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Handledare: Sven Åberg

Rickard N Jokela

SlowBass

Exploring, adapting and evolving the possibilities of the bass guitar.

Det självständiga, konstnärliga arbetet finns dokumenterat på inspelning:

Stallet, Stallgatan 7

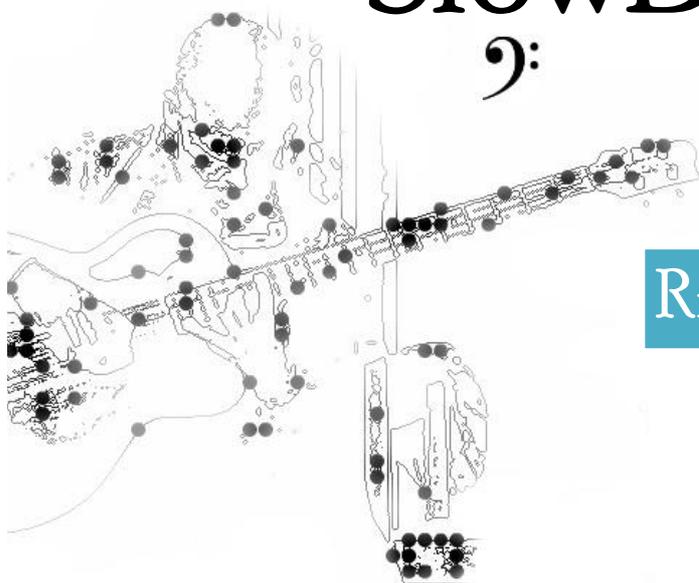
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SlowBass

♭

Explore
Adapt
Evolve



Masterkonsert

Rickard N Jokela

Akustisk bas

Med Jonas Knutsson ~ Saxofon

www.slowbass.se

KMH
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Musikhögskolan

Kungl. Musikhögskolan
T-bana Stadion
Valhallavägen 105
www.kmh.se



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Introduction

SlowBass is a website (www.slowbass.se) dedicated to exploring possibilities of the bass guitar, adapting techniques from other instruments and musical structures found in different genres of music. It is about slowly trying to evolve not only as a bass player but more importantly as a musician.

This essay is a collection of the texts with accompanying audio and video found on the website.

Thought + Sound = Music

To make music I believe that you need two things: a thought and a sound.

I've spent a lot of time finding as many sounds on my instrument and an equal amount of time thinking about my own likes and dislikes in music.

The musical result was a solo concert where the fruits of my labour were presented.

So once you've read my thoughts and heard my sounds the music will be more rewarding even though I hope that the music speaks for itself.

My ambition is that anyone can jump anywhere on this website and start reading. Hopefully each page makes sense by itself but to understand my process and why the music turned out the way it did I recommend reading from left to right in the navigation bar. The different headlines give a short presentation on each topic. The sub chapters are in alphabetical order so feel free to start wherever you like.

About the project

How much music can I get from a 4-string acoustic bass tuned EADG?

That is the question and this website is not the answer.

It is merely a presentation of my journey towards an answer.

The name SlowBass is inspired from an art exhibit I visited during the summer of 2012.

The exhibit, called Slow Art, is a collection of handicrafts that have been produced in a way that emphasizes the working process, for instance a necklace made off eggshells, an iron bowl that have been hammered on for 75 hours and so on. The tag line for this exhibit is "*Nobody sees how fast it goes but everybody sees how well it is done*" and this is a line that I bring with me in this project. Behind the easiest sound lies an enormous amount of work in order to make it sound effortless. It's about embracing the fact that fingers, music and mind needs time to grow and enjoying the process rather than rushing it!

The concept Slowbass is an idea that has been growing in my mind for a long time. It all started with the rather immature question; "Why are so many good bass players playing such boring music?". Being a fan of the genre know as fusion in my early teens I listened a lot to very advanced bass playing and took an interest in developing techniques like slapping and tapping. For some time these were the tools I used as soon it was time for me to play a solo and I knew that the audience would enjoy my solo regardless of the actual musical content. But then I got bored with it. This and opening my ears to new music (such as Indian classical, Arabic music, Flamenco and modern composers like Steve Reich) soon changed my mind set to something more constructive and the question changed to "How can I explore my instrument and try and use what it gives me to create my music?".

Beginning

As a part of my early process I decided to do a list of the instrumental characteristics I enjoy and also things that I miss in my instrument or find difficult to do. A pros and cons list if you will. Here it is:

+ The tonal quality of the bass is deep and I would call it naturally serious. When the bass speaks it reminds me of a grandfather speaking up in a way that makes everybody listen.

- + There is a softness which makes it easy to listen to. When a bass plays slow it's almost soothing, in a way that a bagpipe only could dream off!
- + It's versatile since the instrument itself isn't limited to playing harmony, melody or rhythm.
- + You can do a lot with less. Melodies and chords can be kept simple and still sound rich and beautiful.
- The sustain is not so good and it can be quite difficult to have notes ringing, except for the open strings. My choice of strings has a negative effect on this as well.
- The instruments tonal range is limited to about 3 octaves.
- The options on how you can accompany yourself are few. Two handed tapping is something some bass players use for this reason but I don't think it works well with the acoustic bass.
- The last thing on my list, and this is probably the big one, is the idea that bass is supposed to sound a certain way. Even I have had my preconceptions (and maybe still have) on how it should sound and when I talk to people who don't play any instrument they have a hard time understanding what I'm trying to do or even how a bass can be played by itself.

Creating framework

The next step was that I decided to create some rules otherwise the size of this project would have gotten out of control.

* No effect pedals allowed. I have enjoyed playing with loopers, delays, distortion and all kinds of things in the past, and still do, but pedals can steal much attention from the music and it's easy to cover up bad musicianship because you have a cool setup... For a while.

* No plectrums, clubs or other devices used to hit the string. All sounds should come from my hands.

* No special tunings or capo. Everything should be played with the standard EADG-tuning although detuning as an effect is allowed.

* Finding musical material to play on the bass which isn't playing songs but rather various ways to improvise, working with sounds and different musical structures that allow me to have more freedom when performing.

When I started to work on this project I wasn't thinking to do a presentation of solo bass but after a while it felt right. Playing solo is a great challenge and since I'm interested in showing instrumental details playing with other musicians might have covered those details. Ultimately it is about making music so everything that can be found on this website is something that I use when I believe it adds something musically, regardless if I'm playing solo, duo, trio or big band.

Instrument

My choice of focusing on the acoustic bass rather than the electric bass is a very simple one: I enjoy the acoustic sound over the electric sound for this musical purpose! If I'm playing popular music with a drummer, guitar, keyboard and vocal then I'm most definitely using my electric bass since that's the sound I want for that particular setting, but when looking to what sound I want and what style of playing I'm interested in, the acoustic bass is my first choice. Some things are better with acoustic and some things are worse. For instance sound is something that I find better. I also have the possibility of using the body of the instrument to play percussive techniques and I find that I play in a different, more personal, way with the acoustic bass. The not so nice things are the physical aspects. Every time I switch and play on an electric bass I realize I can play a lot faster on electric and have a much more relaxed playing position. My acoustic bass is quite big so my right shoulder and wrist get angled in a way that's not really comfortable for longer periods of time. Since I'm always sitting down while playing I'm also moving a lot, like crossing my legs, trying to avoid getting stuck in these uncomfortable positions. I've had some problems with my right shoulder over the years that can be traced back to practicing long hours without breaks and also practicing with some tension and this is

something I try to avoid by taking short breaks, relaxing and breathing while playing and also by working out and strengthening my body.

