Sven Midgren

Folk as Art

– my development as an artist

Skriftlig reflektion inom självständigt, konstnärligt arbete

Det självständiga, konstnärliga arbetet finns dokumenterat på cd/dvd
“All forms of development has the two elements 'progress' and 'danger' built into them.”

Kenzaburo Oe, Tidningen Vi, March 2013

“If there are no questions – it is not art. If something delivers defined answers, it’s not art but propaganda, or maybe entertainment.”

Notes from a lecture with Kristiina Ilmonen
Abstract

The present paper discusses the two concepts 'music as art' and 'music as function', put in a historical context but also based on my own experiences and development throughout the Nordic Master in Folk Music. Special regard is given to how my changing relationship to these two concepts have affected my own development. The paper also describes several different methods for artistic development as well as some ideas about what (folk) music can be and how we can think about it.

*Keywords: Art Music, Functional Music, Folk Music, Artistic Research, Musical Experiments, Artistic Development*
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0. Preface to the document version of Folk as Art

This is not what I consider to be my thesis, but a printable version of it. The real work is presented at www.folkasart.wordpress.com where the hypertext features can be experienced as I have intended. I urge any reader of this document to visit the webpage and become an active co-creator of the text, through deciding which texts to read, and in which order.

The fact that the text mass presented here is not intended to be read in a particular order, but rather to be explored a bit back and forth, means that the order in which the texts are presented here is not necessarily the best one. I have tried to put it all in an order so that it makes sense to read it from the first page to the last, but I wish for the reader to overlook any confusion that might occur if the text is read in a linear fashion. Instead, I hope that the reader will make use of my attempt to include the inter-thesis hyperlinks in this printable version. This is done through giving each text a number in the header and whenever there is a hyperlink in the original text it is indicated in this document with [brackets] (►21) and a reference of which number to go to.
Introduction - Aims of the essay, outline of the essay, some words about the NoFo-programme.

1. What is this all about? (introduction to the main question)

The idea of this thesis is to describe my experience and development as a musician during my studies at the [Nordic Master in Folk Music] (►14) (NoFo) programme. This will be done with special attention given to the tension-field between folk music as Functional Music and folk music as Art Music. I will make an attempt to put this tension-field in a historical [context] (►9), and also make rough definitions of how I use the terms [Function and Art] (►5). My own development during this masters programme can very much be described as a movement from the idea of folk music as Function towards the idea of folk music as Art. I will try to describe how this movement is intertwined with my self-image as a musician, and how that has affected my music making.

Furthermore I will describe the [methods] (►19) I have been using in my artistic development. This includes different [ideas] (►27) I have been using as a starting point for music making, as well as how I have been using my [body] (►24) and [playing] (►23) as tools for development.

I have tried to keep the focus of the thesis on the present day situation, and what I have been doing during the two years master's course, and not giving too much space to how this all relates to my past. Even so, I have felt that it is necessary to describe some things about my [my musical background] (►17) to help the reader understand what the shifting of view on folk music means to me, and why it created such a big change.

As an appendix there are some [musical] (►39) [examples] (►38) included, as well as some more anecdotal texts from the blog I was running together with my fellow NoFo students, as well as a quite random [parallel to a book] (►45) I read during my stay in Helsinki.

Writing this master thesis has been a great way of helping myself understand what I have been doing during these two years of [traveling], (►43) playing, [experiencing] (►35), exploring, practicing, thinking and developing. In the end, the [legacy] (►37) of my NoFo studies is something that will stay with me for a long time.

All ideas and perspectives that I bring up could be extended a lot further, and I am greatly aware of the fact that a lot of the texts lack in depth and/or consistency. In the end, it is an artistic degree I have been doing, not a traditionally academic one. This written thesis is only a small part of the final examination.

2. The Beginning

A bit more than half-way through my master studies I realised something had happened. Something had changed in how I looked at folk music, what I thought it meant to be a folk musician and how I saw myself as a (folk) musician. At the same time I discovered that, without feeling that I made any technical progress when it came to playing the violin, I still developed a lot in my playing. A development that had more to do with what I did with my ability, rather than with increasing my ability. I realised that what had happened was a development in my mind. I allowed myself to do things that I hadn't allowed myself to do before, even if I had the technical ability and the musical ideas. Somehow I had opened up some of my mental barriers.

Before I started studying at music academy, folk music for me was strongly connected with social events. It was music that belonged in a [social context] (►3), and the social context provided its meaning. For me, doing (playing, listening to, dancing to etc.) folk music was a social act, something I did together with friends. Also as a performer, I strongly acknowledged the power of the context, and took pride in considering myself as a tool for a greater purpose, to provide the music that was right for that occasion, be that a dance evening, a wedding or a funeral.

In the third semester of the NoFo-studies came a turning point. That's when I really started to be comfortable with the label Artist (for myself) and Art (for my music) and that created a great feeling of freedom: If what I'm doing is art, and I am an artist, then I can do whatever I like. I don't have to feel constrained by the idea
of [tradition] (►29) and 'traditional playing'. Not that I dismiss the idea of tradition and traditional playing as a source of artistic knowledge, inspiration and material, but rather than seeing it as goal I started using it as a spring board, a point of departure. In the end, this left me with a completely new feeling of freedom in my playing. For me, the shift from Function to Art was what I needed to free myself from some of my inner limitations.

3. The Community

My local community of folk musicians consists largely of amateurs, a lot of them with a great knowledge about folk music but not very skilled instrumentalists. In that environment there is a great appreciation for good tunes and you get acknowledged if you spread new tunes (preferably from the right origin, and not too difficult ones) play good harmonies and good for dancing. Playing 'artistic' or soloistic, or choosing a repertoire that reaches beyond the average level of difficulty does not get you an acknowledgement. To be part of the group musically, you have to align yourself with the common idea of how the tunes should be played, and, especially in my core group of folk music friends, there is a strong leader whom to follow. It is folk music as a group experience.

And in that milieu folk music is very much a [functional music] (►7). It has a (social) purpose and that is why you play it. It is played in a social context, together with friends as a way of socialising, and it is played for dancing. That is really the only reasons to play folk music.

If it is played on stage it should still be considered dance music and if it is arranged in a way that wouldn't work for dancing that clearly puts its value as folk music at stake. There is definitely a risk of getting the music labeled as not folk music. The same goes for contemporary composed tunes: they might be brought into the repertoire, but only if they fit into the patterns of what is considered traditional, if it goes along with the groups idea about what folk music is (and fits within the technical limitations of the group). In the end however, it is not about the danceability of the music, but rather a matter of belonging. The music should be accessible for everyone and everyone should be able to participate.

For me this environment and these people meant a lot. It gave me a context and a sense of belonging, it provided clear values and easy-to-follow 'rules' for playing. I got appreciation for my skills and I could easily contribute to the community by bringing in new tunes, or just by being a 'strong' musician, for the others to lean on. So I made the values of the group my own, and that influenced and affected a lot of my practicing and development. Of course I had some ideas of my own, and sometimes wanted to take music in somewhat different directions, but I found it hard to allow myself to do that, and even harder would it have been to present those ideas to the group. From time to time I often found myself thinking “what would NN think about this?” or even “I would like to do this, but they would never approve of it”. To be honest though, I think I also had a tendency to project my own fears and inner judges on that group of people, and thus place them outside myself.

If community for me represents music as function, then education (►4) represents music as art (►6).

4. The Education

During my time in musical education, I have continuously been presented to ideas of more 'artistic' nature, ideas that in different ways concerned (folk) music as an expression of [Art] (►6). Also some of my own thinking and development has taken that road as well. The idea to produce art has been exciting and appealing, but also felt a bit dangerous. And either way, I was fairly certain that I wasn't an artist and I certainly wasn't allowed to do art. I wasn't good enough, I wasn't crazy enough, I didn't have good enough ideas.

As I was making my way through the NoFo degree I gradually started to get used to the idea that folk music could be a form of art, and a folk musician was then and artist.

The idea probably started growing already when I began to study music at the academy in Malmö in 2008 and it definitely grew stronger when I changed from studying to be a fiddle teacher, to be studying to be a performer (which is what I did when I began my NoFo studies). The real shift
however took place during the semester we spent in Helsinki at the Sibelius Academy (SibA).

I think there are several reasons why it was in Helsinki and at the SibA I began to think of myself as an artist. One of the reasons I think simply has to do with timing. It took some time for me to really start to believe in myself as an artist and as a performing musician; in the third semester of the NoFo studies, the idea that I could become a freelance musician, and that it actually would be possible to make a living playing music, began to sink in. But it is definitely not just a matter of time. The folk music department at the Sibelius Academy is a very special institution and it provides a very special environment for personal and artistic development. It is an institution where the idea of folk music being art, and folk musicians, student and teachers alike, being artists, is very strong. And since that idea is present everywhere in that institution, in all activities that take place there, it is natural that that is the place where the idea of myself being an artist would start to grow on me.

So in a way the whole process of 'becoming an artist' could be seen as just adapting myself to a new community and its values. The folk music department at SibA was the first institution during the NoFo studies where I really had a sense of belonging, and then it's natural that I also adapt the values of that institution, just as I had been doing before, only in a really different environment.

**Function vs. Art (Theory)**

5. **My Definitions or Associations**

I have, on purpose, chosen not to define the two terms Function and Art very clearly. And I have chosen to define them very much myself, intuitively, since it is my own development I am trying to make sense of, and since it is the meaning of these words, and how I use them, within myself I am trying to describe.

In general, the interesting word is *Art* (►6), a term that changed my way of thinking about myself and my music making. *Function* (►7) is a term I'm not very happy with, but I haven't found a better one. I use it to describe, and refer to, the approach to folk music that I used to have, before my NoFo studies, and the approach that is present in the community I come from.

It is easy to see the two terms as forming a dichotomy (►8), and I am aware that my usage of them also sometimes follow that pattern. However, in the end I try to form a synthesis (►11), showing that they rather make up a duality, describing two different sides of the same thing (in this case music).

6. **Art**

The definition of Art is a difficult one, something which has been subject to quite a few dissertations on its own. As I said, I am not after a perfect and water proof definition of Art, but rather I'm looking into what does Art mean to me. What connotations do I give the word, what meaning does it have to me. In the end it is a very powerful word, that in the end changed a lot of my thinking about myself and my music making. So what do I put in to it?

When I think about it, I have had a tendency to favour the aspects of Art that easily could be considered positive.

Art for me means freedom. It means doing 'crazy' and 'weird' things. It is a perspective, a process and a way of thinking, rather than a result or a concrete object. It is a way of thinking that allows me to do whatever I like. A way of thinking that allows me to trust myself, and trust that what I do is Art. It means crossing my own boundaries, breaking my own limitations – technical and mental. Art is exploring. It means following a very personal and individual path, trusting your own judgement. It means leaving the comfort zone, moving into the unknown, away from the answers provided by following someone else's path. It means unlimited space to fill up. Art means asking questions. Art means creating connections between things that were thought or considered to be separated. It means diversity, it means communication, it means letting out the inner voices. It means feelings.
I have tended to think less about the more (in my opinion) problematic aspects of art: that it creates a division between performer/creator and audience. That it is elitist, a concept that is strongly associated with the (male, white) genius, high status and upper class.

I have also consciously chosen not to define Art in any strict way. I am aware that there are incoherent and paradoxical thinking in what is written here, in how I describe Art. But what is important to me is not to have an exact definition of Art, what it is and what it isn't. What is important to me is just the experience, that when I started to think of myself as art, and my practice as an artistic practice, I experienced increased freedom and increased space within which I could work.

See also [Function] (►7), [Dichotomy] (►8) and [Dichotomy or Duality?] (►11)

7. Function

Function is a much harder concept to define. I am not very happy with the term, but I will do my best do clarify what I put into it. Dahlhaus (1970) calls it Genre-music, which in a way perhaps is a better term, but I will stick with Function, since that is the term I have got used to.

