

MUSIC WITHIN THE WORDS, WORDS WITHIN THE BODY

Sonic discoveries through human language and electronics

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1. INTRO

“ Your voice is a very powerful weapon. When you are in tune with the cosmic breath of heaven and earth, your voice produces true sounds. Unify body, mind, and speech, and real techniques will emerge. “ Morihei Ueshiba

Voice pierces the layer of the inner and outer self and it has the ability to mediate between spiritual and physical existence. Voice lies in the body. The body can't work without the mind and mind can't work without the body. Voice belongs to everybody and everybody has access to their own voice and body. All you need to do is; Inhale... and Exhale....

2. THE RESEARCH TOPIC AND BACKGROUND

2.1. Foreword

The written part of this study ended up being a little longer than advised in the curriculum. But as I was told, the whole program of “artistic research” in RMC and Denmark is on the verge of just formulating itself. So I took the freedom to formulate my own way of doing the project leaning also on to my previous “heavy” academic research in the area of Comparative Religion and Anthropology.

I have been pondering a lot about the need and purpose for the artistic research itself. And I think one of the major factors is to being an artist in relation to the society and reflecting oneself in it. Artistic experience can't be fully explained by words, and that's not the purpose or aim for me either. Rather it is, being in dialectic with different art forms, creating a language to mediate between and also the academic discourse. And at the end and most importantly be accessible and in reflection with the wider audience and hopefully make the understanding and use of art more accessible to everybody.

That's why I felt the need set my study also in a socio-historical context, to widen up the understanding and take part of the discourse of being a "female improvising vocalist."

That's why the 25 pages limit was also not enough for my purposes of this paper.

2.2. Research topic

My purpose is to (1) find the compositional and improvisational tools within text and language, its microtextures and (2) to create a system for creating music that lies between composition and improvisation and (3) allows me as a vocalist to orchestrate and be free in music and sound on the premises of my own instrument – the body.

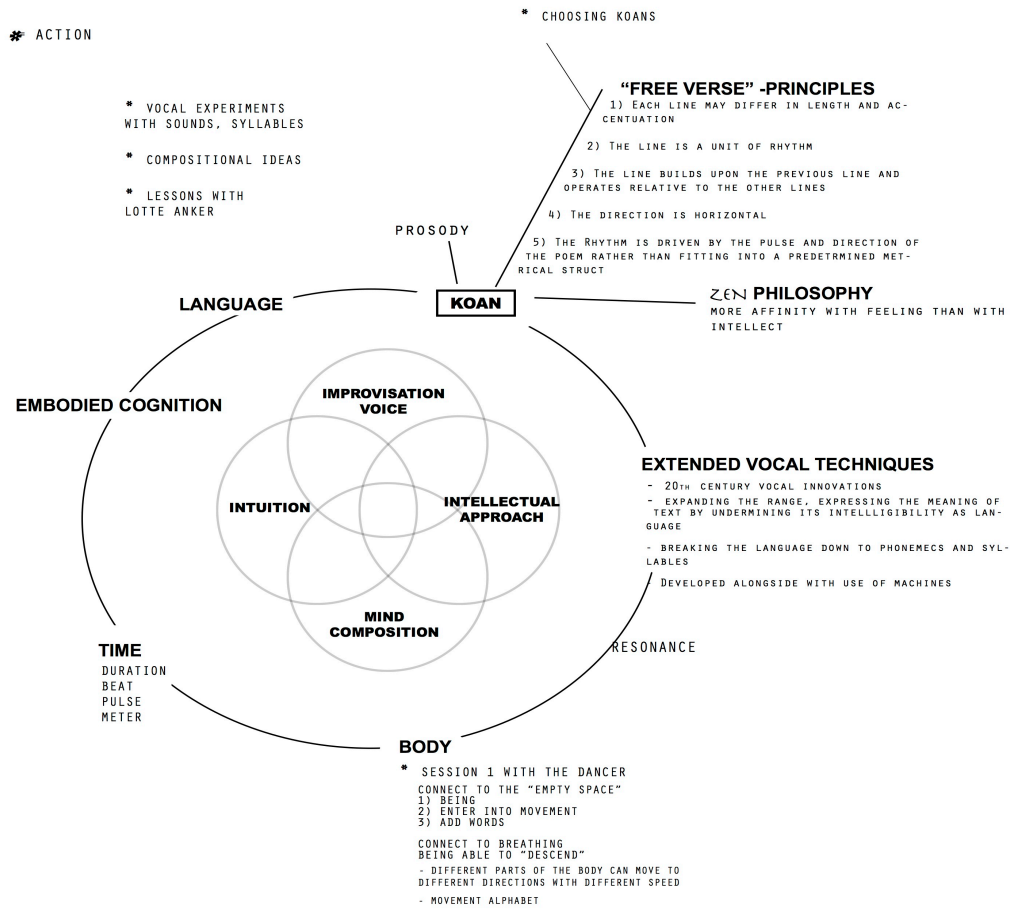
I am looking into new ways to using the texts as a material. Not only interpreting the emotions and the narrative of the text like I have done previously. Instead, I am trying to turn this around and see what kind of sonic material the text – letters, syllables, sentences and the whole form itself can suggest without the semantic meaning of the words. I am looking into the close relationship of the development of electronic music and extended vocal techniques and in practice, I merge in the symbiosis of these two.

The starting point of this study is my own self, my body-mind. And followed by philosophical questions around the music itself and the position and meaning of a vocalist, an improvising vocalist, in a more socio-(historical) context. In my opinion voice and an "improvising vocalist", itself resonates between different layers; *body-mind-society* and *metaphysics*. Therefore the study is rolling on that feed each other and resonate with each other; body-mind-instrument - electronics - sonic platform - metaphysics – society – body - mind-instrument.

I will first reflect upon the background of the vocalist- instrumentalist dialectic (*society*), that reveals some complexity of the whole vocal practice in general. Then I will introduce the material Zen *koan* texts, and the philosophical challenge (*metaphysics*) briefly, where after I will look into different parameters of the text and the prosody, the intonation, rhythm, and stress of the text and the sonic textures and sonority of the micro sounds and single letters. (My material)

I'll also open up the personal need for this study and the vocal practice and the learning process. Electronic tools that I am using are a both, a continuum and a composing tool for complementing the vocal sounds and creating a symbiosis where electronic sounds become embodied in the human body and voice becomes electric.

2.1. Mind Map I



3. NECESSITY OF THE RESEARCH OF VOCAL IMPROVISATION

3.1. Voice - Instrument dialectic

We often hear the saying; “Using the voice as an instrument”. Voice is anyhow not just “like an instrument” it *is* an instrument. It has many special characters, one of them is being used in everyday life for communication alongside with language, tones of voice etc. It is also very much incorporated in ones personality. It has the special character to add words and sentences to clarify the musical narrative. The words can also reach the listener in more cognitive way than music without words that is much more open to ones own interpretations and imagination and maybe opens up the ears for other aspects of music.

The impulse for me to keep the voice in the center of my work was two-folded. 1) In my view, the complex relationship and position of improvising vocals versus improvising instrumentalist, and the need to expand the space of the vocalist. 2) My own body instrument that resonates with the metaphysical elements and my whole musical practice.

I have felt restricted since I started my studies at the Jazz Academy. I felt I could not live up to the expectations of the academy and the predefined space (style, sound, behavior) of a lead vocalist, and instead found a free space in my own compositions. But it left me to wonder about the fact and the current atmosphere of my study institution at that time.

The first question we often get from journalists in my improvising (all female) vocal group IKI is; Isn't it hard to be such many females in the same band? I strongly doubt that any of my male colleges get this question or need to explain their musical practices from the perspective of gender. In a way, it feels that we continuously have to “defend that space”. It is very tiring and unnecessary, but obviously unavoidable. In IKI, our response to that is normally to neglect the question and talk about the music and musical practice instead.

Without this becoming a feminist pamphlet, I think it's nearly impossible *not* to reflect on gender issues to widen up the perspectives in music as well. Just to press my point

and to be understood right, **I believe music itself has no gender**, limitations or social structure or hierarchy. But **the people, the society around music** and the power relations of the society has its influence how we people approach musical situations, either aware of it or unaware of it.

I see music and society in constant discourse with each other. They both mirror and have the power to influence and change each other. The discourse that I am introducing here is a perspective from how the social structures and the dualistic of the Western thought have formed the power structures of music in the society. The reason why I think it's important to point this out is that music has also a power to change these structures and access and actually has its source in the non-gendered, sacred place. If we look at the complexity in vocal development in the jazz context, vocals can be roughly separated more into the direction of "entertainment" and the instrumentalists had the part as the "artist –musicians". Which means historically in that cultural context, people haven't and still do not have in many cultures the equal premises to access to music unbiased.