The bass I used for the most part is a Tacoma CB10 Thunderchief with GHS Pressurewound string. When traveling to learn I have used a bass called Escape MK II from Traveler Guitars.

Inspiration

"There are some things you learn best in calm, and some in storm" ¹
- Willa Cather

It's interesting to look back and think of the series of events that enabled me to walk the road I'm currently on. There are some moments of success but perhaps more moments that seemed like failures at the time but opened up new paths. There are so many different persons (so many that mentioning all would be a project in itself) who have played a big part in my growth as a musician and many of them have been role models not only as musicians but as human beings as well. This is my way of paying tribute to the teachers and musicians, whom without this project never would have happened.

Jonas Hellborg – Bass

The record "Good people in times of evil" (with Shawn Lane – guitar, Selvaganesh – percussion) is one of the most influential records in my path as a musician. It was the first time I've heard the fusing of Indian music, jazz and rock and it really spoke to me. I came across it in period of my life when I was trying to find all the cool fast playing, slap crazy bass players and while Jonas Hellborg is a very technical bass player it was the music that caught my interest. After hearing him my interest for Indian music was ignited which made me apply to the Academy of Music & Drama in Gothenburg a couple of years later.

Ahmad al Khatib – Oud

When I started my studies at the Academy of Music & Drama my main focus was trying to learn Indian classical music.

Since there wasn't a teacher with that knowledge when I started I ended up meeting the Palestinian oud player Ahmad al Khatib. My knowledge of oud or middle-eastern music wasn't that good but I considered myself fairly good from a technical and rhythmical standpoint having played a lot of fusion-jazz and progressive metal. Within a few minutes of our first meeting he crushed my confidence by presenting a piece of music in the Arabic rhythm called Samai (10/8). After that I spent the next 3 years absorbing as much knowledge as I could from him. He showed me the type of musician I would like to be just by being himself.

Marianne Svasek – Vocal

We first met when she visited my school in Gothenburg and did a workshop on the Indian classical style called dhrupad. After that we met in Rotterdam, where Marianne works as a teacher in Codarts, because she thought I should come and meet this teacher visiting from India (who turned out to be Bahauddin Dagar). And the last time we were in India were we met as students living in the same house sharing laughs, taking strolls and learning music from the same family. Without Marianne I'm sure my quest for Indian music would have been a lot less fruitful and less enjoyable.

Bahauddin Dagar – Rudra vina

What attracted me to Indian music at first was the virtuoso style of playing and the rhythmical complexity.

Dhrupad music is all about playing slow and this is what Bahauddin showed me and something that I'm starting to really enjoy and appreciate. Everything in the world seems to be speeding up so it made sense for me to slow down my music trying to create some balance and I don't think I would have done this without meeting Bahauddin. Bahauddin is full of music, humor, knowledge and constantly sharing it with his surroundings. I spent a couple of weeks with him in India on two separate occasions, and those periods have been extremely rewarding and creative. Hopefully I can go back in the near future, because I still feel like a beginner in slow world of dhrupad.

Jonas Knutsson – Saxophone

I have always been proud of being from Umeå, a city in the north of Sweden which have generated a lot of great musicians, and so for me to meet and play with a guy that I've been listening to and admiring growing up has been truly inspirational. Having fellow Umeå-native Jonas Knutsson as my artistic guide during my studies at the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm has been one of the highlights of my years as a student. When meeting in his rehearsal space you always get a nice cup of coffee with a cookie on the side but most of all the opportunity to play & speak about music with a wonderful guy!

Björn Meyer – Bass

I consider myself as a self taught bass player. It might have something to do with being stubborn and wanting to find my own way but part of it is not finding a bass teacher that shares my musical interest. The last year I've had the good fortune of meeting Björn Meyer (whom I have enjoyed listening to in the past) on some occasions and I really like his style of playing but I admire his choices in music. Listen to Björn's playing with Anouar Brahem, Bazar Blå, Asita Hamidi and Nik Bärtsch's Ronin.

I would like to thank some of my **teachers** through the years:

Richard Ekre Suzzi, Thomas Jäderlund, Anders Hagberg, Petter Berndalen, André Ferrari, Tommy Linell and Pelle Hjelmer.

And here are just a few of the great **bass players** that influenced me:

Jaco Pastorius, Carles Benavent, Victor Wooten, Rick Laird, Leonard Hubbard, Tommy Thordsson, Pino Palladino, Scott Thunes, Tony Levin, James Jamerson, Les Claypool, Richard Bona, Dominique Di Piazza, Tim Commerford, Avishai Cohen...

And lastly here are some of the wonderful **musicians** that made a difference for me:

Keith Jarrett, Björk, John McLaughlin with Shakti & Mahavishnu Orchestra, Meshuggah, Regina Spektor, Rabih Abou Khalil, Steve Reich, Joni Mitchell, Primus, The Dillinger Escape Plan, Hariprasad Chaurasia, Miles Davis, Blind Guardian, The Mars Volta, Jan Johansson, Prince, Frank Zappa, Feist, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Weather Report, L. Shankar, The Roots, Anouar Brahem, Peter Gabriel, Esbjörn Svensson Trio, Dave Holland, Rage Against The Machine, Dhafer Youssef, Radka Toneff, Zakir Hussain, Michael Jackson, Bela Fleck & Flecktones, Shawn Lane, Metallica, New Tide Orquesta, Jeanette Lindström, Talib Kweli, Paco de Lucia, Return to Forever, Nik Bärtsch's Ronin, Jill Scott, Renaud Garcia Fons, Allan Holdsworth, Sigur Ros, Mark Guiliana, John Cage... The list is can be made longer...

Thoughts

As a student of music I've had a lot of time for reflection.

I wouldn't have believed it if anyone would have said that I would spend almost the same amount of time reading books as practicing in some periods of my studies at the Royal Academy of Music but it is true. Reading has become part of my practice and the most inspiring books I've read rarely deal with music. In my first year I wrote a text called "Practice inspiration?" where I wondered if it is possible to affect the level of inspiration on a daily basis. I think you can and one of the ways I think you can do it in is to step outside your comfort zone. To test this myself I've started to read different books (I wasn't a big reader before so any book can be considered a different book), watching different movies and eating different food at home and when visiting a restaurant. Perhaps it doesn't seem like something that will change your life but that was never the point.

The point was to get inspired and I think it works for me.

Here is a collection of thoughts surrounding the instrument, musician and the music.

Attitude towards sound

”Dhrupad for me isn't a style – it's an attitude towards sound”

- Marianne Svasek when asked by me if new instruments such as the bass have a place in the dhrupad tradition.

