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A Musical Personality

A quest towards discovering my identity in music and developing it into a musical personality

Skriftlig reflektion inom självständigt, konstnärligt arbete

Det självständiga, konstnärliga arbetet finns dokumenterat i KMH:s digitala arkiv.
Abstract

The purpose of my research was to develop and strengthen my personality in music as a vocalist, so I would be able to freely let it out during any musical encounter. My base for the research was a duet with guitarist Mikael Máni Ásmundsson, but it was during a rehearsal with him that I realised for the first time I even had a musical personality – that I liked. Before, I had often felt uncomfortable and tense when playing music and not sure who I was as an artist.

I limited myself to working with West Coast jazz, jazz standards, and lyrical improvisation, and I used various methods such as transcribing, ear-training in multiple forms, and improvisation exercises, to develop my musical personality. The research resulted in a nine-song album that Mikael Máni and I created in 2020 under the artist-name Tendra. That album is my examination project.

I learned a great deal from the experience. I gained self-confidence, independence trust and calmness during this journey, and at last I feel comfortable with who I am as an artist – my musical personality has finally moved in.

Keywords and guiding lights:
storytelling, identity, melodies, lyrics, scatting, improvising, expression, rooted, musical ear, comfortable, personality.
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Preface

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Mikael Máni Ásmundsson.
1. Introduction

Dear reader, the text you’re about to read is in many ways a story. It’s a story about is my journey towards discovering my very own musical personality. Although the story has a departure point and a destination, the travel logbook indicates a route that is not a straight line from A to B, but instead, it looks like a drawing made by a two-year old with multiple lines and circles in chaotic and improvised directions. I kind of like it. It’s abstract but inspired and intuitive thinking shines through. Near the end of the thesis, I will explain how everything came together, but for now, let’s start from the beginning.

The story begins in Amsterdam. The year is 2015, and autumn in all its glory hovers over the city with its greyness and withered, falling leaves.

I remember sitting on my couch in apartment 263 in Presto, the name of the student house I was living in while doing my BA in jazz vocals at the Conservatory of Amsterdam. I believe it was a Sunday. The weather was grey, as per usual, dim and gloomy. I’d had a musical meltdown, if you will. A moment of weakness where the whole world of music seemed pointless, and my place in it was vague. My purpose was nowhere to be found, and I had lost my love for making music. Since I was a teenager, whenever I needed to escape my day-to-day troubles, I would lock myself away, put on some music, lie in my bed, and drift away into the safety of the untouchable world that music creates. In a weak, albeit dramatic, attempt to feel a tad better, I grabbed my headphones and my iPhone, opened the Spotify app, stumbled upon a playlist called ‘Winter acoustics’, and pressed play. The first few notes I heard were from a guitar. Moments later, a subtle voice snuck in. So simple. I completely broke down and started to cry — faith in humanity restored.

1.1. A little background story...

At CvA¹, I found myself completely surrounded by very skilled and ambitious students. The practice rooms were fully booked all day long, and the atmosphere was high in energy. Although this environment proved to be very inspirational, it also created an atmosphere of competition between students. In the first two years in the vocal department, we focused mostly on ‘strengthening our basics’ regarding the jazz tradition, by digging into jazz standards, improvisation, and theory, and there were weekly ‘vocal nights’ where the vocal students would perform. Before I go on, I’d like to emphasise that what you’re about to read was my personal experience, and neither the school nor the students can be held accountable

¹ CvA = Conservatorium van Amsterdam
for my feelings. I want to make it clear that the Conservatory of Amsterdam is an amazing school I highly recommend as a place to study jazz! Now, back to the story.

In the vocal department, because we were all working on similar stuff and doing similar things, comparisons became almost inevitable, and it became difficult not to get sucked in and take part.

One of the skills that I felt was ‘expected’ of singers – a sort of measurement of their validity – was the ability to scat fluently like an instrument. When a singer performing a standard would improvise a line that included notes considered outside, the crowd would immediately react with a cheer or a ‘yeah!’ If a singer would improvise a phrase in double time and throw in a b9 or a #11, there might even be an applause.

Like the other vocal students, I focused mostly on jazz standards during my first years at CvA. I would do my best to make the music sound good. I’d put together a band with bass, drums, and a chord instrument, arrange the tunes, and practice hard. However, no matter how hard I tried, how hard I worked, how much I practiced, or even how religiously I tried to squeeze some ‘hip notes’ into my scat solos, I didn’t feel comfortable. It felt like I was lost within the music, trying to find my way around, feeling overpowered by what other people were playing, and trying to be heard without getting in the way.

In 2018, I was diagnosed with social anxiety, also known as social phobia\(^2\). For me, the disorder is an all-consuming fear of being judged, rejected, or humiliated. The disorder has actually become pretty manageable, but it’s still there and I still actively avoid crowds where I have to talk or be social. Having coffee with one person is easier than having coffee with two people. When this is put in context with musical situations and what I was feeling at CvA, those Sunday musical meltdowns are not so surprising. Playing music by myself was easier than playing with one other person, which in turn was way easier than playing with two or more persons. In the past, I’ve most often opted for doing gigs by myself or with a maximum of one other person, whom I needed to know pretty well and trust.

Now it’s time to introduce a turning point. During my second year I met a guitar player, also studying at CvA. We had a lot in common, for example; we were both from Iceland (cue those ultimate homesickness remedies, the insider jokes and the sharing of the Icelandic chocolate stashes). This person was Mikael Máni Ásmundsson.

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\(^2\) **Social phobia (social anxiety):** ‘Social anxiety is the fear of social situations that involve interaction with other people. You could say social anxiety is the fear and anxiety of being negatively judged and evaluated by other people. It is a pervasive disorder and causes anxiety and fear in most all areas of a person’s life.’

At 6 o’clock one day in late November 2014 – in room 632 at CvA – we had our first jam. It was just the two of us and we played some standards and a few lovely Icelandic tunes. I immediately liked playing with Mikael. Apart from his rock-solid timing, his warm and colourful tone, and his carefully chosen and gently formed voicings, all of which impressed me a great deal, I couldn’t believe how open his ears were and how intensively he listened to what I was doing. He showed me musical respect on a level I had never encountered before. I loved the way the music was sounding and how I sounded within it. My initial thought was, and I quote, ‘What the hell?’ – here I was, thinking that I wasn’t even qualified to be a jazz vocalist and basically on the verge of switching to a book-keeping carrier.

There was something big bang-y happening – and I liked it.
2. The why, the what and the how

2.1. *Oh, but why? – Purpose*…

After graduating with a BA in Jazz Vocals from CvA in 2017, I took a year off from school to figure out what I wanted to do with my life and stuff. I had a couple of jazz projects to work on, but I was still dealing with the same problem: most of the time when playing music with other musicians, I’d feel tense and have trouble focusing. I’d try to contribute to the music so that it would sound good, but usually I’d end up feeling lost and the music would suffer. Anything unexpected was scary. I’d feel uncomfortable and unable to react to what was happening in the moment. Let’s just call it an epic mess, bordering on disastrous. OK, that’s perhaps a bit dramatic, but it didn’t feel good, and it wasn’t nice.

However, it occurred to me that I never felt as good musically as when I was playing in duo - *with Mikael Máni*³. With him, it almost felt like I became a different person. I experienced a sense of calmness and clarity, even when unexpected musical occurrences showed up. I felt free to follow my instincts, knowing that Mikael would catch me if I went off track, and at the same time, I felt comfortable merging with his groove. There was mutual trust and there was a conversation. I was all too familiar with this tense-feeling, epic-messy way of performing, so it was all too apparent that something new was starting to emerge: an identity of sorts. A new person – *a musical personality*.

I liked this personality very much – *but I couldn’t control it*. It was clearly not used to being in the sunlight and it didn’t dare come out unless the conditions were just right.

But, at last, my goal was clear: *The purpose of my research was to develop and strengthen my personality in music, so I would be able to freely let it out during any musical encounter.* I wanted to have an identity that was rooted enough in my character so that I wouldn’t get lost within the music. By saying this, I do not want to disregard the amazing influence other musicians, the venue, or the atmosphere of the music might have on how I’d move around within the music, not at all! To me, that is a very important part of playing music. No, I just wanted to be able to join the musical table without losing myself – to be able to be an independent force within the music and *contribute* to the conversations, rather than just *agreeing* with everyone else.

I decided to pursue this new personality and, at the same time, fulfil my life-long dream of living in Sweden. I successfully applied for the jazz-master’s program at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, or *KMH*⁴, moved overseas, and began my quest.

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³ If you didn’t read the background chapter, Mikael Máni Ásmundsson is an Icelandic guitar player and a fellow CvA alumni who I met in Amsterdam during my studies there. In 2014, we started a duet project, and our collaboration served as a base for this research.

⁴ Kungliga Musikhögskolan in Swedish.
2.2. Questions… *Let’s ask some!*

So, when the goal was clear, the next thing to do was to figure out how to get there. To begin with, the following question was slammed on the table:

- *When I feel the most comfortable playing music, what elements and conditions are present?*

Then, another one emerged.

- *How can I develop these elements so that they become a rooted force in my musical personality?*

With these questions to guide me, it was time to get structured and get to work.

2.3. A *magnifying glass moment* – Identifying elements

Inspired by the one and only Hercule Poirot\(^5\), I put my deduction skills to use. I needed to learn more about this personality and understand it better. I needed to know what its characteristics were, what its strengths were, what it liked, and in what conditions it would shine bright like a diamond. My deductions took me back to room 632 at CvA, searching for clues.