Functional music is music that has an 'outer' purpose. It may be dancing, it may be a ceremony (like a wedding or a funeral), it may be as a means for friends to hang out together. All this also implies that functional music is music where everyone is somehow participating, there is no real division between performer/creator and audience, everyone is necessary and the one would not exist without the other. Hence functional music depends on (the approval of) the collective and doesn't really give space for the individuality.

Functional music is also music that follows clear and straight lines that are defined by this purpose: If I'm playing for dancing it is the danceability of the music which defines its value; If I'm playing together with a group of people it is the musics ability to fit into the taste, style and technical ability of the group that defines its value. This creates a very comfortable space to move within. As long as you're keeping inside these frames there is a great deal of freedom and it is easy to know what is good and what is not. Quality in this context is about reproducing tradition and convention, fulfilling the requirements of the genre.

See also [Art] (►6), [Dichotomy] (►8) and [Dichotomy or Duality?] (►11)

8. Dichotomy

The whole description of Function and Art, but in a much shorter way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Art/ist/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collective/community</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amateur</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom within a framework</td>
<td>Freedom to explore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproducing</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>Risk taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating</td>
<td>Performing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music for the sake of a purpose</td>
<td>Music for it's own sake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conform</td>
<td>Eclectic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned through Living</td>
<td>Learned through Educated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The list could of course be built on, with opposites like lower/upper class, low/high status, local/universal, oral/written culture but I prefer not to consider the more valuing and judging aspects of the dichotomy.

Constructing this dichotomy lead me to asking a lot of questions.

Do I really need this polarisation? What does it do? What does it do to me and what does it do to my art and what does it do to other people and my relationship with them?

In trying to answer these questions, I ended up forming a [Duality] (►11) instead, to create a synthesis of the
two different approaches to music. In most places in the text however, I write dichotomy, mostly since that is how I feel that it is most often thought to be.


When I started to realise that my mind was shifting from thinking about folk music as [Function] (►7) towards thinking of folk music as [Art] (►6), I believed this [dichotomy] (►8) was something I had built up myself and that it was something that existed only in my own head. Of course I could see signs of it also in my background, in comments from people around me etc. but my general idea was still that it existed mainly in my head. In a way, that was a good thought, because it meant that it would be easier to get rid of. I only had to make up my business with my self, I wouldn't have to also take care of the outer world. However, I gradually realised that I am far from the first one to recognise this dichotomy (or [Duality] (►11) as I prefer to call it in the end): the conflict between Art Music and Functional Music.

The division between music as function and music as art is very much a division between folk/popular music and what we normally call 'classical' music. It is even so included in our language that another common term to refer to the latter is precisely 'art music'. This division has not always been there though. Carl Dahlhaus (1970) puts it in a historical context in his book *Analysis and Value Judgment*, explaining that before ca 1800 all music was 'functional music', music that was justified because of its genre. Music (and all other art forms as well) was recognised for its ability to fulfil the criteria (stereotypes) of whatever genre it was in: its ability to be functional. Then came the Romantic ideas of the Genius, the Artist and the Work and music would now be judged for its uniqueness and originality rather than anything else. Roughly at the same time came the idea of 'folk music', the genuine music of the people, and this served as a direct counterpart to the idea of art music. While art music belonged to the higher classes in society and expressed the idea of a composer-genius (and perhaps also the soloist-genius), folk music was the possession of the poor and expressed the soul of the People. Its value was in its anonymous, collective history, with unknown (and mystical/mythical) origins.

When I realised that the tension between function and art was something I had learned from the world around me, rather than something I had made up myself, I was actually quite relieved. It made it easier to understand myself, and it became easier to think about, and discuss, the development and change I was going through.

In many ways, the function/art dichotomy, and its folk music/art music parallel, is very present in today's Swedish folk music scene, as are a lot of the other romantic ideas from the 19th C about folk music. For me personally, one of the most important and interesting aspects of these ideas is how they have affected the thinking of the amateur community, which makes up the largest part of [the world of Swedish folk music] (►10), and which forms a strong part of my own background in folk music.

10. The World of Swedish Folk Music – a very short, one sided, and rough description

This description does in no way give a complete picture of the Swedish folk music scene. It focuses on the amateur [community] (►3) and the main point is just to briefly show how the [art/function-dichotomy] (►5) is at work within this community (together with a lot of other Romantic ideas about music).

The Swedish folk music scene is very much a music scene with a strong culture of participating. A lot of the people involved in the scene are more concerned with playing themselves (or with dancing) than with listening to other people playing in a traditional concert setting. And when it comes to concerts, there is a great recognition of solo players who represent a body of traditional, regional, material. The ideal, for amateurs and professionals alike, is to play tunes from your own home region: there is still a very strong idea about the connection between geographical origin and musical style.

If you can state the geographical 'origin' of a tune, that supposedly says all you need to know about the tune. And if you then play tunes from 'your own' area, you will, almost automagically, play them more or less in the right way, whereas if you play tunes from some other area you're bound to fail. This idea gets stronger in some certain 'high status' areas like parts of Dalarna and Hälsingland, where you 'should' preferably have lived in the village for generations, to be able to play the tunes in the right way.
Another of these mystical (romantic) ideas is that the music is something you must have 'in the blood'. And you either have it or you don't. Even among some groups of musicians, there is little recognition of the power of practicing.

Of course these ideas are duly questioned, and most people would not agree with what I just described, but parts, and left overs, of this thinking keeps popping up everywhere and all the time, both within and outside the folk scene when talking about folk music.

In the amateur milieu there is also a great deal of scepticism towards musicians who educate themselves. Even among people who could be considered more liberal, and more open towards the educated folk musicians, their openness is often built on certain criteria. It demands that the educated musician doesn't move too far away from what could be considered 'real' folk music. The music must follow recognisable patterns (e.g. 32-bar tunes with AABB-forms) and shouldn't deviate too much from familiar tonality and harmonisation.

In general, as an educated folk musician, in the folk community, you are often acknowledged by your ability to follow in line with tradition, rather than by your ability to evolve it. If you move too far away, people might say 'it's good, but it's not folk music'.1 All this very much reflects the [function]/[art] [dichotomy] (►7/►6►8).

This whole scepticism is also often based on the idea that folk music is not something which can be taught, and especially not in the dry, sterile safeness of a music academy, but it is something which has to be lived and experienced. (For a great example of this way of thinking, read here: http://andyletcher.blogspot.se/2012/11/degrees-of-folk.html, which also shows that this discussion seems to occur in every country where you allow the folk music to enter the educational institutions.)

Of course it is very different between different parts of the folk music world, how much these ideas are at work, and how strongly they are part of the communities understanding of folk music and of themselves. And I have a huge respect for the amateur community and the ideas present there; they are very much a part of my background, where I come from. Especially the power and relevance of [experience] (►35) is something I can hold as perfectly valid, and also an area where I used to see (academic) education as being quite problematic. However, my experiences at the Sibelius Academy, and in general what I've learned throughout my NoFo studies, have made me realise that it is perfectly possible to learn a lot through experiencing also within the frames of education.

Of course, the experiences you can get within the frames of an Academy, and the experiences you can get outside it, are sometimes quite different. In the end the best way to learn a lot is to take part in both.

11. Dichotomy or Duality? (And a whole lot of other questions)

Why do I do this division between Art and Function? Does it have any meaning? Do I really need this polarisation? What does it do? What does it do to me and what does it do to my art and what does it do to other people and my relationship with them? Does it help me in my development or in my understanding of the world? And is it really a dichotomy where the one excludes the other and everything has to be put in one of the categories (and hence has nothing to do with the other), or is it rather a duality, like the two sides of a Janus-mask, or the two sides of a coin?

A short answer is that [I didn't 'do' this division] (►9). It occurred to (or maybe in) me without me asking for it. However I accepted it and used it as a way of describing my own development. And in that way it became extremely useful. It provided me with a way of describing my past, present and future. I could put words to what was happening inside me, and it was easy to explain the connections between my changed way of thinking and how that affected my playing. As a way of describing the world around me however, I think it is rather a bit dangerous. There is a risk of projecting values to the different concepts, and then judging people for being too much of the one or the other. When I think about it, it makes a lot more sense to think about it as a duality, as two sides of the same thing. The two sides are always present, whether we want them to or not. The different

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1 This is very much based on my own experiences in my own local folk music community, but also on conversation with fellow students and how they are responded to in their own home communities.
aspects of them might be stronger or weaker in different contexts, but to me it makes a lot more sense to talk about an Art-Function *Duality* (like the Wave-Particle Duality of Light) rather than an Art-Function [Dichotomy] (►8).

In many ways, both in my own thinking, and when I've been writing this text, I tend to create an opposition also between *tradition* and *art*. In the end this is not what I want to do, but in some ways I think that in order to really explore the idea of art and what it is, I have had to leave some of my older perspectives and ideas (like *function* and *tradition*) behind for a while. In the future, I think the two ideas will move closer to each other again, merging into a useful perspective that provides me with concepts and tools from both sides. At the moment, the idea of *art* for me is very much an idea of [freedom] (►12).

### 12. Art = Freedom (Function/art within myself)

“For me, the movement from Function to Art was what I needed to free myself from some of my inner limitations and judges.” From: (►2)

In my notebook, I find this, from October 2013: “If I become more artistic – does that mean that I'm moving away from my roots, from the amateur community that I still strongly identify with? And if so: why? And what do I get instead?”

The answer I give myself is that I get [freedom] (►13). In me, Art and Freedom means very much the same thing. What I experienced when I started thinking about myself as an artist, was an increased freedom. I would allow myself to do new things, to make musical experiments that I didn't dare to do before. I started playing music in new ways and I started thinking of music in new ways. And when I realised that seeing music as *art* increased my freedom, of course that perspective became even more interesting and appealing.

As I felt it, I made huge developments, and increased my *action space* greatly, just by changing how I think of my own musical practice. The feeling was really powerful, like I had found the key to a new world.

At the same time, attaching the label *art* to my own music created a distance between myself and my past, a distance between myself and the amateur community where I come from. When I was making use of my art-connected freedom, I had a strong feeling of moving away from the way music is being made in [the community] (►3) of my past. Since I have been physically, geographically and socially removed from that community most of the time, while studying at NoFo I still don't know anything about the long term consequences of this distanciation.

### 13. What to do With the Freedom

If I wouldn't have used the Freedom, I wouldn't have felt it. It was through doing things, I realised I had increased my freedom.

One of the things that happened to me was that I started [Playing] (►23).

Another effect was that I started to trust my ability to play music that was purely for listening. Previously that was something I didn't really dare to do, and also something that didn't really interest me. But with the new view on my own playing that affected both my confidence and my interests. This led to the composition [I väntan på Krilon (Waiting for Krilon)] (►39), a tune type I wouldn't have dared to perform earlier. It also led to some experiments in my fiddle lessons with Finnish herding tunes.

I also allowed my solo in the Tranotra tune *Krokodiltärar* (by Mats Edén) (►38) to take new directions. I became less concerned with playing 'the right notes' and thought more about dynamics, over all musical lines and began to appreciate, and search for, rougher sound qualities.

The freedom also made me change focus for my musical research. Where I previously had had my main focus on groove I now began interesting myself for other aspects of fiddle playing too, like tone and dynamics but more importantly a completely different aesthetics and idea of what a 'tune' and what to do with it. One of the main ideas that started to grow during the semester in Finland is how to combine the ideals of the archaic, or *long* aesthetics with *pellimanni* repertoire. One of the key ideas I'm using to try to do
this is the thought that [there are no tunes] (►33), but I've also become really inspired by what I learned about Norwegian hardingfele music and how the hardingfele tunes are built up, while studying in Voss. Another suggestion for how to combine the two different musical worlds was provided during a trip to a Polish folk music event in the autumn 2012. There I experienced a way of playing tunes that differed quite a lot from how I'm used to it, and that definitely showed some clear aspects of archaic aesthetics. The musicians often played for 15-30 minutes without a break, using only a small number of tunes (one tune could easily be used for at least 10 minutes) and the tunes were often very short but got repeated over and over again, always with variations, both in the melody and in the number of repetitions of parts and phrases.