One of the things I felt was missing in my playing was a wide variety of sound. Now I'm talking about sounds that you create with your own hands. There is no lack of different sounding basses, amps or effects but most players tend to do just about the same things with their hands when I believe it's the biggest area to really find your own sound. To quote the late great Jaco Pastorius: *“There are no tricks... it's just all in the hands”* ². So what did I do to explore this? Lots of time just spent with my instrument just to discover all the different sounds I could find, not really caring if the sound is good or not. This is something I really recommend every musician to do because it's been very fruitful and a lot of fun! And the more you know about your instrument the more creative you have to be in order to discover something new. After a while I discovered sounds that I liked and felt the need to develop. I didn't know at the time what to do with some of them, like trying to play with fret noise (which is something you try to avoid at all cost when you are a beginner), but I knew I liked the sound and that was all I needed to know. Playing a major scale getting fret noise on every note turns out to be quite difficult. In fact I found that most of these “bad” sounds require time to develop technically and more importantly finding a musical use for them, and this has been an interesting process for me.

One note

My studies in Indian music has allowed me to meet vocalists who start their day (around 5 AM) practicing singing just one note for one hour. At first I thought it was sort of crazy but after speaking with them and understanding more about the traditions it started to make sense. It also got me thinking about what would happen if I adapted this practice with one note on the bass. Because it doesn't make much sense practicing just one note on the bass for a long time. Or maybe it does?

So I started with the simplest thing you can do on a bass guitar: plucking the note A with my index finger. On most of my basses I have 20 frets, which gives me 8 different sounding A's (two on each string). For now I will just use 3 different sounding right hand positions (meaning where on the string I pluck): neck, middle and bridge. Adding this together gives me $(8 \times 3 = 24)$ 24 different A's just using my index finger! If you start to think about how many techniques can be used to further vary the sound of this note then after a while you have almost a million different sounding A's! Almost...

This is at least for me a very interesting thing to keep in mind when playing something that at first glance just seems to be “one note”.

Playing on one fret gives you more than just the clean note and here are two examples. The right hand plays in the same position so the change is all in the left hand.

Bilaga 1 Fretnoise

Bilaga 2 Dampening

Marianne Svasek is one of those vocalists who wake up long before me (in India I always felt like the laziest guy in the house getting up around 8 AM) and she is a person that has played a big part in my music the last couple of years. How she sings one note and looks at that note inspired me to rethink my thinking. It might be easy to look at the bass and see where every note is since the frets are there to show you, just like the keys on a piano.

But instead of looking at a note like a static thing I try to approach it the same way Marianne does when she is singing, imagining a note as a space. How you enter and how you leave this space is of equal, if not greater, importance as the space itself. This can be done on the bass using a variety of different ornaments such as bends, slides, hammer-ons, pull-offs.

From background to spotlight

One of the biggest changes in my musical life the last couple of years is viewing myself as a solo instrumentalist instead of a backup instrumentalist. I always enjoyed playing with other musicians and this is what I feel most comfortable doing, but the challenge of being on stage alone is something very different. As a bass player in an ensemble you have certain musical responsibilities. I think most people share the same idea of what makes a good bass player; grooving, keeping time, playing basic harmony and creating a platform other instruments can take off from.

In short, playing the bass! Someone like Jaco Pastorius got away with playing a lot more things because he was a genius but most musicians don't want to play with a guy trying to be like Jaco. Trust me I tried it! Tony Levin is one of those players that truly make more with less and the things he plays are so difficult because of their simplicity and the level of musicianship he possesses. If you have any doubts that sort of playing is in demand just look at his discography.

I would argue that a lot of the one sided bass solos heard are not just the bass players fault. Because if you think about it, what generally happens when it's time for the bass player to play a solo?

Guitar/piano might stop playing entirely and the drummer plays softer.

I think this is done with the best intentions so that the bass will be heard (especially if it's an upright) but speaking out of my own experience it also puts the bass player in a somewhat unfair position.

What I enjoy the most when listening to a group of improvising musicians is the interplay between them and a really good rhythm section can make even the worst soloist look good. But if nobody is backing up the bass player it's a lot of focus on what might be the musician least used to that attention.

And perhaps it's the only solo you have (compared to that guitar player who gets a solo in almost every tune!) so you really want to play your best and show all those cool things you have been practicing, which usually results in a kind of musical mess if you ask me. This musical mess has happened to me on more occasions than I would like to admit, but hopefully writing this will prevent it from happening so much in future solos. So to all you other instrumentalists out there: don't leave your bass player stranded when it's time for solo unless they ask you!

When you move away from the group context the role of the instrument changes to something else. All of a sudden small things that go unnoticed when playing together are seen and heard. You can be a great bass player but a no-good soloist because you are now asked to do something else. If I'm playing a gig with a band I might play in the same position all night using very few technical variations and it's enough to keep the music interesting because I have a certain function in the band. But if I do a performance on my own and use the same approach I will be very one dimensional and get boring after a while since I have different musical responsibilities. I'm not saying that one is better or worse or that it is harder to play solo than in a band. I'm just saying it's different.

I have had to practice different things and think about my performance in a new way. For instance: timing is always important but when I'm playing alone time is a lot more flexible. Tempos are not fixed in the same way as playing with a drummer and there is more freedom to be enjoyed. Also finding subtle ways to bring out more nuances from the instrument and having an idea where each sound is allowed to unfold. If I use all my different sounds and techniques in the first 10 minutes of playing then what do I do for the rest of the concert? There might be some joy in repetition but I believe that if I manage to give a new sound after 40 minutes the effect will be bigger for both me and the listener. So these last couple of years I've focused a lot more on details compared to before when I have been playing bass. Playing melodies, working on different phrasings, listening to how the sound differs when playing a melody on just one string compared to playing on two or three and so on. I've also been working on actually playing out of time (or maybe calling it free from time sounds better) to try and get the melodic lines as melodic as possible, not worrying about fitting the notes into a beat. It's been a great way of opening up the ears and hands to new ideas and looking on how much time I've spent on playing rhythm compared to playing melody I still have many hours to put in before I can consider myself a balanced musician.

Structure

Part of my work with SlowBass is finding ways of performing music that isn't just about playing compositions. I have nothing against playing songs but I feel it's more exiting when there is room for improvisation and spontaneity.

So for this reason I found different musical structures that makes it possible for me to improvise and create on the spot but also makes a concert easier to prepare both before and on the stage. Instead of playing 10 songs I now have the option of mixing in these structures to give a feeling of something different.

Here is a short improvisation made in December 2011.

My ambition was to not decide on what to play until the moment where I'm actually about to start. This proved to be a lot harder than I thought because ideas kept coming, especially hours before the concert, and I kept trying to ignore them. I knew I had a short time frame so I couldn't really play that long and I remember deciding straight away to focus on A# to B (playing in E Lydian) and then adding loud bangs as a contrast to playing soft. On one hand I consider it a failure because I fell into a comfort zone at some points. The biggest surprise for me was the ending because I wasn't thinking of ending like that but in the moment it just felt right so I stopped!