Tamar Sella has looked into this problematic and suggests, that it all starts with the body: *"A place to start looking for answers is the fact of voices belonging to bodies—in jazz, historically, black bodies, female bodies, bodies which, at certain moments in time, needed to be transcended for economic and political ends ."* (Tamar Sella, 2015 Ethnomusicology Review.) “

When a lot of counterarguments could, has, and will be presented and it is not very comfortable to reflect on these things, my own experience in the jazz school was more or less right on the spot with laying the expectations on the vocal student what Tamar Sella argues.

...Singers, with sensual bodies and universal words, as historical originators and entertainers, lacking in complexity and innovation, fixated on the Great American Songbook, limited by diatonic improvising or no improvising at all; and instrumentalists, with their mechanical tools of great speed and range, as masterful innovators, creating new styles, crafting and developing their improvisations,

elaborating with rhythmic and harmonic complexity.[4]” Suggesting a strong gap between “art” and “entertainment”. This is not at all what music itself represents, but the society and discourse (practically speaking meaning mass media, amount of the female students and teachers eg. at RMC, amount of the female artists in festivals etc.) suggests something else.

And hearing a lot of counter “arguments” when I pointing this out “ in the style of: “hey, but it’s not like that anymore, especially in Scandinavia” (denial), “don’t take it so seriously, I’ve been also harassed even though I’m a male” (diminishing the experience of actual harassment), “yes, it’s horrible people don’t react” (putting the blame somewhere else rather than acting on it), I have to state that even though, it would hypothetically be different, better or changed, it is important to *acknowledge* that it hasn’t been that for very long time. Besides, the current *#me too* “movement” shows that there is still quite a lot of work to do in the area of structural equal treatment of human beings. And I believe institutions have a big responsibility to affect and change the society.

3.2. Improvisation – Composition dialectic

Another dichotomy can be found in the area of improvisation and composition dialectic. In a history of Western music, improvisers are marginalized and preoccupied with “the work” and composer as solitary genius. This prospect of composing and improvising as separate entities have roots in the Enlightenment period in the beginning of the 18th Century.

Why it is important for my study is to acknowledge the roots of the Western “intellectual” tradition. As put by Tracy McMullen 2010 “*Music poses a problem for a Western intellectual tradition that privileges reason and the mind over the body*” (Tracy McMullen, 1. 2010).

Confronting my own biased “Western intellectual roots” of thinking; the headline of this chapter already implicitly suggests the dualistic division of the two entities “improvisation” and “composition”. My own conception to composition has been simply put “old-fashioned.” Improvisation has been/ is regarded as a bodily action

while the composition is more on the “rational site”. In my later experience the two are very close to each other, and even the same thing, that’s why I felt the need to clarify and create the tools and to try to overcome this dialectic in a solid way.

In the improvising itself then again, the instrument vocal dialectic raises its head again: another point of view that problematizes the position of voice versus instrument in an improvising setting can be looked into the two different notions of traditions of improvisation can be noted in the premises of Afrological and Eurological improvisation. Whereas the first one stresses the notion of the personal narrative and “telling your own story” whereas the Eurological improvisation could be described by an absence of intention.

That’s where the different notions of being an improvising vocalist versus instrumentalist, improvising and singing your “heart” out versus keeping it more “cool and distant” come into play.

Tone Åse on quoting the other Norwegian vocalist Sidsel Endresen:

“I feel that all this focus on “liberation” and “discovery of your own expression”, and the search for what is “personal” and “unique”, etc. is a trap. ... Especially when working with extended vocal techniques, that are often very expressive, you are constantly in danger of becoming too private.” (Norwegian singer Sidsel Endresen, interview in Ballade no, 27.08.2009, Translation by Tone Åse.)

I totally agree on Endresen’s notion on the danger of being too private and emotional and the teaching of the vocalists is very much concentrated on that. And yes I agree, in musical terms and in the terms of “taste” that is often just “too much” of that. But I have to ask, in theory, why are emotions considered as inferior to reason or private considered as *dangerous*?

Jenny Hvals analysis about Björk and her highly and boldly personal album “Vulnicura”, turns this discussion on its head:

“She has even added diary-like touches, by putting dates to the songs in the heartbreak narrative. That is a brave move, because isn’t that what girls would do? The term “diary” is another of those placeholders used to diminish female artists.” (Jenny Hval (<http://www.talkhouse.com/jenny-hval-talks-bjorks-vulnicura/>))

Being too private and emotional in other words, opens a place for diminishing female artist. I guess that’s where the *danger* might lie also in Endresen’s statement. To be taken seriously, not to be considered as too “uncomfortable” (too private) and not to take the risk of getting hurt, you need to as a vocalist remember to stay away from too much vulnerability, to keep the distance, and not to get too private. That’s why Björk took a brave step. But that step is only to be taken if you already own a “position” like she does.

To sum up; I suggest that *private* and *emotional improvising* (Afrological) is not inferior to the public and “*emotionless*” “*intellectual*” or “*highly artistic*” (Eurological) approach. They just represent a *different purpose* and *tradition* of expression. This intertwines with the notions of *composition* and *improvisation*, *feminine* and *masculine*, *private* and *public*. **Composition** being *artistic and intellectual* and **improvisation** being more entangled with *body and irrationalism*. I also suggest that these notions and categorizations are **not embodied in the music itself**, but are factors outside of the musical act itself.

Anyhow, we people have the need to categorize, favor and organize music from different premises either consciously or unconsciously. Our choices of style and preference are also in relation to our social status, economic value, musical success, and egoistic purposes that we might not be always aware of. Put in other words, the implicit suggestions and “vibes” on what is good music, what is bad music, what is “allowed” and what is not to has to do with our social and economical position, gender and in the society as well. And to overcome these preferences we need to be aware and reflective of our personal choices and surroundings. It is important to *understand* and *be aware* to be able to *let go*. And luckily music has the power to pierce and communicate between all the categories.

This mission to break these categories of both in a sociological sense and in music is not a new one and did not stop at John Cage:ish indeterminacy. Even though avant-garde was revolutionary at his time (and influenced many after him until our time,) attempting to break out from the idea of “ego” and Protestant world view through zen philosophy, he ended up posing another layer of the dualistic thinking. (I’ll get back to him later on.)

3.3. Personal need for this study

For me, as naïve as it might sound, music was an active choice of the (spiritual) “path” of life. As graduating from the university in 2007, I decided not to go further in the academic career but to concentrate on something that I found more profound and meaningful resonating more directly with life itself: music and art. I am still constantly trying to “catch up” the missing 7 years of my musician life, that I spent in the university. A positive thing is that I feel a big respect and thankfulness that I am allowed to commit to musical practice and do what I do because it is not taken for granted. A more complicated “the lack of 7 years” becomes when I feel the need to be a “better” musician and “catch up” and be in a “higher” level.

The trick with music is, how I see it, that it doesn’t work that way. It doesn’t work with only reasoning and skills. At the end, for me, it is something about a “state of mind” and experience and finding the peace in “being” and the holistic growth as a human being. You can’t enter that world with the brain or emotion – only.

I was just on a verge of finalizing my second album, when I started the study at RMC, and this research. I ended up in working very much on the after production of the sounds and corrections, a lot of sound manipulation, and even some forms for the album were re-made. The process was long and writing music had been slow and difficult. The result was at the end and, in my opinion, a good sounding album, where everything was more or less thorough- produced at the end.

This result didn’t really respond to my preliminary vision of the album, which was to be more in dialect with the instrumentalists and be free with my own instrument, not to be limited to sing the melodies and interpreting the texts only. At the end I felt that I encountered many limitations as a composer, bandleader and a singer in this particular band context, I had to find another angle to approach the compositional and

performative process. I had created the limitations for myself that I was trying to get rid of. The element that I *was* anyhow able to influence in the music, was the postproduction and the element of *sound*.

3.3.1. Free space in sound

The concentration on *sound* itself opened a lot of doors on the production side. It also gave me the freedom to organize the music in another way than before. But then again I was lacking some tools. The *sound* was the key, just didn't know exactly how to approach it. I needed something concrete and more organized tools to tangle the challenge.

