacious and very collective. And that was sort of the foundation for THIS trio in general (meaning his current trio featuring Stephan Crump on bass and Marcus Gilmore on drums) - which was not really soloistic in orientation, I mean there was soloing but that wasn't the main thing that was happening. The main thing that was happening was the evolution of grooves, spaces and textures and things like that."

The trio manages to play the most rhythmically intricate material, but with the most organic and elegant sound. As opposed to many other jazz and fusion bands, who also play odd meter based music, this band really stands out in my opinion because of their ability to play texturally and with so much space within the rhythmical systems. It's almost like the music levitates from the rhythmic grid and becomes a warm sounding collective beat.

The trio has worked a lot with rhythmic modulation, and it is a recurring effect in many of their songs. Instead of instantly shifting from one tempo to another, the band gradually morphs a groove into a new subdivision. The transition from groove number one to groove number two, can be several minutes long. They use this concept as musical texture with different rhythms and note values grinding against each other instead of just a transition to a new tempo. In songs like Ronnie Foster's "Mystic Brew" from the album "Historicity", or Michael Jackson's "Human Nature" from the "Accelerando" album, there are sections where the trio goes from one subdivision into quintuplet grooves. This sounds so cool and beautiful in my opinion. Theoretically, one can argue that they are playing in a 5/8-time signature, but because of the placing of the snare accents, it sounds like a slower quintuplet backbeat. I love this "in between" feeling that the groove gives the listener. We're so used to listening to 16th notes or 16<sup>th</sup>-note triplets, but this subdivision in 5/8 sounds so interesting and almost exotic. I've been listening to these songs for a long time, and I wanted to write a song with a similar groove for just as long.

Before writing the song, I did some research into music with similar grooves, and I stumbled upon the Cameroon drummer Brice Wassy. I know that Brice Wassy has been a big influence on Marcus Gilmore as well as the other members in Vijay Iyer Trio. Brice Wassy released an album in 2005

called “Meditations”, and on that record, there is a song called “Body’s”. The song is basically a beat in 5/8 that develops throughout the song through different instrumentations and variations. I’ve practiced to the song a lot, to develop a deeper understanding of the groove, and to be able to play creatively and fluently.

The piano figure that I wrote is quite simple, it’s a bass line going from F to G to A, with a “response part” consisting an interval being played downwards between E and A. It’s simply an Am chord with different bass notes, but because of the missing minor third, the intro gets a very open and almost “epic” side to it. The harmonies are quite simple and diatonic, and the melody is repetitive with a few highpoints. The first note of the melody is a B natural creating a Lydian sound.

In the solo section, I changed the time signature to a slower pace (5/4), to create a contrast for the listener, but also because of convenience. I find it easier to play and improvise in a time signature with a slower pace – even though it’s still in an odd meter. Since the theme of the song is in 5/8, it seemed natural to change the pace to a slower rate, and also it created a nice contrast to the rest of the song.

### Further - The rehearsal

The rehearsal of the song went rather swiftly. The biggest challenge was for Henning and Morgan to play the theme with rhythmic accuracy. The song starts off with an intro without the guitar and trumpet, and they enter with the melody in unison. The melody is quite simple without any phrases going over the bar line, but there were a few places that we had to work on slowly and thoroughly to get it right. The real challenge was for Morgan and Henning to enter with the melody, and be able to lock in with the groove directly. This is another subject that I discussed with Ann-Sofi Söderqvist during my lessons in composition. We were talking about playing in odd time signatures, and her point was that it can be harder to take a pause and reenter, than it is to just keep playing all the time. If you play you “have to be IN the music” - but as an “outsider” it can be hard to suddenly appear inside a challenging groove. Regardless of the musician’s level or skill set, it can be a challenge to instantly fall into the right groove and play the part, especially in an odd time signature.

I must admit that being a bandleader still doesn’t feel natural to me. I guess that it’s a learning process just like anything else, but even though I consider myself to be a fairly confident guy, I still find it a bit nerve wrecking to tell other musicians how to play. Even though I’m dealing with music most of my time, I have come to realize that I’m quite bad at describing what I imagine musically. For some reason, it’s a challenge for me to articulate how I want the music to sound. Maybe I just have to trust my instincts more, and maybe it has to do with lack of confidence with my compositions – I’m not sure. But that is definitely a side of my musicianship that needs nurturing.