This idea, to search for the intersection between archaic aesthetics and pellimanni repertoire, to find out where they cross and how they interact, is definitely one of the strongest ideas I'm bringing with me into my future work and research as a musician, when I leave the [NoFo] (►37). I am still very much only in the beginning of figuring out how to put the ideas together, and how to make it become music.

The biggest difference still is probably to be found on the inside. I think differently about music, and about my own musicianship, but I haven't really had time to implement it all into musical practice. The last semester of the NoFo has meant a lot of moving and touring (during January-early April I 'lived' in six different places, in 3 countries, rest of April I toured 6 countries in 17 days) and that has taken a lot of energy from the fiddle playing and practicing.

I have found ways of thinking where I use myself and my own ideas as a starting point, rather than the opinions of my community. I try to listen more inwards, listen to myself and my own wishes, ideas and ideals, rather than what I believe the people around me think is good. In the end it is a matter of confidence but also a feeling of need. I need to be true to myself, and I need to explore what that means.

Freedom means responsibility and in this case I think the main responsibility is towards myself, but by being true to myself I am also taking my responsibility towards the rest of the world.

Somehow, being true to yourself, making the most out of your abilities and possibilities, for me becomes a question of moral. When you play together (or in other ways interact) with other people you have to be the best version of yourself available at that moment. If the world can't trust that you're doing as best as you can, how can they trust you at all? How should they know where you actually are, where your limits are? When I play in ensemble, I should give it all; to do otherwise is somehow almost rude. When I am on stage, there is no reason not to give the audience everything I am able to give and the same goes in the practicing room: why should I not go all the way there, how am I supposed to know my abilities and limitations otherwise? If I was religious I would probably say it is a way of praising god or the creation; now I just say it is a matter of morals, and a question of how we want the world to be, true or untrue?

Still: It all sounds good and clear, but of course it is difficult. I believe there is a lot in the world around us that limits us, and prevents us from doing our best in every situation. And there is a lot within ourselves that prevents us from doing our best in different situations, and our task is to get rid of that and free ourselves.

Background

14. About the Nordic Master Programme

The Nordic Master in Folk Music is a unique collaborative study programme, where four different institutions join forces to create something very special. Students from the different institutions move around together as one group, spending one semester in each of Royal Academy of Music, Stockholm (SE), SMKS, Odense (DK), and Sibelius Academy, Helsinki (FI). The last semester includes a six week intensive study period at the Ole Bull Academy in Voss (NO) and for the rest of that semester the students are studying at their respective home institution.

This situation offers both advantages and difficulties. On the surface level, the obvious thing you get as a student is the possibility to study and compare the different folk music cultures and traditions in the different countries. But furthermore you also get to experience the different approaches to, and cultures of, teaching folk music in an academic environment.
Since the students from the different schools move around together, acting as one 'class', that group is both your [social safety-net and your ball-and-chain] (►16). You're incredibly exposed to the other members of the group, and their aims, wills and ambitions as well as their habits and behaviour.

In my case, I was fairly lucky since our group worked quite well, both socially and [musically] (►15).

15. Tranotra

Together with my classmates at the NoFo programme, I formed the band Tranotra which has been my main forum for ensemble playing and group work throughout these two years.

The group consists of
Benjamin Bøgelund Bech (DK): clarinet and bass clarinet
Olaug Furusæter (NO): fiddle
Markus Räsänen (SWE/FI): free-bass accordion
Sven Midgren (SWE): fiddle & viola

Some of the things we have done together can be read about at www.nofobloggen.wordpress.com (or ►40, 41, 42, 43, 44).

It has been very interesting to work so closely together with one group for such a long time. We have had the possibility to do a lot of experimenting and trying out different musical ideas. Almost all the work with arranging has been done together, and we have been able to let the process take a long time, allowing the ideas to grow slowly. I think all this time together in the rehearsal room, is actually our main quality and the main explanation to why we sound as we do, and how we have been able to create music on the level where we have done it. In our case, I would probably say that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

But in the end it has also been quite limiting, to only work with one group for such a long time. Working with the same people (and people you didn't chose yourself) all the time means compromising with the same people all the time, and there is a limit as to how many different ideas you get the possibility to work with.

During NoFo I feel that I've got so much inspiration, and ideas going off in all different directions, but within Tranotra there is only a small section of all these ideas and all this inspiration that has had a forum to develop in. All the other ideas has had to be put on hold and kept for the future. Of course in a way, you always have to chose and prioritise between what ideas to work with and develop, but previously I've had several different groups and forums to develop different kinds of ideas in, so this situation was quite different.

In the end I think it has been worth it, and I have learned a lot from it. I think we have managed to create some really good and interesting music which I am actually quite proud of.

16. Group vs. Individual

The NoFo Master's programme is in many ways different from other master's programmes. It is very much based on the group rather than the individual. This has influenced not only curriculum and the course of studies, but also my way of thinking of it. I have had a tendency not to think about myself, my needs and wants, but rather, what does the group need or want, and even more, what is possible within this group.

This impact can also be seen in my writing. After having written for a while I realised I had a tendency to write we and us instead of me and I, even if my outspoken aim with this text is to try to capture my development and my ideas. And even more, I actually found it difficult to write me sometimes, especially when it came to describing input from teachers and teaching. Probably this has to do that I often didn't really feel that the teaching was directed towards me as an individual, but rather towards me as part of a group and even more to the group as a whole.
17. My Musical Background

I will make a brief account for my musical background, with special attention to some key events and periods that have shaped me as a person and as a musician.

I grew up in a folk music environment in Skåne (southern Sweden), and from early age my parents put me in the children's section of their folk dance team. I started playing the fiddle at the age of five and about a year later I attended my first folk music summer camp. Throughout my school years I was playing classical music with my teacher in the music school and folk music in summer courses and from time to time I would also have a folk music teacher 'on the side', or participate in different kinds of folk music groups for youths. I was also playing in orchestras and singing in choirs, something which has taught me a lot about making music in a large group, ensemble discipline etc. When I reached my teens I also started playing the guitar and for some years I was singing and playing in different pop bands and projects.

In the summers I was always going to music courses and camps and when I was 15 I started going to folk music festivals together with my friends from these camps. In the folk music environment I was able to be someone I liked to be and folk music became a strong part of my identity. Some years later I went to the Ethno camp in Falun, a folk music camp for youths with participants from all over the world, and this was a really life changing experience. Between 2001 and 20011 I have visited 8 Ethnos in 3 different countries (Sweden, Belgium and Slovenia) and it has really had a huge impact in my (musical) life. Getting to know people in other countries and learning about different types of music has given a lot of perspectives on 'my own' music and the musical experiences I've made at the different Ethno-camps are an important reason behind me choosing to become a musician.

When I graduated from school I went to Newcastle (UK) to study British folk music for a year (another thing Ethno is to blame for) and then moved back to Sweden to study engineering physics. After about a year and a half I needed a break in the engineering studies and instead got involved in a project to create a year of folk music in my region. This gave me a lot of contacts and engagement in the local folk music [community] (►3), and I began to think that this was a context where my knowledge and skills were of use and could make a difference and a contribution. Around this time I also got involved with the band Chokladfabriken, and we started to perform at various folk music events in Sweden and Denmark (the band stopped playing in 2012). One thing led to another and eventually I decided to become a violin teacher instead of an engineer. In 2007/08 I spent a year at Malungs Folkhögskola and then went on to the Music Academy in Malmö.

During my second year at the academy in Malmö I began to feel a bit shut off from the rest of the world and started questioning if what I was doing in the practice room actually meant anything in 'the real world'. Also I felt that the teacher's education didn't really allow much time for musical development. I decided to prioritise any opportunity to get out and play, something which resulted in, among other things, a week at a mazurka festival in Poland and a collaboration project in Denmark. I also started playing with the fiddler Reine Steen, one of the foremost tradition bearers in Skåne today, in his eponymous trio, creating a musical platform for him, together with a double bass player.

In my third year in Malmö I spent one semester as an exchange student in Newcastle, coming back to the folk degree there, 6 years after I was there the first time. After three years of studying to become a fiddle teacher, I changed path and joined the [Nordic Master] (►14) in Folk Music, focusing on performance rather than pedagogics, something which has greatly changed my perspectives on [music in general] (►5) and [my own musicianship] (►37) in particular.

18. Self Integration

(This text is partly built on a reflection over Free Play and In I Musiken, written autumn 2011 for the FFK-course with Sven Åberg.)

Experience is a key in creating a strong music-self integration. I have no knowledge of the psychological or cognitive factors involved in this, and the term is completely my own (though I would be surprised if no-one else has had similar thoughts) and I don't make any claims that this has got any scientific value. It is, however, slightly based on reflections done after reading Free Play and Into the Music (In i musiken).

Autumn 2011, early in the NoFo education I wrote this text for a course we did in Stockholm with Sven
I'll try to do a small summary of my own development over the last years, with special regards to music and consciousness.

When I decided to go down the path of professional music making, it was mainly because I experienced that the Music gave me experiences I couldn't get anywhere else. It was not about a feeling that 'music is everything to me' or 'I have to express myself through music in order to survive', but at the times when I was making music, especially with others, I could get a feeling of content, peace and satisfaction. Sometimes I would enter the world of music completely, forgetting everything about time and space, sometimes it was just a comfortable feeling of connection and a strong sense of context.

Since I started studying music, these moments have actually become less frequent. There is more focus on the craft, on developing technique, style, expression etc. And the moments when music really captures me has become less common, and they never occur within the frames of education, but always outside it. I have been interested in, and spent a lot of energy on acquiring various musics, styles etc, and much less energy on (consciously) developing my general relationship with music and my instrument.

But I have also started thinking a lot more. When I now have re-read the both books (Free Play and Into the Music) I realise that some of the thoughts they contain is stuff that has been present in a latent mode, below the surface, since I read them last time (which was before I started studying at Music Academy). They contain many thoughts that has helped me along the way, above all with getting a grip on the education as a whole (since I often experience music education to be very fragmented).

I experience that there is a long way to go before I reach 'nirvana' through music, but over the last years, I have been thinking more and more about how my musicianship affects other sides of life, and how it would be possible to use some sort of 'spiritual' development, to also become a better musician. I'm on my way back to a state of being where music actually gives me transcending experiences, even if it's a slow process.

At the same time: Does one have to have experienced nirvana to be a full-fledged musician? Is it first then, that music becomes divine? And does the music has to be divine? Always? Everywhere? Could it not just get to be some simple dance music sometimes? Or something which is in the background when you're eating dinner or washing up?

Now, about a year and a half later, a lot of these thoughts are still relevant, but I have also moved on a bit. To begin with, it is no longer true that I haven't had any transcending or capturing moments of music making within the frames of education. I would still say that there is something in the imperative of the education, that doesn't help towards creating a good environment for music making. Something which, most of the time, limits the engagement of most people, limits how much of themselves they actually put into the music making. But during NoFo I have experienced capturing and transcending moments of music making, also within the frame of education.

But more importantly, I have been thinking more about, and also experiencing some aspects of, the connections between the music and the self, the 'inner' aspects of music making. And I am even more convinced now, that there is something to gain from developing the 'spiritual' side of myself, to develop as a musician. A strong, open and relaxed mind, confident and in contact with itself and in contact with the body, is a good start for making music. For me, there is actually a strong link here to the [power of experience](►35), which for me is an idea that in the end is about how body and mind gets connected. And since music making, in the end, is a physical activity (since it involves, and depends on, movement of the body, at least when playing the violin) that aims to express something that begins in the mind, I feel it really helps to have a good mind/body connection.

Music/self, mind/body, feelings/physical movements. It seems to me like a perspective that is based on the whole, rather than splitting things up into pieces, is beneficial.