3.3.2. Brain is part of the body

During this process, I was also keeping up with the teaching and other bands and projects that all felt equally important. After half a year of pondering around with different tasks and trying to figure out what is “artistic research at RMC” all about, I got hit by a stress collapse.

Stress together with physical and mental symptoms, and the back pain, problems with sleep etc. took me far away from my instrument and myself. This lead me to search the way back to the music, to myself and to *my body*. I was forced to reorganize my life. I worked on a thought of starting everything from *the beginning*, without trying to brain things out, but from the core of *my* musical-self – my body. I tried erasing all the presumptions and go for the simplest form of making and experiencing music.

One of the first things I encountered was the concept of rhythm and how it evokes the physio-cognitive level of singing. *Rhythm* itself does not involve *phonemic content*, such as words, that can be used as a narrative or non-narrative element in music. Rhythm is one of the most universally recognizable elements in music, and it has the potential evoke a physical response, which can be felt as resonances and vibration in the body. *Similar physical resonance can be felt in the singers body-instrument while singing.*

As the continuum for getting “grounded” in my body and instrument, I wanted to approach my instrument from the perspective of movement as well. I took two sessions with a dancer/body therapist as part of the “school” lessons to include to this study. The outcome of those lessons was to search and allow the “empty space” inside me. Transferred into musical practice it would mean first to *recognize* the “empty space” and *localize* it in the body. This could, for example, be in the stomach. After that, trying to sketch some kind of movement from that empty space followed by a sound, any kind of sound.

I also started to make my “voice meditation” - exercises again after a few years break. I vaguely base this exercise on my brief study of Indian *dhrupad* singing. Basically, I was singing one note for a long time 45 min- 60min and sensing the “descending” of the voice and different “chacras” in the body. My aim was not to “make music”, but just to sense my body and instrument and to *Inhale... and Exhale...* This started to have some interesting mental effects on me after a while because I did it for no other purpose than for the sake of “doing it.” I experienced a whole lot of tiredness, but at the same time concentration and inspiration and a deep interest in life.

In this period I also spent three weeks playing only drums every day as my musical practice. This acceptance of emptiness and no “direction” or productivity, concentrating on not being a better singer, but playing drums and making voice meditations, the different dimension and approaching *time* in a different (non productivity) perspective led to this study.

When I was ready to enter the active part of the research, I wanted to approach language, texts, and the voice and figure out a methodological way on how could this be a basis for both, composition and improvisation without having to be in the position of a subjective storyteller and a vocalist accompanied by instrumentalists. Also, instead of removing the lyrics and singing “like an instrument” (*Scat-singing* is a good example of this) I wanted to reveal what can be unfolded by the textual elements without the narrative part of it.

Next thing to figure out was, what kind of texts should I use? If I wrote them my self, I would express my self in a way that I wanted to get away from. If I used somebody

else's poetry, then I would still be expressing somebody's emotions and expression just interpreted by me. Against these backgrounds, I got intrigued by Zen and *koans*.

3.4. Summary

As a concluding thought, looking at these different parameters around the improvising vocalist like myself, I'm suggesting that; The "improvising vocalist" reflects and carries the power relations in the society in historical and present sense. Reflecting on Sidsel Endresen's words of vocal improvising often becoming *too* "private" and emotional and pushing to the direction of emotional and personal approach is very much and how the vocalists are educated. But what makes it *too much*? And why is the vocal teaching pretty much based on that notion? Why are there no tools in general to approach the vocals differently than imitating the instruments or expressing "your" story (in jazz vocal education)? And finally, why are or were these elements (emotions, entertainment, bodiliness) considered inferior (in artistic sense) or *too much* or *uncomfortable* in the society and in "art" music in the first place?

I suggest that this notion is entangled also in power relations in society and the whole history of Western philosophical history of dualistic thought since Plato (emotions vs. ratio – entertainment vs. art music – body vs. mind, male vs. female – "black music" vs. "white music" etc.) The music itself I believe, challenges these dichotomies and that's why the interest in the Buddhists monotheist thought or the idea of Yin and Yang in music is very understandable.

In my opinion, "vocal improvisation" holds the possibility of a change of how vocals/vocalists are positioned both in society and in musical context. And the chance of pushing against heteronormative values in society in general.

I have also encountered myself in many ways through stress, through my body, my personal reflection, search and also some personal findings in spirituality. Some of my ideas are based on my own biased background that I have tried to open up to be open for change. Therefore, I think in addition listening to different albums, for me has actually been the *ideas* behind them and the composer.

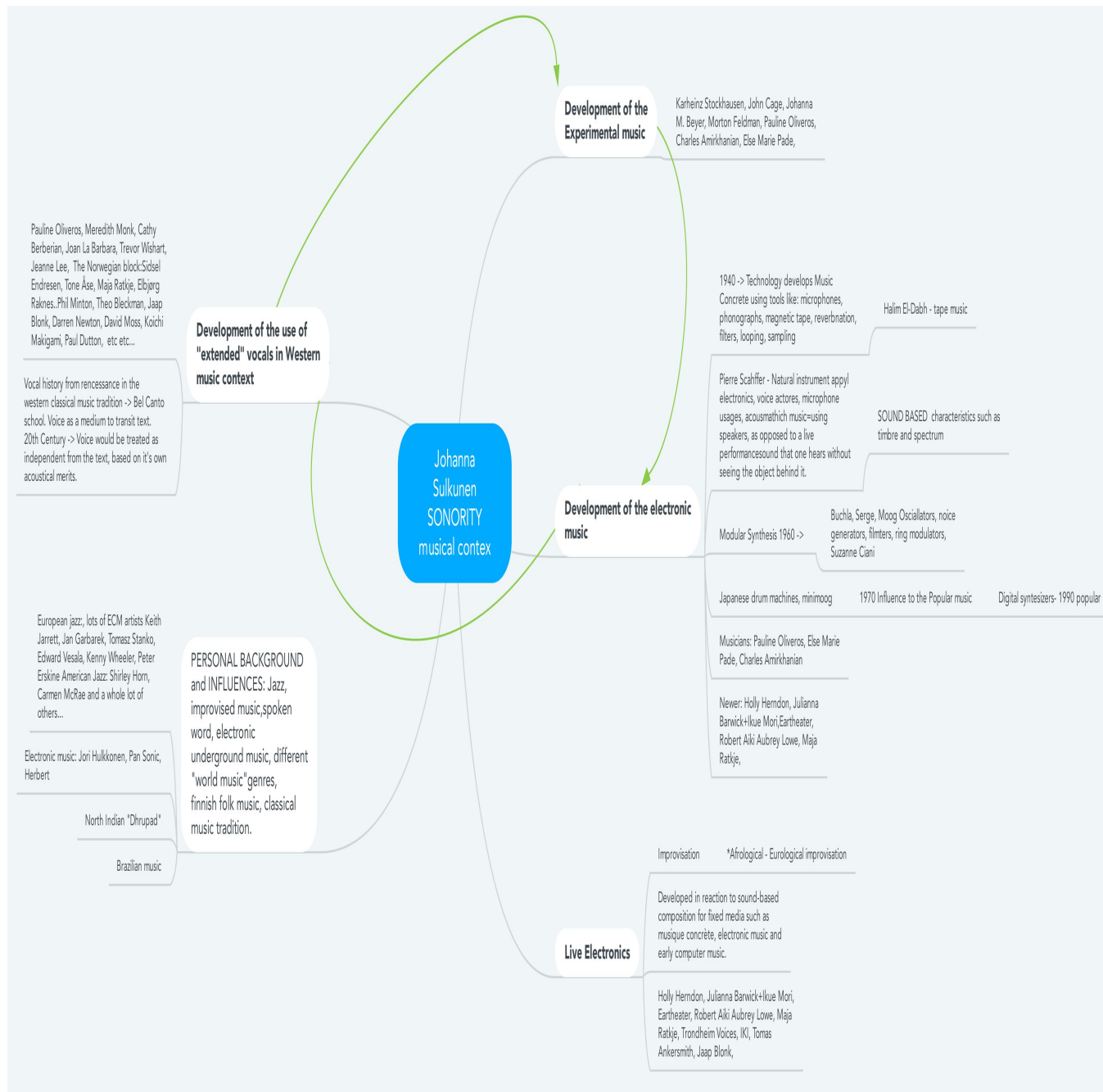
Finding the *tools or words* to work helps to on a solid ground towards something new

and creating a new platform for vocal work. After the re-setting stress experience, I had to go back to the basics, and start my investigations from my own body- instrument from the start.