Bilaga 3 Short improvisation

Contrast – Similarity

Working with contrast is a nice and quite common tool to use when playing improvised music. When I get stuck musically or feel that I'm just repeating myself without any clear direction I try to think of a musical contrast to what I'm playing and that usually gives me something new to play.

I work a lot with contrast especially when I practice improvising to be able to quickly figure out different musical options. It can be anything from switching Major to minor, rubato to in tempo, soft sounds to loud sounds and so on. But if I use contrast in the same way all the time then it soon becomes predictable. In the book *Poetics of Music*³ composer Igor Stravinsky says "*Contrast is everywhere. Similarity is hidden, it must be sought out, and it is found only after the most exhaustive efforts.*" Any piece of music contains so much information so how and on what you decide to use the idea of contrast is individual. With Stravinsky's words in mind the next step has been to link the music with similarity as well. Here is an example:

First improvisation	Second improvisation	Third improvisation	Fourth improvisation
E Major	F Phrygian	Free	Free with A as a root
Fingerstyle	Tremolostyle	Fingerstyle	Slapping
4/4	4/4	Rubato	7/8
Moderato	Allegretto	Free	Animato
Mezzopiano	Forte	Piano	Fortissimo

The first and second contrast each other as far as notes, technique and dynamics but rhythm and tempo is fairly similar so when the third improvisation comes it contrasts both. The third and fourth are similar in the sense that both are free tonally. By thinking and creating boxes like this has helped me getting out of my normal patterns and allowed me to practice improvising in a more rewarding way. It makes you take two steps back and look at the bigger musical picture and see where you have been and where you are heading.

Contrast is essential for the structure I call the Jarrett and I think that similarity is equally essential in the structure called the Indian.

The Glass

Another structure I find very interesting and useful on the bass is using the idea of addition and subtraction. This idea comes from the composer Philip Glass and more precisely his work “Two Pages”. The piece is one line of music that is taking new shape as notes are added and removed. Here you can see what the first part of “Two Pages”:



I find it to be a great way to play grooves but by adding and removing notes over time you are constantly changing so it won't become dull playing just the same thing over and over. By keeping a steady 1-2-3-4 time with the foot you also get interesting changes in the rhythmic feel when the melodic pattern changes from even (2,4,6,8) to odd (3,5,7,9).

The Indian

This structure is from the Indian classical music and consists of Alap-Jor-Jhala. When performing a raag this is where you start and it is performed without any percussion. How long you spend in each part is up to the musician and can vary from 5 to 60 minutes. When you are playing a raag the first thing you do is to play the alap. This is a part played slowly without any pulse where you really focus on getting the most music out of every note. In dhrupad, the style I've been doing most my studies, this is where you truly show your musical knowledge and unfold the essence of the raag. Some can spend an hour playing just alap without it getting boring, but it is a rare art and most musicians outside of the dhrupad tradition prefer to play short alaps. The next step is jor. Here you are in a way repeating the melodic outline but you are doing with a pulse of medium tempo. The last part, jhala, is in fast tempo and here more focus is on creating rhythmical patterns. So one way to look at it without relating it to Indian music is:

Alap —————> Jor ———> Jhala

Slow (without pulse) – Medium speed – Fast speed.

Since I feel different techniques are appropriate for different speeds you get a natural disposition of different sounds to help keep the music fresh.

Alap is perfect for slow bends and playing in the lower register letting each note sound as long as possible. Touching different microtones is also nice since it's easier to hear the changes in pitch. When playing jor I tend to use a combination of slides, faster bends and also techniques such as artificial harmonics and playing chords. In jhala, since it is fast and you want to have 16th notes going all the time, there isn't that much room for change in the right hand. I like to use fast slides and hammer-ons and work mostly with different patterns in the left hand to make something interesting happen.

Here is a recording from my time in Mumbai in March 2012.

I play alap, jor and jhala in Raga Bhoopali.

Bilaga 4 Bhoopali

The Jarrett

"There has never been a time where improvisation has been given the respect it deserves" ⁴
– Keith Jarrett

I once told one of my teachers that I would like to be able to do what piano player Keith Jarrett usually does when performing, meaning just sitting down with my bass without any planning or idea on what to play. To sit down with the instrument and just be able to take off and go wherever the music wants to go! I like to romanticize about the musical genius where magic just happens but for me some sort of structure is needed otherwise the music will be all over the place and most likely not make very much sense. If I wake up inspired one day and music just flows from my fingertips then good for me, but a structure can come in helpful the other 364 days of the year. In his book *Blink* ⁵ (with the beautiful subtitle *The power of thinking without thinking*) author Malcolm Gladwell has a chapter called "The structure of spontaneity". The chapter is about an improvising comedy group in New York called Mother, describing one of their performances. Improvised theater might appear random and chaotic when in fact a lot of time is spent practicing but also that certain rules are required for good improvisations to happen. In short Gladwell writes: *spontaneity isn't random!* It happens because you have honed your skills and because you have created platforms where you are able to start improvising and then the music can grow from there.

This is something I have tried to adapt especially in my quest for solo improvisation. To have certain musical structures on which I feel comfortable to improvise so I at least have a direction when I start, or something to fall back upon. You can also hear that even a master such as Jarrett uses some kind of structure. By listening to a lot of his more recent work I found out what I now call the "The Jarrett". The Jarrett is sort of a reversed Indian in the sense that it's also 3 parts but starts wild and ends tranquil. First part is usually something very free in both rhythm and choice of notes. This style is easiest described as what's usually called "free improvisation". In my ears it's perhaps not really that pleasant but I feel it works more as a set up (in the same way for the second part, which is more harmonic, more grooving but it is also setting up for the third part. The third and last part ties it together with a slow and melodic feeling. Since you've had all this seemingly unorganized music free from melody for a while I feel the ears can relax a bit in the third part. I think of it as a very nice and easy way to structure part of a concert while also giving yourself freedom to fill the structure with whatever you like.

For an example of the master himself I recommend listening to Keith Jarrett – The Carnegie Hall Concert parts I, II and III (released 2006 on ECM Records).

Working with layers

One of my negative aspects of the bass is the difficulty of playing more than one thing at the time. Some bass players have found their way around this and developed two-handed tapping for instance, but I feel that tapping techniques doesn't really work that well with my acoustic instruments, so it is something that I haven't spent that much time doing. But I have been interested in finding ways to create what I like think of as musical layers. What I mean by this is to have different sounds happening, not necessarily at the same time but in the same way a drummer can hit a cymbal to refresh the sound. Since the range of notes is limited on a bass I try to think about playing in all registers and not just playing melodies and chords higher on the neck for instance but using the full range. This limitation of notes invites other sounds to happen otherwise I feel it can become boring to listen to, not because the music is boring but simply because you are listening to the same sort of sounds for a long period of time. I think the most commonly used layer by bass players are harmonics which are easy to play and they sound great but it's easy to overuse them once you acquire a taste for them. If I would use effect pedals then those could be thought of, and used, as layers, but since I decided to do it the hard way not using any effects I had to think of something else.