The two books, Free Play and Into the Music, has been very influential for me. I've read them at least twice each, at different stages in my musical development and education, and I always read them differently, relate to them in different ways. Apart from inspiring me to a lot of the thoughts presented in this text, they have also been very influential in leading me to the belief that [ideas], however abstract and far fetched (in relation to music), have direct impact on how you make music, and what kind of music you are making.
Method

19. Why Method?
Originally, I didn't intend to write anything about method. I didn't even know I had a method and even less did I think it was important. However I ended up in a discussion with a person who just finished her PhD and one of her first questions about this work was “so, what method are you using?” And I didn't really know what to answer. As the conversation went on I realised the question was very relevant, both for the sake of my own work with this thesis, and for the sake of artistic research in general. So, I will try to make a description of the methods I have used in this work of [artistic research] (►22), and how I've gone about to be able to put it down in [words] (►20).

20. Method for Writing (Method for Processing Knowledge)
Writing this thesis is very much a matter of processing the knowledge that I have gained during my two years of master studies. To do this, I have had great help from making notes, in lessons, when practicing, when traveling or just any other time when I have needed to put my thoughts down in words to make sense of them, or just to see them in text. This thesis builds very much on these notes. I have also had great help from reading books, both fiction and non-fiction. I have tried to list all the influential texts [here] (►47).

I have also learned about the importance of making thoughts possible. Gradually I began to realise that my thinking and reflecting worked better sometimes and in some places, and not so well other times and in other places. When I realised this, I started making use of it, which for one thing led me to making sure that I get some moments of solitude every now and then, since that seems to be necessary for me to gather my thoughts and understand my situation.

While working with this thesis, I have been writing more or less simultaneously on lots of different parts. Instead of following a straight line of thought, I have allowed my writing to go in the direction that my thoughts lead me. I have been adding bits and pieces under various headings, constantly starting new paragraphs while trying to capture my thoughts. After a while I realised that this probably reflected how the knowledge was organised in me, and in the end that lead to the creation of this [hypertext] (►21) thesis.

21. Hypertext
The idea of presenting this thesis as a hypertext didn't occur until I had already been working with it for a while. I realised that I had problems organising the different topics and ideas I wanted to present, in a linear fashion. In my head it was all a web of intertwined ideas, thoughts and experiences and somehow I wanted to make that come across in the thesis as well. Originally the idea was a lot more visual in it's presentation but I had to compromise in order not to let it take too much time, and demand too complicated technical solutions. Still, I hope that this hypertext will invite the reader to explore the content in any order they like, and to focus on the parts of it they feel are interesting and leave the rest out. To give an overview of the thesis I have created a map.
Form/Content (Reflection)

The idea of letting the form of the essay reflect the content. The content for me very much consists of different bits and pieces, elements, experiences, thoughts, ideas, influences etc. that are not clearly connected, but that rather form a whole because they are all contained within one body/mind (i.e. Me). In creating this essay as a hypertext I am doing the same. The whole is created by the united effect of the different pieces, solely by them all being included in this work, rather than by them being organised in a straight 'logical' fashion.

By doing this I aim at letting the form reflecting the very nature of knowledge.

About Presentation of Knowledge

The texts doesn't have to be connected, there is no need to frame them with words. I can have four loose texts about method and the frame is created by tags and categories. The whole is created by induction and triangulation and the final work (of assembling and understanding) is handed over to the reader. The “Thesis” is like a micro version of what (academic) knowledge is, i.e. a cluster of information, texts, pieces of a puzzle, where the end result, the total knowledge, occurs in the reader, in every individual, having his or her own individual experience (what texts you've read, in what order, what you have played, when, with whom, where you've been etc.). Knowledge, in context and in constitution, is personal and can never be anything else but personal.

22. Method for my Artistic Research (Method for Development)

The overall work I've been doing during my Master studies can be described as Artistic Research. In this work, I have used several different methods. Some very consciously chosen to aid development, some chosen just out of curiosity, and some not even considered a method until I look back at them in retrospect. Some of the methods are described in this thesis, like how I've been using [playing] (►23) and the [body] (►24) to move outside my comfort zone. Or how the contrast between [text and music] (concrete and abstract) provokes me, forces me to think and in the end also develops me. There is also a section on how I have been using [ideas] (►27) and concepts like [origin] [Skåne], [tradition], [archaic music] and the thought that [there are no tunes] (►33) as a source of [inspiration] (►34).

During my studies I have also had great help from discussing with teachers, friends and colleagues, who have provided new perspectives and asked useful questions. I have also received a lot of inspiration from reading books and listening to music. Writing lots of notes has also helped me in processing information, reflecting and taking care of ideas. This has been helpful both in my artistic research and when [processing] (►20) my development.

23. Playing

Perhaps the most obvious method for artistic development is practicing. There is a lot that could be said about different methods for practicing, how to get the most out of the hours you spend in the practice room, how the practice sessions should be laid out etc. but this is not the main topic of this essay so I will just conclude that I have been practicing a lot, both with very focused attention to technical development, and with the aim to learn a certain stylistic features and tunes.

Moreover, I have been playing a lot, both in the sense of playing my instrument (swe: spela fiol) and in the sense of playing games (swe: leka). Sometimes I have felt bad about it, that it was just a waste of time in the practice room to let the bow, fiddle and fingers play around without any certain goal, but in the end I think it has been a very good thing to do. It has lead me to find new sounds and to get a more relaxed physical relationship with my instrument. It has helped me move away from the all-too-comfortable melodic/harmonic areas I used to be playing around with(in) and served as an opening to (for me) new fields of melodic and harmonic structures and movements.

It also lead me to finding completely new sounds on the fiddle (for an example, there is a video included in
the online version at http://folkasart.wordpress.com/2013/05/05/playing/ or at http://youtu.be/eeUeVhiYr98 and trying to make use of the 'ugly' as a contrast in my music.

It is worth to notice that this idea and method of play and playing emerged more or less simultaneously with my change of perspective, towards folk music as Art.

24. Body as Method

When asked about how the movement from function towards art had been done I realised that bodily experiments had been an important part in the process. In general there has been a synergy between several different processes that has worked parallel, all involved with breaking my learned patterns and expanding my area of movement within music, expanding my personal stage. A lot of this took part during the semester in Helsinki, even if it had been started during the preceding semesters in Stockholm and Odense.

I started to play \[\text{include hyperlink to text about playing}\] with the instrument, experimenting with what sounds I could get out of it but I also started to play with my body and with my voice. And I think it was very important as an opener for me, that I got bodified experiences of my increased personal stage to aid me in using that also when I was playing the fiddle.

A lot of it started in Kunkkula and the Kandiakatemia week we had there, quite early in the semester.

The week provided musical-physical inspiration in many ways

- Starting every day with yoga-like exercises, creating a physical state of being that very obviously improved my ability to work, create and develop.
- Doing contact improvisation – which is also something I had been doing a bit of before, but not in a context that created such an obvious connection with musical activities.
- Doing various forms of physical/body/dance-improvisation, that always showed very clear parallels to different aspects of music.
- Doing voice/body-sound improvisation.
- Just being surrounded by other people who did 'weird' stuff with their bodies and voices also served as an inspiration.

Among other things, that week resulted in the physical experiment described shortly here (►40).

I also got further input (lessons) that gave a lot of physical experience, especially within the masteriakatemia course. We had quite a few hours with a dancer (Giorgio Convertito) who provided the idea that dancing/movement and music/sound is different aspects of the same thing. Where musicians are concerned about organising and making impact on time, dancers are concerned with space, but in the end it is the same thing. [Phrases in space and phrases in time] (►25) are different expressions of the same thing, and time and space is the same thing. These lessons provided a very interesting perspective on how the body can be used to develop various aspects of music (e.g. phrases) without using the instrument.

After the week in Kunkkula, and spurred further by the Masteriakatemia lessons, I continued using my body as a tool for development on my own. I gave time to starting the days with various forms of [body warm up] (►25) and I used body/movement-improvisation as a way of opening up body and mind. All this ended up with the idea that by challenging my body's habits, I can move outside my normal boundaries, my comfort zone, and this gives experience that I can use in my playing as well. For me this became a method of approaching the Art. This is also something I intend to explore more, and definitely something I will make use of more in my future musicianship.
25. Phrases in Space and Phrases in Time

Exercises done under the supervision of Giorgio Convertito

**Warm up:**

Lay down on the floor, breath normally, close your eyes and just let the body relax. Feel the floor against your body. Where is contact, where is space? Go through all parts of the body in your mind, and feel them, feel how they are. If there is some parts of the body that doesn't feel so good, places where there is pain, tension or ache, try to project the breathing there, like a beam of light and heat.

Slowly, beginning with the toes, start moving your body. Make believe that you're floating in water, that the body is being carried by the water rather than by your own muscles. Go on with feet. Knees and lower legs. Thighs and hips. Your body is floating in water, the air is carrying it so you and providing just a tiny bit of resistance, just like water.

Then start with fingers, hands, arms, shoulders in the same way.

Open your eyes if you like.

Start moving your whole body. You're still floating, like in water. Rocking, wobbling, stretching. Laying down, sitting up, standing up. Walking.

To end: stand. Feel the balance in your feet. Where is your weight? Loosen up the ankle joint, knees, hips. Feel that your weight is always shifting a little. You're balancing, not fixed. You breathe and you move, even if you're just standing.

**Phrases (group exercise) - very rough description:**

Let each part of the exercise take time. A lot of time. The whole process can be divided into several sessions. Create phrases in space. Phrases can mean small or big movements, positions, or changes in positions.

Explore them. What happens if you move them to a different place in the room? What happens if you change the level of them, if they are high or low, big or small?

Explore.

Pick up someone else's phrase.

Explore the memory of the room. If a phrase has existed in one part of the room, it leaves a trace there, a memory. How can you explore the memory of someone else's phrase. Or the memory of your own phrase?

When a phrase moves through the space it leaves a trace along the trajectory. Explore the trajectory. Your own. Someone else's.

**Always:** Follow the phrases. The end point is present already in your starting position. The end is present in the beginning. When you throw something you can always tell where it is going to land.

**Comment:** This whole thing might sound very weird, strange and far fetched. Especially the idea of the memory of the space and the traces of phrases. However, my experience (and I have a background with a very square science-based approach to understanding the world) is that if you just accept these premises and ideas, they make great sense and the whole exercise becomes very useful for developing a sense of phrase and understanding various aspects of phrase, development, division of space (or time). Furthermore it becomes a great example of the benefits of inter-disciplinary collaboration within the arts.
26. Inspiration and Expression

In a lesson in Artistic Research in Odense we were asked to describe what [inspire] us as musicians, what we're trying to express with our music. I realised that I often get inspired by things I read. And that it is a source of frustration when I think about my musical/artistic practice in a larger perspective that it's hard (or, frankly, impossible) to express words and sentences when you play an instrument. I read a lot, news papers, magazines, books (►45), and that inspire me and it has a huge impact on my view of the world. And I would like my world view, my ideas about society and mankind, my ideals, my fears and hopes for the world, to come across in my music. And since I feel that a lot of this, within myself, is based on my experiences of written text, it is not obvious for me how I can make it come across in my music. Almost all the music I'm involved with, and have been involved with in the past2, is instrumental. So there is a large gap between how I feel that my own world view is shaped (that is, through written text) and the means I have to pass it on to the rest of the world (which is by playing the fiddle).

This conflict, between what I perceive as the direct communication of written text, and the abstract reality of music, frustrates me, but also works as a motor in my artistic and musical development. In the end, I hope to make something good out of it. How to make my music reflect myself, my ideas and my opinions is an artistic 'problem' that can lead me on to new musical and artistic solutions, ideas and processes.

27. Ideas

As a starting point for artistic development I have often used ideas or concepts (some people would maybe call it images, but for me that is a slightly different things). Sometimes the ideas are closely connected with, or obviously applicable to, music; sometimes they are more abstract (►26). For me, an idea is expressed in words. If it is not expressed in words, I tend to think of it more as a feeling. And the tension (frustration) that exists between the words of the ideas, and the sound of the music is something that drives the development.