All in all improvising vocalist and voice itself pierces many spheres in different layers 1) social structures 2) vocalist's space within the musical setting. 3) resonance between body-mind-and spirituality/ metaphysics, that again merge into the social structures. All these areas, in my opinion, affect each other and have consequences resonating with each other.

4. MUSICAL CONTEXT

4.1. Mind Map II



4.2. My personal background

The first notes I heard when entering this life, were Finnish folk tunes and Christian psalms. That, and classical music are my personal “roots”. Later on, I got intrigued by all sorts of music from punk to electronic music, to heavy metal to music from different traditions, and all sorts of instruments – violin, guitar, percussions... until I finally

ended up studying jazz, and using my voice as the primary source of musical expression, and intrigued mostly by the improvisation and freedom part of it. I took an education in the jazz conservatory, but it anyhow started to feel very limited to work around such a controlled field than what was required in the conservatory in Holland at that time.

So I started experimenting more and more and was lucky to meet other vocalists who also were standing in a situation of yearning for something “else” than the conservatories were to give. The need to expand the role and the space in music, be in a community and not being the band leader alone. So we began experimenting, putting together all our influences from different musical backgrounds and started the group IKI with nine improvising vocalists in 2009. The concept was based on having no concept but singing and experimenting; “9 voices- no rules”. This groups development and my own investigations in the fields of Indian music, Brazilian music, Jazz and different kind of vocal training and my own (alternative jazz group) have been behind my musical practices until the start of this study.

4.3. Voice and Electronics - The current field

The interest in both extended vocal techniques and electronics is not a new tendency. And the field that I am operating now, would probably fall into a category of live-electronics and experimental vocal music. There are many vocalists who have been working in this area for decade(s) longer than I have. And to name a few from the “Norwegian block”. Tone Åse, Maja Ratkje and Sidsel Endresen. And even though Sidsel Endresen is not working with live electronics, her impact on the current Nordic Improvising music scene is unavoidable and she would definitely fall into the same “inspirational” category for me with the two previous ones. What is similar to Tone Åse and Sidsel Endresen is their “jazz” background, I believe. In my ears, the melodic, storytelling background shines through even in the most sound based pieces. Maja Ratkje then again, is clearly from another tradition (contemporary composition, sound art) or at least taken clearly another direction. Her way of using the voice as a material and not only as in dialogue with the electronics is very inspiring.

From the experimental vocal improvisers side, there are also names worth mention like Maggie Nicholls, Phil Minton, Koichi Makigami, David Moss, Julianne Barwick and

her collaboration with Ikue Mori that represents something a little different than the previous names. I won't go into details in analyzing or my likes and dislikes in their work because of the lack of space in this paper.

Other interesting artists on the contemporary field more closely related to electronics and electronic manipulation, but crossing genre-wise out from the clear vocal free improvisation and avant-garde scene, are for example Holly Herndon and her laptop based compositions and use of the vocal processing. She is getting closer to the "beat oriented" electronic music, where also the work of "Herbert" has been a long lasting influence on me. Interesting modular synth composers/ players/ musicians worth mention are for example Kaitlyn Aurelia Smith, and Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe. Aubrey Lowe's album "Psychic Nature of Being" has been an inspiring three-track album recorded as a one-time improvisation without overdubbing. I could go on with the list of influences forever, but I'll stick to these few examples for now.

4.4. Early electronics and Contemporary Classical Music

Looking into the early electronic music has helped me to understand the connections between the development of electronic music and extended vocal techniques and their use. It has also been inevitable for me since I wasn't so familiar with it before this study. I went as far as the 1920s-30s first electronic instruments by the Italian futurists and Luigi Russolo's *Intonarumori*. And the early pioneer of electronic music, Egyptian Halim El-Dabh who composed one of the earliest known 'works of tape music (electroacoustic music) *The Expression of Zaar* 1944. Other remarkable inspirations have been Johanna M. Beyer – *Music Of The Spheres* 1938, the work of the Danish electronic composer Else Marie Pade and her amazing work in the field of electronic music and *music concrete*.

I'll get back to three composers more closely; **Pauline Oliveros**, because of her approach on electronics and voice and the concept of deep listening. **John Cage**, because of his inevitable influence for the whole contemporary music and close relation to Zen Buddhism, and **Morton Feldman** because of his "Rothko Chapel 5" his durational thinking, intuitive approach and the peculiar harmonics.

4.5. Extended vocal techniques

When talking about *extended vocal techniques*, I refer to the techniques that are “extended” from the norms of our culture, or more conventional Western classical music vocal tradition. In this light the 20th-century vocal innovations - among others - were 1) expanding the vocal range, 2) Breaking down the language into phonemes and syllable pieces rather than expressing the meaning of text. A movement related to the development of extended vocal techniques was the Dadaist movement. During the First World War, artists gathered in Switzerland to develop ideas not welcome in their own countries. Dadaists experimented with breaking down language into phonetic and syllabic pieces, like Kurt Schwitters’ 1919 “*Simultangedicht Kaa gee dee*” and it was a countermovement for logic, reason, and aestheticism of modern capitalist society.

Little later in the 1950s and onwards there are some very relevant vocal works that took another direction. Very important works are eg. Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Stimmung* in 1968, Joan La Barbara. *Voice Is the Original Instrument: Early Works* (1976), and her contribution on many of the works of Cage, Feldman, Morton Subotnic.. Other in the vocal genre were the Meredith Monk (Dolmen Music 1981 is great) and Trevor Wishart (eg. vox cycle 1980-1988).

If we look into many, much older traditions the use of vocals and the techniques are very rich. I won’t have time in this paper to go deeper into various interesting vocal traditions, but only for example throat singing can be found at least in Mongolia, Tibet, Tuva, (South) Africa, added with multiple polyrhythms, Pakistan. To point out that the various functions and ways of using the voice and it’s qualities has much longer roots in elsewhere than in the classical or the electroacoustic music. So in this way, “revolutionary” and alternative way of using voice is just about taking other traditions and putting them into the Euro- American context.

5. COMPOSITIONAL TOOLS AND METHODS

5.1. The material

5.1.1. Text - Koans

"*What is the sound of one hand clapping?*" The student of Zen is supposed to meditate on this riddle until some degree of insight or enlightenment occurs. The tricky part is that there is no right answer. What you are, or what you know, or what you believe, is what you get.

Choosing the text material took me quite a long time, I went through a lot of poetry, different languages and ended up reading about Zen. I wanted to use the texts as abstractions and sounds, rather than narrative stories with a whole lot of emotional content, still keeping open the possibility of playing with the images that the text brings.

I am trying to explain the essence of *koan* as well as I can, and the reason why it suits the musical approach in this study.

Most of all I want to highlight that *Koan* practice is first and foremost religious practice – not “free verse” per se. Koans are not meant for literal poetry, but religious texts. *Koans* are not based on any literary rules like for example haiku’s that follow the 5-7-5 syllables. In this sense my whole headline, “*koans* as free verse poetry is false”. To be able to deal with the rhythm and analyze the texts in *koan* from the technical point of view, I am “treating” the *koans* as free verse. I am borrowing tools from the world of poetry and analyses of prosody. It is *not to say that I presume the koans to be poetry per se*.

There are heavy loads of *Koans* and their explanations written during the history of Zen in Japan from the 12th century. Originally translated from Chinese to Japanese to English and a massive amount of material from the 20th century Zen scholars. I have chosen the classic of the *koans* the “*Gateless Gate*” and a massive translation of capping phrases, (The monk selects a verse or phrase that expresses the insight he has had while meditating on the kōan. He searches for this capping phrase in one of the

several Zen phrase books that have been specially compiled for this purpose.) from Chinese “Zen Sand – the book of capping phrases for *koan* practice” as my main sources.

The *koan* “is an artificial problem given by a teacher to a student with the aim of precipitating a genuine religious crisis that involves all the human faculties- intellect, emotion, and will. “(Hori 2003,6).

I don’t claim to be enlightened and I am aware of the fact that I am ripping the texts quite barefaced out of their religious context and boldly using the texts for my own purposes. I anyhow want to highlight that I have a big respect for the religious practice itself, and that I realize my limitations of understanding in this area. On the other hand, I’m not the first artist, searching for similarities in the practice of Zen (*koan*) and in the practice of music; you can practice and read the notes of a musical piece, but only when *experiencing and expressing* the music it realizes itself.