The thing I miss the most when playing solo is a beat. I think every bass player enjoys playing with a good drummer but when I'm on my own nobody is there to provide a groove for me. So I've been trying to incorporate all these advanced percussive techniques like playing rhythms on the instruments

body and doing percussive patterns on muted strings while playing notes on other strings. Although I'm really happy with the results of this practice it can also be seen as bypassing some steps and jumping straight to hyper-advanced level. Because what is the one rhythmical layer than most musicians already do on perhaps an unconscious level? Stomping feet! Having been surrounded by many fiddle players in the Swedish folk music tradition it is impossible not to notice that stomping feet can be used as a great tool when there is a need for a pulse. Good news for me! The sad part is that I realized how little control I have over my feet. Since I would be stomping my feet anyway I don't think of this as breaking my own rules when I wrote "*All sounds should come from my hands*". At the same time I decided that hitting the string with the ring on my right middle finger is not allowed because it can be seen as a tool even though it's part of my hand (the rules only apply for this project, when playing with something else I will most likely go crazy using effects, rings and special tunings just because I'm free to do so!).

The musicians with the most foot control are without doubt drummers, with church-organists coming in at a close second. Meeting and speaking with different drummers has been a good way of finding ways to practice this new skill. These issues arose on the way:

* I prefer tapping my right foot but because the instrument also rests on my right leg it can be a problem with balance.

* Since I change positions while playing it requires some thought on how to position my legs. If I have them crossed, tapping my left foot, then my foot is likely to tire faster because it has to lift the right leg as well. Switching between positions while keeping a steady beat with my feet is rather complicated so it's better to have one position until the foot should stop.

* The coordination of the feet takes time and if I don't pay attention they might revert back to whatever they feel like doing. Therefore it's important to take it slow and concentrate on the feet while listening to what they sound like together with what the hands are doing.

What sound you get depends on what part of the foot is used, how hard, the shoe and the floor. I'm working on trying to create 3 different stomping sounds: heel (kick drum), toe (snare drum) and full (kick and snare). I can also slide the foot along the ground after stomping to produce a sound that would represent a hi-hat. In this video you can see a short demonstration of how I have practiced different patterns for my feet.

First is you just see the different parts of the foot that I use then comes a pattern of 4 (right heel, left toe, right toe, left heel), then a pattern of 6 (right heel, left heel, right toe, left toe, right toe, left heel) and finally a pattern of 2 with sliding the foot in between.

Bilaga 5 Foot

This is perfect practice when riding the subway and I try to work out new patterns to continue to develop my feet. Using various techniques of hitting the instrument to produce percussive sounds (either a groove or just as an effect) is a layer that I enjoy but adding a pulse with the feet has proved to be much more effective to find this rhythmical platform that I've missed when playing solo. When adding these sounds that aren't exactly sounding as notes (such as scraping the string with the nail or bending the string to get a distorted effect), giving the ear some rest from hearing the bass as a bass, I have quite many layers to choose from.

In the future I would like to work on adding my voice to my playing. I never felt comfortable singing and my ability to play and singing even the ugliest note simultaneously is horrible. I either sing what I play or play what I sing and none of them sound like music to my ears. My idea is to use the voice for singing harmony, keeping a root or doing rhythmical patterns but I have to complete many practice hours before this will become anywhere close to music. Richard Bona is not only a great bass player but he has a wonderful voice as well and he does some crazy playing while singing and it all fits together very natural. If it ever was questioned then Bona is proof that learning to sing can be a useful tool for any musician and a very nice layer for us bass players to make use of.

Sounds

"You have to put more color into it!"

- Bahauddin Dagar when I was practicing a phrase that he didn't enjoy all that much.

If I should summarize the idea behind SlowBass in just one word then it would be freedom. Part of the chapter called Thoughts is about developing a freedom in the way I perform music, the musical structure. This part is about finding a technical freedom on the instrument. Although technique seems like something that can be practiced and perfected forever I think there is a level of "technical enough" and that level can be higher or lower depending on the music you wish to play. Once you reach that level then it's time to try and create some music.

What I have done here is to gather different sounding techniques so I will have more options when I play. In the same way a painter has many colors in his palette to choose from I want to be able to pick and use sounds that I find appropriate for the music. I've tried to find as many sounds as possible and not discarding things that at first might seem strange.

The search for the sound is an inspiring process and I hope you try and create your own collection of sounds. Some of them might be considered ugly sounds but when used in the right context they make sense, at least in my ears. Some ideas are inspired from other instruments and some just come from the instrument itself. I have selected some of my favorite sounds and techniques with texts on how the idea came about, how I developed it and also some audio and video for demonstration. I am in no way saying that I invented these sounds or that no bass player before me has ever used them because that is simply not true! But as far as I know nobody has ever presented these ideas in a more detailed way. I'm happy to give you these colors from my sound-palette!

Bends

"You have to think of a walking elephant... Don't make him run!"

Bahauddin Dagar describing a certain kind of bend.

One of the first sounds/techniques that I started working on was developing different kinds of bends. For me it is one of the most beautiful sounds on the bass but it's very rarely used. When you speak about bending a string a lot of people conjure up the image of maybe a blues or rock guitarist and while that is not wrong it isn't really the sort of bending I'm looking for. For me the ideal bending sound was coming from Indian instruments such as the sitar and the rudra vina. The rudra vina in particular is an instrument that has changed the way I look at my own instrument. Or perhaps I should say a vina player. In my search for learning more about the Indian classical music I met Bahauddin Dagar in Rotterdam in April 2010. Before then I had been studying Indian music with whoever could teach me but this was my first meeting with an Indian musician from India. Bahauddin is one of India's premier rudra vina players and his late father, Zia Moihuddin Dagar, is considered by many as "the" player. The Dagar family is one of the most respected in the dhrupad tradition and known for their long alaps. Before we met I already had developed some of the technical aspects (like bends, slides) but that first meeting with Bahauddin just opened my eyes, ears and hands to try and develop things that I never would have thought of before or just rejected as impossible. Well at least not appropriate! Because why would you practice slow bends if you are playing bass in a heavy metal-band?

One of the things that makes Bahauddin such a great teacher for me is that in a way his knowledge about "how you should" play the bass (before we met at least) was somewhat limited but his knowledge about the bass sound is very good. The rudra vina can simply be described as the bass of Indian classical music. The sound is very deep and the way it's played has many similarities to the bass. So what happened was Bahauddin asked me to do things that on his instrument isn't that difficult but on my instrument seemed almost absurd. When you bend on the vina you have a huge range compared to the bass. Also the fretboard is bigger so you always pull the string down which is easier to do. In the beginning I just sort of laughed and tried my best but then as my fingers got stronger (it's

like finding that new muscle that you never worked on before) my bending-range increased pretty quickly. Of course there is a limit to how much you can bend on a bass with standard strings and standard tuning but I was surprised on how far I could go with some practice!

