

FOLK SONG LAB - deconstruction, improvisation and flow

This is a presentation of the ideas behind and the findings so far in the ongoing project Folk Song Lab. The goal of this project is to explore new artistic expressions for folk song, thus revitalizing and renewing folk singing of today by means of collective improvisation, developed and explored by the artists in the project.

The research questions take its starting point in the ethnological performance-perspective, meaning that a folk song takes form only in the performance, viewing the song as a cognitive frame. *‘What was it she had carried in her memory? Not a text, but a ballad: a entity soluble in the mind, to be concretely realized at will in words and music.’ (Bronson, 1969).*

Thus, how can the cognitive framework of folk song be examined by collective improvisation in sessions? How can central dimensions in folk singing style, such as musical and lyric formulation in the moment evolve and be promoted through different improvisation models? *Singing, performing, composing are facets of the same act. [...] the moment of composition is the performance.’ (Albert Lord, Singer of Tales 1960)*

The project also aims at observing how the design of models for improvisation affects the participant experience of psychological flow, both on individual and on group level. How can *flow* be stimulated by designed improvisation models based on *flow* features such as *mimicry, play, risk, reorientation, feedback & real-life performance using improvisation. The models such as ‘shadow-singing’ ‘meandering’, ‘storyboard ballad’* are tested and evaluated by its creative usefulness.

The project is unique from the perspective of genre, gender, and instrument and is inter-disciplinary and the participants are beside project leader folk singer Susanne Rosenberg, three other professional folk singers and two neurological researchers. The project is supported by The Swedish Research Council in a three-year project.



Susanne Rosenberg
Royal College of Music, Stockholm, Sweden
susanne.rosenberg@kmh.se

Susanne Rosenberg, folk singer, professor and doctor of Music, has been a pioneer in both rediscovering the older Swedish style of folk singing, as well as using it in new artistic environments, involving cooperation with Sweden’s foremost contemporary composers and directors, and with her own internationally renowned groups; touring Europe, Asia and US several times. Rosenberg has been a leading voice in developing the folk singing environment in Sweden by innovative research in kulning (herding calls), folk song style, improvisation etc..

She is professor of folk singing at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm (RCM) where she has taken a vital part in developing the folk music department. In 2013 she finished her artistic doctoral studies - ‘Kurbits - ReBoot, Swedish traditional singing in new artistic context’. At the moment Rosenberg is leading an inter-disciplinary improvisation research project - ‘Folk Song Lab’ - granted by The Swedish Research Council.