In his book, “Zen Sand” Victor Sogen Hori introduces **two approaches to *Koan***. First, and common way to approach the *koan practice* is to see *koans* as an instrument that “...deliberately poses a problem unsolvable by the rational mind beyond the limits of rationality and intellectual cognition.” (Hori 2003, 7)

This psychological instrumentalist approach reduces the *koans* as merely psychological tools that deprive the *koans* themselves of the meaning. It is anyhow highly non-evident that the vast amount of commentaries and *koan* texts written would all be occupied with a technique that is itself nonsense. Another implicit problem with this approach is the dichotomy between the awakened and a conventional dualistic thinking. An awakened person is thought to be able to choose to act either in the conventional dualistic way or in the awakened non-dual way. The dichotomy between duality and non-duality, conventional thinking and awakened mind, is itself a duality. “*Rather than being free from dualistic thinking, the awakened mind ends up more tightly locked into dualistic thinking, incessantly forced to choose between being conventional or being awakened.*” (Wright 1992 (Hori 2003,8)).

Therefore Hori suggests that the better way of approaching the *koans* is not to see *koan* as an object standing before the mind that investigates it, but as the seeking mind itself.

As long as consciousness and *koan* oppose each other as subject and object, there are still two “hands clapping,”¹ mother and father have already been born. But when *koan* has overwhelmed the mind so that it is no longer the object but the seeking subject itself, subject and object are no longer two. This entails a “realization”.

My experience of reading the *koans* with a “nonawakened mind” can be both amusing and aesthetically satisfying. Often the descriptions are picturesque “*Clouds dwell on the mountain peaks completely still; water flows down through the valleys, bubbling busily*” (Hori, 14.182 Zen sand, 511). Other times they are getting directly to the point.; “*Have a shit, take a piss.*” (Hori, 4.3. Zen sand, 101.)

5.1.2. Prosody

LANGUAGE itself forms rhythms in different levels: Syllables - they form transients and sonorities, words and sentences - they form patterns and sequences. The poem or text as a whole – can form a a dynamic and form of the musical piece. Prosody in linguistics means “the study of supra segmental characteristics of speech, like intonation, rhythm, and stress.” (Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosody>). “Szczepek Reed (2011) defines linguistic prosody as covering “all interactionally relevant, supra segmental aspects of talk, comprising the features of pitch, loudness, time and voice quality” (p. 13), whereas poetic prosody will focus more on aspects of music such as rhythm, sequence and structure— and, to a much lesser extent, tempo. “ (Andrews 2016, 6)

Adding to this one of the main characters of my investigations have been the “textural” elements of single letters and words. I have been using English as the language, where my Finnish accent is directing my pronunciation and the intonations. Therefore, I want to highlight, that the purpose for me is *not* to be linguistically perfect, nor do I claim to have sufficient knowledge on the English language to make a perfect linguistic analysis about the texts used.

¹ This refers to the well-known *koan*; *Two hands clap and there is a sound. What is the sound of one hand?* (隻手声あり、その声を聞け)

— Hakuin Ekaku

My purpose is to find *musical inspiration, insight ,and tools* in the language, in this case, *Zen Koans*, to find new ways and methods (for myself) of composing and improvising.

5.1.3. Free verse

In his book, *A prosody of free verse – explorations in Rhythm*, Richard Andrews (2016) claims the twentieth and twenty-first-century rhythms in poetry as based on the line rather than the metrical foot as the unit of rhythm, and that larger rhythmic structures fall into verse paragraphs rather than stanzas. “Most studies (of prosody) have declared the attempt to write such a prosody as impossible: they prefer to see free verse as an aberrant version of regular metrical verse. They also believe that behind free verse is the ‘ghost of meter’. Running against that current, *A Prosody of Free Verse* bases its new system on additive rhythms that do not fit conventional time signatures”. (Andrews 2016).

According to Andrews “The additive principle is key to developing a free verse prosody is that (1) *each of the lines of free verse may be different in length and accentuation*, (2) *the line is the unit of rhythm*, (3) *one line builds upon the previous line and operates relative to the other lines that precede and follow it*, and (4) *the compositional drive and direction is ‘horizontal’*. 5) *rhythm is driven by the pulse and direction of the poem rather than fitting in to a predetermined metrical structure*.

This was a good place for me to start being very dogmatic in my experiments. The aspect of rhythm and my devices at first (the looper) caused problems very soon and it was not unproblematic to translate Andrew’s additive principle directly into composition. But at least I had some material to start with finding the solutions to my challenges in writing music and I wanted to commit time on figuring out a more organized, disciplined and methodological approach and most importantly *different* from what I’ve done before.

6. THE PROCESS AND THE IDEA

I’m walking over the busiest crossing in the world - the famous Shibuya crossing in Tokyo. I cross the street, approaching the train and metro station. The past few days I’ve been searching for sounds in temples in Kamakura, recording mostly silence but

also other sounds of the temples. I have my headphones over my two ears and the recording device in my pocket. And two small microphones taped with the bright orange tape on my two hands. Nobody really pays attention to my looks, even though I feel myself like inside of a space suit. I am thankful for the camera enthusiasm of the Japanese people. I deduce that's the reason why it seems that I have a free access to everywhere with my device – even the holiest temples. Japanese love cameras. I immediately love the Japanese people.

My initial purpose for this trip was to collect sounds from the Rinzai-Buddhist temples to broaden up the sound picture of my studio work so far. And to get closer understanding contextualizing the texts – koans - that I have been using for my artistic work.

I have so far recorded a vast amount of silence, wind, birds, some interesting reverbs and different objects in the temples. Temples are quiet, and it's very hard to get to sing in them. I also understand pretty fast that the access to the temples is very limited since the truly committed religious people couldn't be less concerned about my study at the Rhythmic Music Conservatory in Copenhagen.

While walking down towards the big crossing, some amount of frustration hits me; What am I actually doing here, with the idiotic recording device? Am I just a naïve first world privileged superior human being hunting after the classic “orient” experience, why use all this effort to a project that is so far out in the artistic- I should get a “real” job, why do I always need to put myself into these “travelling- alone -to strange-places” situations, maybe my intuition has finally failed me, the whole project is just a failure. What am I doing here? Alone?

These thoughts in my mind, on the busiest crossing in the world, it suddenly hits me; I hear the music. The train arriving on the station, the texture of the chattering sound of the language that I don't understand, the sudden breaks in the sound texture, they all create a stream of the music piece that is beyond emotions and beyond a subject or the “musical act”. All is music, I am music, I resonate with the existence through sound and my body. This makes meaning. After all.

My primary aim was to find the dialogue between myself (my tendencies, my musical background, and voice) with something from the outside of my own self, something that I don't have a inner relationship with but something that I can lean onto and reflect upon.

I saw the text and the field recordings as this kind of “outside entity” and as an indeterminate element. I felt that my musical choices so far had been too much going around in my own emotional circle, and I was getting tired of it. Tired of myself. Even saturated with my emotions to an extent that I didn't want to express those emotions anymore in a form of a song and my own “semi-poetic” text work. I was trying to push myself away from my characteristic style of writing (that is fully based on a feeling, an emotional flow, and inspiration) I've never really had any method and I always felt that I “should have” and “should know”.

6.1.1. John Cage

In this context, I started looking into **John Cage's** work and ideas about music more closely. I don't have the required knowledge for a thorough analysis of his work, but to contextualize my own work, I think it's important to refer to Cage as well. I wanted to draw mostly from his *ideas* of the compositional process.

John Cage is often considered as the big genius and a liberator of the “sound” and his attempt to overcome the power of “ego” in his work. His acceptance of “noise” especially resonated with me at this point: *“Wherever we are, what we hear is mostly noise. When we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating”* (John Cage, The future of music: Credo 1940). This and other “futuristic” statements are for sure revolutionary and have their influence on everybody after him. His close relationship to Buddhism was also something that I found “common” with my own interests. But his “giving up control” to remove the ego of the composer and the performer is also controversial and has been interpreted in various ways.

In this context it is important to mention that Cage was not in big favor towards improvisation: *“In fact, Cage was intent on differentiating his music from connections to the body, expressivity, and improvisation (which he connected together) and would*

not be pleased to have his music associated with sensuality or irrationality” (McMullen 2010, 2). Also, for me his ideas of indetermination don’t really follow the Buddhist ideas. The fact that he wanted to overcome the mind and the ego by creating something that would break it implies that the ego actually exists. In Buddhist teaching, it’s not possible to talk with the terms of ego- no ego, because this is already a dualistic division. Another point that is remarkable is that he actually removes the part of a “resonance” and interdependence from this idea of indetermination. And actually gives the “decision” of his music to “something bigger” to decide. While doing that, he already implies a theistic worldview of that “something bigger” exists.