To begin with, in that room, 632, exactly two people were present. No more. Another thing that was present, just pleasantly floating around, was the music, and within the music, there would regularly appear new melodies that didn’t necessarily exist before. Lovely melodies, just dancing around on top of chords, sung and played without lyrics. I also remembered feeling comfortable and calm.

So! There were *jazz standards*, which seemed to be music the personality connected with; ornamented by *improvisation*, which the personality clearly liked doing; played by *a duet*, which the personality most certainly preferred. I deduced that a combination of all of the above created a *comfortable* and safe environment for the musical personality to come out of the shadows. Because these are all very broad terms, I will dive deeper into them in the next chapter.

But! There’s still one little thing missing from these findings, that is crucial to this thesis. I remember I felt my ears open up wide in room 632 that day. They became very receptive and helped me respond to the music in a way I didn’t think was possible.

\(^5\) The great Belgian detective! In case you are not familiar with Agatha Christie’s whodunnit-heroes, I sincerely encourage you to get acquainted with Mr. Poirot. [https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hercule-Poirot](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hercule-Poirot)
I don’t know if I can emphasise enough how extremely important the ears are for a vocalist. It might be difficult to fully understand it if you’re not a vocalist yourself. For me, my ears are my life. If they fail me, I’m doomed. I can’t detect pitch, I can’t hear harmony, and I can’t decipher what’s going on in the music or how to adjust or respond. Without my ears, I can’t improvise with others. Without my ears I can’t play with anyone else. I firmly believe that ear-training, in whatever form, is vital to the vocalist’s musical existence and because I became ‘all-ears’ when my musical personality appeared that day, ear-training I’d have to do.

2.4. Limitations… in all their glory

With all the clues lined up, it was time to put together a theory. Having gone through my deductions, sitting silently for hours and hours, thinking, I realised something. The personality actually wanted to come out, but it was too shy. Scared. Perhaps even terrified. I asked myself what I’d have to do to draw it out and keep it there. If it was scared, it was most likely scared of something, so I figured I’d have to find something the personality wasn’t scared of and take it from there. Because the personality first appeared on that fateful day in room 632, it became clear to me that I had to create a similarly comfortable environment, where the personality could feel safe enough to come out of its hiding place and be seen and heard. OK, but how do I do that? I asked myself, in a detective-like manner. It didn’t take long for me to notice that the answer was staring me in the face, like a cat with a fluffy tail, about to attack its unlucky, soon to be attacked prey. It was right there.

‘You need to humour the personality by luring it out using it’s favoured musical elements!’

At CvA, I had started listening to old jazz records, mostly ‘West Coast jazz’ records from the 50’s and 60’s. The kind of records that were recorded so extremely live that you could hear cracks in the floors and small mistakes here and there. When listening to these recordings, I sometimes caught my ears looking for a specific style of improvisation and a specific feeling in the music. When they found it, they would grab it and listen intently. Then, when that musical personality first started to appear, I noticed that it was all dressed up in that style, disregarding the rest of its stylistic-wardrobe options. In an attempt to explain this a bit better, I came up with a small, and if I do say so myself, cute metaphor called the world of art:

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6 West Coast Jazz:
The world of art.

In the world of art, my chosen continent is music. I travel to a country called Jazzland, and my favourite region is the West coast, sometimes nicknamed Swing. The city of choice is Standardstown where the Mayor likes to sing the head of a song with lyrics and then improvise over the form. My favourite neighbourhood, where I love hanging out, is the one called Lyrical improvisation. In a beautiful park, I sit down with my notebook and try to transcribe what I hear and later, after walking around the neighbourhood for a while, I make some visits to a couple of friends, a bass player, a piano player, a guitar player and a singer, and finally end up in a small party with a quartet. Later on, I might go to a few different parties and even later I might be so inspired by what I’ve learned and experienced that maybe I’ll start painting and decorating my home with some new ornaments, souvenirs and colours.

(An excerpt from a practice diary. Marína Ósk, 2021)

Voila, the limitations. These became my focus and my world. My roadmap towards my goal. As you may have noticed, the style described above led me to living in the land of jazz, working mainly with the West Coast jazz tradition, studying jazz standards and lyrical improvisation, and playing mostly in smaller ensembles. According to my deductions, these were things my personality liked. Let’s zoom in a bit.

First, let’s talk about jazz standards. Since my journey kind of started with jazz standards, it seemed like a good idea to limit myself to that wonderful American Songbook and focus on learning jazz standards I hadn’t sung before. This was an opportunity to challenge my ears and learn standards from an ear-training perspective by focusing on hearing colours, sounds, and characteristics of a chord progression and the melody’s relationship to it, instead of letting theory, modes, and written notes lead the way towards new material. Another thing. These songs affect my well-being, and I tend to feel all cuddly inside when singing them. They’re romantic and old-fashioned, warm and inviting, and the feeling of swing is just such a nice feeling. But what I most appreciate about these old-but-gold pieces of beauty is their melodies. To shine a light on this matter, here’s an excerpt from my notes, where I was experiencing the power of a jazz standard’s melody:

To me, it’s like it leads the form of the song, guiding us through it. Gently, but clearly, it establishes where we are and what comes next. It’s based on statements and motives, and it has a strong connection to the harmony, but still, it’s independent enough so that when you strip away everything except the melody notes themselves, you can still sing it and it still sounds great. You can sing it with a big-band, and you can sing it with only percussion – the melody stands strong and it’s beautiful. The lyrics play a big part in how you phrase it and it’s open to interpretation, based on what you’re feeling.

(Marína Ósk, diary excerpt, 2019)

My goal was not to master the art of singing standards, but rather to give myself a clear frame to work from. Where that work would then lead would be the exciting part. This style of music offers so much regarding expression and storytelling from a vocalist’s point of view.
This thinking led me to the next element in question, which was scatting over jazz standards. We continue with the excerpt:

When the melody has been sung, the text is over and the harmony indicates that it’s going to go back to the beginning. I sometimes get the feeling that I want to continue the story. I want it to be a lyric-free story, based on expressing something I can’t really express using words. I have a feeling Chet Baker experienced something like this. When I listen to his vocal albums, I get the feeling that I’m being invited to experience his wordless expression, be it when he’s scatting or playing a solo on his trumpet. His improvising is so lyrical that it almost feels like he has words in his head, but doesn’t want to let them out, they might be too personal. So instead, he expresses himself without words.

(Marina Ósk, diary excerpt, 2019)

Here, Chet Baker had arrived at the party, but he’s someone who has influenced me a great deal. More on that later.

In the excerpt, the word lyrical is mentioned. That’s a very interesting word, especially when you put it together with improvising. To me, lyrical improvising is a combination of melodic improvisation and singable improvisation. By melodic, I mean that its structure resembles that of song melodies, like for ex. regarding statements, developing motives, rhythmic variations within phrases, combined with a storytelling build-up, often using few but very carefully chosen notes. By singable, I mean that it sounds like the instrumentalist is singing through their instrument, as if they have words or lyrics in mind. To me, a lyrically improvised solo is a new melody and, if one chooses to do so, one could add lyrics on top of it, and it would be as lovely as a gentle breeze on a warm day on the beach. This type of improvising intrigues me!

That being said, one can also improvise melodically without it being very singable. Take saxophonist Charlie Parker. The other day I had a conversation7 about how he plays very melodically when he improvises, but his solos are not so easily sung. I believe for something to be singable, it doesn’t necessarily have to be easy to sing; rather, it resembles something that might be intended for the vocal instrument. Parker tends to play fast, to go for phrases that include many notes, and to jump from a low register to a high one – all things that tend to be on the ‘avoid’ list, when one is composing for a vocalist. Adding lyrics to Parker’s solos is therefore not the first thing that comes to mind, at least not to mine.

Of course, you can add lyrics to whatever you like and learn to sing any kind of solo. Jon Hendricks, Annie Ross and Eddie Jefferson actually turned this practice into a virtuosic art form, called a vocalese. However, a vocalese doesn’t necessarily have to be something that’s

7 The conversation in question took place with Mikael Máni Ásmundsson, on 10 April 2021, and he kindly gave me permission to mention it.
difficult to sing. If you’re wondering what a ‘vocalese’ might be, vocalist and virtuoso Kurt Elling has a great explanation:

As I say, vocalese was invented by Eddie Jefferson, and is the writing and performing of a lyric which has been tailored to fit the lines of an instrumental solo from someone else’s record.

(Kurt Elling 2005)

I happen to really enjoy singing an up-tempo, bouncy, and challenging vocalese as well as writing the lyrics to one, but the lyrical approach to improvisation feels like a much better fit for me and I love listening to it.

Studying lyrical improvisation was first and foremost a method and served me very well as an ear-opener, a great reflex practice, and an expression amplifier that eventually led me to unexplored fields of creating and making music – but more on that later.

Next on the list is ear-training. The elements mentioned above, improvising and making it lyrical, as well as learning new jazz standards from the ear’s point of view, are all connected to ear-training. But what is ear-training, really? To me, as a vocalist, it’s a fundamental practice that affects the vocalist’s ability to understand and react to what’s happening in a musical moment. When the ear is strong and well trained, it gives a sense of independence to the vocalist, where they can trust themselves within the music and move around freely within it without feeling lost or insecure. To me, being independent means to be able to rely on my own instincts and trust that they are valid. Musically, this is very valuable.

