

ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND DRAMA

DEEP SEA

Composing vocalist's journey.

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ABSTRACT

In this project I explore the roles of interpreting and improvising vocalist, poet/lyricist, composer, ensemble leader/conductor in three projects and performances in search for an honest expression. I also discuss and reflect upon vocal interpretation, vocal improvisation, and the relationship between composing, arranging and recomposing. I have worked on different versions of a song named *Deep sea*. In preparing the first version I wrote a poem and composed a lead sheet simultaneously for a Gothenburg based trio. In the second version I arranged the lead sheet to a bigger ensemble at Parma Jazz Frontiere Festival. In the third version I arranged the piece to a concert in the University of Gothenburg. All the versions were rehearsed, performed, documented on a video and reflected upon.

This study is inspired by phenomenology, words of Kaija Saariaho, Lauren Newton and the teaching of Anders Jormin. The findings of the study show that composing from a poem based on feelings, experience in conducting and singing simultaneously, rehearsing time, tempo, presence of an audience and knowing a piece by heart among other things can affect the vocalist's interpretation and improvisation. The study also shows that collective free improvisation can benefit and be a natural part to a composition, enhancing and deepening the interpretation of the piece.

Key words: lyricist/composer/vocalist, ensemble leader/conductor, vocal expression, vocal interpretation, vocal improvisation

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aesthetic values and musical self

I am a vocal artist, who combines composition, improvisation and writing poems. In my opinion it is ideal to experience truthfulness, acceptance and presence in creating art.

Throughout my studies and experiences with music, I have been developing a compositional language: I enjoy honest lyrics, rich melodies with jazz harmonies, odd meters and dynamic music. As I compose and find my way to interpret, I also find landscapes for vocal improvisation. My childhood with gospel, hip hop and R&B, youth with jazz, salsa and Brazilian music, early adulthood with free improvisation and composing, my love for nature and solitude, silence and the need to belong, my family, all the life experiences and feelings are hopefully heard in the outcome we call music. I try to listen to the truthful inner voice. I have experienced that sincerity and the need to feel truthful has been guiding my decisions throughout my life and musicianship, because otherwise I would suffer from the pretense.

Through my former education, the emphasis has been mainly on a chord and scale based improvisation. I've always felt it is more natural, beautiful and meaningful to sing horizontal melodic lines with colorful additional notes than rapid scales up and down. I've realized after intensive training periods, that it is not enough for me. It is not me, or my voice only.

For the past one and a half year I have been exploring sounds with extended technics and filming myself with my phone as I sang and explained how I made the new sounds. I have found these sounds through free improvisation and movement. I believe that improvising with textural sounds is useful in my compositions. Textural sounds are hard to notate in a traditional way, that is one reason why they are suited to be used as improvisational elements in a piece. The sounds can be also guided graphically or with written instruction in an otherwise traditionally notated piece. As examples of textural sounds in this context I can mention sounds created with inhale or exhale as a basis. Furthermore, I've been exploring syllables and inventing my imaginary language, and also

been using spit, water, teeth, tongue, nose, hands and lips. By doing this I have been developing an improvisational language that is completely my own. But in all of this I am trying also to be silent and to listen to the situation and the space.

Vocal improvisation might not be as fluent for example in traditional jazz improvisation as other instruments, yet it should be praised for it's unique qualities. If vocal improvisation is only mechanical practice from the books and copying others, it lacks it's finest qualities. According to my point of view, improvisation that moves me on a deep level is affected by life experiences, body's state, emotional state, performance situation, space and time, regardless of a genre.

Without honesty, it is impossible to meet and to feel closely connected. In order to have a truthful voice in a composition and improvisation, and in all art, you have to be present while creating. Trust, acceptance and presence comes from artist's knowledge of her artistic self. Music is bigger than our egos. If we are too occupied polishing our egos, aiming and worrying to master at everything everyone else is mastering, we will never be ourselves or see the person we are playing with. Then we will miss the change to meet in a deep level and deliver music that has capacity beyond the wisdom of words. A sound, vocal improvisation in specific, an expression of an emotion, is our birthright. So maybe we are our best teachers.

1.2 Purpose and questions

I take on and explore the roles of interpreting and improvising vocalist, poet/lyricist, composer, ensemble leader/conductor in three projects and performances in search for an honest expression. I also discuss and reflect upon vocal interpretation, vocal improvisation, and the relationship between composing, arranging and recomposing.

Can truthfulness be a source of inspiration for a lyricist, a composer, a vocal interpreter and a vocal improviser? What is honesty to me as an artist?

What is vocal interpretation and improvisation to me? What is the meaning of sincere interpretation

and honest emotions as a vocalist? What is a natural way to improvise with my voice? Can writing a poem/composing a piece affect my vocal interpretation and improvisation? Can an audience affect my vocal interpretation? What else affects the role and character of vocal improvisation?

As a composer how to create something new to myself and at the same time embrace the esthetics, knowledge and skills I have presently? How to write music where I am true to myself as a composer, a vocalist and an improviser?

How to arrange for players with different backgrounds? How to arrange so that as improvisers all involved feel like being themselves?

How does jazz composing meet free improvisation, modal improvisation and improvisation with changes? What is a natural and meaningful way to use vocal improvisation in *Deep sea*? Is there a successful way to combine collective free improvisation to *Deep sea*, so that the outcome feels organic and honest?

How does being active in multiple roles in the making of music affect my vocal interpretation and improvisation? Is it beneficial for a vocal performer and improviser to compose? Can a performing vocalist/lyricist/composer/conductor feel closely connected to the ensemble and to the audience?

My aim is to use improvisation as a natural element enhancing and enriching the written music, arranging space for creativity in the now moment. My aim as a vocal improviser is to find out what a natural way to improvise with my voice would be, so that the music feels organic.

As I composed, rehearsed and performed versions of the same piece, I was exploring what affected vocal interpretation and improvisation. I was interested to see if and how writing poem/lyrics, composing, arranging, rehearsing, conducting and performing would affect my vocal expression, interpretation and improvisation. My sincere wish was for the composition to meet improvisation in a dynamic, meaningful and an organic way.

1.3 Method

I experienced the composing, writing poem/lyrics, arranging, rehearsing, conducting, singing and

performing from a subjective and first person view. As I wrote the poem/lyrics, composed, sang melodies and improvised, I used my emotions and imagination as I desired to create music that was according to my musical taste. My musical taste is a result of my thoughts, memory, education, life experiences and experience in music both as a listener and a vocalist.

Once I had written the poem/lyrics, composed, rehearsed with the ensemble and performed I reflected on the process, and tried to see how my intentions came true. I saw myself in different roles and in connection to the piece, a rehearsal and a performance situation, space, co-musicians and an audience.

Each single version was affected not only by the experience it created, but also from my past experiences with music. As a lyricist, composer, ensemble leader/conductor, vocalist and an improviser I was active in multiple roles in the making of music.

I have focused separately on composing, rehearsing improvisation and interpretation of melodies. Composing has taken more and more of my time, also time off from practicing improvisation or interpretation. I have had an intuition that composing opens the ears to different aspects than focusing solely on improvisation or practicing written melodies. As a vocalist, I have noticed that my level of freedom to improvise rose as I focused on composing. Also, by rehearsing improvisation in my music, my improvisational skills in jazz harmony has developed faster than ever before.

I hoped that by staying with one piece, arranging it for bigger ensembles, performing it three times, I would develop a deep relation to the interpretation of the piece, would hear the improvisational possibilities the piece offers inwardly and would be able to express and reveal my feelings and musical thoughts deeper at the same time as the music would become more than me. I wished to dive deeper into the music by composing and arranging, by staying with the same piece as Kaija Saariaho describes in "Musiikissa, musiikista, musiikkiin", ("In music, from music, to music"), "This is probably one question that makes me compose, the search of the mystery of music, diving into the music. Big pieces tend to give it better possibility, because staying in the same material helps to make it deeper, so I at least imagine."

¹ Pekka Hako and Risto Nieminen, ed., Ammatti: säveltäjä (Helsinki: Like, 2006.), 129. (All quotes originally in

With composing and arranging space for interpretation and improvisation, I hoped to connect to this deeper level of being, finding out about my natural voice and improvisational language as a vocalist, as I continued to work with the same piece.

In this study it is not only important to compose, but to learn from composing and arranging and to find my way back to be the improviser I am also in the compositions, and by doing so letting the music breath and to be more than just the notes composed.

This study consists of three versions. A version, in this case, is a process that starts from composing/arranging a piece. Each version consists of composing and arranging, rehearsing, performing a piece of music, and reflecting after a performance as well as after watching a video of the performance later on.

I was an active participant as a poet/lyricist, a composer, a vocalist, an ensemble leader/conductor and a performer. The same piece (vocal melody and harmony) was composed, arranged and performed 3 times with different instrumentalists and ensemble sizes. The performances were documented on a video. I reflected the process shortly after each performance and more objectively in the spring 2017 as I looked at the videos and gathered knowledge of the experiences. The composing and performing process lasted from April 2016 to November 2017.

The two first videos are at the deposit of the author. I asked the third ensemble via group message if I could publish the video of the performance online and for academic purposes. I explained that the video could be published with names or anonymously. I also made very clear that they could say no to my question. In one hour after posing the question I had got written answers from all the musicians in the last performance, giving their permission to publish the video with their names.

I also had mail correspondence between three vocalists on the subject of vocal interpretation, a composer/arranger on the differences between composing, arranging and recomposing, and with a composer/cellist/improviser on the subject of musical parameters. All of them gave their permission to use their words publicly in this study. The Finnish speaking vocalists and the composer/arranger

also approved my translations.

Version 1

April 2016 writing lyrics and composing a lead sheet

May 2016 rehearsing and performing with trio in Gothenburg, Sweden

May 2016 reflecting the process

Version 2

September, October 2016 arranging and recomposing the piece for 10 person ensemble

November 2016 rehearing and performing in Parma, Italy

December 2016 reflecting the process

Version 3

November 2016 arranging the piece for different 10 person ensemble

November 2016 rehearsing and performing in Gothenburg, Sweden

December 2016 reflecting the process

Finishing the study

Spring 2017 reading books, discussing with vocalists and composer/arrangers,

reflecting the videos, finishing the study

1.4 Sources of inspiration

I am inspired by Woodruff Smith's short description of phenomenology in *Stanford Encyclopedia* of *Philosophy*. I use it as a way to focus to the versions, to create the conditions, to reflect in a subjective view, to find out something new for me, to connect information by connecting all that I

am to the versions: a mother, a poet, a composer, an arranger, a vocalist, an ensemble leader, a conductor, a student and a performer.

I had the privilege to meet Lauren Newton at International Association of Schools of Jazz (IASJ) meeting in Denmark already in 2013, where I was elected by my former school Metropolia University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki. Newton is a contemporary vocalist, composer, improviser, and a professor, for jazz vocals and free-improvised music at the University of Music in Lucerne. The week spent with her, having vocal lessons, seeing her sing, being encouraged by her as she listened our ensemble rehearsing and especially listening to her perform and jam made me more curious of the possibilities of voice and my own potential than ever before. Her extremely skilled and controlled singing, the variety of sounds, boldness and emotional depth had a huge impact on me. While I listened her improvise wildly was on the contrary a peaceful and a meaningful moment to me.

Since 2007 I had already been exploring and studying both jazz and free improvisation, getting lessons from a jazz singer Sanni Orasmaa and a free jazz drummer Mika Kallio. I had also been involved in improvisation collective Laponia Improvisations and a vocal improvisation and movement group Wild Song. However, listening to her improvise made me think that I was on a right place at a right time, on a right track, on a verge of something. Since then I have had contact with her and listened to her improvised performances online, especially in duo settings. Her variety of sounds and improvisations that seem carefully constructed and meaningful have been and still are a source of inspiration for me, as well as singers like Sidsel Endresen, Gretchen Parlato and a composer Maria Schneider.

The International Association of Schools of Jazz is founded by David Liebman. He is renowned american jazz saxophonist, educator and composer. In June 2010, he received a NEA Jazz Masters lifetime achievement award from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). During the week I had the honor of not only singing in rehearsals, jams, student concert, featuring in teacher's concert, hear these established and skilled musicians perform, but also to speak with them. The most important passing sentence that Liebman said as we picked him with the Finnish teachers Tomi Salesvuo and Ape Anttila: "The problem with young musicians nowadays is that they do a lot of different things and don't focus on something specific." This sentence summed up my thoughts and struggles, and gave me the courage to do bold choices, although it was a general thought of

² Conversation with David Liebman in June, 2013.

Liebman. In the same summer of 2013 I stopped singing cover music completely and allowed myself to focus only on the things I loved in music: improvisation and original music. I also switched from pedagogy line to a musician line to be able to apply as an exchange student to the University of Gothenburg. I was hungry to learn more of improvisation and composing. I got in as an exchange student to many schools. After the exchange year in Gothenburg I continued improvisation master studies. Now I am in a verge of graduating. Next autumn I will continue an after master program in Oslo in jazz composing.