One thing to accept is that bending on the bass is two quite different movements in the left hand. The E and A string are the easy ones because you bend downwards which I feel gives you more power, control and a more relaxed position. But D (if you want to bend more than a half step) and G require you to bend upwards which can put both your hand and left shoulder in an uncomfortable position. Another thing which created a problem for me, especially when doing the bigger bends, is the fact that you come in contact with other strings. The way I solved for instance a bend from E to G on the G string is to lift the D string with my right hand which gives my left hand more space. But that coordination took some practice and is still something that can be perfected.

Bilaga 6 Bends

Flamenco

The connection between flamenco guitar and bass makes a lot of sense and I wonder why the bass world haven't drawn more from this source of inspiration. There are of course some really wonderful bass players playing flamenco and bass players outside flamenco who have borrowed ideas about technique but there are so many things to be inspired by. For this project I've been looking more at the technical aspects of the guitar rather than the music itself but there are some fantastic ideas to be found in the music as well. I particularly enjoy the rhythmical side of flamenco with wonderful rhythms like the Bulería (a fast 12-beat cycle). The techniques are translatable to the bass since they play without a pick and for anyone already familiar with playing slapping it is not such a big technical leap that one might think. My inspiration in this area mostly comes from listening to guitar player Paco de Lucia, talking with musicians playing flamenco on the guitar and trying to put these different pieces together myself. A good guitar player makes the most advanced technical things sound so easy and fluent because even though it is a very virtuoso style it is the music, not the technique, which is the point.

After speaking to some flamenco guitarists I understand that making a guitar sounding flamenco takes a lot of practice, and I dare to say that making the bass sound flamenco takes even more time! There is the steel vs nylon string problem (same thing as the tremolo technique) but here you can feel the strings' thickness and spacing also makes it more difficult compared to a guitar. To get the percussive effect when playing a rasgueado (where you strum the fingers across the strings) you need to use a lot more strength. The nails are important for a guitar player but as a bass player I am having a hard time seeing any advantage with long nails while playing bass. I tried to grown my ring-finger nail to test it but never felt that it made the technique easier or added anything to the sound.

Since I mostly play the acoustic bass guitar there are some things that are possible to do that doesn't make any sense on an electric bass (or rather a solid body). The golpe-technique is one of these. This is where you strike the body with the ring finger to create a percussive sound and I would say that it's no harder to do on a bass than on a guitar. I have a protective surface so you don't strike on the actual wood. It once again makes a difference if the nail is long or short. Since I use my ring finger in other ways I like to keep the nail short and this means the golpe will sound more muffled because I hit with the tip of my finger but it is possible to angle the finger so part of the nail also hits. So by keeping my nail short I can produce two kinds of sounds which are helpful in adding some percussive patterns in the music.

In just two years of digging for ideas I have found several right hand techniques in the flamenco-style that might be the most interesting technical challenge for the right hand since I found Alexis Sklarevski's The Slap Bass Program at age 15!

Just sounds

"They say, "you mean it's just sounds?" thinking that for something to just be a sound is to be useless, whereas I love sounds just as they are, and I have no need for them to be anything more than what they are. I don't want them to be psychological. I don't want a sound to pretend that it's a bucket or that its president or that it's in love with another sound. I just want it to be a sound." ⁶

– John Cage

When speaking about music I always found it to be a very thin line between the "cosmic-everything-is-art-dude" and the more mathematical and theoretically "correct" approach to music, and for me the goal is to walk in the middle. American composer John Cage (perhaps most famous for his piece 4.33 which is 4 minutes and 33 seconds of silence written for piano) is a person that influenced my attitude towards sound after discovering his music as well as discovering his writings on music.

No matter what you hear when you listen to his music I find his thoughts surrounding music very interesting and I think his words are applicable regardless of what music you wish to play since he speaks mostly about sound. So in the spirit of John Cage I try to think of each sound made by my instrument as just a sound and for me it's all about how you use them. I like to look at them as different kinds of seasoning when cooking a meal. You can use different things to make the food taste different but it is important not to over-season because then the meal will suffer.

There are lots of sounds to be discovered on the bass that might seem strange or unusable at first but when you take some time to develop them and try to put them in a musical context they make sense! One of my favorites is scratching a string with the nail. By doing this you get a sound which reminds me of the guiro (percussion instrument used in a lot of Latin American music) so really you have 4 different sounding guiros to play with since the strings give different sounds. The most comfortable finger for this is the right thumb but using the index and middle finger also works well. The scratching can be done while holding a note with the left hand or with the string muted, for a percussive effect.

Bilaga 7 Guiro

Another thing that is directly related to percussion is using the body for playing rhythms. This is one of those things that doesn't work on the electric bass. You can find quite a few guitar players doing this on the acoustic guitar and it's used by some upright bass players but I never saw anyone doing it on the bass guitar and it's a lot of fun trying to implement it. Sometimes I use it as a separate thing if I want something new to happen musically so not playing notes (basically treating the body as a percussive instrument) can be a nice break but the goal with this technique is to combine rhythm and melody.

Bilaga 8 Percussion

One technique that might seem bizarre at first is playing on the edge of the neck. This is done by pulling the G string downwards to the point where it sounds distorted and then keep pulling it from the fretboard. This was the ultimate "but why?" sound until I've played it enough times to just think "yes but why not?".

Bilaga 9 Neck edge

Microtones

One of the first things people usually ask me when they find out that I have been studying Indian and oriental music is: *"But if you play a fretted bass, how do you do microtones?"* I've been telling them that I don't really care about microtones because for me that's just one aspect of the music that never really caught my interest, perhaps because I play an instrument that is thought to have a fixed note. My teachers haven't really bothered forcing it on me either. Bahauddins approach has been trying to get

me to play the music with whatever my instrument allows me to do. Maybe it's a part of my search for my instrumental limitation or maybe it's just because I want to be able to tell people "*Microtones? No problem!*" that I started working on playing those kinds of sounds on the bass. I have seen some guitar players that added extra frets to be able to play microtones but since part of my idea is to play a bass without modifications extra frets was never an option.

There isn't any trick to playing microtones on a bass. You just have to bend the string the appropriate amount and keep it steady. What makes it difficult is playing these notes without it sounding like you are bending the string every time and keeping the intonation. But the whole point with these microtones in my mind is to give a new kind of flavor to your playing. To do it properly you have to train your ears more than your hands. For me who isn't deeply rooted in a specific microtonal tradition it gives me a certain freedom to choose how I want to work with the microtones. Indian classical music, Swedish folk music or Turkish music all use different systems for the microtones and have different ideals for how they should sound so instead of trying to do it in a certain tradition I have just tried to make it work on the bass. So what I have done is dividing one note into what is audible for me and this gives me 3 new notes per fret, one a little sharper (B1), one in between (B2), and one a lot sharper (B3, that could also be thought of as a flatter C depending on how you use it). Try to bend a B to a C in one bend and then try to bend to the middle of that (B2) and once you can hear that it is in fact another note you can bend to the middle of that (B1). Then you just do the same thing, bend B → B2 → C but try to find the note (B3) in between B2 and C. This was my first step to approach this and afterwards it's only a matter of implementing it on whatever I'm practicing, for instance playing a major scale with a sharper third and a lower seventh for instance.