Last, the smaller ensembles. Apart from the fact that Mikael Máni is an amazing guitarist who has studied the art of playing with a singer enthusiastically, it’s not a coincidence that it was through a duet that my musical personality first appeared. When playing in these smaller settings, there tends to be a lot of space in the music, and in that space, little Miss Small-Divs lives, along with Mr Vulnerability and Mrs Fragility, all close friends of my voice. Developing my personality through duets and smaller ensembles actually led me to a lovely little mantra: Less is all you need – in life and in music.

2.5. The way to go – Methods

Now, let’s talk methods. When the goal was clear and the limitations had been clarified, it was time to start thinking about how to travel to the desired destination. I decided to start with becoming more familiar with lyrical improvisation; then moving on to learning new

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8 Source: https://kurtelling.com/what-is-the-difference-between-vocalese-scatting-and-ranting/ (Last visited on the 14th of May 2021)
standards; and from there, to start practicing my own improvisation. Then, to test things out, I wanted to play with a few different people and see if I could bring out that personality!

To learn how to improvise lyrically, I figured I’d best seek out musicians who had mastered the skill and learn directly from them. Because most of the ones I discovered were either deceased or too old to even be on Facebook, I went for recordings on the internet and got into transcribing like the wind, learning and singing along with lyrical solos.

I then started looking for new music to work with, focusing on standards I hadn’t sung before. I became a ruthless song filter. My gig folder got an extravagant ‘trim’ and every song that didn’t feel right to me, got the boot. I then used my new repertoire to practice my own improvisation skills, trying to incorporate some stuff I had encountered and learned while transcribing. I focused on exercises where lyrical improvisation could be developed and intuitively and devotionally worked on them in that legendary place, called ‘the practice room’.

I met up with some friends, one on one to begin with, to play and tried to observe how my musical personality reacted to each of them. The more I improvised, the more my songwriting muscle started to activate, and eventually I started composing and playing my own music leading up to my examination project, which you’ll read about later.

Documentation wise, I used old-fashioned notebooks and pencils, the modern Evernote app, the Voice Memos app on my iPhone, and the Notes program on my computer. I kept a practice diary and recorded there both what I did and how it felt, what I experienced, and what I learned. I also made multiple playlists on Spotify, gathering the musical material I used.

2.6. The biggest small print you will ever read…

Before you take a short stretch, grab a good cup of coffee, and prepare yourself for the next chapter of this thesis, I want to talk about two things: intuition and influence.

To me, intuition is one’s ‘gut feeling’ when it comes to making a decision of any kind. If there are multiple options, it tells you which option to go for, and it makes noise if you don’t listen. Well, my intuition has been making a lot of noise for a really, really long time.

When my research journey started at KMH, I got the feeling that I was supposed to read lots of books and articles and become well acquainted with other people’s research regarding my topic. To begin with, the goal of my research was somewhat vague, and it took a while for the quest for a musical personality to become a sentence. But when it did, certain things started to make sense.

Every time I sat down to look for reading material, I hit a wall – the wall of no. It felt like something inside me was hindering me, telling me not to do it. My whole life, I’ve been at
war with my intuition. When put in context with my social phobia, perhaps this is not so surprising. It’s like experiencing a constant debate in one’s head. Should I trust myself or should I just trust others? Usually, I’d opt for the latter. Thinking back to CvA, when I was on stage with a band, it’s very clear. That inner battle made me disappear into the music, like I was being swallowed up, and my decision-making was mainly based on proving myself or mirroring someone else’s musical intentions.

From the beginning of my master’s studies, I’ve been learning how to trust my intuition. Telling my inner doubter to get lost, telling my inner judge to be silent, and allowing my decision maker to make decisions in cahoots with my gut feeling. I figured that was something a musical personality might be all about. As a result, this research became intuition based. I allowed myself to study the music I wanted to study and to sing the songs I liked and tried to let trust be my solid companion. I decided to trust my decision to depart from something that felt comfortable. Therefore, you won’t see many quotes from books or articles, and I won’t be toe-dipping into any sorts of area overview. Instead, you’ll see diary excerpts, because, in my diary, I could safely write down my thoughts and experiences without worrying about being overwritten by someone else’s words. However, this did not mean avoiding influence or denying the outside world. No, no, no!

Influence has got us surrounded. It’s everywhere. It’s like oxygen… Years of studying, playing, and listening to music is perhaps all about influence. During this research, I listened to a great deal of music, transcribed recordings, and played and talked with teachers and colleagues – to be influenced.

However, I wanted to be able to be a part of the conversation. To not just nod along or stay silent. To not have other people’s words flow through my pen. My intentions were not to slam the door in influence’s face, but rather to form a little bubble around myself where I could practice using my own words to talk about how I was experiencing the glory that is music. A little safe place where my intuition could speak freely, and I would have the headspace to listen to it. Then, when having musical conversations with others, I might finally be able to be a part of the narrative.

I’m not saying that reading other people’s stuff wouldn’t have been very beneficial – it probably would – but rather explaining why it didn’t happen. I just didn’t feel like it, and for me, listening to that feeling and believing it, was new and empowering and, in many ways, an important step towards getting to know my musical personality. As I said earlier, I have the tendency to value the opinions of others more than my own and while I was in that transition period, I didn’t want to risk that affecting my journey.

With all this out in the open, let’s dive into the next chapter, where transcriptions rule the kingdom, lyrical improvisation steals the throne, and the jazz standards try to live happily ever after.
3. The process – A practice room exclusive

About two pages ago, you read about some elements and limitations that I put on the table, creating a toolbox of sorts, to be used to build a comfortable environment for my musical personality. In this chapter, you’ll read about the methods that were used, the gains and the pains of practicing and researching and perhaps you’ll read something that sparks your interest. I’ll try to make it a fun read and throw in a few jokes. Now, shall we?

3.1. ‘Fill your pantry with tomatoes’ – Gathering the ingredients

Diving right in, the first thing on the list was to do some ‘Spotify and YouTube research’ and gather some ingredients for the pantry. It was a highly non-scientific and extremely non-structured, listening-based research, where one listens non-stop to music, sometimes on repeat and sometimes in binge mode, and adds a bunch of recordings one likes to playlists along the way. Everywhere I went, there was a smartphone in my pocket and headphones covering my ears, and I brutally went through a few pairs – of headphones, not ears. I was mostly listening to West Coast jazz, and slowly, a list of artists I liked was appearing. I started to collect their recordings on playlists, focusing on their improvised solos. My main criteria were that the artists had to be playing jazz standards, they had to improvise over the form of the song they were playing, and they had to improvise lyrically, in my perception. To know whether they fitted the glove, I asked myself, Can I imagine putting lyrics on that solo? If the answer was yes, the recording got playlisted.

My list of lyrically improvising musicians became quite the collection. In the coming subchapter, I’ll talk a bit about the three artists that influenced me the most: Chet Baker, Paul Desmond, and Lester Young. Honourable mentions include Miles Davis, Jim Hall, Stan Getz, Blossom Dearie, and Russ Freeman. The list does go on, but we just don’t have a decade to talk about everyone on it.

The chosen ones . . . Chet Baker

One of the first jazz artists that lit my musical fire was trumpeter Chet Baker. When I listen to him sing and play, he manages to keep me invested throughout the track.

Lyrical solos are a specialty of his. A great bunch of his recorded solos, both vocal and trumpet, sound like a continuance of the melody of the song he’s playing, only without the lyrics. It is as though he manages to find a new perspective or a different angle on the before-told story of the song, and just continues, wordlessly, with what he wants to say. His improvised storytelling often reminds me of the structure of a melody, and he was very good at keeping a certain improvised idea alive throughout his solos. And then, to top all this glory off, both his trumpet solos and scat solos would sound great if you’d put lyrics on them,
making them very singable and vocal friendly. That is what I’d call a *lyrical* approach to improvising – and I like it!

**. . . Paul Desmond**

Another artist that captured my heart was saxophonist *Paul Desmond*. Desmond’s saxophone tone is not of this earth – and I mean that in a good way of course. When I listen to him, I somehow feel calmer and my shoulders relax. When I listen to his improvisations, I instantly get the feeling of lyrics. His phrases are structured and directional, yet flowing and expressive, and so incredibly melodic. His use of vibrato is also very singer-like. His playing is virtuosic but intimate and relatable. Paul and Chet have a lot in common when it comes to storytelling, but I feel as though Chet is wearing an old, second-hand, knitted sweater and making his point by saying things casually yet to-the-point, whereas Paul, is wearing a neat suit and a tie and making his storytelling point in a refined and formal way, but so clearly that anyone could grasp what he’s saying.

**. . . Lester Young**

The last artist I’d like to feature and for whom I completely fell flat on my nose is saxophonist *Lester Young*. What I like most about Lester is the way he manages to play with a bunch of warmth and a pinch of cheekiness – and boy, does he swing. He not only swings, he *sings*. Through his saxophone, he manages to create sounds that actually sound a bit like Billie Holiday. I’ve noticed Billie adding a bit of air to her vibrato at the end of her notes, which results in a slightly hoarse whiskey-voice vibrato. When I first noticed Lester’s use of vibrato, my words were, ‘*Well, I’ll be damned*’ – it sounded the same!

Lester’s phrasing, both regarding the melody and in his improvisation, sounds very lyrical, although ornamented. Singing along with his recordings is such a lovely experience. He manages to create very lyric-friendly melodies, and to me it sounds like he just loves to play, making him super nice to both listen to and a treat to transcribe – which is what I did next.