It pays off to focus on something. In the end the only one stopping us is ourselves. The experience of a week of singing music I loved in IASJ: melodies with colorful jazz harmonies, rhythms inspired by jazz and world music, improvising with jazzy changes, modally and freely, singing with horns and performing in a good setting with nice, likeminded musicians from all over the world, Lauren Newton and David Liebman's words, made me hungry for more. I wished that I had focused even more on improvisation and composing, and then I did. IASJ provided me an inspiration and encouragement to go my own way all the way. It is a lesson I will not forget.

During my studies in the University of Gothenburg, Anders Jormin, a swedish bass player, composer, a professor at the University of Gothenburg and honorary doctorate at the Sibelius Academy has been my main subject teacher. He has been guiding my journey with finding my voice in improvisation and composition for the last 3 years. Moreover he has been a trusted and a valued person during the process of learning. I have grown hugely because of his encouragement, honesty, experience in music, wisdom and warmth.

On the lessons we have focused on vocal improvisation in my pieces, with chord changes, exploring a natural way to improvise, melodies that go beyond the bar lines, syllables and sounds that naturally suite my voice.

Getting advices to where to focus when composing a piece from the beginning till the end, as well as exploring the harmonic possibilities with as experienced person as he is has made me grow to the point of being able to write relatively fast and to arrange to large ensembles.

To compose and to improvise is to live through them or to compose and improvise of the life lived. To a performance affects much more than a composition or improvisational skills. Even though I could focus on the compositions and arrangements effects on vocal interpretation, and

improvisation, I am also welcoming the idea of what more can affect a composer's, poet/lyricist's, vocalist's, ensemble leader/conductor's interpretation and improvisation in a performance situation.

Kaija Saariaho writes, "Everything that affects me as a human being, affects also my music." and "Unlike many other young colleagues, who eagerly developed their own systems, I tried to find the right notes by listening the modes of my heart." Saariaho also writes, "A thought that is still central despite all the changes: the desire to travel both deeper and forward in my music, and to feel the tension that comes from traveling to two direction at the same time."

I also think that life can not be separated of music, a persona is active participant in creating art. I think the beauty of poems is the openness. When I start to compose a song based on a poem I have written, I listen to my feelings and intuition. The exploration of the "new", the pull to two directions comes from attaching to these deep emotions as well as wanting to explore something new to me via composing and arranging: blending fully notated to improvisation, trying out new patterns and textures for different instrumental settings, wanting to reveal the fragile and to express steadily and boldly, as well as trying out different approaches for voice.

In the words of the poet Theodor Roethke, "We learn by going there, where we must go." I am inspired by these words and use them to help me to trust my intuition to guide this journey.

³ Hako and Nieminen, ed., Ammatti: säveltäjä, 129.

⁴ Hako and Nieminen, ed., Ammatti: säveltäjä, 129.

⁵ Hako and Nieminen, ed., Ammatti: säveltäjä, 132.

⁶ Theodore Roethke, "The Waking," in *Words for the Wind: Poems of Theodore Roethke*, Performed by Theodore Roethke (Folkways Records, 1962).

2. IMPORTANT VALUES AND CONCEPTS

If we lock our intentions, base our actions solely on rational thinking, a childlike curiosity and with it creativity seems to vanish. But when we base our actions to accepting deep emotions, as well as what our true interests are, our background, rational thinking with all the knowledge and experience we have gathered becomes our great ally. Creativity is a paradox in itself, as Tommy Helsten describes in *Elämän paradoksit: saat sen mistä luovut*. ("Life's paradoxes: you get what you give up").

The deep wisdom and truths in life are often paradoxical. They seem absurd and contradictory. It seems as if life appears as a mystery, that doesn't respect facts, as an unconditional majesty, who will not let herself to be reigned.

When a certain truth appears as a paradox in life, apparent conflict is being created, impossibility. By this life shows, that truth can not be governed. The truth travels by it's own terms and doesn't flinch the irritation of reason, instead it appears sovereignly wrapped with opposites. Tension is born between the opposites and contradictions. With tensions life always creates something new. Perhaps the paradox is the outfit of truth, when it has decided to create something new.

Honesty, feeling of truthfulness is important to me in creating art. I am well aware that no-one can say what the absolute truth is, and that is not my intention or interest either. I realize how relative the aim of truthfulness is since there are as many truths as there are people. However, truthfulness or sincerity holds a certain wish and direction for my artistry. I must state that I have a longing to compose, perform and improvise in a way that feels truthful and meaningful to me. In this work I use honesty as a concept of following my intuition, personal taste derived from experience and knowledge, as well as listening to my inner feelings as I compose, arrange space for expression, perform and reflect. If I wish to compose something meaningful and sincere, I have to stay away from pretentious convincing, the aim to please and be accepted as a person through art. Art is not a mean to anything, art is what we already are, in my opinion. And when we just are and see what happens through creating naturally, our intuition and subconsciousness starts to work:

Cameron writes in Finnish translation of *The Artist's Way*, "Subconsciousness wants truth. It

⁷ Tommy Hellsten. Elämän paradoksit: saat sen mistä luovut. (Helsinki: Kirjapaja Oy, 2001), 11-12.

ceases to speak to a person, who wants something else." To me music and life, reality and dreams go hand in hand, and there isn't one without the other. Therefore, the origin of the composition will be text driven from everyday life's dreams and sorrow. And like life is a mixture of plans and surprises, I will compose and arrange space for interpretation and improvisation with the hope that the same spontaneity will take place in a concert situation.

In life, we learn from our and others mistakes, and the beauty of life comes not of perfection, but of acceptance and courage to be and show your true self. Keshavan Nair speaks of courage and honesty, "From courage you will receive boldness for risks, strength for compassion and wisdom for humbleness. Courage is the foundation of honesty."

To be creative, to compose or to improvise genuinely needs courage. To play together also needs compassion. An ensemble is working for a common goal. Without humbleness, we would hear only ourselves and loose contact to others. In a musical situation where interpretational or improvisational spontaneity has a big role, everyone affects everyone. In this work, a piece will also affect the improvisational situations: in a solo with chord changes or in a free improvisation part, by providing inspiration from where the piece has led, as well as providing a direction with the next written part.

I get inspired to write lyrics/poems to my close friends or relatives. I enjoy truthful being as a lyric based composer. On the other hand, what inspires me to compose are the feelings and thoughts I'd like to say, but don't find any other words than music, or music with the combination of abstract words.

Instead of these true feelings I could compose dreams, and in a way, I do. On the other hand, I compose about the ultimate reality. However, I feel, that the beauty and hope in life is in openness. With music you can state facts, question the facts, make statements you wouldn't have the courage to say in real life, dream and let the music speak deeper that our words or actions. Everything that has the possibility to stop us, makes us listen, not only the music and message, but to ourselves. Music to me is a way of handling life, search hidden answers and to embrace the reality.

Though my words are based on true feelings and everyday life, nature and hope, they are

⁸ Julia Cameron. Tie luovuuteen: henkinen polku syvempään luomiseen. (Helsinki: Like Kustannus Oy, 2012), 275.

⁹ Cameron, Tie luovuuteen: henkinen polku syvempään luomiseen, 203.

still abstract and give space for the listener's interpretation. One of the reasons, the wish for truthfulness, I want to compose from poems based on feelings, lies in the text by a philosopher Hellsten:

The painful questions rise from the direction, where our true life is and with it also our true identity. The questions rise from our depths, where we are completely true. There is no lie in our depth. There are our true feelings, our true needs and our true self.¹⁰

I hope to compose a piece that suites players with different backgrounds, arrange material to feel at ease yet focused, create individually suitable challenges to need courage and to keep up the interest. I wish to wrap these in a way that no-one has to be too focused on their written parts all the time, in order to be able to have compassion, communicate and to help a person in need of a support.

It is also important that the atmosphere of rehearsals is created so that there is the freedom to express, to play more than what is written if one feels or experiences an urge to do so. In order to create this atmosphere, I as a composer and the players need to communicate. The freedom to play more or less than what is written needs to be explained, and once a player gives his or her idea, I will accept it, if necessary for the music's sake, ask it to be repeated, guide it and most of all value it. It is important to me, that a player can affect the outcome of the composition, to me music is collective work.

¹⁰ Hellsten, Elämän paradoksit, 24.

3. A MUSICAL TOOLBOX

3.1 Vocal improvisation

It is a slow and lifelong process for a vocalist to develop in improvisation. Often, we rush from a piece to a piece, and from one scale to another. Only by realizing that there is no hurry in learning, we actually start to learn. (The same principle is true also for composing, in my mind.)

I think improvising vocalists benefit from a peaceful and accepting mindset. Instead of feeling a need for more skills in a performance situation, we should just be ourselves, with the skills and at the level we are at. When we accept our unique voices, sounds, dynamics and natural syllables, we are at ease with the situation. We should sing from the heart, with the life situation we are at and from the body, the shape it is, allowing, not forcing the notes. We should also consider the space, acoustic or electronic environment and use it to our benefit.

But even before singing any note, we should be at peace and to feel a sense of belonging to the otherwise instrumental ensemble setting, even in front of an audience. As a vocalist, I am aware of the responsibility of lyrics, but still I think that voice is part of the ensemble like any other instrument. I don't feel separated if I connect to the players through an eye contact, setting of a stage, orchestration and an active musical conversation. If I sometimes feel alone or nervous, I remind myself that there is no room for shame or critic, when we understand the true nature of improvisational situation as Lauren Newton described: "A moment is good as it is." This thought gives me the freedom to express.

So instead of needing something more, we should just appreciate our uniqueness as Stephen Nachmanovitch beautifully describes in *Spela fritt: improvisation i liv och konst*. ("Free play: improvisation in life and art"), "Spontaneous creativity comes from the depth of our being, where we are ourselves, pure and original. What we need to express is already in us, we are it, so the creative work doesn't consist of getting the expression out, but of removing the obstacles for this natural flow."¹²

¹¹ A private jam session discussion at IASJ Denmark 2013

¹² Stephen Nachmanovitch. Spela fritt: improvisation i liv och konst. (Göteborg: Bo Ejeby Förlag, 2010), 17.

Throughout my musicianship and studies, I have explored the possibilities of improvisation, that is, focused on jazz based scale improvisation, free improvisation and textural sounds with extended techniques that have been useful in contemporary music. I have had to face fears and limits, and find the power of trust. Via rehearsing almost anything is possible, when there is trust in the situation.

To me improvisation is based on certain limits and always has a target, regardless of the genre. These limits provide concentration and energy. In the spring 2014 Estonian pianist, improviser, electronic musician and composer *Taavi Kerikmae* told in an evening with Laponia Improvisation Collective, that: "Free improvisation is freedom to choose your own limits." ¹³

Sergio Catrillon, a Colombian composer, cellist, improviser and PhD Candidate at the University of Helsinki, taught *a laboratory of performance exploration and music creation in real time* for Laponia Improvisation Collective in the spring 2013. The course encompassed knowledge and experiences that came from free improvisation, music heuristics, and the process of composition through the performance. The course was not of "improvisation" even though the last had been a solid background in the development of the Laboratory. The course aimed to go beyond improvisation accomplishing important aspects of music performance and deep listening.¹⁴

In one of the experiments Castrillon wanted to encourage the students to create a piece in a situation using parameters. In the experiment the limits were related to register, rhythm, notes or scales, intensity or timber. In a later mail discussion, Castrillon explained, "Using parameters can present a dichotomy: a parameter as a musical idea to be developed or as a limit. However, using parameters or limits, can help us to define a structure (form) and to develop musical ideas within different features of sound (intensity, velocity, pitch and timbre)."¹⁵

I would like to enter a state with the composition, when I use parametric improvisation to create a form that connects to the form of the whole piece. In this study I don't focus on improvising chord based scale improvisation, that I have done already and I will give this part for another instrument. I wish to take part in collective free improvisation that connects to the piece.

¹³ Laponia Improvisations is a Helsinki based improvisation collective run by Pauli Lyytinen and Ville Vokkolainen.

¹⁴ According to Sergio Castrillon's description of the course.

¹⁵ E-mail discussion with Sergio Castrillon, April 2017.

3.2 Vocal interpretation

I have been told to be a great interpreter and that I really sing the text. But what is interpretation? And who can define what is good or bad interpretation? Is this not a matter of taste, as it often is in the case of music? As a composer, I think interpretation is everything that edits the written material. As a musician, I think that these edits can be melodic, dynamic, rhythmic, based on sounds, or even silence, all the musical gestures that modify what is being written for the instrument. As a vocalist, I think that these modifications should be based on feelings for the interpretation to be believable. But still the interpretation is a big word that I need to look at closer. Is it the mere feeling behind the melody and text, musical alterations, musical choices based on the composition or something more? What is too much interpretation, what is too little? I posed a question, "What is interpretation to you?" to interesting singers in different genres. I believe there is some common insight to interpretation regardless of the musical choices related to style (genre). These vocalists seem to sing and interpret in a sincere way. I got to know Titta Nevala and Erica Askolin 10 years ago as I started to study music. I got to know Anna recently at a jazz club Bellevue, in Gothenburg. I hope these vocalists help me to deepen and broaden my insights of vocal interpretation.