As McMullen claims: *“According to Buddhism, the wish for a freestanding, independent individual is an impossible one. In the Buddhist Madhyamika teachings, a synonym for emptiness is interdependence.”* What Cage then again wanted some to believe and what he made himself well known, was his way of talking about Zen Buddhism and presenting himself almost as enlightened. However; *Cage’s desire to be free of “cause and effect,” or interaction and inter-subjectivity, is considered an absolute impossibility in the Buddhist tradition, until one attains complete Enlightenment*” (McMullen, 2010, 6.)

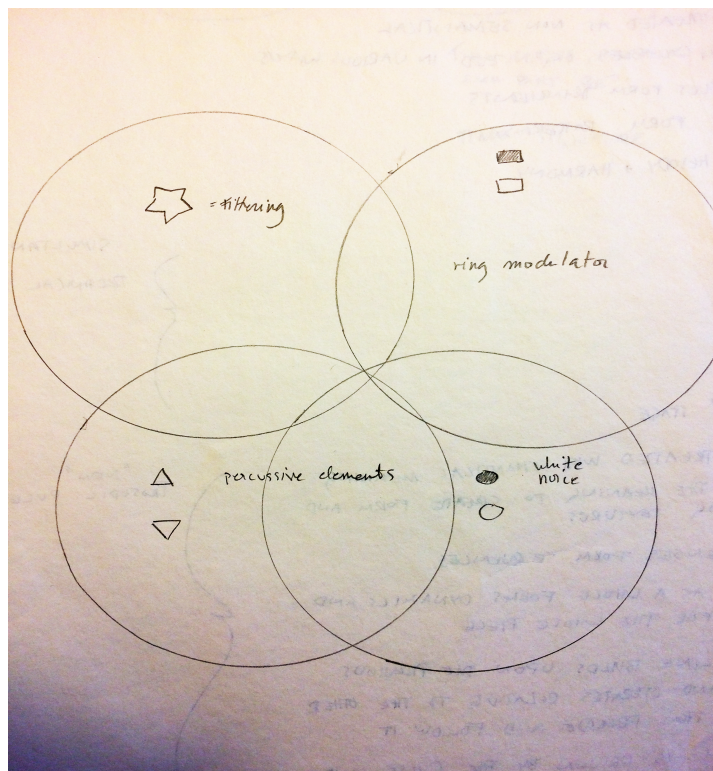
Anyhow, what I think brought me into new areas in my music, was to borrow the idea of chance operations and use the *koans* in that way, that the *koans* would purely control the direction and insight of the piece. In this way, I would actually get something else to my music than my emotions I thought.

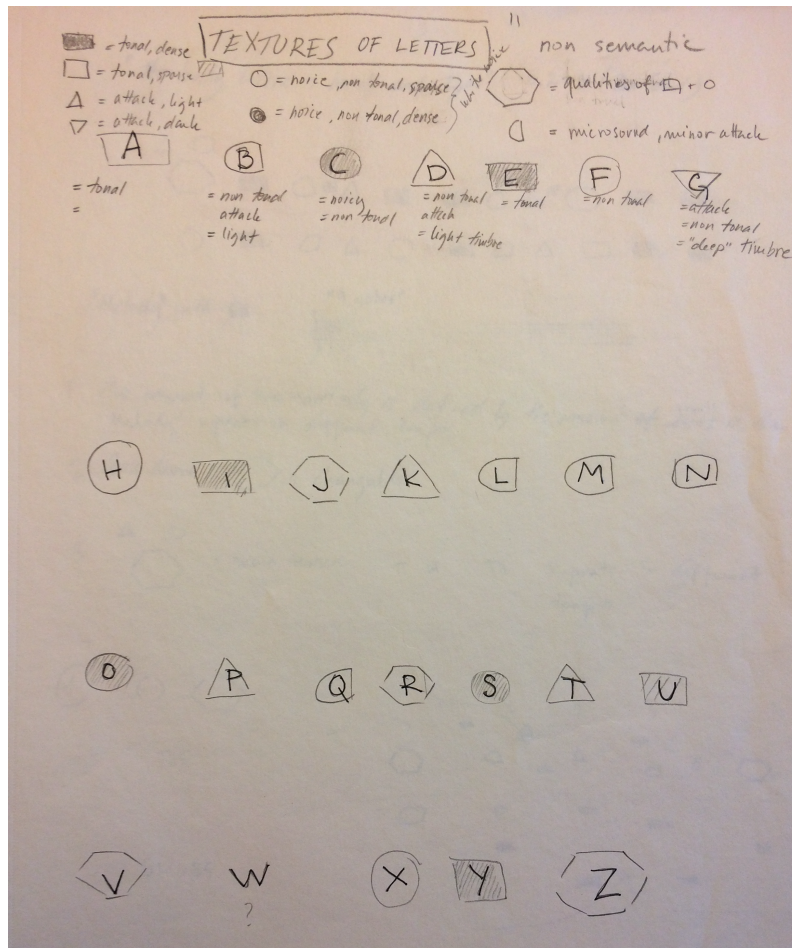
6.1.2. A-B-C to Sonority

My idea was to proceed with the compositions in four stages of using the text as a tool. Letter, Syllable, Word, Sentence and discover the micro- sounds and cosmos within the sounds of the words. I wanted to “granulate” the words and sounds into microscopic perspectives and start the process from the smallest form of sound onward.

In practice, I had very hard time first to figure out how to start, and accept the fact, that I really didn’t know what, or how to do this. My mind was very blank and I decided to start with the “ABC”. And therefore, I actually started out by making a map and

categorizing the letters of the English alphabet into groups based on their sound qualities:





After that, I took a *koan* after another and recorded pieces using only its letters in the specific order to form a composition. This exercise was fruitful in at least four ways:

- 1) I was not controlling or expressing *everything* that came out of me, but letting some part of the composition happen by chance.
- 2) It helped me to get a lot out of the simple the letters and their sonic qualities.
- 3) It forced me to stay longer periods of time in places where I didn't intuitively have stayed and when listening back it can be quite effective.
- 4) AND I felt an immense NEED TO INTERACT.

I took some composition lessons, that pushed me both into the direction of making a sketch of the composition first and then filling it out with sound and timing the different parts. I recorded my ideas instantly and tried to stick to my pre-constructed plan.

This was a very useful experiment, which very soon approved itself to be not very fruitful in letting the musical ideas flow. The stricter the plan was, the more I had temptation of breaking it. I anyhow tried sticking to the uncomfortable feeling a little longer. I omitted all the harmony and melody for a while and really concentrated on making music with sounds. (sound example “The Body Entire”). That opened up my sense for the micro-sounds and structure of the piece in other layers and dimensions than melody- harmony.

This way of working made me realize more and more that for me, at least how I perceive it at the moment, *music realizes itself in sound and in instant reactions and I want to have the door open to reacting these impulses with my instrument – my voice.* Therefore I ended up quite soon making more open compositions that are mostly based on dogmas and restrictions of limiting the choices in improvisations to a few sound or ideas instead of aiming strictly to stay with the preordered plan.

The texts worked for me a playground, I was chopping them into pieces, re-organizing and varying the speed and direction and order. How I organized them, varied. Sometimes omitting all the vocals, sometimes omitting all the consonants or the mixture of these. Also, only using one or two categories or “types” of sound was one exercise.

Now when I look at the struggle of writing strict pieces with letters, I can see that it was actually a very useful state and exercise. Maybe not in a way that I predicted, but more pushing the vocabulary and inspiration to go through very strict restrictions that automatically created an inner impulse of creating something new an opposite to the restriction itself. I have always struggled with writing my pieces on paper, I also gave up this task because of the electronic tools that were more direct and expressing the idea immediately and not through two interpretations- writing and reading.

Examples of the the thoughts and ideas for compositions:

EXPLORING METHODS FOR COMPOSING ⁷ SOLO VOICE

217 (Zen Sand)

the flaming tile broke through the solid layers of ice"




TIME
TEXTURE
FORM
MEANING

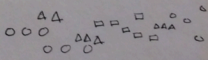
VOLUME
DEPTH
DISTANCE
DENSITY

7.217 (Zen Sand)

TIME
THE FLAMING TILE (descript.) 4 — (ADJECTIVES)
BROKE THROUGH (verb.) 2 ~~~~~ STILL
THE SOLID LAYERS OF ICE 7 — MOVEMENT
(descript.)