3.2. ‘Slicing the tomatoes’ – *Getting to know the ingredients*

*You step into the practice room. You do a few stretches, take a few deep breaths and prepare yourself for a chunk of structured time spent with your instrument. You gather yourself, find your Zen-self, find your focus. You’re now prepared to start your practice session, armed with your practice diary in one hand and your freshly filled water bottle in the other. Practice session is in . . . session.*

*(Marína Ósk, diary excerpt, 2021)*

The practice room has for a long time been the devil’s lair for yours truly. I sometimes enter it and discover that I must have left my inspiration stash in the cafeteria or on the bus. It’s just
not there. At times I’ve walked out of a practice space after about two hours, without having so much as made a yawning sound.

However, and here comes an interesting fact, there are days when I’ve entered the practice room and somehow ended up being in there for about six hours straight. When this happens, the one thing that is present every time is intuition. Intuition gives me the freedom to be driven by feelings. Something intriguing and exciting happens, and without consciously knowing exactly how to go about it, it gets studied, worked on and dug into. If it doesn’t feel good or even fun, intuition says no, throws a fit, or gets bored.

During my time at KMH, I was extremely inspired. There was something I wanted to learn, and I had the tools and the material to do it, and as a side note, the facilities at KMH were amazing! The first thing on the to-do list – transcribing.

To transcribe or to transcribe . . . transcribe!

I tried to approach all the transcriptions, using the same formula. I’d start by choosing a solo to study. This was an intuitive decision, based on the question, what do I feel like choosing? I didn’t opt for a systematic approach where I’d choose a specific solo based on a specific aspect, which most likely would also have been quite beneficial. Instead, I decided to see what would happen if I just followed my instincts when choosing the material.

To begin with, I’d listen to the whole recording a couple of times to get the overall feeling of the song. Secondly, I’d try to familiarise myself with the landscape of the solo itself, by listening to it in a loop. I’d then use the slowdown feature on YouTube or the Anytune computer program and start to learn the solo by heart, phrase by phrase. So far, everything was completely based on listening and repeating.

Because I was transcribing instrumental solos, I needed to come up with my own scat words and sounds. For those who might not be familiar with the art of scatting, let me give you a crash course. Scat singing can be defined as ‘a technique of jazz singing in which . . . nonsense syllables are sung to improvised melodies.’9 (Robinson: 2001). That means that when a vocalist improvises, they make up their own ‘words’, that usually don’t mean anything by themselves, but might sound like an instrument and in context with the music, create an expression of sorts. There are no specific rules when it comes to scat vocabulary, as far as I know, and in many ways, it’s a very personal expression technique. That means that, unless they deliberately decide to imitate another singer’s vocabulary, each vocalist’s scatting language is different and unique. It’s also interesting that the words a vocalist chooses for a phrase or a specific note, can affect or alter the groove of the phrase, its perceived feeling, its length, and so on, all depending on the chosen sounds or words. For me, scat singing is a ______________

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9 https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.24717 (Last visited on the 2nd of June 2021)
combination of creating a melody inspired by the song I’m singing and choosing words and sounds that represent what I want to say and how I want it said.

When transcribing the instrumental solos I chose, I opted for imitation of the soloing instrument’s embodied language and sounds. For the trumpet, for example, I’d use words like ‘bap’ or ‘dat’, starting with a clear attack; and for the saxophone, I’d use a loose attack and words beginning with ‘v’, thus creating a voiced and airy onset. Sometimes, a certain note would indicate a ‘dah’, and another might sound more like a ‘voor’. These are all popular words from the universal scat vocabulary and are in no way my own inventions. I just tried out some stuff, and when I was satisfied with what it sounded like, I moved on.

Then it was time to start putting stuff on paper. By paper, I mean the Sibelius program on my computer. I’d set myself up with an empty lead sheet on the screen and quickly map out the form, marking the different sections of the song with A’s and B’s. Next, I listened to the chords played under the solo and wrote them down on the sheet. To begin with, I tried to focus on the bass, following the bass line and trying to get a feeling for the progression. I’d then fill in the chord symbols by listening to what the chord instrument was doing, in regard to colours and suspensions. Then came the time to write down the solo itself, note by note. I didn’t put any effort into writing down slurs, vibratos, and slide-offs, because those I learned by ear. The same went for any kind of timing, be it laid-back, stretching, pushing . . . To me, that would’ve created a different dimension of the transcriptions, one that I might dig into later, because it most certainly would be very meaningful. However, during the transcription period in question, I decided to allow my ears to absorb that information sub-consciously and wordlessly.

Then why write everything down? – you may ask. Well, for many vocalists, seeing stuff on paper is not necessarily the most important thing in the world, because our primary sense is that of the ear. When we go to our first vocal lesson, we usually don’t start by learning about notes and what a ‘measure’ is, like an instrumentalist might do; instead, we start by singing a song. For me personally, seeing stuff on paper is actually very beneficial in many cases, but not necessary. I did study flute for seventeen years, so I relate certain things to written notes and other things to sound. So, when I had written down a solo, I’d practice singing it along with the recording, this time using my sheet to make it visual. This gave me a different sense of how the solo was structured and what the relationship of the improvised melody to the harmony was.

When all of the above was ticked off on the to-do-list, I’d sometimes try to sing the solo along with iReal Pro or even a capella, without the original recording. I didn’t focus too much on this part, because the idea wasn’t to be able to sing the solos in a different context from that of the original recording. However, there were a few transcriptions I did where I used the material to create a vocalese, but more on that a bit later.

The last piece of the puzzle was to sing along with the recording and try to be as ‘led’ by the artist as possible. To do this, I made sure that the volume of my voice was not too high and
that I wasn’t making any decisions regarding vocal sound or scat syllables; rather, I let the
soloist sort of guide me through the solo, like they were letting me tag along. This made me
feel like I could merge with the soloist, intertwine with their story, and understand it on a
different level. No words, no sheets, just listen and follow. It’s a lovely experience, one I
highly recommend.

Overall, I transcribed more than 20 solos during my time at KMH, and they are presented in
Appendix 1 as a list. I’ve also included a few transcriptions in Appendix 2. Now, I’d like to
take a closer look at three of them: Chet Baker’s solo on *But Not for Me*¹⁰; Paul Desmond’s
solo on his own composition, *Bossa Antigua*¹¹; and Lester Young’s solo on *Almost Like Being
in Love*¹². Listening links can be found in footnotes 10, 11, and 12.

**Diving in . . .**

When studying these three transcriptions, I wrote down what I felt and experienced –
*experienced* being a key word here! I tried to find words that could express what I heard.
Analysis-wise, I opted for a chilled soup made out of descriptive adjectives and humble
perceptions and drew out my magnifying glass when precise analysis was necessary. So, let’s
have a little look at my findings. We’ll start with Chet Baker’s solo on *But Not for Me.*

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**Figure 1: But Not for Me – Chet Baker’s solo transcription. [Click here to listen on Spotify](https://open.spotify.com/track/6U5b8546j43Q53G44V59J9)***

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¹⁰ *But not for me* – *Chet Baker Sings.* Pacific Jazz; 1955. [Click here to listen on Spotify](https://open.spotify.com/track/6U5b8546j43Q53G44V59J9)

¹¹ *Bossa Antigua* – *Bossa Antigua.* RCA Victor; 1964. [Click here to listen on Spotify](https://open.spotify.com/track/6U5b8546j43Q53G44V59J9)

¹² *Almost Like Being in Love* – *Lester Young with the Oscar Peterson Trio #1.* Nogran Records; 1954. [Click here to listen on Spotify](https://open.spotify.com/track/6U5b8546j43Q53G44V59J9)
What a lovely recording! Here are my thoughts!

Chet starts the song by instrumentally playing the verse of the tune, which immediately grabs my attention. He then sings the head of the song quite casually, sticking to a sort of straight trumpet-y vocal sound, although he uses the slightest hints of vibrato from time to time. His notes are formed very directly, and his long notes stay mostly flat and un-fluctuated. To me, he says what he has to say in that ‘I’m a chilled person’ vibe.

He then moves on to a trumpet solo, which I find very sentence based and talkative. It’s like when you’re talking to someone and you begin a sentence and then pause before continuing with your point. Then, you think of something related to your point and talk about that for a while to provide a different context, still regularly bringing up what was said earlier because what you’re saying is directly linked to that earlier point. You manage to sum it up nicely and make your point near the end. After that, you listen for a bit while someone else makes their point.

Chet’s choice of notes feels smooth on the ears. At times, he uses guide tones to connect his phrases, and then he uses elegant little ornaments like he’s smoothly throwing in a joke. I feel
he tells a great story. Overall, the melody is sung in a very straightforward way, and his phrasing regarding the lyrics is quite laid-back and cool, but elegant. When he’s soloing, Chet continues the story, and it seems he’s found a way to continue telling it without words. Also take note of the piano player, Russ Freeman, and how he seems to be listening and contributing to the conversation with some ‘oh-yeah’s’ and ‘mhmm’s’ on the piano, which sometimes Chet reacts to. It’s a dialogue, it’s a story, it’s lovely.

Next up is Paul Desmond’s beautiful *Bossa Antigua*. Here’s a small excerpt of his solo.

![Bossa Antigua](image-url)

*Bossa Antigua* is not a vocal jazz standard, but a tune Paul Desmond wrote himself. It’s the title song from an album that came out in 1964 and is one of my favourite albums of all time! This track has an easy-going groove to it. It slides onwards in a smooth and silky way; dynamics aren’t really a part of the jam. It reminds me of a peaceful summer day where love and life come together in perfect harmony, and all earthly challenges become as easy to overcome as smelling the delicate scent of a flower.