To Anna Lundqvist, a jazz vocalist and a composer, interpretation is: "Making your own version of and already existing song. Re-harmonizing it or singing it your own way. It is your personal take on things, music and voice." ¹⁶

To Titta Nevala, a singer, songwriter and producer, interpretation means:

When you perform you attach to the performance the feelings that the piece evoked in you. What does the piece speak of, do you know yet? What feelings does it evoke? What do you wan't to tell with your performance? Interpretation consists first of internalizing the piece, and then presenting your own views and ideas. The singer can for example interpret by using breaks, dynamic, eye contact, posture, facial expressions and gestures.

To interpretation affects: the space where you perform, light, set up of stage, and the

¹⁶ Message to the author from Anna Lundqvist, April 2017.

distance between the ensemble members and the distance between the ensemble and the audience. Also the atmosphere in the audience affects the singers interpretation, how does the singers body feel, and how has the day been. To a singers interpretational choices affects her natural tone and how she has got used to or likes to use her voice.¹⁷

Erica Askolin, a musical theatre artist and a voice coach describes improvisation:

The only thing that makes us and each cover different is interpretation, no one can be like you. When you build the piece from your feelings, the authentic you is heard from the performance/piece. It is hard to take off un-necessary layers around yourself, but it is easy to add them if you get hurt. As a singer it would be great to show the soul, the innermost you, and when you reveal it or glimpses of it (interpret), then the performance is real and draws you in creating a flow, as if you were telling the story to only one person..

Every listener hears the performance through their own feelings, and if the listener experiences that the performer is speaking of her, then the listener has courage to trust and with it empathize and give energy (tears, joy, applause, silence, excitement) back to the performer. And from these is build a loop of interaction that feeds both the performed and the listener.

Interpretation is in my opinion, the single most important tool of a singer and an actress. It means telling a story based on your own feelings, exactly as you are at the moment, exactly from your life circumstances. You have done the work of thinking in the rehearsals, and in the performance you base to where you are at: if you have just had a fight at home, it is seen, if you are in love, it is seen. You use the reality, the energy of it to your advantage and you transmit it to the piece.

Interpretation is in my opinion and based on Meisner technique I have been studying, based on being sincere and authentic human, inside the imaginary world that the piece creates. Also many technical issues resolve (can be absolutely easy) when you build a piece from interpretation and feelings. Technic is a tool box and if the problems can not be solved through feelings and moods, then you can use the tools to adjust the sound, support and resonance as long as they become so natural, that when you get to the right mood, also the technic that you wished for is a natural part of you.¹⁸

What is interesting is that I can easily identify myself with everyone. I think every time we sing a piece, we should have a personal approach as Lundqvist describes. We all have a unique voice, and

¹⁷ Message to the author from Titta Nevala, May 2017.

¹⁸ Message to the author from Erica Askolin, April 2017.

unique life experiences. I also agree that vocalist's natural tone and how she has got used to or likes to use her voice affects the interpretational choices, as Nevala wrote. What resonates much in me, to the need or wish of being sincere and feeling truthful is the description by the actress Askolin: "Interpretation is in my opinion, being sincere and authentic human, inside the imaginary world that the piece creates." She also described that interpretation is being true to your own feelings, not adding but revealing your true self. I guess that from the feelings and sincerity are drawn the choices we make related to sound, dynamic, rhythmic feel, and even postures on stage, eye contact etc. I have also experienced that feeling based singing can resolve technical issues, as Askolin also described. In my opinion there is freedom when we are honest. When there is no pretense, we are empowered and relaxed. When we are relaxed, and mean what we do, we can do more than we ever thought of being able to do. There is the trust in the moment.

It is also an interesting idea what Askolin described as a loop of interaction between the audience and the performer, that the sincerity serves the listener as far as being able to experience feelings while listening. And these sincere reactions of the audience gives energy back to the vocalist and the loop is ready.

I have often wondered why it is easier for me to sing in front of an audience, that I feel empowered by it, that I feel a connection, that I feel being heard, that I get smaller and that there seems to be almost a bridge of story between two persons. Whereas in a rehearsal with an ensemble I sometimes feel isolated and quite aware of myself. One reason could be, that with an audience I have someone who I can sing the lyrics to, someone who listens to the meanings. In rehearsals, the root of the problem can be about musical challenges, because the material is new and often the first rehearsals go just trying out new parts. Then by the second rehearsal I have practiced my part, and studied the improvisational landscape, and experience more freedom. However, often not on as deep level as with an audience. There is also often an issue of time in the rehearsals, many pieces to be rehearsed before a concert. The pressure and time awareness results to effective use of time, so effective that it sometimes takes off interpretational focus on each piece, moment, space and fine details on sound, dynamic and connection between the players. In these situations, I tend to do my parts as good as I can and not take more space of the musical landscape. On the other hand, there are ensembles, that I have felt completely secure, honest and bold singing and trying out things since the first rehearsal. Often these ensembles have used more time on playing together, and getting to know each other. Often these ensembles also have time to listen to the lyrics.

3.3 Composing for players with different backgrounds

I've often noticed strength and hesitation with performing written material. Often it is strictly played what is written without giving it any persona and life, or totally discarded what is written without being able to seam the interpretation and the piece as one united expression that serves the musical situation and the piece. This comes as a result of either fear and unfamiliarity of improvisation or playing tricky notated music. What passionates me is how to unite these worlds and offer peace and respect as a composer, so that the players from different musical backgrounds and working habits can work together as a unit, feeling that there is place and respect for their individual voices in the piece and rehearsals.

The choices around notation becomes a key factor: how to write clearly and conduct a player who has got used to playing mainly written material, how to write clearly but not too much and give space to improvise to a player with a passion for improvisation, and how to write enough but not too much for an instrument who needs certain things but also enjoys freedom to interpret such as most jazz drummers. When these things work, the music can be thrilling and serve something more important than a performance: equality, respect, individuality, meeting, honesty, acceptance, expression and unity. To me it is thrilling to write for people who wouldn't necessarily play together without someone who crosses the ordinary boundaries with composing.

3.4 Composing, arranging and recomposing

It is difficult to draw a line between composing and arranging. Usually, if the core element of a piece, for example the melody stays the same, every new material around it is arranging. But when do we step across the line between arranging and recomposing? I think that recomposing means not being as loyal to the main elements of the piece, the elements that you identify the piece of. Instead it is opening your mind to the present situation, using bits of the piece that inspire you, and developing a new piece around them. Often the melody and form doesn't stay the same.

I posed a question of the difference of arranging and recomposing to Rasmus Soini, an artistic director of Sointi Jazz Orchestra:

To arrange can mean small variations: different instrumentation, reharmonization, change in the rhythmic atmosphere, composing additional parts to the original piece. Variating the original piece so that the original piece is (easily) recognized – so to say at least part of it's "core" has remained.

To recompose someones (or even your own) original piece, the piece has been a stimulation and a source of inspiration to a new composition, which can contain glimpses of the original elements or be even completely unrecognizable. One might have borrowed harmony/melody/rhythm of the original, but the material built around it leads to another atmosphere and can make the piece unrecognizable to an outsider. In this case there can be very little, if at all material from the original piece.

Somebody might think that an arrangement made a piece sound exceptional, wonderful or it was a great version. When a piece has been recomposed, not even the original composer himself can necessarily recognize it to be a version of his own work – not to mention an outsider. Maybe it is not the purpose. Many recomposed versions can equally be perceived as new compositions – and the author is the only one who can define it.¹⁹

Since the line between composing and arranging, as well as arranging and recomposing are drawn on the surface of a water, that is constantly moving, I don't specify which method I am using. I know for sure that I will arrange, by trying to stay loyal to the melody and form. However if by broadening the form, writing new parts, changing melody and harmony at some point, would mean going slightly closer to recomposing, so be it. My focus is what elements I find that effect on vocal interpretation and improvisation, via writing poem/lyrics, composing, arranging, the time spent with them, leading the ensemble, conducting, rehearsing and performing.

¹⁹ Message to the author from a composer/arranger Rasmus Soini, May 2017.

4. DEEP SEA VERSION 1, A TRIO PERFORMANCE

4.1 Composing a lead sheet based on lyrics

Ferruccio Busoni write, "The mission of a creative artist is to make laws, not to follow them." ²⁰ By the end of the first year of improvisation master studies I had found my laws, or a method to compose that felt natural to me, a way that gave me the possibility to focus on certain musical parameters separately, using my taste, intuition and knowledge. I had accepted the fact that lyrics are very important to me, and made a decision to use the poems I write as a starting point for the compositions. Before writing *Deep sea* I had often written down the rhythm of the poem, and sometimes a graphic guideline of the spoken intonations to guide the melody. However, as I started to write the piece *Deep sea* I chose to let the poem and melody be formed simultaneously, to trust the feeling and the moment. A phrase by phrase the melody and the poem/lyrics formed into a song.

During the studies I had faced strong feelings due to traveling between two countries, the University in Gothenburg and my family's home in Helsinki, and at times I had missed my family terribly. My family had been extremely supportive, but I felt I needed to say something to my oldest daughter. I had seen that my absence had been hard for her. Writing these lyrics was my way of facing the situation, the emotions, and continuing a conversation with her in my quiet room. I think that there can be what ever problems in life, as long as there is openness, respect and love. Then there is always hope and a solution around the corner.

Deep sea

You can test me, pull me and stretch me. I will not let you go. You can tease me, silently blame me. But I will not let you go.

You can play hide and seek, all because I come and go.

²⁰ Cameron, Tie luovuuteen, 290.

But I will not let you go.

Because I am not like one of those, who don't dare to dive deep, to you.

I'd give my all to shelter you, to guard your hopes, and to heal your aching knees and breath life just trying to dry your tears, casting away your fears, and to hush you to sleep, when the sky weeps, out to sea, deep sea.

You can test me, you can test me, you can test my love.

Heidi Ilves 2016

To base a composition to an original poem/lyrics immediately creates a personal meaning and depth for the piece. This is my way of writing. Still using the poem, words of life I've lived, made me feel exposed and fragile. Then I thought that I have no other experience or source of inspiration than my real life as Anneli Arho describes in "Elävät säveltäjät ja kulttuurin kuvat", ("Alive composers and pictures of culture"), "I have to choose what I write about and how I tell it. Nothing else is ready except the life I've lived so far."²¹

I also used words and sentences that can be understood in various ways. The listener will interpret the lyrics through his own experiences as Arho also describes, "Where is the truth of the life we've lived? I wan't to tell the truths of my life myself, but only as much and how the telling pleases me. I say what I wan't to say, although my words can surely say something else." ²²

I let the intuitive mind, taste and the feelings guide many decisions in creating the piece: writing the lyrics, composing the melody from 12 tones, creating a form, and writing the lines for the ensemble. The only time I used my rational mind and knowledge based on education in the composing process was when I notated and presented myself the different chord options to suite the melody, although

²¹ Hako and Nieminen, ed., Ammatti: säveltäjä, 13.

²² Hako and Nieminen, ed., Ammatti: säveltäjä, 13.

the choice was made intuitively and according to my musical taste. In *The concise mastery* Robert Greene quotes Albert Einstein, "The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant." I enjoyed the process of composing at this early stage very much because of the freedom to rely on the intuition. I assumed that the bigger the piece gets, in problematic situations I will use the rational mind to solve the problem.

I chose to trust the intuition and my taste as guide in the making of the melody, giving more emphasis to notes with important words. For the first part I wrote a simple, repetitive and a slowly ascending melody motive in 7 quarter note time signature. I chose the melody notes with the idea that I have all the 12 notes at my disposal. My personal taste and longing for colorful melodies made me pick chords with melody being some additional note of the chord. I felt this was a more truthful way than pre-choosing and locking myself to a certain scale so early in the composing process. In the first part I chose "the character chords" minor 11 and major 9#11 to enhance the melody, and changed the chord after every second bar. So the song started to feel at ease and at balance regardless off the odd meter and the sorrowful lyrics.

I enjoy contradictions, dynamic, rhythmic, sound based, and the combination of composed and improvised passages. Therefore the melody of the chorus is more rapid and has bigger interval leaps than the first part. It goes in 11 meter and has more dense harmony changes. Between these contradictory parts I wanted to create a bridge, that is even calmer than the verse, giving hints of the coming time signature change with repetitive one note melody. My aim was for this quite simple and repetitive package to help the ensemble to enter to the more harmonically dense chorus, since the new rhythmical background is established. The bridge was also designed to offer a peaceful moment for the listeners, for the first part's lyrics to sink in and for the interpretational mode of the vocalist to slowly change from the pain and command to acceptance, to a realization that in the end the only thing the I in the lyrics can offer is love and hope.

As I wrote the lead sheet I didn't force the piece into any meters, but rather listened to the spaces of the phrases, and how the music breathed. Regardless of all the harmonic, melodic and especially

²³ Robert Greene, *The concise mastery* (London: Profile books Ltd, 2014), 189.