Still, I think that musical structure/form and setting may be used to reflect certain ideas about music and the world. Individual/group, horizontal/vertical development, [tunes/no tunes] (►33), instrumental hierarchies etc. are just a few features that can be meddling with, to create different messages and let different meanings come forth through music.

I will try to describe some of the ideas or concepts I have been using, and how they have affected the music. This includes the idea of [Skåne] (►28) and how it relates to concepts of [tradition] (►29) and origin, my understanding of the philosophy of [archaic music] (►30), and the idea that [there are no tunes] (►33).

28. Skåne

The idea of Skåne is probably one of the concepts I’ve been using the longest time in my music making. In its simplest, original, form it is just about playing the tunes from the area of Skåne, which is something I’ve been doing throughout my musical life.. The idea has developed and grown more complex through time though. Some ten years ago I started searching through manuscripts and music books myself, to find ‘new’ (i.e. old tunes that are not in use within the folk scene at the moment) tunes I began to realise the problems that occur when you are to create an interpretation of a tune, based on a written source. The idea got even more complex when began questioning the contemporary (20th/21st C.) style of playing these tunes.

When looking through available transcriptions of older players (a lot of them made in the 1880's) and texts describing their style, it is obvious that there was extensive use of microtonality and a lot of rhythmical variations and details that transcend the (imaginary) evenness of the regular quavers or semi-quavers you find in written music. However this has been very little explored and used by contemporary players of that repertoire. Rather, the main style is quite straight, and in my opinion there is not really any of the key players who make (or have made) conscious use of microtonality. (This doesn't mean that then necessarily play with even tempered intonation, but that's a different question.) And so I've made it a task of mine to try to bring

2 Apart from years of singing in choir. But that is for me a completely different musical experience, one that emphasises the communal experience of music making in a large group, and where the singer is mainly an instrument in the hands of the conductor.
those elements back in use when playing the tunes from Skåne, which is the tunes that I’ve grown up with, and consider to be my repertoire.\(^3\)

I haven't done any proper research into they question, but I believe a lot of the explanation is to be found by looking into the fact that some of the key players in the first folk music revival, in the first half of the 20\(^{th}\) C. came from a background in classical music, and either way had adapted the musical ideals of the classical world. Another part of it may be that Skåne is a region where the older layers of repertoire (e.g. polskas) had gone out of playing, before the majority of field recordings were made. Thus today's playing of polskas (which, in Skåne just like in the rest of Sweden, is considered to be the tune type with the highest status, the most 'genuine' tune type within folk music) is based more on what is found in manuscripts, rather than repertoire learned from recordings, and in most of the manuscripts there is no information about rhythmical or intonational details.

On a greater level, the idea of Skåne is one concerned with identity, [tradition] (►29), the history of Swedish folk music and the mystical/mythical connection between geography and style (discussed in ►10). By playing the tunes from the region where I was born and still live, I fulfill many of the stereotypes of Swedish folk music, which I sometimes find a bit problematic, as many of them build on ideas I don't believe in, or want to question.

On the other hand, it makes it easy to explore and get inspired by some of the ideas contained within these stereotypes. Like the connection between landscape and musical expression. I don't really think this connection exists in an 'objective' sense, but the idea can be used for inspiration. What happens if I let my playing reflect the landscape around me? What does it mean for the music?

By fulfilling the stereotype (playing the tunes from my own region), and at the same time questioning the praxis for how it is being carried out (in this case by playing around with intonation and rhythmical details), I can get the best out of two worlds. I maintain my musical integrity and can still get accepted by the community. This is not an outspoken or thought-through strategy of mine but I think the image is not too far from the truth anyway.

**29. Tradition**

In the autumn 2012 I wrote:

> Searching through old manuscripts, there is plenty of evidence that music and musicians have always travelled and moved around. As I've been travelling in Europe, meeting musicians and music from different traditions, I've found a lot of inspiration seeing how many similarities there are between different cultures. I try to steal the best ideas from every person and tradition I meet, and incorporate that in my music. That's my way of extending the meaning of tradition.

I thought it would be good to add some lines to this thesis about my thoughts about tradition. It is difficult, since it's a complex concept and it is a word which is being used extremely much within the folk music world, but with so many different meanings and definitions

When I was studying at Malungs Folkhögskola with Jonny Soling, I asked him about his thoughts on tradition. What is it and how should we relate to it? The thing I remember most clearly from his answer is that “tradition is often being used as a hammer to beat someone else's head”. There are so many things present in this short answer.

Tradition is, within the world of folk music, a word of power and status. To have (know, be) the tradition is to have status and power. When people tell someone else that 'that's not tradition/al', that is saying 'I know more than you do', 'I know how it should be' and 'I have the authority to tell you what is right' all in one sentence.

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\(^3\) Sometimes this results in comments from the local folk music [community] about anti-social playing style, or that microtonality (‘quarter tones’) is something that doesn't belong in the music of southern Sweden. When it comes to the 'historical correctness' of using microtones in souther repertoire, I could prove the critics wrong by quoting for instance the transcriptions of Loren Brolin, Ola Lags and Jöns Andersson Ryberg (all found in Svenska Låtar Skåne, together with descriptions of their use of varying intonation/tonality). The critique about anti-social playing style is a bit different. It becomes a matter of individual vs. community and performing culture vs. participating culture. An example of the function/art-[dichotomy] at work.
Still, it often seems like there is no common definition of what tradition is, what we mean when we say tradition, what we include and what we exclude.

For me, the most problematic aspect I think, is that we often tend to use the word *traditional* when we really mean *historical* or *historically informed* (as in Historically Informed Praxis, the idea behind the modern day playing of what is called 'early music'). But tradition to me is not something that exists in the past. Tradition is something that exists today and is moving forward. Tradition is moving, [living] (►44), evolving culture. I like to think of *tradition* as a verb in present tense (heading for the future), rather than a (historical, fixed, defined) noun.

Another way of expressing it is a quote I also found somewhere in my notes:

“Tradition is keeping the fire burning, not worshipping the ashes”. (Google kindly informed me that it supposedly comes from Gustav Mahler.)

I try to use the notion of tradition as a source of inspiration. As such it is easy to connect it with the idea of [archaic music] (►32): if music is memory based, what does that do with tradition? And what inspiration can we find through thinking the music 1000 years back in history? And what if we think about the music 100 or 1000 years into the future? What ideas do we get from that? But tradition can be inspiring in so many ways. When I think of the music of [Skåne] (►28), I get inspiration to 'new' ways of interpreting tunes, when I search for a more *traditional* (in the sense of *historical*) way of playing them. If the dancing and playing of some certain tune type, like *kadrilj* or *engelska* hadn't died out more or less completely before it was being revived in the 20th C. what would the music have sounded like today then? And what would the dancing have looked like?

In the end, I don't have a good definition of tradition. It is a word I think about a lot, it is an idea I am constantly relating when I am doing folk music, it is an important part of some of the ideas I have presented in this thesis. Even so, I am constantly revising what I think of it, how I use it, what I think about it and how important it is to me.

30. Archaic Music/Long Aesthetics

Early on when we began studying in Finland, we were introduced to the idea of Archaic music and long aesthetics. I was puzzled by it and it really took some time for me to begin to grasp what it is.

It was fascinating, to realise that there is a type of music, a musical universe, that somehow sounds so familiar and yet so strange. It was there, and that I liked the sound of it, but I didn't understand anything of it. That provided a challenge that was very intriguing. I wanted to understand, wanted to grasp it, and wanted to try to make music on an archaic basis.

This is very much still a concept, an approach, an aesthetics, that I'm in the process of learning and understanding. This text is an attempt to describe how I understand it today, and how I've been using it so far.

In short, archaic music can be described as music building on the oldest layers of Finnish traditional/historical material, music which's roots probably are some 2-3000 years old. Common features are short repetitive phrases, a limited tonal material, persistent repetition with constant, small scale, variation, improvisation and an aesthetic built on slow development over [long time] [music marathon]. The 'Tune' as we know it, [is not really present] (►33) in archaic music: melodies are not considered to be defined, closed units, but rather starting points for music making, variation and improvisation. The slow development and long time perspectives creates both possibilities and challenges. The musical dramaturgy as we're used to it gets dissolved and a completely different musical world emerges.

The performance praxis is based both on factual knowledge about how these tunes and songs have been performed in the past, and by ideas developed today. As I have understood it, a lot of today's playing of archaic music is heavily influenced by the thinking (and music making) of [Heikki Laitinen] (►46).

Another aspect of archaic music is how it relates to the development of music through the ages. What does it mean that we today play music that has its roots thousands of years back in history? And if we ask about the history, then why not ask what this music will sound like a thousand years into the future from now, as well? What does it mean to play music in a culture which is memory based and orally transmitted over thousands of years? Finnish language only existed as an oral language until the middle ages, the music was probably
mainly memory based even longer than that, so the question is very relevant if we want to understand the music in a historic/cultural context. These thoughts and questions are very integrated in the idea of archaic music: to me they were completely new, and opened up exciting doors to new ways of relating to music.

(Random anecdote: during my stay in Helsinki, I read a book called [Riddley Walker] (►45) by Russel Hoban. I got my hands on the book in a quite random way, had never heard about the author before, and didn't know anything about the book before reading it, but it turned out to feature exactly some of these ideas.)

To get a starting point in understanding archaic music, I was told to listen to music by Hiite, Trepaanit, Arja Kastinen, Antti Paalanen and others: slowly, I began to grasp what archaic music can be, and what the consequences are of this long aesthetics.

As it began to grow on me, I realised that there are several aspects of archaic music that touch on ideas I've carried with me for a long time. With some of these, the concept of long aesthetics provided a new way of understanding and developing these ideas, and a deeper understanding for the (artistic) consequences.

Archaic aesthetics provided a completely new approach to variation. My variations of [tunes] [there are no tunes] (►33) before, had been based on the idea of keeping the shape and form of the tune. Changing one note for another, maybe mirroring rhythms or melodic figures or turning scale movements into triads or the other way around. But almost always keeping with the structure of the tune, not adding beats or bars and not changing the harmonic structure.

With an archaic approach to variation the result is quite different. Instead of approaching the whole tune (or a whole part of the tune) at the same time, I will divide it into much smaller sections, maybe one or two bars, maybe even just a few beats, and then loop these elements and create small-scale variations in rhythm, note sequence etc. If it is a tune with very elaborate character (e.g. a lot of semi-quaver figures) I might also try to scale it down to a more skeletal version, before I start making variations. When I feel that I'm 'done' with one element I move on to the next one and do the same with that one.

Treating tunes like this, provides a completely different way of understanding them. When I've been doing variations in this way, I have been able to find patterns and structures in the tunes that I otherwise wouldn't have found. I have also frequently found similarities and connections between different tunes that were hidden when I treated them in a more conventional way.

I have been using variation as a method of challenging myself, both technically and musically, but also as a way of challenging the music itself. By exploring different ways of making variations, I have challenged my own idea of where the limits of the tune are.

Another aspect of playing which is closely related to variation is improvisation. This is also an important feature in the archaic music, and making archaic improvisation (in the online version of the text here is a link to a video: http://folkasart.wordpress.com/2013/05/26/duo-with-benjamin/) has both been a way of exploring the idea of archaic music itself, but also a way of developing my own musicality. Exploring the small scale, down to earth, 'simple' aspects of archaic music making has opened up my mind to musical qualities that didn't use to interest me very much. Tone quality, and making use of variations in tone quality, intonation and rhythmical details are some of the aspects of my playing that I feel have developed by doing (archaic) improvisations and using improvisation as a tool for development. It has also lead to a greater feeling of artistic [freedom] (►13).

In the end, perhaps the most inspiring concept within the world of archaic music is the idea that [there are no tunes] (►33).

31. Music Marathon

Learning about archaic and long aesthetics has also provided some useful tools and understanding for what it means to play music is playing for a really long time without break.