The melody is partially based on a motive that descends downwards between phrases. During his solo, Desmond continues with that descending idea. If you take a quick look at the excerpt, you can see it happening. Take note of the upbeat in bar 41 and follow the notes through bar 46 – he’s using the same idea but moving it downwards. The idea continues throughout his soloing, thus strongly connecting it to the melody of the song and at the same time, giving him a storytelling idea. Brilliantly done!
When I listened to this song for the first time, I felt the urge to sing it. I Googled around and could not for the life of me find any sorts of lyrics to it. Solving this was of the upmost importance, so I decided to write lyrics myself. You can catch a glimpse of them in the excerpt. I transcribed what the saxophone plays until guitarist Jim Hall takes over, and then put my lyric-writing pants on to make the song into a *vocalese*[^13]. At this point, I’d like to invite you to listen to a living-room-demo-recording of Bossa Antigua, recorded and played by yours truly and guitarist Mikael Máni Ásmundsson.

**Link to recording: Bossa Antigua – Marína Ósk & Mikael Máni**

Last, let’s take a look at Lester Young’s solo over *Almost Like Being in Love*.

![Almost Like Being In Love](image)

**Figure 4:** The first chorus of *Almost Like Being in Love* – Lester Young’s solo transcription.

[^13]: To refresh your memory, a *vocalese* is the result of writing and performing lyrics to an already existing instrumentalist’s solo.
Oh, Lester. The groove in this recording is super swingy and fun. Nodding one’s head to it is a natural reflex. Oscar Peterson’s gang sure could swing. The track is not long, and they only play the form three times through. The first time around, Lester plays the melody of the song quite playfully and then smoothly slides into a cool and cheeky solo. His way of playing the melody is respectful to notes, and to begin with, he only uses ornaments here and there and plays around a bit with the phrasing.

He reminds us of the melody throughout his solo. When singing along with the solo, I felt that it was connected to the melody, but it wasn’t until I hummed the song’s melody along with the solo that I figured out why that was! Lester sometimes begins or ends his improvised phrases on a melody note, thus giving us a feeling of ‘ah, this is familiar’, but it’s very skilfully hidden inside his intriguing story. In the third and last chorus, Oscar Peterson steps forward in the B part, contributing to the story by offering us some notes of wisdom, before Lester re-enters, ending the tune without playing the melody again. For some reason, I don’t mind. Singing along with Lester is a such a treat, and the whole track is just lovely. Just lovely, I say! It makes me feel good, almost like being in love even! OK, I’m done.

**Let’s compare, shall we?**

When comparing my experience of Paul’s solo to that of Chet’s solo, an interesting point comes to mind. When I listened Chet’s solo for analytical purposes, the need to look at the written transcription was non-existent. The lyrical beauty revealed itself through my ears and my analysis came from listening, not looking. However, Paul’s solo was an instant lyrical ear-grabber, but it wasn’t until I really looked at the written-out transcription that I noticed how linked it was to the melody. If we add Lester’s solo to the comparison, I noticed its lyrical
powers when singing along with it and noticed his choice of his phrases in connection to his sound, like the vibrato for example. To me, he’s not really outlining any harmonic stuff, but rather freely floating on top of it, using harmony as a dancing floor.

One thing I feel all of those guys have in common, though, is that they play in a very singable manner. They’re not jumping around a lot, they’re not playing a lot of super-fast notes, and their phrases favour expression rather than agility or vigour. They were able to improvise ‘vocal cord friendly’-phrases based on wordless, lyric-inviting sentences. Brilliant!

Now. After having gone through the transcription procedure with a number of recordings, I wanted to practice my own improvisation, and I wanted to sing, and I wanted to learn new stuff and and…. Yes, excitement dropped by for a visit. Next on the agenda was to find some new music to sing.

To learn new stuff or to learn new stuff . . . Let’s learn new stuff!

When choosing new songs to learn, there were mainly two conditions that had to be met. First, it had to be a vocal jazz standard or something alike - where some sorts of lyrics were either already present or the melody was constructed in a lyrically approachable way. Second, I had to love the song. If there was something about the song that didn’t feel right to me, that song got vetoed.

When a song had made it through the vicious filter and was chosen as one of the lucky ones to be studied, the first thing on the to-do list was to learn the melody. This I did by sight-singing the melody on paper while laying out the chords on the piano, trying to lean on my ears for the melody and its connection to the harmony. After doing this a few times, I’d start learning the lyrics by singing the song without any accompaniment. I’d close my eyes and try to transform the lyrics into a storyline, creating pictures or little movie scenes in my head. This method has really helped me learn lyrics by heart and connect myself to the storyline of a lyric from the start.

Then, it was time to get to know the song even more intimately. Not with a bottle of red and a home cooked meal followed by the sweetest desert and coffee, but rather by spending a great deal of time with the piece and improvising. Ah, yes, now we enter the realm of scatting.
3.3. ‘Season the tomatoes’ - *Getting creative with the ingredients*

Improvisation is such a magnificent thing. It’s spontaneous. It’s a reflex and it’s a conversation. It’s ear-training. It’s trusting yourself enough to make a spontaneous decision and change your route, trusting that you’ll still get to your destination. It requires independent thinking while still respecting and acknowledging your environment. To me, improvisation is also composing, phrasing, expressing and staying silent – and it’s something one’s intuition loves to play with.

(Marína Ósk, diary excerpt, 2021)

*To improvise or to improvise . . . Let’s improvise!*

When it came to practicing my own improvisation, I tried to step into the lyrical improvisation masters’ shoes and try on their gloves, and to assess what was a good fit, what was too large or too small, or what was the wrong shade for my season. I didn’t really depart from the ‘pre-planned-and-clear-direction-station’, but rather allowed myself the luxury of going with the flow and to being led by my gut feeling. Right now, I’d like to talk about a chosen few of the exercises I used and how they proved extremely useful. In Appendix 3, you can find a few more of them, if you’re craving some ear-training goodies.

- **The ‘Depart from the melody’ – exercise**

Here’s one I did a lot and still do a lot. It’s useful when practicing connecting the melody of a song to your improvised solo and when when practicing taking out-of-the-comfort-zone chances in your solos and then finding your way back if you get lost (singers!). It’s also a ‘sound-painting’ exercise, where you play around with the melody and gradually, by changing a note here and there, add to your palette a new ‘sound colour’ for that chord or spot in the song.

We start simply and then invite development, like this:

1. Sing the melody, without lyrics, using scat syllables. Stay true to the notes of the melody and stay close to the written rhythm
2. Sing the melody again but change the phrasing a little and play with the rhythm; be late, skip a note, divide a quarter note into a triplet, change where the downbeat would land, push phrases back or pull them forward. Keep staying true to the written melody notes
3. Do the same as in nr.2 but this time, also change or add a note here and there
4. Do it again, now change more notes: Add, skip, double... But keep the melody in the back of your mind
‘Depart from the melody’ – Alterations

After a while, the exercise started to grow and invite even more variations, but the melody was always its core. Here are a few alternative versions that arrived later to the party:

1. Scat over the first 4 bars, stick to the melody, then scat over the next 4 bars, let the melody go. Repeat on an 8-bar basis (*Added goal, try to make it “make sense” by connecting the two 4-bar ideas)
2. Do the same but turn it around. Start far away from the melody in the first 4 bars and find your way back to it in the second 4 bars. (*Added goal, try to make it “make sense” by connecting the two 4-bar ideas)
3. Scat where every phrase you sing starts with a hint of the melody, rhythmically or note-wise
4. ......where every line starts with a melody note
5. ......where you begin each phrase far away from the melody and work your way back at some point
6. ......where you begin each line by singing a phrase far away from the melody, ending the phrase on a melody note
7. ......where the melody cannot enter your phrases

The ‘Focus, listen, and import’ – exercise

One of my favourite teachers at KMH – and all time for that matter – was my vocal teacher Irene Sjögren, who taught me the following exercise in a vocal lesson in 2019.\(^{14}\) We were talking about a solo I had just transcribed and were working on a few angles.

She had me standing in the middle of the room. We put the recording on, and my first instructions were to listen to it and sing along with the solo. I was to imagine that I was hearing the recording for the first time and try to humbly follow the soloist, making sure I didn’t sing anything that wasn’t there already.

Irene then had me stay quiet and focus on listening to some other instrument, like the drums or the piano. Then, I was to sing along with the solo, still focusing on that other instrument. The point was to try to recognise when and where inspiration struck the soloist and where their ideas came from – and vice versa.

\(^{14}\) Irene Sjögren kindly gave me permission to talk about this lesson in my thesis.
This exercise was mind-blowing. It opened up my ears, oh so wide, and I instantly took note of its benefits. A few days after my lesson, I opened a jam session with a house band at a local jazz club, and I caught myself having an improvised scat conversation with the drummer, who was giving me so many ideas. I accepted those ideas without losing myself. It was so nice – and new!