²⁴ Max Tabell, Jazzmusiikin harmonia (Helsinki: Gaudeamus Helsinki University Press, 2004), 122.

rhythmic complexity, I aimed for a peaceful and fresh flow, forward going music, almost like listening to a river, the layers of sounds, rhythmic melodies. During composing I often stepped away from the piano and listened to what I had done, If I could dance in peace, and feel a sense of fresh air I could continue to the next part. To me these odd meter grooves felt natural, interesting and exciting.

4.2 Rehearing with trio

During my studies I have been rehearsing regularly with Malmö based double bass player Daniel Purk and Estonian guitarist Merje Kägu. Material employed has been solely our own compositions. They are genuine players, wise, peaceful, honest, and encouraging hard workers. The trio is an exceptional group that consists of great players and has deep and sincere connection between the persons. This results to empathetic playing, where the music is number one, and the egos are down on the list. I feel that we have had fantastic atmosphere, that I can not take a credit for, because of all of our attitudes towards life, people and music. The atmosphere and communication in the rehearsals has been honest, respectful, accepting and grateful. We have also used a lot of time just being with each other, eating, walking and speaking.

In a small instrumental setting such as a trio, everyone has to take space and responsibility of the musical landscape, more than with bigger ensembles. We are very different as persons and as players and at the same time somehow so same. I believe that via presence, courage, trust and acceptance the richness of the group has become more than it's sum, and this is the essence of music.

While writing the lead sheet of *Deep sea* for the trio, I was interested of creating space for all of us to be ourselves. I finished the lead sheet of *Deep Sea* two weeks before the concert in May 2016. The group arranged the piece together, and focused on playing the form and melody with good time and sound.

In the rehearsals the trio was able to create an atmosphere where the individuals were themselves, yet had patience and courage to be silent. Something beautiful happened: nothing was

forced to happen. The trio no longer served individual purposes, though it consisted of strong individuals who knew their weaknesses and strengths. These strong individuals may have had fears, but more than acting based on the fears, they acted supporting each other and by doing so faced and overcame the fears. The musical interaction was beautiful, and the music was more than the composed melody and harmony. The music moved me deeply, and in order for this to happen, mere skills was not enough. There was relaxation, focus and emotional depth in the interpretation of the tricky piece.

4.3 Reflection after the performance

Photos by Stig-Magnus Thorsen







Merje Kägu, guitar

Daniel Purk, double bass

Heidi Ilves, voice

In the concert the focus was still on playing the theme with good timing and sound. I also played a bit of percussion at the same time as I sang in the concert. Many times vocalist leans on to the band, but I felt that in order for us to play this tricky, new piece, that would have needed more rehearsing time together. We had to lean on each other. We took a risk together.

When I spoke with the trio after the concert, we seemed to have a joint vision: the atmosphere was nice, there was feeling behind the playing. We all had made mistakes and it was obvious that the piece would have needed more work on our own and together.

When I thought about the performance of *Deep sea*, I was happy that we managed to play it. Still I couldn't help feeling more than in the other pieces of the concert, that in *Deep sea* I had to step up at times, to be the backbone of the piece, since I was the one who had known the piece longer than the others.

It is always more exciting to perform a piece for the first time. In some ways I was happy that I managed to sing the piece, and I felt like I meant every word. Still there was too much effort and too little rest and relax in the way I sang. There wasn't enough trust to the voice and to the moment. Maybe the mere responsibility and multi-tasking of singing, playing percussion, sight reading and performing the piece for the first time made me feel anxious. I felt the piece needed a lot of work for me to get to the state of improvisation. I realized that first you have to know the piece by heart, before anything natural starts to happen spontaneously. I wasn't yet in that state with the piece.

4.4 Reflection on the video of the performance

Months later I watch the video of the performance. My first impression is, that it is not as shaky as I had thought. Immediately after the performance I remembered mainly the mistakes and it affected my reflection. As I watch the video now, I see the mistakes in a bigger picture. I realize the reasons behind the mistakes, have sympathy for myself and think that we did a great job related to the complexity of the piece and the time we had to rehearse.

In the concert we had just played a ballad, that we had rehearsed and recorded earlier. The performance of it had a certain magic, it was very organic and soulful. Before introducing *Deep Sea* to the audience I wiped a corner of my eye. In the speak I said that I gave the piece to the players on the same week as the concert, so it really was even shorter rehearsing period than I remembered. There was a little organizing of stage before we could start to play since I needed another mic stand for the percussion. I wiped Daniels water bottle on the floor, and he whispered: "leave it". Instead of leaving it I joked with the audience: "I clean the stage and then we can start."

Sometimes it helps to break the ice with the audience, when you take contact and speak casually. But sometimes the jokes are told because you are nervous and can't stand the silence, you

feel insecure. I remember and see that I felt shaky with the piece.

Time affects everything. After the performance I thought that there was nothing relaxed in my singing. However now I see that the singing in A part was relaxed. The glances to the score took something away from the interpretation as well as playing the percussion. If I would do it now, I wouldn't play the percussion but focus on singing. But at the time it felt like a reasonable thing to do.

There was not much interpretation, melody alterations, sounds, and only a little dynamic changes that were more related to complex parts than the interpretation of the text. There wasn't any improvisation with voice. However I sang the melody, sang the text, though on a surface level I seemed to be performing with smile rather than opening up the inner feelings the text spoke about. I seemed to sing the melody strictly according to the note. Only melody alteration happened in the groovy part after the chorus, an r'n'b like embellishment. I didn't take space to improvise in this repetitive passage, although I now see that the piece would have benefitted from it. I was not secure enough, and didn't wan't to force the improvisation to a piece that I was not ready to improvise to. Sometimes less is more in the bigger picture.

I remember that my friend Nadja Häikiö-Itäsaari sat in the back of the audience. To focus to the lyrics seems to help to get back to the original feeling of writing the lyrics and composing the piece. I was not secure enough to look at many people in the eyes, but at some point in the chorus I remember that by looking straight in front I looked at my friends compassionate eyes, eyes that seemed to understand the pain behind the piece and eyes that seemed to enjoy the music regardless of the small mistakes. Her acceptance seemed to bring out courage to sing the text with more feeling.

Tempo has a great role for voice and horn players specifically. If the tempo is too fast, there is no time to breath deep. Then the phrases tend to get shorter and there is not a nice ending to long notes, when you try to steal place to breath instead of finishing for example long notes with a nice and relaxed vibrato. You are also not breathing deep and especially the high notes may suffer from a

lack of support.

I didn't realize straight after the performance that we had too fast tempo. I think the whole ensemble would have benefitted from a slower tempo. I assume that a slower tempo might have reduced the amount of effort and stress, the feeling of trying to manage to sing the piece. Slower tempo would have also given time for better support and deeper breath. Then the body would have been better suited to sing the piece with less stress in mind as well. Maybe then there might have been a little bit more interpretation and melodic variation.

5. DEEP SEA VERSION 2, AT PARMA JAZZ FRONTIERE FESTIVAL

5.1 From a lead sheet to a bigger piece

I felt the first part needed more movement, energy with more rapid changes. In the silence and tranquility of the night I got inspired to explore possible changes without changing the melody too much. I managed to give the part more life and movement, and ended up changing only little parts of the melody.

The instrumentation (voice, double bass, electric bass, two guitars, drums, piano, two trumpets, 2 alto saxophones and tenor saxophone) was set by the Parma Jazz Frontiere Festival, where I was selected to compose and perform by the improvisation department in Gothenburg. The players and composers came from music schools in Gothenburg, Copenhagen, Oslo, Stavanger and Parma. I noticed that the players were interested in either jazz improvisation, free improvisation or contemporary jazz composing. The students had focused on these subjects and were very skilled in their expertise.

I looked at the piece with my main teacher Anders Jormin. He suggested few chord alternatives. He also suggested for me to start from writing a bass line. Therefore I focused on writing the bass line for the whole form. I started to hear a groovy electric bass riff. At first I thought it was too groovy and riff based for the melody, but since I had decided to follow the honest proposals of my intuition I decided to keep it. I kept the same riff here and there throughout the piece developing it according to the harmony I had chosen. I also was considering the chords I had chosen as successions, and let myself go out if I felt like it. Even so I mainly enjoyed the colors I had carefully picked.

I also focused to the textures of the guitars and their rhythmical possibilities. I composed melodic lines or two voice harmonies for guitars to points when the piece needed another sound, had dynamic swift in the text or seemed to lack additional rhythmical texture to make the music dance under breathable melodies

The piano got mainly chords and space to interpret and to improvise. I wrote solo changes

²⁵ Parma Jazz Frontiere Festival, artistic director Roberto Bonati.

for the piano in tempo with an ensemble, and by itself in no tempo in a lydian mode, resulting in freedom, before the ensemble entered with the written material in B in tempo. I enjoy dynamic music with contrasts and space to improvise, here came the first natural place for improvisation.

For drums I focused on writing the necessary information without writing too much. As a vocalist I rely on drums and search for communication at all times. As a composer I wish the drums to mark certain hits to support other players' passages, but more than that I like to give the drums space for interpretation, individual freedom, and a possibility to communicate at the same time as he or she marks important places and conducts the dynamic form according to the composition's wishes and the moment. I had a session with my close friend and a drummer Joona Räsänen of how to write for drums, and what is specifically relevant.

Few years ago I had written a piece that I arranged spontaneously and performed together with horn players from Laponia Improvisation. I realized that there was something fascinating in the soundscape of horns and voice. I had also written for trumpet a lot. However, the only time I had actually written for many horns had been a year before. I hadn't given the process enough time, or trusted to my intuition, taste and knowledge. The end result had been a mixture of doubt, stress, lack of time, hurry, as well as some functioning parts and interesting new ideas with bending pitch and different tempos overlapping one another. A part with tempo, chords and a melody had functioned best with new players and a little rehearsing time. Something else, my new ideas, would have needed more time and familiarity with the players. Therefore, in this version, I wanted to use traditional ways of notation and time, study arranging from Timo Lehtovaara's *Sovitusopas*. ("*A guide for arranging*"), especially how to compose and notate for an electric bass, drums, guitars and horns²⁶ and more specifically for horns, guitars and a double bass from Ertugul Sevsay's *The Cambridge Guide to Orchestration* ²⁷, as well as staying true to my artistic voice and use the knowledge I have gained from my former education.

Till quite long the staves for the horns were empty. I noticed that I doubted if I could make the piece good and ready in time, and didn't want to write anything in that state of mind. I felt the monster of "correct jazz positions and movement" present and ended up writing some cautious long note lines that fit the chords, scales and moved nicely together. However the idea of correctness, positions and movement rules didn't inspire me to write at all. I also realized how problematic it was for me to write with my high expectations, as Kenny Werner writes in *Effortless Mastery*,

²⁶ Timo Lehtovaara, Sovitusopas. (Helsinki: Sulasol, 2014).

²⁷ Ertugul Sevsay, The Cambridge Guide to Orchestration. (New York: Cambridge University press, 2013).

"Nothing is so inhibiting as needing to write something brilliant." Only when I started to think about the advice I got from a composition teacher Peter Burman: "If you can sing it, it's right because you can hear it" I was able to listen to the silence and freed myself to work again, to write lines and thick harmonic positions that mainly fit and sometimes broke the harmony I had designed earlier. It was a matter of trusting my intuition, feelings and taste, as well as knowledge.

Knowledge is good, you need to know the options in order to choose what to use. We are individuals, what works for one, might not inspire another at all. I had already studied jazz harmony, as well as experienced and listened other styles of music. While composing the horns I rather listened to what came out naturally, the mixture of influences in my musical past and current interests. My love for jazz harmony was definitely one of the main elements. But it didn't come by forcing and stressing, only by listening and allowing.

Of the horns I started to write for trumpet, the highest horn first. It felt important to write the uttermost voices: bass, the lowest and trumpet, the highest. I purposely handled trumpet part as it's own contrapuntal melody, instead of writing a highest stemma of five note harmony according to the vocal melody. Then I added the second horn to the places I felt singing something more, and so it continued. At some points I even got inspired to use the close jazzy big band voicing, as well as thirds in a groovy transition, because I genuinely felt there was a place for a big united horn sound within the harmonic structure.

I had written a long piece, that had a lot of separately moving, rhythmical elements. I felt that the piece should cool down in the end, so I purposely undressed all the fancy and energetic elements. By repeating a sentence from the lyrics, and by adding one word to the end, I revealed the deepest meaning of the lyrics. The repetitive melodic phrase in a different atmosphere, slow and spacious, calming ground, revealed the motive behind the whole lyrics of the piece: "You can test me, you can test me, you can test my, love."

From a groovy, fast and full part, to this spacious and calm ending I wrote an improvisational bridge. I thought it would be a great part for a drum solo, and the composition would work as a stepping stone and the last part as a target for the solo, giving the improvised solo a form from full and loud to a spacious and cymbal based pianissimo. I considered the solo to last 1,5 minutes.

²⁸ Kenny Werner. Effortless Mastery. (New Albany: Jamey Aebersold Jazz, 1996), 74.

5.2 Rehearsing process

On the first evening of the festival period all the musicians arrived to a beautiful city of Parma. On the next day we started to rehearse. We had 9 pieces, that we rehearsed during the three long days. In the evening of the third day, was the concert. In every rehearsal we had maximum an hour per piece. We had had long rehearsals and everyone got tired at some point. Gladly we also enjoyed a long lunch and amazing Italian food.