B B1 B B3 C

Instruments with frets can be easier to learn than those without but in my case it also made me look more than listen as a beginner. Since you can see where the note is you might not have to listen to it and you can learn to play a song visually instead of actually listening to the notes. I remember starting out playing bass and my friend who played guitar would show where on the neck I was supposed to press. So for the first years I learned a lot of visual patterns that sounded like songs by Rage against the machine. Working with microtones is all about listening and sometimes it can be almost impossible to hear the difference at first but with time the ear starts to notice all of these small variations. My approach nowadays is more like I'm playing a fretless bass in the sense that I try to not look at the neck so much, hearing the notes instead of seeing them.

So why not use a fretless? I feel that there are just too many sounds and techniques that I have to sacrifice when I play a fretless so it's not really contributing to my music. But some players sure can make it sound beautiful!

Bilaga 10 Micro

Ornaments

"You have to dance with your fingers!"

Oudplayer Mousa Elias giving me some advice on how improve my drills.

When I talk about ornaments on the bass I mean the small movements by the left hand made before or after playing a note. Technically it can be a bend, slide, drill or some sort of hammer-on or pull-off. However, I would like to make a small difference between using something as a technique and using it as an ornament. For instance when I use slides as technical idea I'm looking for a musical element where the sliding sound, not necessarily the note, is the important part. When I use slides as an ornament I think of it somehow more connected to the actual note that I'm about to play. It is a way

into the note rather than something that happens before the note and therefore I see it as a smaller movement. This is directly connected to the attitude towards sound. I like to use ornaments as a subtle thing so I don't want the actual technique to be heard since it might steal focus from the note. The best way to develop this has been to record myself when I practice since I found it quite hard to actually hear if I'm overemphasizing a certain ornament while sitting with my instrument. Recording, both audio and video, is such a nice tool and I keep forgetting to use it over and over again. It can be discouraging listening back to myself and realizing that it sounds... not so good... but it's important to remember that the reason I'm recording is to become conscious about how it sounds and therefore have the option to do something different.

Here is a short recording from the practice room where I'm trying a phrase with some different ornamentation.

Bilaga 11 Ornament

Slides

Different kinds of slides are used a lot in Indian classical music by instruments such as the violin and sarod but for me it is more interesting to look at some of the more recently introduced instruments like mandolin and guitar since they also have frets. U. Srinivas (mandolin) and Prasanna (electric guitar) are two good examples of how I would like to use this technique. Because of the frets the sliding has to be done in a certain speed otherwise it will just sound sloppy compared to a fretless instrument where you have more possibilities in terms of sliding slow. What kind of string you use makes a big difference and the string that fits my style of playing the best is GHS Pressurewound. A normal roundwound string will generate a lot of noise when the left hand is moving and flatwound strings, although smooth, just doesn't feel right for me and I don't like the way they sound in other areas of playing. The pressurewound is in between, a bit smoother and less noisy than the roundwound but still has a brightness and edge.

When it comes to the actual sliding technique there isn't that much to it except sliding as long as your fingers have calluses otherwise it might burn a little. Speed is important to make it sound fluent and I try to put as little pressure as possible on the string. I practice slides using all my fingers in the left hand so I'm not limited to a position. I prefer using the ring finger but I've seen a lot of people (like Prasanna) using mainly the index finger. Since the space between frets are so big on a bass I find that using my index finger makes my hand move more which is something I like to avoid because it requires more energy and can also put the left hand out of position.

Tremolo

The idea of developing a way to play tremolo on the bass came after my years spent learning from the wonderful oud player Ahmad al Khatib at the Academy of Music and Drama in Gothenburg. Because one of my SlowBass cornerstones is to only work with hands, therefore plectrums are not allowed. Playing with a pick can sound great and some bass players, like Carles Benavent (most famous for his work with Paco de Lucia), make it sound magical, but it gives you a certain sound and holding a pick also locks you in a position of playing.

What is so great about the oud is that it can sound really soft but also really loud. For me the big thing in the beginning was how to get that soft tremolo effect on the bass. I have always enjoyed looking at other instruments for ideas and it's easy to get jealous of the possibilities which always seem endless on a piano for instance. But the grass isn't greener on the other side, it's just a different lawn of grass. No sound or idea is harder than the other so it's just a matter of trying to adapt what works. Finding more possibilities instead of looking at the limitations.

So how about that oud tremolo? The oud has nylon strings which gives it a much softer timbre and since I want to stick with steel strings (even though acoustic bass with nylon strings sounds amazing!) it makes it harder to play soft. The way I do it now is using the tip of my index finger and rapidly hitting, finger fully extended, the string with both down and up stroke. This gives me control over the tremolo and a natural softness since it's actually quite hard to play with too much power. Short fingernails are a must for this since you want to use the fingertip and not the fingernail.

Bilaga 12 Tremolo 1

The other way I do tremolo has a lot more in common with the actual oud style of playing and feels like a more versatile technique since it can be played on more than one string. What I do is imagining myself playing with a oudpick (a long plastic thing) but treating my index finger as the pick.

The up and down stroke gives two different kinds of attack since I hit the string with my nail on the down stroke but use my fingertip coming back .

This style of playing is also more rhythmical and dynamic than the previous one and playing with the nail gives a very distinct sharp sound. Here I want to hit the string closer to the bridge than the neck so the string will be tighter and therefore avoid getting my finger stuck on the string. It can also be done with just the thumb which gives a softer sound and is reminiscent of bass player Victor Wootens double thumping technique (using the thumb in an up and down motion while slapping instead of bouncing of the string). Using the thumb makes it easier to dampen the strings with my right palm to get an even softer tremolo.

Bilaga 13 Tremolo 2

Music

"One of the biggest fallacies I think in art circles, and in music circles maybe, when people talk about it is that music comes from music... it's like saying babies comes from babies. It's not true! It isn't what happens. Music is the result of a process the musician is going through, especially if he's creating it on the spot." ⁴

- Keith Jarrett

Here are you find the result of the process I have been going through:

The concert

Bilaga 14 The concert

This is my examination concert recorded on the 14th of May 2013. On stage I didn't want to explain in technical terms what I was about to do so I used a metaphor since I knew the audience contained quite a lot of people who weren't musicians. My work with SlowBass has been like building a small town by hand, figuring out what I like my town to exist of, what kind of buildings I want and how many park benches there should be and where they should be and so on. I wanted the audience to think of this concert as a guided tour around this small town with the possibility of finding their own areas of interest within letting their imagination run free. I never wanted this music to be exclusive for bass players so it was always important to try and present it in a way that made sense to anyone. But of course there is a technical side and here is how the concert was constructed inside my brain.

I start off with a minimalistic idea playing the note C for quite a while and then introducing some bass notes. This felt like a good way to make the audience focus and listen to the small variations in one note so that when a new note appears their ears will notice. It was also a nice opening for me to get comfortable on stage and dealing with potential nervousness. I would say that perhaps 50% of the bass

notes where improvised and 50% where planned ahead. After this I make the presentation mentioned above.