This is still only an idea I have: I want to make a dance/music marathon where the music just goes on and on and on, without a break. Like a folk music rave, but with live music. Where the same dance just goes on and on and on. And then gradually melts into another dance. So far, I haven't attempted to carry this out, but it
really is something I want to do at some point. And trying to understand the concept of long aesthetics has somehow put this idea in a new light. Now I begin to realise what it actually means to play the same tune for 10 minutes. Or 30, or 60. What possibilities it creates and what difficulties and challenges comes with it. It makes it possible to use really slow musical development, since the long time will make it possible to still create a great line through the music. But it also means that the conventional 'drama' of a tune is dissolved: it simply moves to fast. And it certainly provides both physical and mental challenges – to keep the energy in the playing and to keep the focus for such a long time really takes some practicing.

All this is consequences I didn't really think about, before I started trying to understand archaic music and long aesthetics.

32. Archaic Aesthetics and the Concept of Art (the Irony)

The irony.

Archaic aesthetics is in many ways one big questioning of 'the Artwork' as a closed, defined unit, and thus a questioning of Art as we know it. Archaic music and archaic aesthetics is built on completely different principles than the ones we use to define Art. In fact, they are much closer to the ideas of functional music, music which is more about principles and concepts than about the Work of Art. And still, I strongly associate the archaic ideas with (folk) music as an art form. I could even go as far as saying that beginning to understand archaic aesthetics was an essential part in understanding what folk music as Art could be. Oh, the irony.

33. There are no Tunes (There is Only Inspiration)

Probably the idea that has provoked my thinking the most since I first heard about it, is the thought that there are no tunes. The idea was presented to us in a seminar with [Heikki Laitinen] while we studied ad SibA and at when I first heard of it, I thought it was really disturbing. The Tune, I would say, is at the heart of Swedish folk music. I have grown up learning tunes, with teachers who have been telling me that the only important thing is the tune: we don't need arrangements or harmonies or fancy concert clothes or anything else, as long as we have the tune and do it justice by playing well. (In a larger perspective, of course, this reflects the romantic idea of [the Work].)

The idea itself is fairly simple. The tune as we know it, is an artefact without that has no (historical) validation. There simply are no tunes. There might be ideas for tunes, themes, structures, dance types etc. But the closed, defined, entity which is an A-part like this and a B-part like this and you repeat them over and over again (perhaps with small variations, but always staying true to the tune) is a falsification invented by 19th/20th C. thinking.

When I started to think about it, the idea intrigued me and I found it fascinating. Of course, I thought a bit about whether it had historical accuracy or not. (And when talking with Swedish folk music historian Magnus Gustafsson, he greatly questioned the idea of discarding the tune as an entity, but did approve of some of the implications the idea has.) But in the end the historical (lack of?) correctness of the idea didn't matter to me. I found the idea interesting and inspiring, I wanted to understand it and I wanted to understand how that idea could effect my playing. If there are no tunes, what can we then do with the material found in old manuscript books? If I discard the idea of a tune, but rather treat the notes as a suggestion, an idea, what happens when I play the 'tunes' I already know? What can I do with them?

The more I thought about it, the more inspiring I found it, and the more I began to get ideas of how to turn the idea into music. It opened up doors to completely new ways of treating old material. New ways of interpreting old manuscripts and the material found there.

A lot of the methods I have been using when exploring this idea are found in the text about [archaic music]. In Finland they make a distinction between pellimanni music and archaic music, where the pellimanni (swe: spelman, eng: fiddler/folk musician) music roughly corresponds to what is called folk music in Sweden and the rest of the Nordic countries. (Denmark has a more anglicised definition of folk music, including also singer/songwriter type of music (visesang), but that is again another discussion.) And it
is in the tension field between archaic music and the thinking that surrounds it, and *pellimanni* music, that I have worked the most with the idea that there are no tunes.

My quest is to try to understand how this idea can be turned into music, if I use the *pellimanni* repertoire of [Skåne] (►28) that I've been playing all my life. In trying to connect the methods and features of archaic music with the *pellimanni* music, I have found great inspiration in Polish folk (mainly the mazurek- and oberek tradition of the Mazovia region) music and in the hardingfele repertoire from Norway. Both these traditions have similarities with both *pellimanni* music and archaic music, both when it comes to how the tunes are made up, and how they are being treated by the musicians. In the end, I feel that this is still very much work in progress. It is fascinating, but also frustrating and annoying to find that this 'simple' idea, that 'there are no tunes', is so difficult for me to turn into musical praxis.

To try to understand the idea, and get closer to it, I have made a lot of experiments with trying to dissolve the tunes while playing them. One method has been making variations with the method I described under [archaic music] (►32). Another one has been to start with playing just a single note, and then gradually adding notes, rhythms etc. to slowly get closer to 'the tune' but often never really getting there.

Something I haven't done very much yet, but intend to work more with in the future, is to treat the tunes according to principles of modal music. Somehow I feel that my sense of a 'tune' is very connected to my perception of (Swedish) folk music as mainly being structured according to harmonic principles. If I could find a more modal approach to playing the tunes, I think that would bring me closer to a world where there are no tunes.

I don't know how fruitful these experiments have been, and I don't know how good they actually are, if the aim is to understand what it means that there are no tunes, but at least it has been interesting, and resulted in some music that I wouldn't have done otherwise.

One of the reasons why I have to struggle so much with really understanding the idea, and how to make music from it, is that tune as idea and entity is so strong within me. It is what I have grown up with and it is what I have been taught throughout my musical life. This new way of approaching music is based on completely different concepts of what music is, and I suppose it takes some work and time, to get that idea incorporated in my playing. It probably doesn't help either that this idea also contradicts conventional thinking about music in western society.

In the online version of this text there is a recording of what kind of music this has resulted in for me.

**Meta**

My thinking about this idea is also interesting on a meta-level. One of the things that occupy me, and that puzzles me as an artist, is how to incorporate theoretical ideas into musical practice. This is a very concrete example of how it can be done. Of course, this is something which is based on an idea which is already about music, but it has other implications (about originality for instance, and the right of the artist, any artist, to make their own decisions) and it is possible to derive ideas about the world in general from it, the same way that it would be possible to derive the no-tunes idea from ideas about society and the world.

For me, this question illustrates very well the possibilities and power of combining musical practice and theoretical ideas, and through that, I find it very inspiring not only for the music that can be created straight from the idea itself, but from all the other music it suggests could be created from other ideas.

**Postlude**

The idea that there are no tunes is for me deeply connected with the whole way of thinking at the KaMu-department at SibA. It seems to me that it is at the root of much of the artistic work that is carried out by teachers as well as present and former students. For example I put this idea together with the concept of “the three-day wedding musician” (first presented to me by harmonica player Jouko Kyhälä at a seminar during the Nordtrad conference in Helsinki april 2012): In order to be able to play for dancing for three days in a row, the musician didn't actually (or necessarily) have a repertoire that covered that much material, but instead had concepts for tunes, musical skeletons and themes that were used for variation and to create “new” “tunes” on the spot.
34. Inspiration

During the autumn 2012 (while studying in Helsinki) I began thinking more about what inspiration is. I started to talk about it with friends, and it turned out that there were a lot of different ways of describing it and relating to it. I don't know how much wiser I got from these conversations but at least they were really interesting, and at least I got some sort of idea about what I think inspiration is, and where I get it.

For me, inspiration is a thought that spurs me into creativity or into action. Inspiration is an idea that leads forward, suggests new ways of seeing things or suggests a possible development. Inspiration is open ended, never finished. It's more about asking questions than delivering answers. Inspiration is pointing in a direction saying, 'go there and have a look, you might find something interesting' (instead of saying 'go there and you will find this'). Inspiration is an open door or a window, not a signpost or a map.

I often find inspiration in stories, broadly defined. It can be a traditional story, like what is presented to us in books and other types of fiction, or stories from real life. [Riddley Walker] (►45) is a good example of the former, as is Moon Palace by Paul Auster, which contains some interesting thoughts on the quality of wide open spaces (which can easily be seen as a parallel to silence) as well as an interesting experiment about getting to know a work of art. Real life 'stories' that have inspired me during my NoFo studies is for instance the performance artist Marina Abramović and her work The Artist is Present, where she sits down in a chair, just silently looking into the eyes of whoever sits down in front of her. I've also been greatly inspired by hearing about singers today learning thousands of runo-meter lines, to somehow enter into the world of that music/poetry/language and see how it affects them. To me, the idea of doing experiments with yourself, like consciously confusing your mind and memory by overloading it, or exploring your endurance, presence and openness in ways like Abramović, is an extremely powerful idea; an idea that shows that it's mainly our curiosity, imagination, determination and our will to let go of conventions and things that doesn't matter, that sets the limit for what we can do, as artists and as humans.

The idea of curiosity has radical implications also when it comes to practicing. The idea of practicing is normally that a set of exercises is going to develop a set of skills and that is the aim of practicing. But with an open and curious mind, there doesn't have to be a known goal with the practicing. It's possible to just do things, over and over again, and then see what happens, what the outcome is. This is something I learned from Jonny Soling at Malungs Folkhögskola, who spoke fondly about it. If you do an exercise for a period of time, something will happen. You don't necessarily know what, but you know that.

Other stories doesn't have to be as drastic. The Polish fiddler Jan Gaca, who at 80 yrs of age is still playing for weddings and dances, and has become a super star of the present folk revival in Poland, is a source of inspiration by himself, serving as an example of energy, presence and rough skill. Or the German weaver and musician Küster, who lived in Skåne in 19th C. and started each day with drinking a 'kaffegök' (coffee mixed with alcohol) and then composing two tunes. This persistent composing, the continuous search for the perfect tune, shows the power of endurance. For me, these are great images to have at the back of my head, while I go about, evolving my own music.

35. Embodying Knowledge – the Power of Experience

One of the major things I've experienced during my NoFo-studies is the power that lies in embodying knowledge (See Mark Johnson Embodied Knowing Through Art in Research in the Arts, Ed. M. Biggs & H. Karlsson). How physical experiences affect my thinking and my feeling and thus influences my (artistic) possibilities. Having experienced things like what we did in [Kunkkula] (►24) ([‘walking 50 meters in one hour’] ►40) has deeply affected me, as a person and as an artist. Furthermore it has also introduced me to a new way of artistic development work. While I've previously seen exercising (conscious repetition of certain exercises, patterns, passages etc.) as the main way to improve myself as an artist and a musician, I now see experiencing as another means, by which it is possible to improve my skills and abilities. For me, the main difference is that while exercising demands numerous repetitions (with gradual development) of the same exercises, experiencing doesn't need to involve repetition in the same way. Experiencing offers a strong and direct effect and makes an instant difference, even if it sometimes takes some time to digest the experience, and really understand the implications and effects of it. With experience, the major difference is between before and after, between not-having and having the experience. Between having not having done something,
and having done it. With exercising the effect comes with time, gradually. With experience, the important thing is not how experienced you are, but that you are at all experienced. Having done something once means the knowledge about it is actually in your body. In this sense experience becomes body instantly, experience is bodified knowledge. This also means that doing something (e.g. music) becomes a way of thinking about it, and more so than talking about it would be. The act of doing becomes a cognitive act.

Repetition in itself, can of course also be a kind of experience. Playing the same tune 200 times in a row is a very different experience from just playing it 20 times, or twice. Playing without stopping for one hour is also a very different experience from having one hour of effective playing time spread out over an hour and a half.

Another aspect of experiencing is that (at least in my experience) its effects are much more unpredictable than the effects of exercising. Of course (good) practicing also gives (side) effects that you can never predict, but at the heart of exercising is the prediction: 'I am doing this because I want to develop that.' By contrast, experience offers 'I am doing this to see what happens'. Exercise is guided by specific ideas about what areas (in your playing) to develop (e.g. specific technical aspects of playing, a specific melody or passage etc.), whereas creating experiences is guided by a general curiosity, or in some cases an idea, but a much wider one, about what to deal with ([fear] (►36), for instance).

The drastic and direct effect of experiencing can of course not replace exercising, but it is a powerful complement that offers other possibilities for development. If nothing else, using experience as a method for musical development is a way of strengthening the [music/self-integration] (►18).