My piece was the only odd meter piece, and in the first rehearsal I realized that some of the horn players were surprised and little bit stressed of the rhythmical difficulty of the piece. Different horns often started in different places, as well as had different rhythmical figures. I could have written the piece in 4 + 3 + 4 instead of time signature 11 quarter notes. But since the piece stayed either in 7 or 11 for long periods, and the melodies were airy, linear and over the bar lines, I hoped my notation would work. I had tried to avoid unnecessary tempo shifts to save time in the rehearsals. To reduce the stress and to have a quieter and softer, more united sound from the horns, I decided to rehearse and play the piece in a slower tempo, in parts. It seemed to help the horns.

In the second rehearsal one of the guitarist couldn't be there, so the one left had no-one to lean on to, since the guitars often had written figures that needed the both guitars to sound right. The horns together were still quite laud compared to other instruments. The two bass players played their parts very well already in the first rehearsal, they had seemingly studied the material earlier. The electric bass part was the trickiest and I had sent it one month earlier to the player asking if it would be possible to played at all. After all I write music for the players, and if a piece is too tricky, I should look into the mirror.

In the rehearsals I felt myself very occupied with conducting and singing the vocal part, focusing to make the ensemble rehearse the parts that needed rehearsing, and to make the dynamic form work. I didn't feel comfortable to use more time to rehearse a part for vocal improvisation. After rehearsing my piece, I also had eight new pieces to rehearse and many of them included vocal improvisation. I focused to my score and rehearsing the ensemble. I gave space for the piano and drums to improvise, although I had had in mind to try more collective improvisation in the solo parts.

The piano solo was in tempo with changes, moving to a rubato in a lydian mode and free improvisation. My idea was to move from there to B part in time. The pianist, Norvald Dahl, gave a

nice suggestion that after the lydian mode he could play through the B part using the chords and melody in rubato. I asked him to play it in a simple, considerate way and end up with two bars in tempo, so I could conduct the ensemble in.

The another improvisational transition was before the very last slow and soft part. I gave the second solo to a drummer Ivar Myrset Asheim, hoping him to use time and to gently guide the atmosphere to a continuous rhythm with different pitched cymbals.

Even in the last rehearsal, we were not able to play the piece through, but the parts started to work separately. I felt that I was able to encourage the ensemble and not to worry about the performance. I think it builded comfort for the players. I hoped that in the performance I would be able to focus on interpreting the text, since the rehearsing work had to be done.

5.3 Reflection after the performance

Photo by Eleonora Boccacci

Photo by Gianni Grossi





Norvald Dahl, piano
Enrico Degani, acoustic guitar
Ferdinand Bergström, elecric guitar
Katrien Hermans, double bass
Andrea Grossi, electric bass
Ivar Myrset Asheim, drums

Ndabenhle Zulu, trumpet Simen Kiil Halvorsen, trumpet Manuel Caliumi, alto saxophone Håkon Hagen Knudsen, alto saxophone Gabriele Fava, tenor saxophone Heidi Ilves, voice We played the second version of *Deep Sea* in the middle of the concert at Parma Jazz Frontiere Festival. To help the horns, I wanted to give a quite slow tempo. I ended up giving too slow tempo. I should have taken the time to sing the chorus in my mind or to use a metronome. Thankfully the drummer speed it up a bit.

I was very pleased to the piano solo part, especially when he played totally on his own, in no tempo. It gave a contrast and freshness to the piece with the different sound, rhythmic feel and volume. The pianist seemed to take his responsibility seriously. In the rehearsals he had already offered ideas, received ideas, and was focused and relaxed in the performance. His playing was sincere, therefore the improvisation seemed natural, organic and effortless.

I realized, that in the rehearsals I had been very focused on the ensemble and had sang quite mechanically, lacking expression, feeling and interpretation. However, the audience made me more focused to the lyrics. Again there was someone listening to the words I sang. I believe the sincerity in the lyrics, the feeling-based way of writing the lyrics in a moment, served the performance situation. I had meant what I had written, and now I let the audience to hear it, to see me and to hear my story.

In the performance situation happened so many things that took my concentration, especially the slow tempo, and guiding the ensemble. However, I was still able to mean what I sang and to direct it to the audience. I believe that this is because I had internalized the piece. I no longer needed the score or the lyrics, the music was in me. I felt I had a conversation with the audience.

It is very easy for a musician to be focused and to discuss the musical mistakes after a performance, or to say that playing was fun or I felt shy. However, since we do music with people to people, it is at least equally important to consider the level of connection between players and between the ensemble and the audience. We can do mistakes and we can feel insecure. By accepting these feelings and situations we can see further than ourself. When we don't pretend and free ourselves to be who we are, at the state we are, our fellow players can more likely be themselves too, including the audience. Being authentic you means accepting the presence. This seemed to be essential for the interpretation and connection with the ensemble.

5.4 Reflection on the video of the performance

I look at the video of the performance almost a half year later. I notice that the tempo is not only too slow, but double slower. There is a little hesitation in the tone quality here and there. I might assume that it would be quite easy to sing a melody in a slower tempo with decent sound, but the hesitation is heard in the pitch and use of registers. The piece seems disconnected and not supporting the melody or the text. I realize that the arrangement is designed for much faster tempo. I had remembered the drummer to speed up, but now I see that the piece would have benefitted of even bigger speed up.

The first time the piece seems to work perfectly with the whole ensemble is in the instrumental part between the verse and the chorus. In the chorus I faced the audience and started to live with my hands as well. Simultaneously the vocal tone, control of the vocal registers and the pitch got better. But still every time I conducted something and I turned away from the audience, the focus got away from telling the story.

In the chorus we always speed up in the rehearsals, now it served the music. As we entered the groovy part before the piano solo, the tempo was already more suitable for the piece. During the piano solo I had also time to cool down and to guide the horns to play a solo background. I enjoyed the freedom the pianist took when he played freely on his own, after a written fermata with the horns.

Looking at the video I must state that, in this performance, there seemed to be a risk to lack interpretation while conducting important parts of the piece and singing simultaneously. I also realize that there should have been as much practice as the ensemble needed with the piece, this time more than what we had. Otherwise the singer/conductor ends up focusing too much on guiding the ensemble through the piece.

So why did I want to conduct while singing? Since I sing material that I have composed, I think it is crucial to know how to conduct at least the basics. At it's best conducting provides possibilities to guide the dynamic of the ensemble and form in a more spontaneous way. Conducting is a powerful tool for the vocal interpretation. However the material must be internalized by the vocalist/conductor, and well rehearsed by the ensemble. Even then only the tricky transitions or specifics should be conducted, to maintain the connection to the story the vocalist is interpreting.

As we entered the last chorus the vocal tone sounded more convincing and the body language seemed more relaxed. I see that I was focusing on singing and not to guiding the horns. I realize that at a performance situation vocalist shouldn't be too focused on other's playing, because the only thing a vocalist can instantly affect is his or her own singing. And the more secure the vocalist is, the more it might help someone who is struggling with his part. On the other hand what happened as I relaxed too much, was that I lost a little focus on singing.

I was also standing next to the drums and horns, behind me were the two basses with their amplifiers. The electric guitar next to me didn't play chords, but written lines or two note patterns. What is crucial for the vocalist's pitch is to hear the chords from a piano or a guitar.

In the second solo transition the drummer played freely on his own before he gave a signal of a new tempo with repetitive cymbal hits. The sound was written to the score, but the idea of the rhythmic pattern came from the drummer. I am always very pleased when someone gives their own ideas to my piece, as a Finnish composer, an author and an improviser Eero Hämeenniemi describes in *Vapaa säveltäjä*. ("*A free composer*"), "To me instrumentalist or a vocalist is not someone who is performing my ideas without their own will, but a valued cooperation partner, whose musicality and imagination can with pleasure affect the final result of the music."²⁹

Watching the performance made me see that the last part seemed to be the most united. It is a simple, short, slow, spacious and meaningful part. We do some mistakes in the very end, and therefore I spontaneously repeat the last word one more time with more conviction. What is mistake when playing a written piece? I think in the end, it is an opportunity to create something new.

The applause of the audience, and the memory of the travel and meeting new people warms my heart. It makes me think of interpretation: it has nothing to do with the mistakes or the difficulty of the piece, but courage to open up and say something you mean. It doesn't have to be presented in a perfect manner, but the audience hears if you mean what you sing, if you have lived through the story of the lyrics. I am not so great actress that I could draw certain feelings I have had in my life and use them in a different situation the lyrics describe, but I am a human being with feelings that I can show as I compose from these feelings. This served greatly the situation when I faced the

²⁹ Eero Hämeenniemi. Vapaa säveltäjä. (Helsinki: Basaam Books, 2014), 321.

audience.

I was grateful when people came to listen, it was almost a full house. I didn't wan't to pretend or to focus on pretending to be the most skillful vocalist, since there is always a better one and music is more than presenting skills. I didn't wan't to waste my or the listeners time on a meaningless show. Instead I wanted to create a bridge of openness with the players and the audience. I believe it is true what Kevyn Lettau writes in *Vocal improvisation*, "Why are we doing any of this singing and music in the first place. Namely, to connect with people and to share a special part of ourselves and to do that our hearts must be open." 30

³⁰ Michele Weir, Vocal improvisation. (Advance Music, 2001), 206.

6. DEEP SEA VERSION 3, AT ETERNITY OF A MOMENT CONCERT

6.1 Arrangement

We performed the third version of *Deep sea* at the University of Gothenburg, less than a month after my trip to Parma. I was ready with the piece 3 weeks before the concert since I wanted to give the players time to read it. I had asked 2 guitarists, 5 horns players and a drummer to feature University's improvisation master concert, Eternity of a moment, so we could play the piece. I had added some lines to the instrumental bridge, and orchestrated it again. There was slightly different instrumentation with the horns, for example in Italy we didn't have a trombone player. I had wanted to be sure that the trombone part was playable, so I had ended up mixing the melodies of the three lowest horns, placing the trombone to the lowest or at some points more to the middle of the horns. I hadn't wanted to compose more, the piece felt ready. Instead I had planned to have more time to rehearse with the ensemble.

6.2 Rehearsing process

In the relation to the program of the whole concert, I had organized separate rehearsals for *Deep sea*. We had twice two hours rehearsal and on the concert day a one hour rehearsal. Even though everyone couldn't join every rehearsal, we still had double the rehearsing time compared to the second version.

I was relaxed in the rehearsals, because I knew what I had written, and what I wanted from the ensemble. Now I knew also my part by heart, and had practiced conducting and singing the piece simultaneously in Italy. I was able to focus to the needs of the ensemble and the piece while I was conducting and singing. My multiple roles started to feel natural to me. Also the atmosphere in the rehearsals was focused and the communication worked well. I had learned already in the previous version that it is beneficial for all to be straight and to let the instrument groups rehearse separately the tricky parts.

I was very lucky to get such players who had studied the material before the rehearsals and were giving their presence and honest expressions in the rehearsals. In the first two rehearsals my main focus was to rehearse the ensemble so well, that everyone would feel comfortable with the piece. I also asked if they needed me to conduct. It turned out that it was helpful and needed in some transitions and tricky places. Having this conversation also made my double roles of vocalist and conductor easier for me, since I knew where they needed me to conduct. Being aware of this freed my focus to singing. However I didn't feel very connected to the text in the first two rehearsals. But singing with dynamics, different sounds and improvising in the groovy bridge started to feel natural.

I felt the solution of giving the pianist Anders Gledisch guided improvisational space was great, because it served the piece's atmosphere, and dynamic of the form. It was like fresh rain and gave a perfect contrast to the piece that had a lot of rhythmical elements. I also wanted to keep the improvised transition, Joona Räsänen's drum solo before the end.

The evening before our general rehearsal and the concert I got a suggestion from the drummer Räsänen to perform the drum solo with voice and drums duo. I didn't say no, but I also didn't have time to prepare for it. Most of the times when I improvise in a piece, I have composed a landscape or created a concept that I know quite well and can relate to. To improvise as a duo with voice and drums freely felt surprising, because my focus had been on the composition, arrangement and the ensemble. However since I am a lover of freedom, improvisation, sound exploration and sincerity I thought I will definitely try it. I thought that there is nothing to loose. On the other hand, I felt that soloing freely as duo on a short notice meant taking a risk, I could ruin the carefully rehearsed and composed piece. But I had trust in improvising with the drummer Räsänen. I also believed that a moment is good as it is, like I quoted Lauren Newton earlier. So I decided to do it with an open mind, and it worked fine in the rehearsals.

While improvising I spontaneously chose to use some sentences of the lyrics, together with the imaginary language, as I mixed melodies with textural sounds. I got immediate feedback from the ensemble that it deepened and revealed more of the lyrics. I also said to the ensemble, that if anyone in the group feels like joining, they are very welcome, but only after I've established something repetitive as a cue to join. I also said that whoever joins, stays and no more people should enter. I was very happy that John Nilsson, the tenor saxophonist stepped in with great

presence, sound and energy.