## The Concert

At the concert, we played four of my songs, “Kingsgarden”, “Further” and two other songs that I have not described in this thesis. Besidesthis, I decided to play a jazz standard, the Chick Corea composition “Windows”. I thought that it was nice to play something that I had not written myself. Also, I found that playing a jazz standard with a band like this, is quite different from how it sounded when we played original music. It is a context that everybody in the band is familiar with, and we all knew the song from before. On another note, it was the only song with a “swing feel” at my concert, and I wanted to show that side of my playing as well - a more “straight ahead swing” kind of playing.

Overall, I was satisfied with the concert. I think that my bandmates made a really nice effort, and that the songs took shape like I wanted them to. I was a bit nervous at the concert, and it took me a moment to shake that feeling off, and just play like I always do.

I didn’t get the recordings from my exam concert before the 5<sup>th</sup> of April, one day before my “opponering” (a month and 4 days after my concert). When I listened to the recording I was pretty

satisfied with the outcome. There were a few mishaps, and a few places that should have had more time in the rehearsal room, but we collectively managed to convey what I wanted with each song.

One thing that I could have done differently at the concert, was to choose my gear with more care. After my concert, I found out that I could have ordered a different drum set for the show, and I should really have done that! The day of my concert, my own drum set was at home, and I didn't have access to a car. Therefore, I thought that I had to play on KMH's DW Gold Sparkle Jazz Kit.

At the sound check, I thought "Yeah, whatever. It's going to be fine." But when the concert began, I was really upset with myself for not finding another instrument for a concert of this importance. To be perfectly honest, I've never played a drum set, that I hate more than that kit. The balance was completely off, in my opinion, the bass drum sounds like a cardboard box and the toms resonate for too long, without any overtones. My complaints about the drum set might seem irrelevant, but ultimately, I think that one's specific instrument affects the music to some extent. The more experience you get with playing different drums, the better you get at coping with instruments in bad conditions. When your first reaction when you play a note is: "Oh no!", it can really become a limiting factor for the music.

I remember that it took a while for me at the concert, to get to the realization: "Okay, this is what I have to work with. I better make the best of it." - Even though I was perfectly aware of how the drums sounded, it still took me a minute to actually accept it at the concert.

## Final reflection

A central part of my exam project was give myself a challenge, and to work with it as a vehicle for my compositions. Even though I dropped my initial idea, I learned a lot in the process. As I mentioned earlier, I have never regarded myself as a composer, in the sense that composing is a very "underdeveloped" part of my musicianship. I simply haven't spent the time and the effort working on that side of my musical identity. I didn't feel experienced, talented or equipped enough as a composer, to be able to write music with such defined "guide lines". Come to think of it, an idea as specific as this one almost seems like commissioned work that a professional composer would get. I simply overestimated my abilities as a composer.

That being said, I still managed to write songs that were somewhat inspired by "world music". Because my final compositions were so far away from my first idea, and the element of "world music" is not evident or perceptible for the listener at all, I felt like I had to change course during my exam project. After my decision, I started focusing on being a bandleader, rehearsing the music and playing a concert instead, and that was also new ground for me. I've more or less been a sideman (drummer) in all the musical projects that I've been a part of over the course of my life. To write music and rehearse it with my band, being in charge and making the decisions was (and still is) a challenge for me. This of course is a learning process, and it still doesn't feel completely natural to me. It is something that I intend to work on in the future, and now I know that it is not as hidden as I thought. I'm still very interested in "world music", and the impact has on modern jazz music. My interest in the field was something that sparked long before I started with the exam project, and it's a theme that I will continue to study. For instance, I have often thought of moving to West Africa for a few months, and study the drum traditions in countries such as Mali, Senegal or Ghana. Not right now, but hopefully in a few years.

Setting yourself a goal like this is demanding, but it's also educational. I really had to work, and to squeeze the music out of my head to get to the point that I wanted. Even though my final result was so far from what I imagined when I wrote my thesis statement, I still managed to be the composer, arranger, organizer and drummer for an entire concert that I'm content with. I didn't finish the race, but I went on a *detour*, and found some interesting things underway. I discovered some sides of my musicianship that I wasn't aware of, and I became aware of some sides that need work, nurturing, practice and more experience. I went on a detour – and stumbled upon new things!