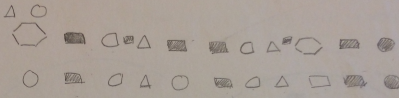
THE FLAMING TILE
BROKE THROUGH
THE SOLID LAYERS OF ICE

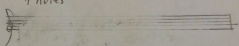
○ = FAT, FILLING SOUND, FULL 
□ = OPEN 
△ = SHORT, STACCATO, THIN  * see



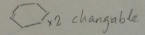
13


"the body entire is hands and eyes" 5.262 (Zen Sand)




"Melody" with  "9 notes"

1 The amount of time/melody is defined by the amount of ^{words} ~~notes~~ in the melody repeats in different tempos

2 Bass drone  1/2 changeable

3  = main textures T H TH Repeats in different tempos

THE 

SHIDES

6.1.2. Morton Feldman

In the variety of the exercises I made, the importance of intuition, instant reaction and my subjective response to the material were at stake. I was trying to hold myself totally away from these factors. What happened after a while, like I mentioned was the opposite. The need to react, and interact, but with a different listening experience. After trying to figure out the way to make pieces only with consonants, I went to I went to other extremes and created the piece “Glinding” (later named as *VII Abide*) using only vowel types in stacks of sound. Vowels, in their sonorous nature, often trigger the melody and consonants are more rhythmical or textural. The vowels piece “Glinding” was a total counter reaction for the experiments I had made so far.

While doing this and working out on stretching out the piece from its first version, and leaving out some more “expressive” Bulgarian style voices. I ended up looking more into Morton Feldman’s work and ideas. I am not in-depth familiar with all his work, but his ideas and the I am not interested in analyzing the scores into specific details right now, but the sonic experience and the ideas of extremes duration, repetitions which were not obvious and minimally changing patterns and rhythms that were floating and not predictable and his harmonies that linger and feel like shadows and the auditive experience from his music (eg. Rothko Chapel and Three Voices) is truly inspiring for me.)

His mission of “let the sounds be themselves” and working “without a method” should be perceived in the context on which he was operating in the 1950s. He was not interested in music being a “metaphor” for something else or a “vehicle” of representing something else than the music itself. This kind of reaction and refusal to the current systems of composition was the ground for his innovations.

He is often characterized as minimalists, but they were interested in getting away from emotion and expression. Feldman isn’t going to get away from the expression. He is trying to allow his subjective approach to the sound and I guess that’s where it somehow gets me. There has to be some of resonance or ground reason for reacting to the sound. Otherwise sound becomes “noise without a purpose.” And this can also have

a function as to provoke or question aesthetics or the “system” etc. My purpose *in music itself* is anyhow not to be political.

I think it’s this kind of “between categories” that really appeals to me in Feldmans music and the acceptance of some kind. Maybe it’s the acceptance to both, the sound and the subjective reaction to it some kind.

6.1.3. Pauline Oliveros

Pauline Oliveros is most well known from her conception that extended to a whole institute of “Deep Listening”. Pauline Oliveros herself describes Deep Listening as “listening in every possible way to everything possible to hear no matter what one is doing.” She also makes a sharp separation between listening and hearing. I guess my personal deep listening experience was in Japan, where I practically didn’t talk for 10 days but listened to my surroundings. The power of experience must have been colored with the psychological need to connect with something while being in a foreign cultural setting alone. But whatever the reasons, the experience of truly “waking up” to the sound of the surroundings at that point, made the point of its importance.

Comparing the two composers, John Cage and Pauline Oliveros, McMullen points out the contrasting elements in their work. “... *Oliveros, (by contrast to Cage,) harbors none of these fears of the body, interaction, or improvisation*”.

Also Cage’s statement of *sounds of the environment being more useful aesthetically than music.*” Is taken another, a slightly more reflective direction: *When you say the sounds of the environment are more useful than music-what is the music we are talking about, and how does it function in our lives? What are the sounds of the environment useful for? In my own perspective, I would say listening is useful. It can change one’s consciousness instantly.* “ (Mc Mullen, 2010)

Her “Deep Listening” ensemble, the whole institute and its purpose, and also her earlier electronic works are very inspiring and of course the work of voices, as well as early electronic works. (like “Sound Patterns 1961” and “I-IV” 1966).

6.2. Compositional Devices

All the way through, my ears have been leading my choices of equipment and how to use them. I respect the details very much and my direction or preference of sound is quite clear for me. That helps a lot in the workflow, even though my knowledge or skills on the electronic devices was pretty much zero when I started this project. I anyhow didn't want this to stop me from doing things, and I have had some very good help from Mads Emil Nielsen, Konrad Ullrich and Mike Sheridan of explaining and helping out very patiently to get me started.

The leading thought for me has been that I want to have my voice and vocal work as the basic element and then I modify and process the sounds until the desired sound is found.

General challenge for me working with the electronics has been the fact that it is very time-consuming to learn a new tool from scratch. The other fact is, that sometimes the "playing around" takes over too much and then I end up losing the reason why I am doing what I am doing. But as long as the electronics are working as a continuum of myself or new discoveries lead to something new, I consider it as positive development, *an accident - a new sound - inspiration - new vocal sound – new music.*

The final sound result is often non-recognizable from the first sound source, the voice, but still, the intention, the rhythm, intensity, the placement of the sound in the whole sound picture is somehow "embodied". I have also small amount of manipulated samples from the Japan "temple trip" that I use for breaking up or adding up to the vocal universe.

6.2.1. Looper and a reverb

The first experiments that I made within this study using the *koan* - texts as a playground were a simple boss dual track looper, and a T-Rex tonebug reverb pedal. I could use basically four parameters: 1) Dry 2) Reverb 3) Loop forward 4) Loop backward and of course all the effects that I make using only my voice. This set up was soon too narrow, because of the looping would be only used in two ways to get the desired effect; Either record a one long loop and react on that in a real-time, or make a

static loop and make another layer over that. I have from the start tried to avoid making clearly loop-based music were adding another element after another. That narrows down the element of time in a polyrhythmic sense and doesn't allow multiple time layers moving independently.

Quite soon I upgraded to a three-channel-looper, where the variation and multiple simultaneous time layers were possible and could run independently. Some weeks I worked only with this very simple set up but soon run into a problem that I had to deliver some music (to the school) and opened up the Ableton Live.

6.2.2. Ableton Live

Since I was a child I had a dream of having a “machine” that would be able to externalize the sounds in my head instantly. I always struggled with the writing of the scores accurately, so I felt I was getting closer to my kind of writing tools with Ableton. I could see my “scores” right on the screen and visualize them and also “write” them by singing them directly into the program.

While looking into different effects I had encountered that there were two tendencies or “schools” in the electronic world – the software and the hardware, at least that was the “vibe” I got when talking with different people.

I didn't have any previous experience, so I decided to try both and be open to what ever feels the best. The tendency and the fashion at the moment seem to lean on to the hardware and “no computer on the stage”- statement. Also, the visual programming language MaxMSP seemed like an interesting option, but “all is possible” was not really what I was looking for either.

Anyhow Ableton was the program I had on my computer so I decided to go for that. First I just recorded very simply using couple of tracks and making the effects mostly by vocals. Soon I anyhow discovered all the effects and the way of using them creatively by mixing them with each other, mixing my sounds together etc etc.. and learned to create the sounds that I was after.

I had an idea that after I had formulated and clarified the desired sound with Ableton in a studio-setting, I would be able to buy the hardware that I would use in a live-setting. After a while I anyhow decided that the computer should stay on the stage.

6.2.3. Red Panda experience and the problematic loop

On my “no computers on the stage” period, I bought this great pedal called Red Panda Particle granular delay/pitch shifting pedal. It chops your signal into small grains and then does various strange, trippy, robot things to it, using the techniques of granular synthesis in real time. Results range from radical pitch and delay modulation to shimmering repeats to stutter/glitch sounds.

I worked for some weeks with only this and my three-channel loop pedal. I was quite content with the result, but there was all the time one thing bothering me. The carefully detailed sounds that I had worked on with Ableton Live were not accessible in this setup and I couldn’t get away from the limitations of the loop world very easily.

I also wanted to be able to access rhythm or the concept of “time”, but not in a static loopy way. Music has the power to change – stretch and shorten – the sense of time. Time, in music, moves in another level than our normal linear “clock” time. It is challenging to make loops “organic” when the looper is there to basically loop very un-organically and the whole concept of time starts feeling very “flat” and un-humane. I wanted to find away to go around these challenges so I started looking into more devices.