Extensions

**Body is Experience is Body is Experience or Doing is Thinking**

I have found that many times there is a great difference between having done something, and not having done it. The important thing is not how experienced you are, but that you are at all experienced. Having done something once means the knowledge about it is actually in your body. In this sense experience becomes body instantly, experience is bodified knowledge. This also means that doing something (e.g. music) becomes a way of thinking about it, and more so than talking about it would be. The act of doing becomes a cognitive act.

**Thoughts after Finishing Reading Cook (Music, Imagination, Culture).**

From a letter to a friend:

[...]musicology and music analysis […] has got very little to do with how we actually listen to music and what it does with us as humans. I often tend to use books and reading as a way to understand the world around me. Somehow I want to think that 'all' I need to know is to be found in books (and hence in the thinking of other people). There was something in this book that made me think that there is no point in reading about people's theories about this and that (in music). The only thing there is, is experiencing, reflecting and developing, all based on my own very subjective perception and closely connected with intuition. And probably that goes for life as well, even if I still believe that there is a lot to learn about life and what it means to live as a human being through reading novels.

The book itself ends with a conclusion pretty much similar to this video: http://vimeo.com/54763818

**36. Fear and freedom, Body and Soul**

Autumn 2012, when we were studying in Helsinki with the NoFo-programme, we spent a week with the Kandiakatemia in the Sibelius Academy's fantastic countryside facilities in Kallio-Kuninkala (commonly referred to as Kunkkula). Kandiakatemia is best described as a one week course in free improvisation for the bachelor students at the folk department.

One of the main things I experienced during that week, is how physical preparation and warm up, can affect
mental abilities and create artistic (mental) freedom. Every day that week started with a good long warm up of the entire body, often with yoga-influenced exercises that put a strong focus on breathing. And this really did something to me. At the end of the week my whole being was affected. I don't know which is the chicken and which is the egg but my breathing was deep, slow and strong and I felt calm and at peace with myself. And that particular physical state of being had a strong impact on my ability to play the violin.

At the opposite end: I was sitting in Voss, practicing. I had slipped on the ice the day before and landed on my left wrist so I had a bad ache and couldn't move my hand or fingers as freely as normal. However I was trying to use that as an advantage, practicing to play without pushing the string all the way down on the fingerboard. After a while I felt my breathing was really strained and my whole body felt tense and uneasy. And that made it impossible to play well. I tried to relax and focus on the bow and the sound I was making, putting my whole attention at the sound and just trying to get my body and movements to adjust intuitively to aid a good tone from the fiddle. However it didn't work.

I don't know why I felt like I did at that point, something was stressing me and that made my body tense. The main point is just to describe two different physical states and how strongly they affect the fiddle-playing. And how strongly the general state of the body, and how free both body and mind is, is connected to breathing. This has led me to the idea that I should start practicing yoga, to be able to control that better, and easier find a good physical-mental state of being whenever I need it.

37. The NoFo Legacy (Conclusion)

So, where have I ended up now, after two years of exploring, developing, understanding and questioning; myself as a musician and artist, and folk music in itself?

I have a lot of ideas that I have gathered during these two years that I want to explore further. With many of them I feel that I am only in the beginning of understanding where they lead and what they actually mean. There are no tunes (►33), Archaic Music (►32), Body as method (►24) & Embodied Knowledge (►35) are some of these ideas and methods that I intend to work more with in the nearest future. The Music Marathon (►31) is an idea I really want to carry out at some day and in some form. In the near future, I also intend to gather some sort of improvisation collective in Malmö, continuing working with ideas of free folk music improvisation that were presented during the Kandiakatemia in Helsinki.

Another interesting method I haven't made use of yet, but want to try out in the future, is different ways of bathing in a repertoire or style, overloading the brain, and then see what comes out. Learning some 50 (or 500) polskas within a certain style and then (mentally) tearing them to pieces, throwing them up in the air and see what comes down. (And of course, I ascribe this method to Heikki Laitinen (►46).)

I have acquired some good skills and tools to aid my (musical) development, that I will bring with me in my future work as a musician and artist. Questioning myself and my musical praxis, and musical conventions in general, in order to create space for development; An interest in creating and using different types of musical experiments, often without knowing where they will lead, but just diving into them with an open and curious mind; using theoretical ideas as a basis for practical music making; connecting body with mind and opening myself to the power that lies in experiences.

Especially the mind/body connection and its relation to fiddle playing, music making and artistry, is something I want to explore further. Doing yoga, physical exercising and body improvisation are some methods I will try to involve more in my daily life, in order to aid this.

In the end, I have gathered a lot more confidence as an artist and a musician. If anything, I leave this degree with a feeling that the exploration will (or at least can) go on forever. There are no limits.

Helsinki, Voss, Stockholm, Malmö 2012/13
Sven Midgren
Appendix 1: Tunes

38. Krokodiltårar

This is one of the first tunes we arranged with the group. We learned the tune from Mats Edén (who also composed it) in one of our ensemble lessons in Stockholm, during the first semester of NoFo. The bass-riff which is being played by the bass clarinet and the accordion is featured on the original recording with Groupa too. Somehow I got the idea to contrast it with something a bit messy and annoying in the treble register so I invented the pentatonic loops that are featured in the 'epilogue'. Originally it was only intended to be some sort of interlude, but in the end it became more or less a part of it's own.

To create the ostinato I used pentatonic material, which is an easy way to make sure that there will be no clashes, whichever notes get played at the same time. I also used the idea of overlaying different rhythms to create an effect of multitude and a bit of chaos. Both these methods I actually learned from Mats while I was studying at the Music Academy in Malmö.

As soon as we started playing it to an audience, and made a recording available on the Internet, people started making references to Steve Reich (and esp. his Music for 18 Musicians) which is a bit funny since none of us in the band had listened to any of his music. For me, the inspiration came from the English group Spiro and their tune The White Heart, which I had heard on a compilation of contemporary English folk music. However this constant comments about Steve Reich made me check out his music, and I did find it quite inspiring.

The Solo

Here (in the online version) are two versions of the solo, one recorded spring 2012, while we were studying in Odense, and one recorded in february 2013, after the semester in Helsinki. Unfortunately I don't have access to a version of the later solo without the effects, but in a way that doesn't matter: the effects only enhance the overall idea of the solo. I would say that the difference between the two solos is quite big. The Odense version is very concerned about playing notes that fit, trying to play in tune and not really taking any risks. The CD version is a lot more powerful, risk taking and concentrated. There are a lot of the same ideas and patterns present in both the versions, but they are performed in quite different ways. For me, this is a clear result of the development that happened during the semester in Helsinki and more concretely, an effect of the playing (►23).
39. I Väntan på Krilon (Waiting for Krilon)

The Story Behind the Tune.
Some time before I started my studies at NoFo I read a trilogy of novels by the Swedish author Eyvind Johnsson, called 'the Krilon trilogy'. The were written and published 1941-1943 and in short, they form an allegory about the small (good) man's fight against the evil in the world. Krilon is fighting a sort of war on his own, against evil powers who turn his friends against him. And he never loses his faith in man, and he never stops believing in the power of words and the power of being human towards each other. I got really inspired by the books, and the main character, Krilon, became some sort of a hero for me.

The Composing
After a while I thought I wanted to compose a tune in honour of Krilon, and I gradually worked out an idea for what kind of tune it should be. I had the image of Krilon being a quite short and sturdy, with a good heart and a gentle mind, though a bit stubborn. In the end I thought I would capture that in the shape of a schottis in g minor.

This idea was growing and slowly developing in my head for quite some time, and then one day in Helsinki I sat down to compose it. Since I had this quite strong idea about what I was aiming for, I thought it would be quite easy, and to begin with it was. To reflect the stubbornness of Krilon I wanted an ostinato to go underneath the tune and that came to my mind quite fast.

I recorded the ostinato on my Zoom H2, created a loop of it and started to play on top of it. Out came a tune, but not at all the tune I was aiming for.

When I realised what had happened, the tune got it's name quite naturally: Waiting for Krilon (Swe: I väntan på Krilon).*

After composing the tune, I tried to describe what is in it:

Krilon represents the good in mankind. Not because he is without faults or in any way perfect, but because he is always striving and believing. He believes in the good in humans; he helps them being good just by believing in them. He is the one that forgives us when we do wrong and who guides us to road we really want to walk. And it's not about religion, about any god or salvation. It is plain damn human compassion. Krilon is the friend who is there when we need him.

And so we are waiting for him. It is a waiting full of hope, but also a waiting filled with reflection, thoughts about our faults and failures, but filled with hope, trust and belief in ourselves.

Krilon is the honesty, openness and trust we need in our lives. The tenderness, sensitivity and firmness.

This has developed over time, as we have been playing it live and I have been telling parts of the story to the audience. I am still searching for the best way to describe the story behind the tune, the story of Krilon, and why he is such an inspiration, but for each concert I think I'm getting a bit closer.

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Playing the Tune

The tune is interesting, since I think it's the first time that I've composed a tune that is so obviously a tune for listening. And it provided a good challenge for me, since I really had to work with other aspects of music than I was used to. First of all, I got to play lead throughout the whole first half of the arrangement, and most of the time being the only one playing the melody. This in itself was quite new to me, since I tend to play a lot of harmonies, second voices and accompaniment otherwise. Gradually, I also began to understand that this type of tune, which doesn't build on a dance groove, but rather on long melodic phrases, demands a completely different approach to playing it. Had it been a year earlier, I think I wouldn't have dared to play the tune, thinking my playing wasn't good enough for this kind of tunes, but now I thought it to be a good challenge.

Still, having played it now for about half a year, I still feel I am very much in the beginning of understanding how to do it justice and I still feel there are a lot of things I need to develop and work with. Tone is probably the main thing, since I am not too happy with my tone on the fiddle, especially not in the higher registers. Intonation is another aspect which I also need to work a lot with.

However, this kind of tunes does not only provide demands and challenges, but also possibilities. Having the constant, steady, ostinato going underneath, the beat of Time as we like to think of it, there is a lot of freedom to really shape and stretch the phrases, dynamically as well with the timing. When it works, I get the feeling of floating, being carried by the others in the band.

Video from a performance during the Nordtrad Conference in Vilnius, april 2013 is available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vt9ljXGrD0

*Those familiar with 20th C literature will easily understand where I got the inspiration for the title.*
Appendix 2: From the NoFo-Blog

40. Walking 50 meters in one hour

Posted on September 29, 2012 by NoFo-Bloggen

As Benjamin wrote we’ve been to Kallio-Kuninkala for a week of improvisation together with a group of other students from the Sibelius Academy.

The surface level of what’s happened is fairly easy to describe. Lots of improvisation and contact exercises, exploring ourselves, the others, the group. A process of opening up, accepting, meeting, searching. Lots of strange stuff going on. People screaming or standing silent, crawling on the floor or on each other, running around, standing still, moving slowly, making strange sounds with their instruments and voices, going on and off stage and in and out of rooms, creating beautiful music and soundscapes and horrible music and sounds. Talking about what we do, feel, think, find, experience. Sauna and party and jam sessions.

But this doesn’t really say anything about what actually happened. I’ve experienced a week of incredibly strong meetings with strong people. Opened up to others and let others in, in ways that rarely (never?) happen in everyday life. Learned about myself, life, music, artistry, focus. We have been crying, laughing, smiling, seeing. The strong feeling of being part of a group that supports you, challenges you, meets you, includes you, love you.

I tried to describe it to a friend: love, improvisation, meetings, physical and mental exhaustion, energy, openness, happiness, time, warmth, eyes, humans, hands, bodies, moment, sounds, music, exploring, extreme, movement, contact, silence, focus, words, dissolving of time, power, non-words, sauna, food, walk, group, human, tears. But it probably doesn’t matter how many words I list. There will always be more to add.

Maybe another way to describe is a picture from the very end of the week: we finished with going round, looking everybody in the eyes and silently, without words, telling them what we had experienced with them, learned from them and learned about them. I ended up sitting on the floor, shaking with tears.