- **The ‘Channelling’ - exercise**

Here’s an exercise that proved to be a game-changer. This one revealed itself from the work I had done with all the transcriptions, imitating the instruments. The purpose was to channel an artist (or an instrument) and see what would happen. This exercise can be useful when you’ve been doing something for a while, like singing a certain song or improvising over a certain progression, and you feel like there’s nothing ‘new’ left in your creative box. Then it’s really nice to have a tiny little secret box hidden away in your coat’s tiny little secret pocket. The exercise looks like this:

1. **Choose an artist or an instrument.** Any artist or instrument will do, as long as you’ve listened to them and are aware of their characteristics
   - a. An example of instruments I used: Trumpet, Alto Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone, Voice, Guitar
   - b. An example of artists I “used”: Chet Baker, Frank Sinatra, Blossom Dearie, Ella Fitzgerald, Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Billie Holiday

   *Note: You can channel a trumpet without channeling a certain trumpet player. For the sake of an example, let’s choose Chet Baker*

2. **Choose a song to work with and choose your angle (choose 1, max 2)**
   - a. Singing the melody with lyrics
   - b. Singing the melody without lyrics
   - c. Approaching the lyrics
   - d. Improvising
   - e. Other stuff

   *Let’s choose improvising*
3. *Think Chet Baker, think improvisation. Then follow these steps:*

   a. *Sing through one chorus “normally”, with your own nose and ideas*

   b. *Close your eyes and imagine you have a trumpet in your hand. Then imagine you ARE Chet Baker*

   c. *Improvise over one form, imagining you are Chet playing his trumpet and use your fingers to form notes, the right fingering doesn’t matter. Channel Chet’s musical spirit. A few elements to consider:*

      i. *The instrument. The trumpet usually has minimal vibrato. When tones appear, usually their attack is abrupt, not gradual. Use scat words that imitate the instrument*

      ii. *Think about what kind of phrases and sentences Chet might use. Think about their length, how they might sound or look like, their speed and their material*

      iii. *What’s his body position? What does his energy feel like?*

This exercise was a breath-taker when I discovered it. Realising that I could channel someone else’s sound, presence, feeling, body language . . . it gave me so much new material to work with – lovely! It’s also a real focus exercise, as I wanted to stay in character for quite some time. In other words, it was a lovely way to practice holding onto a certain musical personality . . .

*Reflections . . .*

All of these exercises proved super beneficial. The ‘Departing from the melody’ exercise for example, gave me a clear starting point for lyrical improvisation by connecting it to the melody, as well as some clear musical material to work with. I learned how to ‘hear’ progressions of songs from the melody’s point of view and recognise colours and characteristics in the chord progressions.

To me, *learning* a chord progression can be achieved in different ways. For example, you can learn what specific chord is to be played where and know that the B part modulates to Eb major. However, and here’s where the ‘Departing’-exercise truly steps into the spotlight, you can also learn the progression by knowing it by *sound and feeling*, without thinking about whether you’re singing over an Bb7 chord or whether the note you’re singing is the 9th. For me, the following happened. I started to recognise the layout of the songs by anticipating what sound was coming and what it felt like. To me, that’s *ear-training at its best*, because it is based on hearing rather than seeing. To be fair, hearing and seeing can absolutely co-exist when learning a tune. Personally, I used to start by going through a song, chord by chord, analysing and digging into the sheet music and singing guidelines while being aware of what
notes I was singing and later in the process, try to learn the song by ear. But starting from the other end was one of the biggest benefits I experienced from my entire research.

By departing from the melody, I developed a clear roadmap of the song, and the melody lingered on through my improvisation. What actually changed was that instead of starting by getting to know a song by analysing chords and trying to figure out modes and scales from the sheet music, those became the third or fourth steps in the process. In the end, I became acquainted enough with the tune to let go of verbal thinking and just follow my instincts – to trust my ears completely to know where we were headed. This gave me a strong sense of independence, as I felt that I could trust I knew what I was doing and feeling. I could make my own decisions, and I knew they were valid.

The ‘Focus and import’ exercise was an ear-opener and got me having musical conversations, such as during that jam session I mentioned, instead of just following other people’s ideas and mindlessly agreeing with them. It also helped me notice things within the music that I hadn’t noticed before, like the use of panning in a recording and how the bass player’s timing can change the feeling of the song, giving it a forward driving feeling or perhaps a super laid-back, cool one. I started to take note of my own choices regarding note lengths and how they affected my improvised phrases and also how waiting patiently while the guitar player finishes his fill between melody phrases can create a new entrance point to the next phrase in the melody. I could go on for days, but I think you get the point. The exercise really opened my ears, and I started to notice things I hadn’t noticed before.

The ‘Channelling’ exercise expanded my vocabulary regarding sound and energy and, at the same time, furnished my mind with new and fresh ideas. It was almost like I could, all of a sudden, open a locked drawer in my creative closet of ideas and to my surprise, discover a brand-new jacket, hidden behind that winter coat I had been wearing every day for the past year (yes, in Iceland, this does happen). I was able to tap into a new source of embodied knowledge that I’d like to connect directly to the transcription part of the research. All the digging and studying and listening and repeating all manifested somewhere within my unconsciousness, waiting for me to find them and use them. The exercise also affected my scat vocabulary, and after channelling different instruments and vocalists, my scat dictionary grew quite a bit, resulting in new ways for me to express myself through improvising.

Ear-training, independence, vocabulary, ear-opener, musical conversations. These words indicate something lovely, don’t they? But did they work? What was happening with my personality? Did these exercises strengthen it? Was it starting to appear more often?

The plot thickens.
3.4. ‘Cook the tomatoes’ – *Bake, sate, grill, squish* . . .

testing the ingredients!

The hard labour described in the previous chapters needed an outlet. It was important to break up the solitude of the practice room and invite someone else to join the fun. Apart from continuing to collaborate with Mikael Máni, I met up with some friends to *jam*. As I’ve mentioned, I’ve always felt the most comfortable in a small setting. Meeting up with one person is easier for me than meeting up with two people – so duets it was. I tried to bring my personality with me; sometimes it shone like a star, and sometimes it was shy. Here’s what went down.

*There were two different piano players* . . .

There were two piano players I met up with on a regular basis during my studies: Baldvin Snær Hlynsson, a fellow Icelander and KMH bachelor student, and Jan Alexander, a fellow master student at KMH, who incidentally also studied with me at CvA. Baldvin and Jan are very different players with very different styles, but I played some vocal jazz tunes and improvised with both of them. Jan and I also improvised freely a bit.

I noticed when playing with these guys that, although they have very different styles, I subconsciously opted for phrases on the *legato* side of life with both of them. I also sung louder in general, and my long notes were dark and round. This was a great ‘direction’ exercise for my long notes as well as an opportunity to experiment with a darker colour in my voice, which is usually on the brighter side. During these jam sessions, I also realised how differently I reacted to the piano in comparison to the guitar – and it was indeed a reaction rather than a conscious decision.

Playing with the guitar fits me very well, in my opinion and I’ve done it a lot. I’ve noticed that I tend to sing with a great deal of precision and rhythmic accuracy, and I tend to use a lighter vocal sound. Volume control becomes quite easy with the guitar, which creates a possibility for the smallest of details in the vocals to be heard. Singing with the piano, meanwhile, as described above, resulted in the exact opposite effect. Legato phrasing, darker and rounder sounds, and overall, more loudness. This could’ve been a different story had I chosen to use my microphone, which was usually not the case in my piano endeavours. That was mostly because we booked rehearsal rooms with the good grand pianos, which unfortunately seldomly included a PA system.

. . . *a double bassist* . . .

Then, there was the bass. For one of my vocal lessons with Irene Sjögren, I asked double bass player Johan Tengholm to join me. We played a few songs in duo and talked about the different roles a singer might have as opposed to the bass player in a setting such as this.
I noticed that, when playing with just bass, I would react by simplifying my lines and I’d take less chances in my phrasing. My focus level was through the roof. I also had the feeling that I needed to know exactly what I was doing and be sincerely independent. Singing with just bass allowed the smallest of details in my voice to pop, because while the bass served as the root of the collaboration and as our direct connection to gravity, my voice got to sit on top, near the sky, almost in different weather conditions, enjoying the perks of the anatomic differences in our ‘voices’. Both of us had the freedom of moving around within our own pitch range, as I’m usually categorised in the soprano department and the bass, well, it just doesn’t have the anatomy to go there, neither can I reach its region of low notes. By the way, singing with only bass is also a great ‘pitch’ exercise for both the bass and the voice.

... and a vocalist.

In the spring of 2019, Icelandic vocalist and KMH master’s alumni Arnar Ingi Richardson, asked me to do an a capella duet with him and perform on a lunch concert he was planning in school. We chose an Icelandic piece called ‘Hjarta mitt’ (transl. ‘My Heart’) by Icelandic composer Tómas R. Einarsson, written to accompany lyrics by Icelandic writer and Nobel price award winner Halldór Kiljan Laxness. We met up a couple of times to arrange the tune and allow our voices to get to know one another.

I noticed that paying special attention to my own pitch and matching it to Arnar Ingi’s pitch was important. This was a deliberate action. I felt that complete trust was necessary and trusting Arnar Ingi was easy. He’s such an amazing singer and a good friend!

It was interesting that, no matter what, we always sang the song in the same key, B minor, even if we started somewhere else. Also, in some ways, singing with Arnar Ingi, who has the vocal capacity to reach quite the bass-like notes, as well as the alto range, was similar to playing in duo with the double bass. Being aware of one’s pitch became really important. I felt my focus level reaching altitude, and the colour of the two instruments (including voices as instruments) indicated two different musical dimensions.

Then there was a double duet... Marina Osk Kvartett!

At one point, during spring 2019, Mikael Máni and I were both situated in Stockholm. During that spring, I caught myself having the urge to create a quartet, consisting of trumpet, bass, guitar, and voice, that resembled the atmosphere of some of the Chet Baker vocal albums I so dearly admired. I contacted a duet of sorts, namely, bass player Johan Tengholm and his brother Erik Tengholm, a fantastic trumpet player – and of course I asked Mikael Máni to join. All of them said yes, the double duet got married – and we became Marina Osk Kvartett.