6.3 Reflection after the performance

Photos by Stig-Magnus Thorsen





Anders Gledisch, piano Merje Kägu, electric guitar Simon Brinck, electric guitar Katrien Hermans, double bass Daniel Purk, electric bass Joona Räsänen, drums August Eriksson, alto saxophone Gustav Davidsson, tenor trombone Vegard Holum, trumpet Mathias Hagen, tenor saxophone John Nilsson, tenor saxophone Heidi Ilves, voice

My fellow player Katrien Hermans said, that after *Deep sea* the audience woke up to give a big applause for the first time and both the band and audience was more present from there on. I think that one reasons for this feedback, a loop of interaction as Askolin described earlier, is that I spoke a few words of the piece to the audience before we started to play. I told them of what and why I wrote the piece. I think that it added depth to the whole groups playing, it became obvious that *Deep sea* was not just a tricky piece but there was a real story, need to express, feelings and dreams behind it.

Although I was the composer and conducted certain places in the performance, I felt being more a singer who expresses a certain story and feelings. I felt as if my daughter who I wrote the piece for was there, in the back of the audience, the feeling was so intense. I felt very supported by the ensemble and because of the sincerity close to the audience. I enjoyed listening to the ensemble that

added so much to the composition. The ensemble played with great dynamics and sounds, adding their personal flavors. I gladly let the players use their intuition and imagination to play more or not to play what is written.

In the drum and vocal improvisation I decided to start with a sentence of the lyrics: "I'd do my all to shelter you, so you can test me." I developed the melodic improvisation to a repetitive phrase in no tempo. Then the saxophone entered. I had said to the saxophone player that don't be afraid to step on my toes and take over if you feel like it. Knowing myself I had explained to him that I will just get excited if he lets himself fly and play freely with full energy. When someone gives more, I tend to give more and usually the music grows to a good direction. I felt the improvisation was collective and resembled the discussions and feelings I've had with my daughter. The solo made sense for the piece and again revealed more depth and openness.

The beauty of the improvisational moment made me think about improvisation in a relation with Ivar Grydeland's words in "Ensemble & Ensemble of Me".

When my musical material bleeds into others' musical material It is when something is on the brink of becoming something else

It is deciding to let it bleed.³¹

Well balanced collective improvisation is a result of strong individuals. In musical situations we always have the change to be silent or to enter. But when we enter, we should always give the true flavor, color and story we carry at that moment. Then the true seeing, meeting, accepting and the empowerment and empathy of music can take place. There is honesty in the moment.

Fades that sound like uncertainty sucks.

If it is an obvious consequence of someone not daring to make a statement.

Most often applicable to individual fades, but it sounds even worse if it is collective³²

In order to say something, one can not leave a half said sentence hanging in the air. Instead one needs to say a sentence till the end to reveal the meaning. But if there is no-one who is first silent

³¹ Ivar Grydeland, date of access 1.4.2017 "Ensemble & Ensemble of Me" (PhD diss., Norwegian Academy of Music, 2015). http://www.ivargrydeland.com/artisticresearch/node/7

³² Grydeland, "Ensemble & Ensemble of Me"

and listens before answering, what is the point of revealing thoughts, experiences and emotions. The beauty of words, the beauty of sounds, the beauty of life, the beauty of music, is in the silence, to be and to notice something sincere.

The performance felt like a personal success as a poet/lyricist, composer, arranger, interpreter, improviser and vocalist, because it felt truthful. I was the most happy about, not that we played the piece mainly correct, with good groove, variety of sounds and dynamics, but because I felt the piece was performed, interpreted and improvised with the same energy and feeling as I started to write the text and melody in my quiet room. As I sang I felt the same feelings and more.

6.4 Reflection on the video of the performance

Watching the video makes me immediately see, that the moment the music began I started do dance. My body seemed relaxed and actively listening to the music. My hands moved softly, dancing, almost like wanting to conduct from the first legato from the guitars. When I started to sing, the sound was warm from the first note and I had an eye contact with the audience. The ensemble seemed focused and relaxed. I remember that I had no stress if we would manage to perform the piece. I also had already experienced conducting and singing the piece simultaneously in Parma. Now that proved to be a great benefit.

A friend and a trumpet player Vegard Holum, came to play with us from Norway. He led the horns beautifully, with a warm and dynamic sound, with firm yet gentle gestures. The horns sounded warm and united. Also the drummer Räsänen marked all the important written places as well as kept a good time and forward going time feel. The dynamic changes of the ensemble, and changes between still and groovy moments seemed to make sense with the lyrics. Finally the piece sounded itself, although a performance is never an error free. At some point some of the horns lost their place and I was able to spontaneously show the beginning of the next bar, as well as guide their volume lower to let the guitars to be heard, without loosing the focus on singing the melody and lyrics.

The only time I remember feeling nervous was at some point of the piano solo. Maybe it was

because all of a sudden I had time to wait and do nothing, and while waiting lost the connection to the text. Or maybe it was because we had changed the meter into six eighth notes. That suited the piece, giving it a cool down, but it was not according to the original style or the groove of the piece. However, I thought it was better for the soloist and accompanists to feel natural and connected to the part. The communication of the trio worked fluently in the solo. The backing horns worked well in the six eighth notes meter too, after little instant arranging in the rehearsals with a white pen and a marker. By watching myself from a distance I don't see any signs of nervousness. Maybe I had been overwhelmed by the intensity of the emotions behind the interpretation and realized during the piano solo that we were actually performing.

In my opinion the most beautiful part in the lovely piano solo was the rubato transition in a lydian mode, where I had written a fermata and conducted the horns to overlap the pianist's beautiful arpeggios in the mode in rubato. There was enjoyment of the color and space. The music breathed as the pianist continued to develop arpeggios with the chords towards time.

As the piece continued and I conducted the horns in, my determined conducting gestures prove that the focus was back. The piece and I started to dance again. There was peace, trust and unspoken words behind the music. As we proceeded to the chorus, and faced more difficult passages, both the horns and my voice struggled a little, but continued with a great focus. In the groovy bridge I danced and improvised long lines before entering the collective drums, voice and tenor saxophone solo.

I notice and remember that I was happy and excited to improvise freely with the drummer, I also hear it from the singing volume. There was not much room to raise it. I started with repeating a phrase: "I would do my all to shelter you." I was playing with simple melodies and folk music like register breaks in the end of the phrases that I had sang with a natural voice. I modulated a repetitive phrase a half step up and lowered the volume, to let the saxophone player enter. I continued with repeating "My all", developing the melody with more movement and random leaps, before exploring rapid and high spoken tones with the imaginary language.

I was exchanging the ideas and sounds with the saxophone player, moving to lower tones and sounds while repeating: "I would do my all, my all, my all, so you can tease me." Before the climax, we raised the volume and I targeted some long notes as I mixed words and imaginary language with the sounds. Also the drums started to play more, and I sang some slides from high notes downwards. I had never thought of being able to sing this high notes with as much volume and healthy resonance place. The end seemed to come quite fast, and I held the soft textural ending

a little bit longer. The drums continued the conversation till the end, until he marked the cymbal hits to cue the last slow part of the piece.

It is amazing how two persons who have never played together can try something for a short while before the concert, and improvise together with great energy before an audience. I am very happy that John Nilsson joined the ensemble and the collective improvisation. I guess the matter of my vocal improvisation isn't only of composing the right background, but also about having a sense of collective freedom, connection and meaning built from the text and the composition.

After the improvisation it felt really natural to have the calming part in the end. The part sounded like I had imagined while composing, like someone returning home. With the improvisation and the depth in the interpretation, the eye contact, the freedom of movement in my body, the connection to the players, I felt home on the stage.

7. ANALYZING THE VERSIONS

I focus on what effected on vocal expression, interpretation and improvisation. I don't present the thoughts as facts. I rather show what I found and realized about myself as a vocalist through reflecting upon the versions:

7.1 Version 1

Personal lyrics – adds depth to the interpretation.

Instrumental parts without lyrics – allows the vocalist to experience emotions, have realizations of the text and gradually change the emotion behind the interpretation.

A lack of rehearsing time with the ensemble – lowers the level of interpretational focus, presence, sound, dynamic variety and isolates a singer. Isolated singer might focus strictly to what is written or to try to carry too much responsibility, to have an over emphasized role in an ensemble. It can also prevent vocalist to feel comfortable and secure in front of an audience, and to joke nervously and unnecessarily.

An ensemble that has used time getting to know each other both personally and musically – enables sincere and honest communication as well as boldness to improvise with the voice.

Multiple roles that are not yet mastered while singing simultaneously – makes the vocalist feel anxious, having too much effort and too little relax and rest in singing.

A vocalist not knowing a complex piece by heart – results to no improvisational spontaneity with voice.

A critical mind after a concert – makes the mistakes feel bigger, the focus is mainly on the lacks.

Critical thinking after more time has passed – makes the performance seem better than thought earlier. The vocalist sees mistakes in a bigger picture, reasons that led to them, has compassion, learns from the mistakes and grows musically.

A too complex vocal part – results to a lack of interpretation, melody alterations, sound variety and dynamic changes. Instead the vocalist performs with a mask like smile, not opening up the inner feelings the text speaks about. There is also not much eye contact with the audience.

A close friend in the audience – gives a vocalist the courage to sing and interpret the lyrics with more feeling.

Focusing on lyrics – evokes the original feelings of writing the lyrics and composing the piece.

A too fast tempo – results to a lack of time to breath deep between the phrases, making the ends of the phrases shorter and unfinished. It also results the vocalist not breathing deep, and lacking support especially in the high notes.

A stress of managing to sing a piece – leads to very little emotional expression and interpretation.

7.2 Version 2

A part with clear notation, with enough but not too much written material – gives a security to express and freedom to interpret.

Intensive training days, with many pieces and very long rehearsals – makes the voice tired, at some point the vocalist looses a focus. On the little free time the vocalist needs to be silent, rest, drink water and take care of the body, while the rest of the ensemble may enjoy free time together.

Too little time to rehearse a complex piece, written by a vocalist, with an ensemble – makes the vocalist focus on conducting the piece and rehearsing the ensemble, ending up singing quite mechanically, lacking expression, feeling and interpretation.

Too many pieces to rehearse in a rehearsal – the vocalist might not feel comfortable using more time to rehearse a part for vocal improvisation in her piece, especially if there are vocal solos in the other pieces, and might end up giving the solos of her piece to others.

A too slow tempo in a performance – lowers the level of vocalists concentration. A hesitation is heard in the tone, pitch and the use of registers. The piece seems disconnected and not supporting the melody or the text.

A vocalist guiding the ensemble for the first time – lowers the level of concentration to vocal expression.

An audience – makes the vocalist focus to the lyrics, to mean what she says while expressing a poem based on feelings.

Basing everything to sincerity – the sound, the notes, the textures, the lyrics, the melody and the postures gets derived from a deeper place. Then music can touch the deep emotions, raise awareness and lift the spirit.

A vocalist knowing a piece by heart, having internalized the piece – means not only being able to mean what the vocalist sings about, but to direct it to the audience. Also the music, especially harmony, is heard through an inner ear, not waiting to hear it from the players. Then there is peace and energy in the actions and musical choices of the vocalist.

A vocalist accepting the feelings of insecurity and mistakes in a performance situation – allows the vocalist to be herself. By being the sincere, authentic person, the vocalist caffects the ensemble and the audience positively. A loop of interaction is created.

A vocalist facing the audience and having relaxed and free body language – makes a vocal tone, control of registers and pitch better.

A vocalist turning away from the audience while conducting – makes the focus go away from telling the story.

An instrumental solo – enables a vocalist to cool down and to focus on conducting.

A vocalist conducting important parts of the piece and singing simultaneously, when there hasn't been enough practice with the ensemble – makes the vocalist lack expression.

A vocalist conducting securely while singing simultaneously – enables a variety of dynamics with the ensemble and arranges space for the vocal interpretation. The music and vocalist's expression is in connection with the story.

A vocalist focusing solely on singing – makes the body relaxed and the vocal tone convincing.

A vocalist having too relaxed body – makes the vocalist loose focus, support and pitch.

Stage placement: a vocalist close to the horns, bass and drums – results occasionally to a bad pitch.

Stage placement: a vocalist close to a piano and guitars – means vocalist hearing the harmony and maintaining a good pitch.

Slow, simple and spacious music – makes a vocalist and an ensemble sound united.

A vocalist/lyricist/composer who has lived through the lyrics, having courage to open up – makes the occasional mistakes, difficulty or presenting skills to feel totally irrelevant. Also an audience hears the sincerity as the vocalist means what she says.

A vocalist appreciating people and opportunity to perform with open heart – creates bridge of openness, connection to players and audience.

7.3 Version 3

A vocalist/composer/ensemble leader/conductor who knows a piece by heart, having already experienced the piece to work, and knowing what to wish from the ensemble – makes the vocalist relaxed and communicative in the rehearsals.

A vocalist/conductor having practiced conducting and singing simultaneously – makes the multitasking to feel natural.