# Appendix

## “Sketch Nr. 1”

Trumpet in Bb

Piano

Upright Bass

5

Tpt.

Pno.

U. Bass

9

Tpt.

Pno.

U. Bass

13

Tpt.

Pno.

U. Bass

$G^{(sus4)/F}$   $A\flat^{o9}$   $E\flat^{13}$   $D\flat^6$

“Kingsgarden”

# Kingsgarden

♩ = 110

C<sup>6</sup> G<sup>6</sup> Am(add4) F

Piano

5 C<sup>6</sup> G<sup>6</sup> 1. Am Fmaj7

Pno.

9 2. Am Fmaj7/E Am

Pno.

12 G D/F# C(add2)/G

Pno.

15 C<sup>6</sup> G<sup>6</sup> F<sup>6</sup> C

Pno.

“Ode to J.T.”

**A**

9 Gm7(add11) Gm7(add11) Gm/F Gm/F

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

U. Bass

Detailed description: This musical score is for the piece "Ode to J.T.". It features three staves: Tenor Saxophone (Ten. Sax.), Piano (Pno.), and Upright Bass (U. Bass). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score begins at measure 9, marked with a box containing the letter 'A'. The Tenor Saxophone part consists of a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes. The Piano part provides harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines in both hands. The Upright Bass part plays a steady eighth-note bass line. Chord changes are indicated above the Tenor Saxophone staff: Gm7(add11) for measures 9 and 10, and Gm/F for measures 11 and 12.

“Further”

17 Fmaj7(#11) G% Am7 Am(maj7)

TEN. SAX.

PNO.

U. BASS

Detailed description: This musical score is for the piece "Further". It features three staves: Tenor Saxophone (TEN. SAX.), Piano (PNO.), and Upright Bass (U. BASS). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score begins at measure 17, marked with a box containing the number '17'. The Tenor Saxophone part has a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes. The Piano part has a sparse accompaniment with chords in the right hand and moving lines in the left hand. The Upright Bass part plays a steady eighth-note bass line. Chord changes are indicated above the Tenor Saxophone staff: Fmaj7(#11) for measure 17, G% for measure 18, Am7 for measure 19, and Am(maj7) for measure 20. Blue double-headed arrows indicate the transition between these chords.

“Windows” by Chick Corea

Med. Jazz Waltz **Windows** Chick Corea

**A**  $B_{MI}^7$  (flute)  $G^{\#}_{MI} \bar{7}(b5)$   $C^{\#7}$   $F^{\#}_{MI}^7$   $D^9_{SUS}$   $E_{MA} \bar{7}(+11)$   $E_{MA} \bar{7}(+11)$  (pn.)

**B**  $A^{b7}$   $A^7$   $A^{b7}$   $A^7$   $A^{b7}$   $A^7$   $A^{b7}$   $A^7$   $A^{b7}$

**C**  $E_{MA}^7$   $D^{\#}_{MI}^7$   $C^{\#}_{MI}^7$   $C^{\#}_{MI}^7$   $B$   $B^b_{MI} \bar{7}(b5)$   $A^b$   $E^b_{G^7}$   $E^b_{G^7}$   $A^b_{MI}$   $A^b_{MI}$   $G^b$   $D^b_{F^7}$   $D^b_{F^7}$   $E_{MA}^7$   $D^{\#}_{MI}^7$   $C^{\#}_{MI}^7$   $C^9(+11)$

**(Ending)**  $B_{MA}^7$   $C^{\#}_{MI}^7$   $B$  (3x's)  $B_{MA}^7$   $C_{MA}^9(+11)$   $B_{MA}^7$  (fill)

Solo on form (ABC)

Alternate changes for solos at letter C:

**C**  $C^{\#}_{MI}^7$   $B^b_{MI} \bar{7}(b5)$   $E^b_{G^7}$   $A^b_{MI}$   $D^b_{F^7}$   $C^{\#}_{MI}^7$   $C^9(+11)$

4 3

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