In the beginning, we met up and played some standards. I decided not to bring any arrangements but rather to see what would happen and try a little ‘instant arranging’. I noticed that I felt comfortable when playing with this group. It felt like we all spoke the same jazz language, like we all knew what the others were talking about, and we found a common
groove pretty quickly. Johan and Mikael are both very good listeners when playing with other people and their musical conversations regarding harmony became very tight and like-minded. At the same time, Erik and I had musical conversations within the melody realm. I would lead the melody, and he would either play fills or backing notes or even harmonise what I was singing. Because there were four of us playing, there was a lot more to think about. I decided to try to focus on one conversation at a time. After doing Irene Sjögren’s ‘Focus and import’ exercise, I noticed that focusing on one conversation at a time was easier than before. I was also able to shift my focus quite smoothly between instruments and linger in one conversation as long as I pleased before changing routes.

Playing with this group turned out to be super nice, and pretty soon, I started to bring some of my own compositions to rehearsals. I had started to flex my songwriting muscle quite a bit and some of the pieces I had composed sounded a bit like jazz standards or at least somewhere around that region. What a perfect match for this quartet!

When listening to music, all sorts and kinds, I sometimes get really inspired and just want to lock myself away in the practice room and compose. It feels like something triggers the songwriting muscle, which starts to vibrate and jiggle with energy that needs to be let out. That started to happen to me during my listening and transcribing period. I will not go too much into my composing process for this particular project, but I felt like sharing this particular feeling, because it intrigues me. Perhaps it’s an idea for a second artistic research paper, but we’ll see what the future holds.

I managed to compose an album’s worth of music, and now we’re planning a trip to the studio. But let’s get back to business. Did the hard work pay off? What about that musical personality?
4. Artistic results – *Is that a thing?*

Phew. That was quite a run with a lot of information. Like I mentioned in the beginning, one’s route towards one’s personality is not necessarily a straight line. So far, we’ve gone through loads of information, and I won’t blame you if you’re still wondering *what’s going on with that musical personality?* At last, it’s time to reveal the results part of my endeavours and experiments and attempt to explain what my musical personality looks like, what it feels like, and how everything I’ve written so far is connected to my quest towards making my musical personality *rooted.*

4.1. A mystery revealed – *What is a musical personality?*

To begin with, let’s bring back the research questions, raised in chapter 2.2. To refresh your memory, they were as follows:

- *When I feel the most comfortable playing music, what elements and conditions are present?*

  And…

- *How can I develop these elements so that they become a rooted force in my musical personality?*

Time for a recap! I started by putting on my Hercule-Poirot-inspired deduction suit and went straight to the scene of the big-bangy moment – *room 632 at CvA.* I probably felt the most comfortable in my entire musical life in that room. I was playing in a duet setting, I was singing jazz standards, and I was intuitively leaning towards a lyrical approach to improvising, which felt like a wordless outlet for expression. All these elements made me feel *comfortable.* And when I felt comfortable, *the personality appeared.*

I then tried to identify what that personality brought to the table and what changed when it appeared. First, my ears opened up wide, and I felt I could trust my ability to just go with the flow. OK, that was a new feeling. I then noticed that the atmosphere in the room felt safe and created a feeling of mutual trust so that even if I made a musical decision that was not exactly what I had planned, I felt I could trust that it was supposed to happen and that the other person would not judge that decision. That was definitely a new feeling. Notice how often the word *feeling* appears in different outfits. Now hold on to that word and keep reading.

I realised that I needed to create circumstances on a regular basis where I could feel comfortable and secure enough for this feeling to reappear regularly. Looking at the clues I gathered, I decided to go all in and dig deep into the elements mentioned above, namely, the music and the styles that were present that day. I started by increasing my listening hours
extravagantly, allowing myself to listen only to music I liked. West Coast jazz records became my go-to material, and soon, I began to see a pattern; the instrumentalists I favoured all improvised in a lyrical manner. I also noticed that when the personality was present, I appreciated improvising. It felt nice, and it had a purpose – an expression purpose. So, I decided to try to embody that skill of lyrical improvising by transcribing those who had mastered it. I then spent a lot of time learning new material and practicing my own improvisation, which became a tool to express what I wanted to say because when you transcribe someone else, you embody their story. I then started playing with other people, while trying to notice how I’d react to each person, instrument, group, and situation. These were my methods, and they added up to a glorious number of hours spent in the practice rooms at KMH. These methods became my very own knowledge vacuum and a great ear-training database.

In room 632, I felt a sense of calm and clarity. I felt comfortable. I’m not sure I can fully explain what feeling those things means to someone who is diagnosed with social anxiety (or phobia). Imagine having felt uncomfortable in your own skin since you first remember yourself as a child. Imagine constantly worrying about other people’s possible judgements or the possibility that they consider you stupid or not valid. Imagine that feeling calm is a rare luxury, and every day you’re working a full-time job, trying to control the overwhelming flood of thoughts of insecurity while trying to function properly in life and around other people. Now imagine a moment when all of that just goes away for a little while, and you experience that you can actually play music and feel good at the same time.

This happened to me, and I felt incomprehensibly happy.

So! Remember, I asked you to hold on to that word, feeling? Here’s why. To me, my musical personality actually is a feeling. To you, it may be something different and that’s equally valid, but to me, that is what it truly is. It is freedom. It is feeling comfortable with who you are as a person and as an artist and embracing the elements that make you into who you are. It is feeling like you can trust your musical instincts and not doubt your decision-making when you’re in a musical moment. It is about feeling valid and feeling like you can stand strong behind who you are and not doubt, judge, or tear yourself down. When my musical personality was present, I could freely let my musical instincts guide me through the music and allow myself to connect to the flow of the moment, thus, de-weaponising my brain and thwarting its mission to mess with me.

Listening to music that made me feel good was a way to embody knowledge about the music I was about to study. Transcribing lyrical solos was a way to add new linguistic skills to my improvisational vocabulary and increase my sense of awareness within the music. Learning new standards was a way to practice choosing material that I liked and allowing myself to do so, and then to study that material from the ear’s perspective. This then led to practicing my own improvising skills, which helped me to tap into the newly embodied knowledge and add the newly learned vocabulary to my own musical dictionary. All of this proved to be
invaluable ear-training, because you can’t really buy these ear-openers and reflex enhancers at your local pharmacy.

Ear-training, transcribing, listening, practicing, all the tears, and all the wins – all of these helped me to create a comfortable environment so that my musical personality felt safe enough to meet other people and make music with them. They led to new and unexplored ways for me to make music – which then led me to the final part of my master’s thesis, my examination project. Reader, let me introduce you to Tendra.

4.2. My examination project – Tendra

Tendra was born at the beginning of 2020. The year when the Covid-19 pandemic’s carrier truly took off and ‘lockdown’ became a word we actually use. The makers of Tendra were myself and that guitar player I’ve been talking about for the past 30 pages or so, Mikael Máni Ásmundsson. Before Tendra, we had worked together on multiple projects, but our very own jazz duet, Marína & Mikael, was our main source of music making. Our gig folder was filled with standards and Icelandic evergreens that Icelanders know and love. Sometime during the year 2019, we started talking about composing our own music. We liked the idea, and soon, a couple of new pieces saw the light of day. But that feeling of being comfortable was not present and we both felt it. We decided to trust our instincts, which led us to forming a second band with a whole new identity, where we could compose any type of music and play it in whatever way we saw fit. A clean slate and a blank canvas – Tendra.

During the first four months of 2020, we spent all our free time composing, arranging, and working on our music. We booked Sundlaugin Studio\textsuperscript{15}, in Mosfellsbær, Iceland, in the beginning of summer and spent three days in there recording, overdubbing, and drinking coffee, but our sound engineer, Birgir Jón Birgisson, or ‘Biggi in Sundlaugin’, is not only an amazing recording specialist, but he also makes a mean cup of coffee. Mean!

Our debut album came out on 6 November 2020. The album, which we decided to also name Tendra, carries nine songs, all in Icelandic. Apart from two wonderful session players we recruited, drummer and percussionist Kristofer Rodriguez Svö
nuson and cellist Heiður Lára Bjarnadóttir – it’s just Mikael and I you hear on the album.

\textsuperscript{15} Sundlaugin (transl. The Swimming Pool) is an old swimming pool in Mosfellsbær, just outside of Reykjavik, Iceland, built in the 1930’s. One of Iceland’s most amazing bands, Sigur Rós, converted it into a rehearsal space in 1999. Since then, it’s become one of Iceland’s best recording studios. A few albums by Sigur Rós were actually recorded there, and that by our sound engineer, Biggi. Fun fact: On the first song of the Tendra album, Draumaland, Mikael used the same electric bass that was used on the amazing Sigur Rós album, Takk. (https://www.sundlaugin.com/about)
Behold . . .

‘Tendra’ is an Icelandic word meaning ‘to light a spark’. That’s how we felt when we created Tendra, like a spark had been lit. We had never taken that road before during our years as partners in musical crimes, and behold, it was actually quite nice.

The overall composing process was exciting and new for yours truly. I used to feel self-conscious and insecure before, like I was lacking the capacity to contribute to someone else’s ideas. I was scared that they might just laugh in my face or think me stupid. A recipe for panic and total self-destruction mode of the brain. Simply put, I avoided composing with other people, wholeheartedly.

But at that point in the research process, a sense of confidence had emerged and the cause for panic had lessened significantly. I won’t lie, though. There were times when I would have a lockdown of my own, and that familiar little judge would appear on my shoulder, poking me with its judge stick, as if every idea I had was just ruining the song and probably damaging the ozone layer too. Ah, yes, I knew the judge would appear, but this time around, I had the capacity to deal with it. The weather had shifted – the personality was present.

. . . it was new . . .