A vocalist/composer/ensemble leader/conductor being straight, and guiding the instrumental groups to rehearse separately – makes the rehearsals focused, effective and the communication between the ensemble to work. A good question to ask: "Is there any part you would like to rehearse?", and loop the difficult part or bars a couple of times. When a vocalist is also a composer and a conductor, the meaning of the rehearsals is to make the ensemble secure with the piece. Then the vocalist is secure in the performance.

A vocalist/conductor knowing where the conducting while singing simultaneously is needed – makes the use of voice, sounds and improvising in vamps to feel natural.

Having an ensemble who likes to improvise with voice – provides possibilities to improvise collectively.

Improvising spontaneously together – makes a vocalist use her natural improvisational language, for example sentences of the lyrics, imaginary language, and mixing melodies with textural sounds.

A vocalist improvising with mixing important sentences of the text and imaginary language – deepens and reveals more of the text.

Welcoming the ensemble members to join a collective improvisation – builds a feeling of unity, energy, presence, as well as creates a richer sound scape, and naturally organic music.

A vocalist speaking to an audience honestly before performing a piece: revealing the story, the feelings and the dreams behind the piece – makes an audience more present, adds depth to the ensemble's playing and makes a vocalist feel the emotional intensity of the interpretation, feeling close to the audience.

An ensemble that plays the their parts emotionally – makes a vocalist/composer enjoy the great dynamics, variety of sounds, and personal flavors in the music as well as feel supported by the ensemble.

A player that isn't holding back because of a vocalist, a player that allows himself to take space and fly in a collective improvisation – makes a vocalist give more and the music to grow. It makes a vocalist choose differently and grow musically.

An emotional, bold and collective improvisation – resembles discussion, and feelings in a conversation. This makes sense for the piece and adds depth to the interpretation.

Improvising with our true instrumental and personal flavors, colors and stories – true seeing, meeting, accepting, the empowerment and empathy of music happens.

Listening – makes someone able to express.

Silence – makes the music beautiful.

Silence – makes us notice something real and true.

Singing with the original feeling of writing the lyrics or more – makes a vocalist happy of not musical success but the feeling of being sincere.

Enough rehearsals with the ensemble and a vocalist having experience in conducting – makes the vocalist's body language natural.

A vocalist/conductor dancing to the music – makes the vocalist's body relaxed and actively listening the music. It also makes the vocalist's conducting natural, having an eye contact with the audience, trusting the ensemble. Also the vocal is tone warm and rich.

A drummer playing with variety of dynamics, good time, forward going feel and marking the important written parts – makes the piece feel together and connected to the lyrics.

A dynamical lead trumpet with secure leading skills – makes the horns sound warm, united and float seamlessly with vocal melodies.

Changing the background of an instrumental solo to a direction that isn't according to a piece's original rhythmic atmosphere – can make a vocalist/composer feel conscious and isolated.

A written ensemble fermata with solo improvisation – gives a vocalist possibility to conduct and enjoy the harmonic color and space.

An ensemble needing and wishing for the vocalist to conduct – makes the vocalist/conductor to focus on the music and to rehearse conducting to be sure of the double role.

Focusing on music – creates peace, trust and meaning to the instrumental parts.

A vocalist dancing and singing simultaneously – makes the vocal improvisation feel natural.

A vocalist feeling happy and excited to improvise collectively – raises the vocalist's volume, and results to lack of pauses, and proper breathing pauses between the phrases.

Collective improvisation – creates exchanging of ideas, and makes a vocalist sing notes and sounds she didn't even knew existed in her.

Lyrics and composition – can build collective freedom, connection and meaning to an improvisational part.

An improvisational part in a piece – can provide natural transition and contrast.

A vocalist improvising collectively, having depth in the interpretation, freedom in the body's movement, an eye contact with the audience and experiencing a connection to the players – makes the vocalist feel at home on the stage.

8. AN AFTERTHOUGHT

Writing lyrics based on feelings effected on the role of vocal interpretation and improvisation. Both the vocal interpretation and the improvisation had a sense of truthfulness and meaning I had longed for in the third version.

The effect of time became obvious during the three versions: time to read the piece, rehearsing time with an ensemble, a vocalist spending time rehearsing the multiple roles, and a correct tempo of the piece, all had significant impact. As a vocalist it also took time and trials to enter a state of sincere interpretation and freedom to improvise in the piece. Over time I internalized the piece as a lyricist/composer/vocalist/conductor and as a vocalist grew more accepting towards my singing. I learned to be more patient, and realized that the outcome of these multiple roles was worth the trials, errors and the use of time. Robert Greene writes, "When it comes mastering a skill, time is the magic ingredient. What you can do is to have faith in the process." 33

I realized that I can not speed up the progress, but only keep on going forward. If we have faith or trust in the process, we carry on trying even after an failed attempt. After all it is not the successful attempts that makes us learn. The so called failed trials teaches us of directions where to not go. Eventually we enter a point in our lives as artists when we feel at home and at ease creating and presenting the art. As in life, I am not only a mother, but also a woman, a wife, a friend, a daughter, and a sister. I can not stop being any of these roles at any time, though at times some of the roles are more emphasized. To grow to be a good mother or a good friend doesn't happen over night. It is a result of time and living life day by day being all these multiple roles. The same way, my multiple roles in music, the sides of me, developed gradually, hand in hand. And like the musical roles affected each other, also my everyday social roles affected the musical roles, for example writing the lyrics and guiding the ensemble is hugely affected by my motherhood as well as skills and empathy learned by being a friend. This to me is a great discovery: when I allow all that I am to effect on the outcome of music, I don't need to be anything more. I can just honestly, listen.

I don't aim to be liked, nor to please the public. It is the audience's decision, whether or not they like my art. To like is also a very big word, that doesn't speak of anything specific. I rather hear that

³³ Greene, Concise Mastery, 165.

someone has noticed some detail, that someone gave their time, thoughts, or feelings to the performance, whether or not she or he liked it. However, in music I value the connection between human. Maybe I hope to be heard and understood, though I am not making it obvious or easy.

I believe that music can touch our deep emotions, raise awareness and lift our spirit. I don't think this is possible if interpretation is merely meaningless actions or clever tricks. This would be corny to me. It would not serve the purpose why I do art. The sound, the notes, the textures, the rhythms, the lyrics, the melody and the postures must be derived from a deeper place. For me there is no other option than to aim to base everything I do with music to sincerity and honesty, to feel that I am being truthful.

Based on the experiences with the three versions of *Deep sea*, I realize how much focus the multiple roles of writing lyrics, composing, arranging, organizing rehearsals, leading the ensemble, conducting, singing, learning a complex piece by heart, vocal interpretation and improvising takes. Therefore I understand why it took time to find a natural way to improvise with voice in the piece. In the end I used limited improvisation using parameters of sentences, textural imaginary language and free melodic improvisation based on two characters and to the communication with the saxophonist and the drummer.

As I now know the piece even better, and have internalized also the harmonies of the piano solo, I plan to improvise with the changes in the original straight rhythmic feel in 11, or in a triplet feel in 6 + 5 meter, in my coming exam concert. I would like to experiment what would happen if vocal improvisation would get inspiration of the piece, jazzy phrasing in the harmonic atmosphere and sounds of free improvisation together. I wish to use these honest sounds that suite my voice and are drawn from my past experiences with music. I wish to focus on space even in a jazzy landscape, as well as focus on how would all the three vocal elements of interpreting melody, improvising freely and improvising in a jazz background effect on each other and work together? It is all about music, I am myself in all musical situations.

I believe that composing and arranging is worth the time and work, since I enjoy the work itself. In my opinion a vocalist also benefits from having composed a piece she is performing. The knowledge of the piece and the personal relation to the text, in addition of conducting skills, enables

a performing vocalist to express boldly.

The learning process of composing vocalist's interpretation and improvisation is rich since improvising with voice means hearing the music inwardly. Once the necessary skills are mastered, a vocalist has solid land under her feet to interpret and to improvise on. Even more, she has got inspiration and insight during the learning process that she wouldn't otherwise have. Since she has written the lyrics and the music, she also can sing music that is a combination of the life she has lived and of everything she is. After all, vocal improvisation is not only about scales or parameters, but about meaning, attitude and perception.

Improvisation and composing are two sides of the same act, both dealing with confined improvisation. I proceeded faster with less effort, when I limited myself, because the limits offered a direction. The composition and arrangement of *Deep sea* provided guidelines and limits for vocal improvisation, giving both the interpretation and improvisation a feeling of truthfulness and depth.

I will continue to study jazz composition in Oslo next year. I am also interested of composing shorter pieces for smaller combos in search of the line between improvisation and composition. I believe these could meet even more. I am interested to create space, not only for vocal improvisation but for collective freedom and individual voices of the ensemble. In my dream world the piece would unite players from very different musical, cultural, age and socio-economic backgrounds. I believe that music can go beyond man made borders.

When a child is born healthy, the first thing the baby does is to breathe and to make a sound. A vocal sound is a consequence of both physical and emotional state, as well as space. In my opinion the lifelong process of finding our true voices is a journey of peeling off the unnecessary layers life has put on us. A vocal expression, after all, is our birthright.

9. QUESTIONS REMAINS

"I can not expect my art to give answers, I can only hope that it asks the right questions."34

We build so many borders
to prevent us from seeing
We play so many notes
to stop us from listening
The silence would ask the right questions
We add so many layers
and keep on pretending
-
listen
-
the nightfall
a blackbird sings in April again
Heidi Ilves 2017

³⁴ Cameron, Tie luovuuteen, 221.