Then we move on to the Indian neighborhood in my small city. I play alap, jor and jhala in a raga called "Bhoopali" (another version of me playing this raga can be heard here). I knew from the very start that I wanted to include this and it was never a question in my mind to have it anywhere else than in the beginning. It continues on the ideas from the first piece with making the audience listen to small changes and also allowing my ears and fingers warm up. The scale of the raga is a major pentatonic (E – F# – G# – B – C#) so it is easy to listen to harmonically. Except for the first couple of phrases this is all improvisation.

After the raga I wanted to make a transition playing the E and slowly change the context of how it is heard by making it the second instead of the root moving into D harmonic minor with some variations, using tremolo as the main technique in the right hand. A few days before the concert I thought of using nail polish just to give some extra flair and I used my idea of contrast – similarity, painting the left hand black and the right hand white but having one finger on each hand turquoise. Since my nails got painted just before the concert and I've never worn nail polish previously I realized in this particular moment that the surface of my nail has changed (maybe not a huge surprise looking back on it and perhaps something I should have tried beforehand) using the tremolo technique felt a little bit unusual so this part became shorter than I anticipated. Then I move to the scale "A Hijaz" (A – Bb – C# – D – E – F – G) with some variations but the biggest change in this part is the introduction of an oriental rhythm called "Masmodi" played on the instrument's body and also utilizing the slapping technique. Here I wanted to shift the attention towards rhythm since a lot of focus has been on melody in the previous parts. The notes and chords are improvised within the scale. My choice of stopping playing notes and only working with the rhythms on the body was not something I decided on before the concert but it felt like a good transition to the next part where I start off with playing a short call and response first between notes and body and then between notes and foot. The stage was covered with carpet which made it hard to get a clear sound from the feet so I had to stomp rather hard to make it heard. The call and response serve as an introduction to the piece "Sultani Yegah Sirto".

After this I wanted to move into a different sounding area so I decided to play around with different harmonics and also detuning my E string. The combination of harmonics and the low bass note works really well in my ears and I wanted it to serve as a vague moment for the audience of what is happening since everything leading up to this has been about notes or rhythm and this part for me is more about atmosphere. I particularly enjoyed playing around with the harmonics located on the 8th and 10th fret on the D and G string which are hardly ever used but reminds me of the gamelan music from Bali. Short improvised transition while I tune the E string back and make my way to the next part which starts on C playing a Bulería rhythm with my thumb using my palm to mute the strings. This is a flashback to the first piece I play using the same kind of bass progression with a C on top but playing around with different rhythms. Here I once again wanted to use the foot for keeping and also changing the rhythm. Later this evolves into a slap improvisation that turned into something almost sounding like Swedish metal band Meshuggah (I saw them in concert five days earlier and I suppose that served as the influence for this part). My next transition contains some use of the flamenco technique golpe but a phone rang in the audience which broke my concentration and made me move on a bit quicker than I would have liked.

Next part is my composition "For Her ears only". The previous part was a build up where I wanted to play fast and loud to have the effect of this piece. Here it is all about taking the time playing slow and trying to make every phrase as important. Most what happens in between the melodies is improvised but some phrases are the result of just practicing this piece over and over finding out sounds I like. I end it in a similar way to how I start the concert by playing one note – B in the high octave.

The sum it up I see the concert as three parts: The Indian, The Oriental and The Jarrett. Now I'm not including the first piece I play because I see it as an introduction although its function is important.

Each of these parts consists of three parts and has different elements of contrast and similarity. The Indian is one mode for a long time with three different speeds giving the change where as The Oriental have three modes but follow a similar structure in terms of developing speed. So I think of this second part as the Indian structure (alap-jor-jhala) but with a completely different tonal material. The two parts contrast in the notes but in my mind they are similar in structure. The last part, the Jarrett, has its own structure that contrasts the Indian but bring back some musical ideas previously heard so it also offers some similarity. One could say that the entire concert is an Indian structure where the Indian part serves as the alap, the Oriental as the jor and the Jarrett as the jhala. Overall I'm happy with how the concert turned out. Having these structures allowed me to have the kind of freedom on stage I was hoping for but still having a clear direction. I'm looking forward to continue working with these ideas to see how they evolve in the future!

For her ears only

Bilaga 15 For her ears only

This is a simple piece that required a lot of practicing to find that simplicity.

It consists of just a few melodic phrases and improvisation.

The piece is in A Lydian but I found the melodic inspiration in the Indian raga called Yaman (which is a Lydian scale but with some specific melodic movements). I start by playing C# to sort of hide the real mode for the ear so once the A is introduced it is heard in a different way than if I would have started with A. The most important thing for me when playing this is finding the right feeling for the music, keeping it as simple as possible and letting every note sound as clear as possible.

In my examination concert I used this piece to finish the concert which also ended my Jarrett-structure.

Scratch

Bilaga 16 Scratch

This piece is based on having different sounding rhythms happening at the same time. The first part is improvised trying to keep the movement between E and D with my right thumb and introducing some rhythmical variations with my right index finger. I liked the sound of the scratching as a rhythmical effect so I tried to incorporate it together with the muted thumb in the next part and then adding a melody on top. In the last part (coming back to E and D) I also use my foot to change the feel of the rhythm. It started out as an exercise for coordination and timing but grew to something that I think is a nice musical idea.

I intended to use this in my examination concert but on stage it never felt like the right moment so it became one tool I didn't use that particular day.

Sultani Yegah Sirto

Bilaga 17 Sultani Yegah Sirto

This is a traditional Turkish composition and the beginning is improvising in a style that I think fits with the style. The introduction is heavily inspired by the oud, playing with the tremolo style with the index finger and using my thumb in the end of the improvisation. You can hear that I'm playing around with some microtones around the 1.05 mark. I also use my foot to change the groove even though it is hard to hear in the recording. Most notably you can see me shifting from half tempo to full tempo around 3.15.

I played this piece in my examination concert and it was the only music that I didn't compose myself and also the most structured piece of music.

References

¹ W. Cather, *The Song of the Lark*, Standard Publications, 2008.

This quote was given to me by my mother after my examination concert in the form of a necklace that my aunt made. It is the Swedish version of the quote "*Vissa saker lär du dig bäst i storm, andra stillhet*"

² Quote taken from an radio interview with Jaco Pastorius done by Clive Williamson in 1978. Visit http://www.symbiosis-music.com/jaco_pastorius.html for full article.

³ I. Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music in the form of six lessons* 16th edn, Harvard University Press, 2003 p. 32.

⁴ Quotes are taken from the documentary *Keith Jarrett: The art of improvisation*, Euroarts, 2005.

⁵ M. Gladwell, *Blink – The power of thinking without thinking*, Penguin Books, 2006 pp. 111-117. I can really recommend all books by Malcolm Gladwell and if you wish to learn more visit www.gladwell.com.

⁶ Quote taken from the documentary *Listen*, Miroslav Sebestik, Facets Multimedia Distribution, 1992.