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An Artistic Development Project

Inner and Outer Spaces – an awareness to achieve flow?

Key words; Improvisation, Breathing, Presence in the moment, Awareness of sound and body, Awareness of acoustics.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the project is to explore how a musician can develop awareness of an inner space of sound and mind and how it affects the music. The music itself creates a tonal spatiality which is sounding in the outer space of the hall and continues to live in the acoustics of the room. The project addresses following questions:

**In what way is a player's sound affected by an increased awareness of the body's resonance?*

**What does affirmation mean for the projection of the sound?*

**How is the musical expression influenced by the musician's ability to be in a presence of mind?*

**Does modality mean something to reinforce musical presence and musical spatiality?*

With improvisation as the musical approach, methods used to investigate these questions have been following two main tracks;

**Meditation on sound and silence inspired by exercises in Suizen (Blowing Zen) developed by Buddhist monks in Japan.*

**Modality. The tonal limitations have consisted of a selection of modes from Western, Arabic and Indian music.*

With improvisation as the musical approach the method has consisted of a number of laboratory experiments in different kind of acoustics implemented during rehearsals, concerts, recordings and teaching.

In this work I argue that with an increased awareness of the body as an inner space of resonance, the wind player gets a better sound and clearer projection into the room. Furthermore, with a mindful presence, the musician appears to connect with a quality that makes the musical result more expressive. Finally, the use of tonal limitations with an approach of embracing the mode, reinforces the presence of mind and listening qualities of the musician and thus also the sounding music.

There are a number of artistic and pedagogical implications to gain from this:

The combination of conscious breathing and improvisation reinforces a sense of calmness and concentration in which both the heart and the brain are positively affected. This conclusion is supported by recent medical research.

Thus; an effortless approach in mind and body makes the practice itself pleasant!

Improvisation practice with modal limitations is simultaneously training creativity, skills and theory. This paper suggests that the use of the above-mentioned tools increases the likelihood for a musician to play in a state of flow.

***Musical example:** Presence and resonance. Suizen Exercise.

<https://filemaker-09.it.gu.se/artisten/detalj.php?id=1887>

Time (11.00) 12.45 - 16.15

In this example me and a group of students are doing a free improvised piece with focus on long notes, breathing, timbre and intonation inspired by Suizen. Standing in a semicircle round the audience and starting with one note each, then we gradually start sounding together.

***Musical example:** Modality.

<https://open.spotify.com/album/3DCTYnbz5xzRncgfAyJz8L?si=IOjCYl2yTOasG4b30h0TcA>

The album was recorded as a part of the Artistic Development Project "A Melodic Melange between Nordic Jazz and Arabic Maqam" 2012 -13. <https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/34595>

***Musical Example:** Acoustics, "Temple of Culture".

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZOJpuNVb6Y&feature=emb_logo

A solo performance on contrabass flute, alto and bass flutes in an empty water reservoir.

Student Quotes:

"By setting frames for the focus on presence and awareness of sound and breathing, I experienced that a curiosity to create and a desire to challenge oneself arose and that me and my fellow musicians became more responsive to each other's person and playing and the music that came from it had a completely different and deeper quality than the one previously played by the same musician."

Sara Aldén, (Swedish Singer)

"I felt that the work with sound and breathing gave a lot to the presence and ability to listen. Listening to the others in the group felt more natural, came automatically, after the exercises."

Jonas Liljeberg (Swedish Saxophonist)

"I feel I have learned more about the presence (presence) of the music and the use of the room. I also feel that I have come closer to my goal of being in contact with my own hearing. "

Mathias Aanundsen Hagen (Norwegian Saxophonist)

"I have started to develop having a sense for the direction of the sound...Exercises in presence in the moment... helps you not to think too much about yourself when playing is a great thing to have. It gives the music focus and clarity." Sami Nummela (Finnish Drummer)

"I learnt opening my ears again in many ways. For acoustics, for inner voices, for feedback...I must practice to make music by seeing the simplest technical exercises as music. I think this is something that was really great and has helped me a lot already."

Katrien Hermans, (Belgian Double bassist)

"One thing that is very important and useful to me is to listen, focus and embrace the room before I start playing. To feel more that the room will be some kind of foundation to stand on. I liked to think that I was playing with the room and that the acoustics are not just something that can be good or bad."

Joel Persson Haag, (Swedish Pianist)

<http://andershagberg.se/>

<https://www.gu.se/omuniversitetet/personal/?userId=xhandz&departmentId=086120>