Back to the composition process. The flow of creativity was strong. There were so many new things going on that I barely had time to document what was happening. However, here’s what I remember. During our composing period, I might show up with a fraction of an idea, and we’d develop it together. Sometimes, Mikael would show up with a song that was considered ready, and we’d end up changing it completely. Sometimes, we’d play a specific part in a loop, while one of us improvised around it. Eventually, the other one might react to that improvisation, and there might appear a new section or an extension of the form. Sometimes, Mikael would write the lyrics, sometimes I would do it, and we even wrote a couple together. We allowed the songs to develop like they ‘wanted’ to be developed, meaning we tried to go by our gut feelings and be open to any idea that might emerge, even the weirdest ones.

Perhaps this all sounds normal to you, but to me, it was a completely new experience. ‘Allowing’ someone else to poke around in my own compositions, changing things, moving stuff around, or even adding stuff – absolutely not! Letting stuff sound weird, unconventional, or even ugly – completely out of the question! But this time, what used to be unthinkable had become quite doable.

. . . and it was good.

So, what kind of music was composed? To us, it’s warm and embracing singer-songwriter jazz, with mild pop spices. We actually recorded fourteen songs, and nine of them made it on this album. Out of the nine, two were my compositions (Glans and Spurt í hljóði), and the rest
were composed by Mikael. Regarding the lyrics, in addition to my compositions, four of
Mikael’s pieces included my lyrics.

We allowed the album to be searching, in regard to genres, and we opened the doors to what
our hearts desired. So, we have a little of a lot on there. We have a Latin-sounding song
(*Hendrix*), a piano-voice duet (*Spurt í hljóði*), we have a track with lots of effects
(*Draumaland*), and we also have one based around a ukulele (*Ábót á kaffið*). It’s jazz, but it’s
not jazz. It’s not really improvised music, but at the same time, we were improvising in that
studio, and we improvise when we perform. We have forms and we have game-plans, but
every time we play the music, something new happens and it’s exciting to see where it takes
us.

To me, *that* is improvising. The two of us, reacting to a moment. Together.

*Without this, there’s not that!*

To me it’s crystal clear that Tendra would not exist if I hadn’t gone through with my research.
That doesn’t mean that what I did was without fault. I could probably problematise it for
weeks. But you see, the fact that something like Tendra happened means that what I did and
how I did it was actually quite fruitful. Let me explain.

When we were composing the music, arranging it, and playing around with it, I felt that my
musical personality was present. Tendra became a safe haven where I felt comfortable enough
to just be myself and strong enough to stand behind my ideas – and to my pleasant surprise, I
had a lot of them, and they were actually great and not a danger to the ozone layer. I could
trust my intuition and make musical decisions based on my gut feeling. All the transcribing.
All the improvising exercises. All the standards. All the hours. The quest towards musical
independence. *All this resulted in Tendra.* No, it’s not jazz, and it’s not standards. There
aren’t even any ‘shoobedowah’s’ on there. It’s new music, written from the point of view of
two people who have both studied the world of jazz and are able to improvise – *together.*
They trust each other’s instincts and try to sing and play from the bottom of their hearts.

Tendra is not only a product of years of collaboration, respect and trust, hard work and quests
for musical personalities. Tendra’s debut album is a result of this artistic research, and I’m
very proud to present it as my examination project.

I’d like to invite you to listen to the album on Spotify: [Tendra – album on Spotify](#).
5. Conclusions – The last notes of the outro. . .

Before I say farewell to you, dear reader, and sincerely thank you for reading my thesis, I’d like to say a few words about what comes next and reflect briefly on the last 3 years.

Firstly, conducting an artistic research project was overall a meaningful experience for me, but, at the same time, a very confusing one. At times, it was difficult to put my actions and experiences into context – and then problematise it. Now, one might argue that this is what musicians do every day. We practice, we reflect, we practice again, we perform, we wonder why we do what we do, we cry and have artistic meltdowns, we get up, we practice and reflect . . . I was intrigued and confused and inspired and annoyed, and at times, there were tears, both of joy and madness.

But I’m glad I did it.

There was so much that came out of this project. Apart from Tendra’s album, I actually released two other albums (Athvarf and Hjörtun okkar jóla, see Appendix 4), and there’s another one is in progress. I gained extremely valuable insights into improvisation for vocalists and tons of ideas on how to teach it, as well as realising the importance of appreciating each student’s musical personality and making it my goal to help them to embrace it.

Coming to Stockholm changed a lot of things for me. My mindset got the opportunity to free itself from competition and focus mainly on artistry. I learned to not waste time comparing myself to others and rather put trust in my own capabilities. I experienced living in a place where mistakes were embraced, and success humbly accepted. I learned that no matter who you are and what your artistry looks like, you are valid, important, and enough. If there’s anything I hope you take away after reading this thesis – that’s it!

I walk away with inspiration, love, humility, and gratitude and a beautiful new backpack, filled with memories, knowledge, and experience. I learned a lot, and I can safely close this particular chapter in my musical life, carrying with me a new perception of music and a good feeling about who I am as an artist.

And so, we’ve reached the end of this thesis. My musical personality and I bid you adieu.
Have a great day!

Marína Ósk

Marína Ósk Þórólfsdóttir
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Appendixes

1. List of transcriptions

Amy Winehouse

Benny Benack III, Veronica Swift

Chet Baker
- You Make Me Feel So Young (Take 5) – *Chet Baker Sings: It Could Happen to You*. Original Jazz Classics (remastered version of the album); 1958.

Eddie Jefferson

Horace Silver
- Doodlin’ – *Horace Silver and the Jazz Messengers*. Blue Note; 1954
Joni Mitchell
• The Dry Cleaner from Des Moines – Mingus. Asylum Records; 1979.

Lester Young
• Almost Like Being in Love – Lester Young with the Oscar Peterson Trio #1. Nogran Records; 1954.
• Love Me or Leave Me – Pres and Teddy. Verve Records; 1957.

Miles Davis
• So What – Kind of Blue. Columbia; 1959.

Paul Desmond
• Bossa Antigua – Bossa Antigua. RCA Victor; 1964.
• Two Degrees East, Three Degrees West – First Place Again! Warner Bros; 1959.

Wardell Gray
• Jackie – Los Angeles All Stars. Prestige; 1953.
• Twisted – Easy Living/Twisted. Prestige; 1950.
2. Transcriptions – A few examples

Almost Like Being In Love
Lester Young solo transcription
(Lester Young with the Oscar Peterson Trio - 1952)

Copyright © Marina Ösk
Autumn Leaves
Chet Baker solo transcription

Composed © Melvin Ose
Dancing On The Ceiling
Chet Baker solo Transcription

[Music notation for the song Dancing On The Ceiling, showing chords and progressions.]
Just Friends
Chet Baker transcription
(Just Friends (Live) - Clifford Brown and Chet Baker)
3. Exercises – A few ear-training goodies

- The ‘Learn to hear chord progressions by ear’ – exercise

1. Sit and listen to a recording. Listen intently. Try to “feel” and hear the function of the chord progression.
   a. Anticipate what sound comes next and try to put it in context with functions. Either feel it or say it. Whatever floats YOUR boat!
   b. Do this a couple of times.

2. Go to the piano. Practice playing the chords along with the recording, thinking in functions, rather than chord-symbols
   a. Think about where a chord is going, what sound comes next, what color it is, what’s its function...
   b. Use your ears, not sheets!

3. Practice playing the chords on the piano without the recording
   c. Think functions, where is the chord going, what comes next...
   d. Use your ears, not sheets!

**You can do this also with another song, perhaps one you “know” and have heard often but haven’t studied or played before.

- The ‘If you can sing it, you can hear it – Chord notes’ – exercise

Use the iReal Pro app, an accompaniment track or a recording you like. Choose a song, sing chord-notes. Use these steps for variation:

1. Be aware of what functions you sing (thirds, sevenths...)

2. Be aware of the key and be aware of what notes you are singing, all the time!

3. Don’t be aware of what functions or notes you sing, just go by ear.
   i. Don’t panic if a goofy note appears. Gently move on and get back on track.
The ‘Hear chord progressions that aren’t there’ – exercise

1. Use the iReal Pro app or something alike. Choose a song to sing and find it in the app. Adjust so you only hear the bass.
   a. Sing the melody of the song with lyrics
   b. Improvise over one form, still only with bass
      i. Try to hear what’s not there but the bass indicates
      ii. Keep the melody in mind, just in case...
      iii. Try to free yourself of the outlines of the melody when you’re ready
   c. Start simply, take small steps
      i. Depart from the melody
      ii. Alter it here and there
      iii. Slowly move away from the melody
      iv. Take chances, let loose, break out of comfort bubbles

Keep it simple!

2. Remove everything except your voice. No accompaniment – this is a Capella.
   Now follow these steps:
   a. Sing the melody of the song with lyrics
   b. Improvise over one form – still no accompaniment
      i. Keep the melody in your mind for backup
      ii. Try to free yourself of the outlines of the melody, using it only when needed
      iii. If needed, start by removing the lyrics and scat the melody, using the “Depart from the melody” exercise

Keep it simple!
4. All the music – And listening links


Link to the album: https://open.spotify.com/album/1F0C6cNhNy50tCeWRCtkdv?si=_E3VLCHzTgWehIjVUKmS5Q


Link to album: https://open.spotify.com/album/6yNjOlWn83QKSp0MDpgA2G?si=UHsfvymgRPKzW3jm5-FcvQ

Link to the album:
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- Marína Ósk & Mikael Máni. *Bossa Antigua*.