Another experience The frame: a one hour collective improvised performance using the whole building. Personal task, set by myself: to try to walk as slowly as possible, but still be constantly moving. Result: ca 50 meters (including a set of stairs). The tiredness after it is indescribable and had a very strong effect on my body for hours afterwards, somehow I can still feel it, two days later. I recommend everyone to try.

We’re back in Helsinki now. Trying to digest what we’ve been through. Trying to figure out how to be in the everyday life again. Grateful for the week that’s been.

/Sven
41. Notes on improvising dance
Posted on October 3, 2012 by NoFo-Bloggen
Dance as if it was a traditional dance, like if the movements have existed in hundreds of years, followed people in sorrow and joy, success and failure. A part of a greater, ancient ritual.

Later addition: this goes for music as well. But remember to keep the movements and the notes young, fresh and new. Every note is played for the first and only time, and deserves attention and love in accordance with that.

42. Music and its contrary?
Posted on October 11, 2012 by NoFo-Bloggen
More and more I believe that if you want to understand something, you also need to explore the opposite of whatever it is you want to understand. And since music is about sounds, I think it’s important to explore the silence. In many ways, silence is a very rare thing in our world. And somehow also something that many people find provocative. But to me silence is necessary, not only because I need to rest my ears after hours of (loud) music making, but to be able to understand what the sounds we produce actually do with us. What difference they make in the sonic landscape.

I will probably come back to this at a later time. In general, this semester has produced lots of new thoughts, pushed my mind in new directions, and I’m only gradually finding out where I am or where I’m going. Sometimes it’s good with thoughts from people who’s been in the game a bit longer:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcHnL7aS64Y&feature=player_embedded
(Thanks to Suvi for directing me to this video)

43. Notes on traveling
Posted on October 22, 2012 by NoFo-Bloggen
I’m in a friend’s house in Estonia and was just served a cup of tea. And somehow the taste of it opened up a link to so many parallel’s in my life. All the other times I’ve been in friends houses and been served a cup of tea. Especially it reminded me of England, where I’ve been going a lot during parts of my life. Going there, visiting people I know or people I know-but-don’t-really-know, getting a bed, a cup of tea, some music, friendship. Always the cup of tea.

The thing is, it really works. The tea makes me feel comfortable, at home, even if I would be surrounded by complete strangers. There is something about getting a warm drink and somewhere to sleep which I think opens up the trust in me.

I really like traveling and meeting people, but I don’t really like being a tourist. For me it’s completely different if you go somewhere and stay in a hotel, eat at restaurants and go to museums or if you stay in someone’s house, share their dinner and go for a walk in the
park with them. And it’s far more inspiring, challenging, opening, instructive to meet people like that. People who have a life which is not about serving strangers. Even if it’s sometimes hard to talk with people when you hardly have any language in common, it’s still a way to learn, meet and understand.

After a fantastic, inspiring, great week at Womex it’s nice to be in Estonia. I’m here to teach at the Estonian SügisEtno (a folk music course for youths) and do a couple of concerts together with Johanna-Adele Jüssi releasing her solo debut album. I’m really looking forward to a week that is actually filled with real live music and music making, as opposed to Womex which is a week that kind of circles around music but mainly without actually touching it. Womex is so much more about business, marketing, networking, talking, drinking and maybe listening and it’s all nice and great but it’s nothing like feeling the vibrations of the fiddle.

44. Dead Traditions?

Posted on November 27, 2012 by NoFo-Bloggen

I’m reading parts of a Ph.D dissertation about the Folk Music Department in the Sibelius Academy and I stumble on this quote: “The most fundamental ideological point of departure for creating contemporary folk music is that folk music should be a living tradition.” (It’s on p. 190 in the linked document, for anyone interested…)

I wonder: Is not the being alive part something which is of essence for a tradition? Can it be a tradition if it’s not alive (and thus moving, changing, developing etc.). If it’s dead, is it not then just an artefact, an object to admire (or dislike) but not something you can use? I wonder only because it seems like it’s often required within folk music to state that what we do is part of a living tradition. There are no dead traditions. There are only dead objects.

If it’s tradition it’s alive and kicking. If it’s alive and kicking it’s probably part of a tradition (i.e. part of a chain of thoughts, ideas and actions that humanity is resting on). If it’s dead, we would best bury it. It probably stinks.

/Sven
Appendix 3: Random

45. Riddley Walker

The idea of how knowledge is transmitted in an oral, memory-based cultures showed up in the novel 'Riddley Walker' by Russel Hoban. The novel is set in a distant post-apocalyptic future where the stories from our present-day world, and all scientific knowledge we have today, has been transformed (mutilated one could say) in the oral transmission through the years. Even more interesting, Hoban explores the development of language through time. The whole book is written in a pretend future dialect of English, extrapolated from present day Kentish. What he has done with language in his book, is directly applicable to music and how we treat (and could treat) the material found in old manuscript books. And the method (i.e. the way of thinking) could be applied heading (aiming) both backward and forward in time. We could listen to recordings, and try to imagine the development that has lead to the result, and then try to think backwards to figure out what the music might have sounded like some 100 or 200 or 400 years ago. But we could also (as Heikki Laitinen would have suggested, and like Hoban does) direct the imagination forward, into the future, and try to figure out what the music will sound like in 100 or 400 years.

46. Heikki Laitinen

During my NoFo-studies, no other person has managed to present so many interesting, inspiring and thought provoking ideas in so little time, as Heikki Laitinen did in our ca 90 minutes seminar in Helsinki. For me, Heikki is more than just a real person. He has become an icon, a bearer of some key concepts or ideas that I find inspiring and interesting. And to be honest, some of the ideas that I ascribe to him, actually doesn't origin from that seminar, and were actually not presented by him at all, but by other people (sometimes, but definitely not always, referring to him). I am less concerned with the living person Heikki Laitinen, even if I find it incredibly inspiring to know that he exists and to know that these ideas actually can become real music: for me it is the Idea of Heikki, the Heikki that exists in my head, that is important.

I don't really care what ideas came from him, and what came from other people, and what comes from myself. Heikki Laitinen represents a state of mind, a vision, and an approach to music making and folk music. For me, he is the free-thinker, the one that spurs development; inspiration and development incorporated. It might sound very much like old-fashioned adoring of a (old, white, male) genius but I don't think of it that way. As I said, Heikki Laitinen in this way is not a person, but an idea. The idea of possibility, inspiration and questioning of conventions. And the inspiration lies as much in what I know that other people (like Kristiina Ilmonen, Kimmo Pohjonen, Trepaanit and others) has done with these ideas, as it does in the ideas themselves.
47. Sources of Inspiration

I've had lots of sources of knowledge and inspiration that to various degrees have influenced the result presented in this essay. Some of them have direct impact on this essay, others haven't but they are equally important.

People

Some of the People who have inspired me during my time at NoFo. Directly or indirectly.


Books

Books that have somehow influenced me. Most of them have had direct impact on this essay, some haven't but are equally important.

Fiction

Eyvind Johnsson: The Krilon trilogy (Grupp Krilon, Krilons resa, Krilon själv) – inspired the tune I väntan på Krilon.
Russel Hoban: Riddley Walker – provided some interesting parallels to thoughts about oral culture and archaic music.
Paul Auster: Moon Palace – contains some very interesting thoughs about art and what to do with it.

Not so much fiction

Nicholas Cook: Music, Imagination and Culture
Carl Dahlhaus: Analys och Värdeomdöme
Stephen Nachmanovitch: Free Play
Peter Bastian: In i Musiken
John Blacking: How musical is Man
Mark Johnson Embodied Knowing Through Art (in Research in the Arts, Ed. M. Biggs & H. Karlsson)
Nicholas Cook: A very short introduction to Music

Hypertext inspiration

Jorge Luis Borges: Trädgården med gångar som förgrenar sig (the Garden with forking paths)
Jan Kjærstad: Jonas Wergeland-trilogy (Förföraren, Erövraren, Upptäckaren)
Sven Lindkvist: Nu dog du!

Internet accessed text

LOTS of DN.se, SvD.se, Sydsvenskan.se (esp. Kultur&Nöjen-pages)
I.S. Øksnes: Master Thesis about Torleiv Bjørgum
http://ntnu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:436930/FULLTEXT01
Juniper Hill: From Ancient to Avant-Garde to Global (PhD dissertation)
Music and Musicians
The list of music and musicians that have inspired me could go on forever. But instead I try to make a short list of music and musicians that have somehow had direct impact on the development I have tried to describe in this paper.

Chris Wood & Andy Cutting, EST, Jan Gaca, Norwegian hardingfelemusic, Trepaanit, Janusz Prusinowski Trio, Spiro (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50AgYbxY4J0), Steve Reich, Antti Paalanen,

Videoclips
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8U7dSNar68
“They knew they had to live with what they made, for the rest of their lives.” J. Sundkvist about his ancestors and their respect for the things they created, and the love they put into all their crafts.

John Cage on Silence
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcHnL7aS64Y&feature=player_embedded

Everything is a remix
http://everythingisaremix.info/watch-the-series/

Understanding Music
http://vimeo.com/54763818

Other
Private notes, made during the NoFo-studies
Marina Abramović: The artist is present

Places/Situations
SL local trains Märsta-Stockholm
Morning walks through Vasastan, Stockholm
Biking in Odense
Trains Odense-Malmö
Sunrise over Odense
Tali-forest, Helsinki
Yrjönkatu Swimming hall, Helsinki
Taikalamppu kahvila, Helsinki
Arkadia Bookshop, Helsinki
Kampin Kappelli, Helsinki
Hanguren, Voss
Tre Brør, Voss
Korröfestivalen
Playing for dancing
Ransätersstämman
Appendix 4: Exam Concert Program

Thank you all for coming, please join us for the party!

Tranotra are:
Benjamin Bech - clarinet & bass clarinet, Sven Midgren - violin & viola,
Olaug Furuætser - violin, Markus Räskinen - free bass accordion

Special thanks to:
Olof, Ditte, Kristina, Hélon, Karen, Timo, Pom-pon and Stallet

Exam Concert and CD Release Party
Stallet, Stockholm 26th of May 2013

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Kaukana Lännesdö (comp. Petri Hakala)
"Far away in the West"

Polska från Odense (comp. Markus Räskinen)
While Markus was leaving Odense for the last time (that semester) and driving towards Sweden through the rain, this tune popped into his head.

I väntan på Krilon (comp. Sven Midgren)
Sven is waiting for his literary hero Krilon to arrive in the shape of a tune. He hasn't yet, so for now we have to make do with this one.

Dansken og Trappen (comp. Benjamin Bech)
Sometimes falling down the stairs is like music. You find yourself in a situation where you just have to improvise to survive.

Varupsen polska (trad.)
"Sparropolska"

Gjør Godt Mot Dem Søn Deg Mon Hete (salmoone)
In troubled times, with war and hatred it’s good to remember: Be nice.

Polska efter Thydell
A dusty old tune from Sven's past, one that is in many ways responsible for where he is today.

Rils (trad.)
Two reels we got from Danish fiddle guru Harald Haugegaard.

Hoppet (comp. Sven Midgren)
Dedicated to Sven's niece Alva: something to keep her feet on the ground, her head light and her heart warm

INTERVAL

Morning Waltz for Tranotra (comp. Topi Kerhoen)
A gift from Topi. The very first tune anyone has written for Tranotra.

Carl the Hedgehog (comp. Benjamin Bech)
Carl was a creature with special habits. Sleeping all winter, eating worms, growing through the Finnish forests, and he happened to be Benjamin’s neighbour.

D Tuklač from Korsnäs Finland

Krokodiltåvar (comp. Mats Edén)
Lament for a dead fiddle. Or...?

Polska ur Jeppe Nilssons notbok, Skåne
- But there are no tunes

Ambjörn Qy (trad.)
This tune is Very Very Old.

Influence du 7/8 (comp. Markus Räskinen)
A tribute to Nordic Tree, who provided the inspiration to compose music with Nordic tonality in irregular time signatures.