6.2.4. Roland sp404sx

I slowly started to change my initial idea of having everything as a simple physical hardware and that everything should be created on the spot. There I got the idea of a sampler. There I could actually store some of the things I had prepared by Ableton and also bring the field recordings into a live setting. I would also benefit of the possibility of being able to play and sing simultaneously. Roland sp 404sx was my choice of a sampler because of the possibility of having the signal from the microphone to go directly in.

By starting to use samples, the music also got another dimension. I had two stations; the looper and the two effect pedals (Red Panda and the T-Rex reverb) and the sampler that I could play independently from those.

But I was still looking for something, but I didn't really know what until I bumped into the modular synth world almost by accident.

6.2.5. Morphogene Make Noise

Without knowing nothing about the modular synthesis I was thrilled by it from the start of when I got my hands on it, and heard what it can do. The sound really intrigues me and I started researching if and how the modular synthesis could work using it live with voice. I didn't encounter so many examples, but one who really caught my interest was Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe.

While traveling to New York in June 2017, I was so lucky to meet Robert in person by coincidence. He was working in a modular synth store and I could try out the different modules for the first time. He gave a good insight and I got an idea which ones I need to start with. I had to accept the time frame of this study and I have been limiting myself to get to know one module really well instead of "all at the same time". I can't explain better than the ones who have build it: "The Morphogene is a next- generation tape and micro sound music module that uses Reels, Splices and Genes to create new sounds from those that already exist. Search between the notes to find the unfound sounds.

It works and suits perfectly my notion of treating the words and texts of chopping them into pieces, the microscopic qualities and re-organizing and varying the speed and direction by not following the natural narrative. I can now also send the sound from Morphogene and the sampler back to Ableton and work more with the sound in that environment.

6.2.6. Mackie Mixer 1402VLZ4

Mackie 1402VLZ4 is a 14 channel mixer, that has quality preamps and also flexible possibilities of expanding the set up. I am using the mixer to control the volumes, to equalize and to orchestrate between different "stations".

6.3. Summary – the current set up.

Through these experiments I have transferred from my idea of using only hardware on stage and instantly made sound has changed. I have totally dropped the pedals Red Panda and reverb and the big boss looper.

I have three different “stations” Ableton Live, Morphogene (semimodular synth) module synth and a Roland sp404sx sampler. I can have a “dialogue” between these three “stations” and myself with the clean sounding microphone. This set up allows me having breaks from producing sound all the time with voice and it also allows bigger orchestrations and sound canvases in contrast to the minimalistic and intimate solo voice. I am lacking an optimal controller for now, and that will be the next investment, but I think it’s also nice to

But for now, I am using the computer as a computer that allows me also making impulsive and intuitive choices adding or removing effects on the flow. Of course, this could be more optimal by having a designed controller and selected sounds.

I am in constant search for the optimal devices to fulfill the musical visions. I love the feedback and the dialogue that the device can give. The outcome is sometimes unpredictable or surprising and it feeds the inspiration and impulses and the musical “flow”.

7. THE PRODUCT

The project is named “**SONORITY**”. *[In phonetics and phonology, a sonorant or resonant is a speech sound that is produced with continuous, non-turbulent airflow in the vocal tract; these are the manners of articulation that are most often voiced in the world's languages]*. I have recorded **one album** in a home studio and one “**live session**” for **about 90 minutes** of (non-edited) music. That will equal about two albums. The first recording was recorded and mixed by me and finally mixed together with John Fomsgaard.

The main question for me at the mixing point was the mix of the “natural” vocal sounds and the presence of some recognizable words and the more electronic, digital sounds

that the sound source was unrecognizable. After three or four rounds of mixing, I ended up removing a lot of the “human” sounds, since I couldn’t make the mix of sounds or words and the more manipulated sounds to be satisfactory. There is a lot of vocal sounds still left in the recording, but it got more and more “electronic” along the way.

The **live recording session** was recorded with John Fomsgaard in November 2017 and is waiting to get edited and mixed after this paper. Release album one in spring 2018.

The visual identity for the project is planned in co-operation with Tapani Toivanen who is making and the visuals for the concert, designing the album cover and providing visual material for the coming **web page**. **Live – video** from the final concert because of the good light and visual setting. Small video releases with visuals to be released separately.

8. THE CONCERT

The concert is the sum of my research, my compositional work and my present stage of technical skills at the moment. Music is improvised, but follows the discoveries, elements and themes from this study. I have chosen a *koan* to define the structure and the elements and therefore it works as a “chart”. It is a counter - force to my intuitive choices and brings me to new places during the improvisation.

Because of my set up on stage (computer and other devices) I am not as directly In (eye) contact with the audience as in an intimate acoustic setting that I’m more used to. That brings a new experience for me as a performer to be more like what it might be to be an “instrumentalist” away from all the attention and “being on the spot” all the time. That widens my personal musical “space” and I feel comfortable with that.

The computer is on the stage and it is part of my instrument. I have changed my perspective from “human versus technology” and that the musical experience would be less direct of embodied with the electronics. Vice versa, I think electronics and computer work a natural human extension for the embodied musical experience.

I also visualize the music a lot in the way of forms and different structures and space. That's why I hope that the visuals will "invite" the audience to the space and "style" of the music and help to receive the input. It also creates a common visual space that both the performer (me) and the receiver (the audience) will share. And closing the eyes is always an option if the auditive is getting distracted by the visual.

The first idea was that the visuals would follow the resonance of the human voice/electronic sounds and correspond to them causing a physical movement in the microscopic environment. However, such a physical set up in a live performance situation is not easily realizable in this time frame. So it was necessary to relax the original ideals of true interaction between live-audio and visuals for now. And to use prerecorded material of such physical set ups that could be triggered in the live performance. Now, the interaction between visuals and sound is controlled by a human operator (Tapani) instead of true physical interaction between sound and its visualization.

9. OUTRO

My aim has been to research, how to create music that is built fully on the conditions of voice and not vice versa, trying to imitate an instrument while improvising. The voice is the source of the sonic material and is complemented and in dialogue with the electronic sounds where voice becomes electric and electronics are embodied. Voice resonates between different layers; body-mind-society and metaphysics/ spirituality.

I also wanted to look into the axis of composition and improvisation. Before, I approached them as separate entities, now they have become one and I don't see a reason in separating them from each other anymore. Instant composition seems to be the optimal way of working for me at the moment.

Next state of this study is to transform the poetics of a sonic material of a human language and sounds to acoustic instruments. I will create maps of the categories of sounds derived from the vocals to the other instrumentalists. This will take place in the near future. Human sounds are an infinite source for sound-based composing and improvisation, and I want to continue and develop my future project in this way.

My personal background and challenges in music (and life), explain my choice of texts based on Zen Buddhism, to use in this project – *koans*. From Koans I have been searching both technical and rational help to create tools, but at the same time they represent something outside the dualistic mind. Music being a similar kind of “challenger” has long been a paradox in my music making, that I haven’t been able to tangle in satisfying way for myself.

Now I feel that I am in an interesting territory, learning something new every day. At the moment my aim or interest is not to feed people my personal narrative accompanied by instrumentalists, but to create a situation for people and myself to experience the sound and new sounds.

On a larger scale, I see a bigger mission of creating and developing in my teaching a new platform for vocalists and instrumentalists in co-operation with other artists to work more in the same “artistic space”. In the jazz / improv. environment I wish to be part of pushing away the ballast of the old socio-historical notions of jazz education to create a new space for vocals and vocalists.

I am on the constant move with the electronic setting and researching different tools to realize the music and feed the feedback loop. Although I am just taking the first steps at my electronic music making, I can already feel the freedom that the use of electronics is capable; Orchestrating possibilities and expanding the space as a vocalist, being able to create new, still non-existent sounds, customize my own sounds and other things that are way ahead of my comprehension at the moment.

This study for me is an infinite source of development going into various directions. I see the future of this project as co-operation with programmers, visual artists and musicians, piercing the different spheres in the society.

As the technology develops, it is both scary and fascinating. It seems that my child-time utopia of a “mind-reading machine” where a thought realizes itself in sound and picture is not far, not far at all. And the thirst and hunger for spiritual values and humanity in the current shuddering world is extensive. It might be that these two, at the end, reach

out to the same thing; - A fully embodied experience, where technology, humanity and spiritual experience realize themselves as one.

How ever, one thing is for sure, voice belongs to everybody and everybody has access to their own voice and body. While writing these last words, and inhaling and exhaling the air through my body,... I'm only at the beginning.

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