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11. APPENDICES

11.1 Version 1, a lead sheet for a trio performance



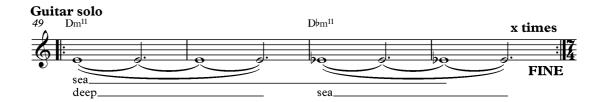










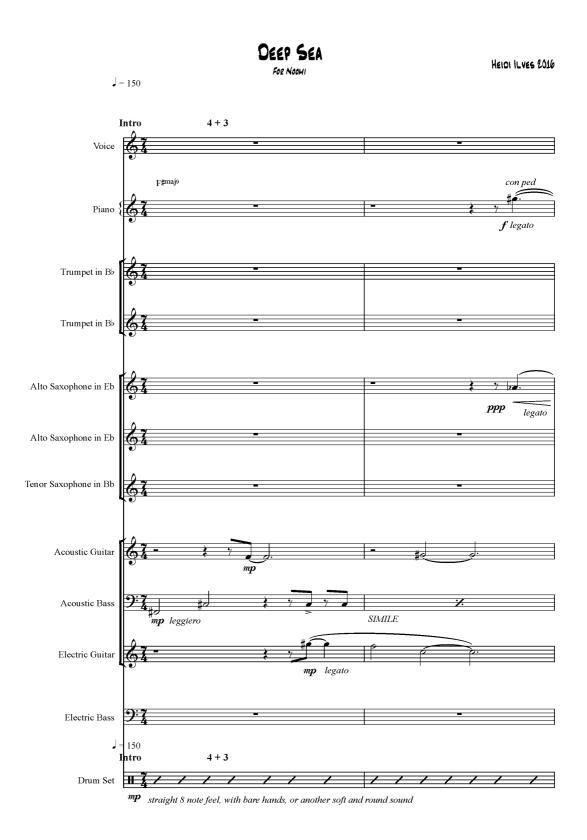


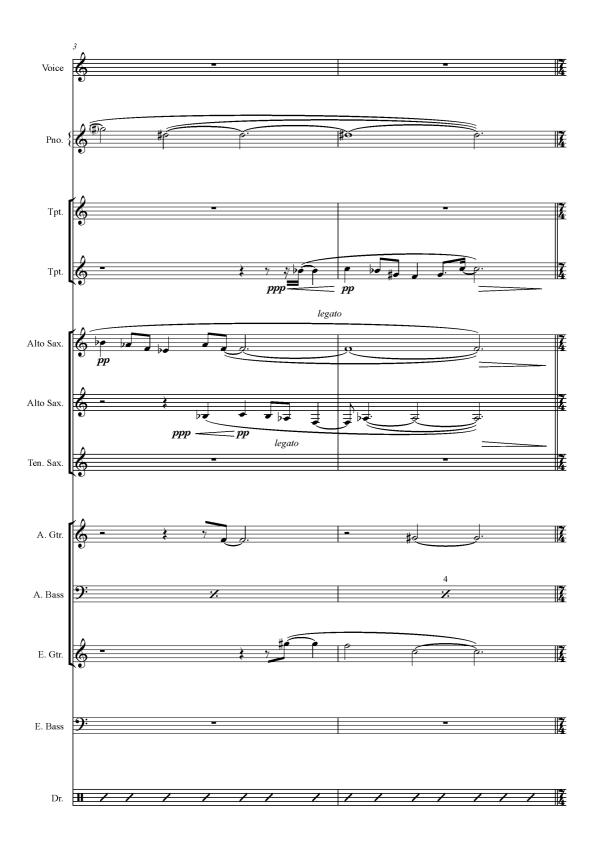






11.2 Version 2, Deep Sea score for Parma Jazz Frontiere Festival























































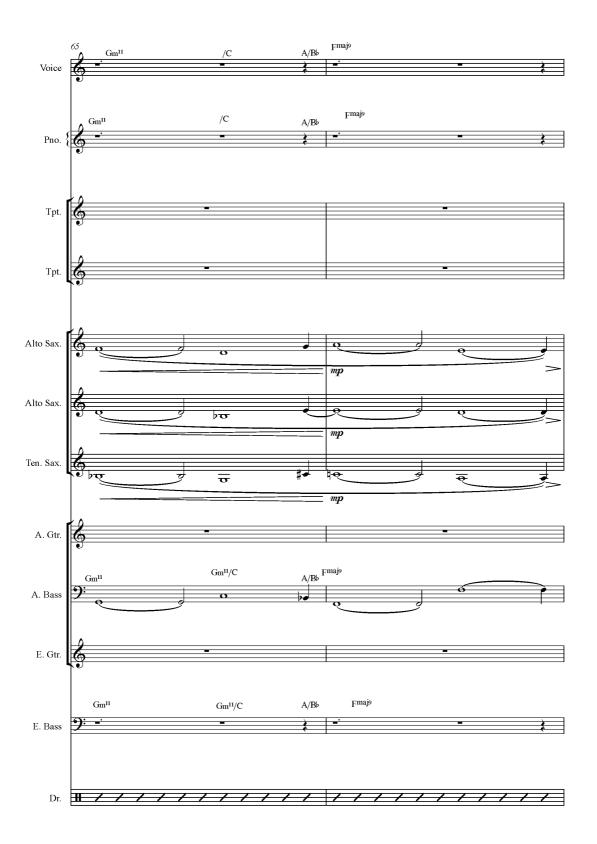


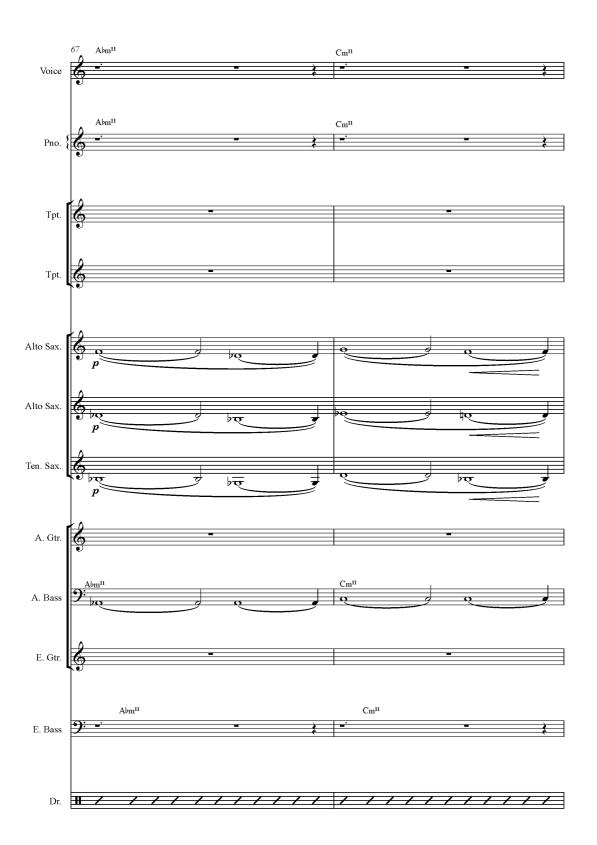


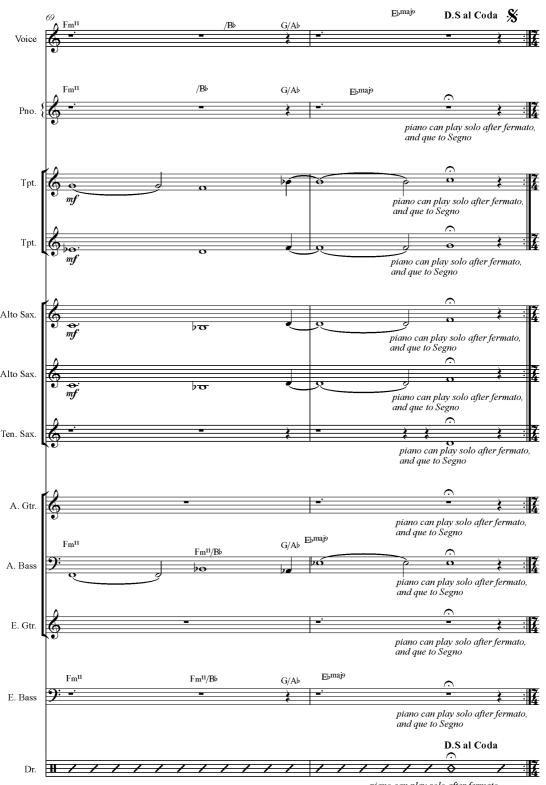


PIANO SOLO: open, saxes on que

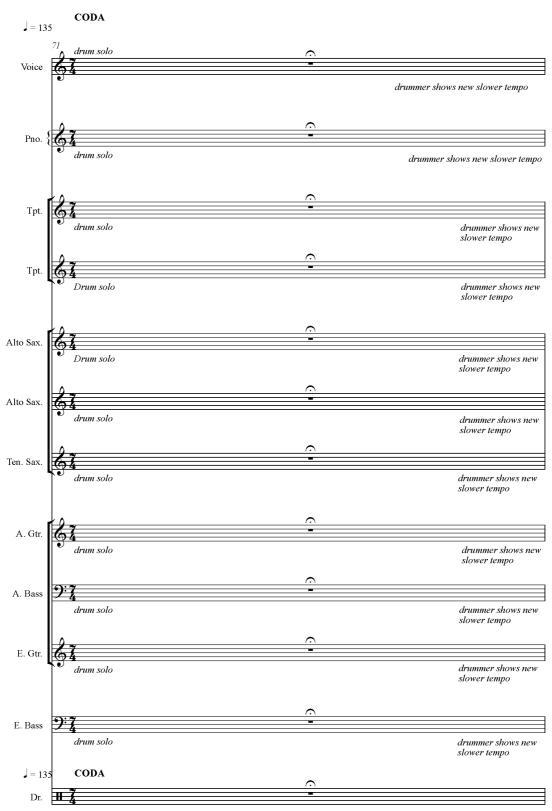






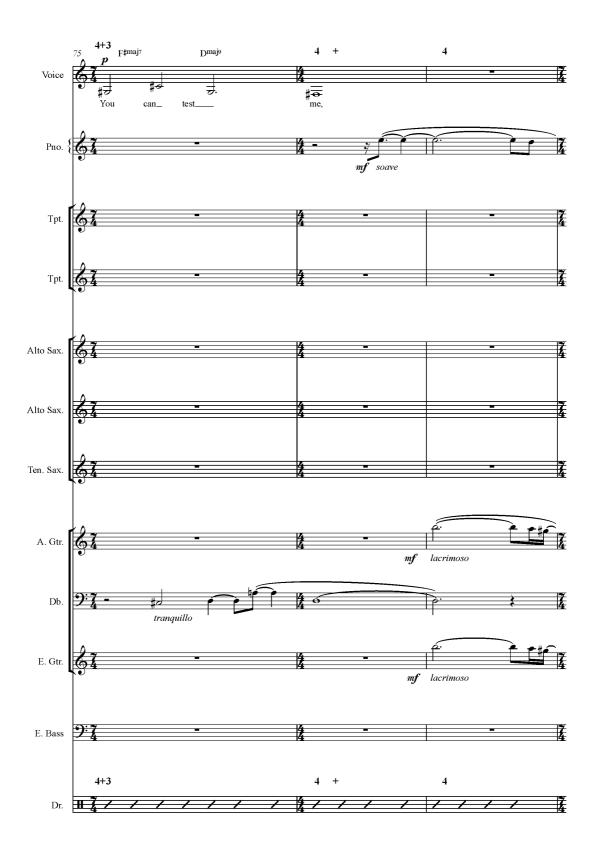


piano can play solo after fermato, and que to Segno, be ready to give time with cymbals in segno

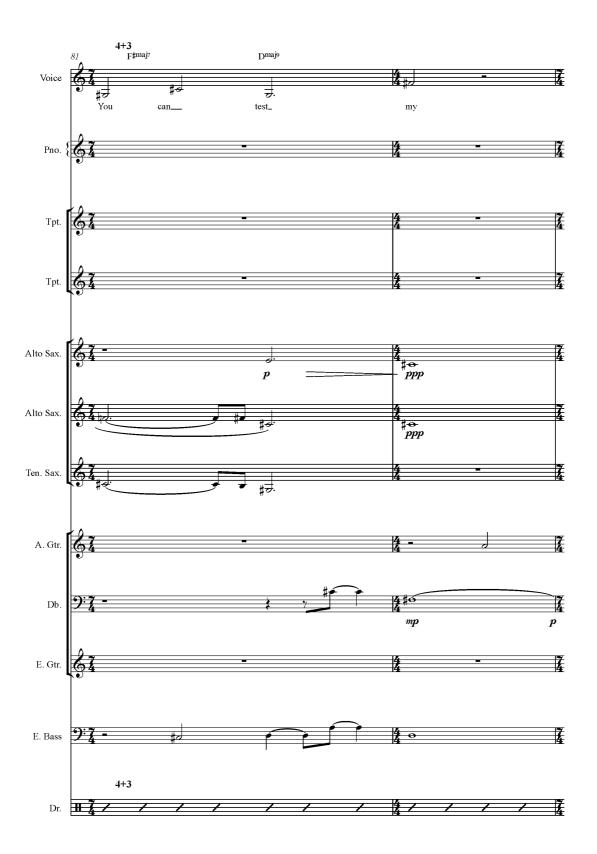


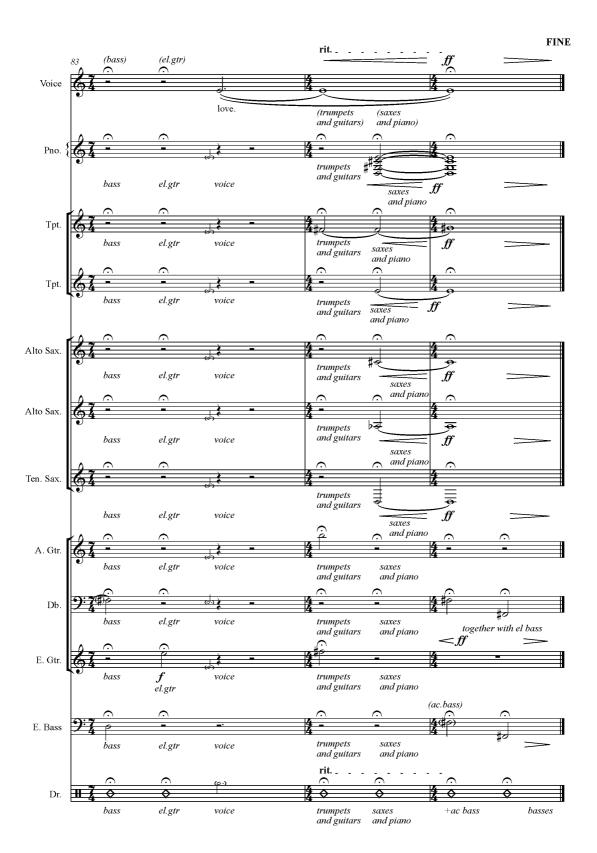
Show through playing ritardando solo (short, minimalistic, cymbal based) the new slower tempo of aprox 135!



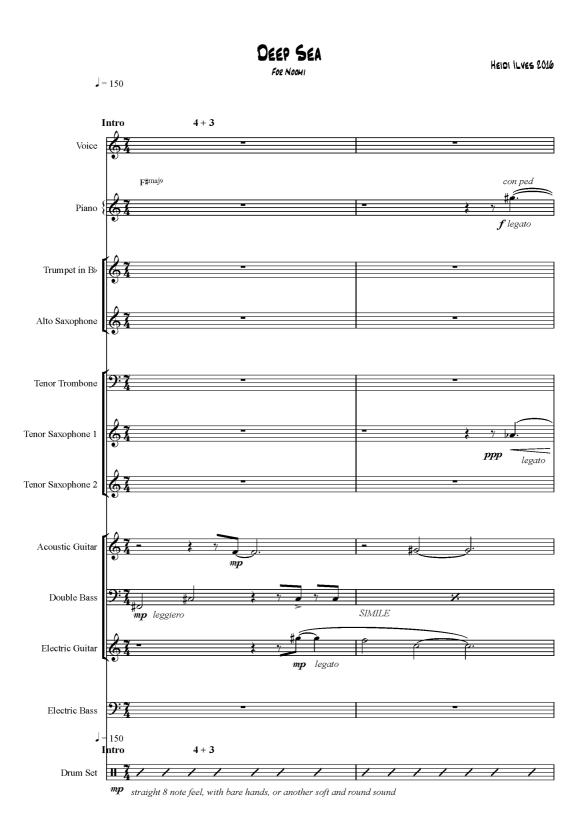


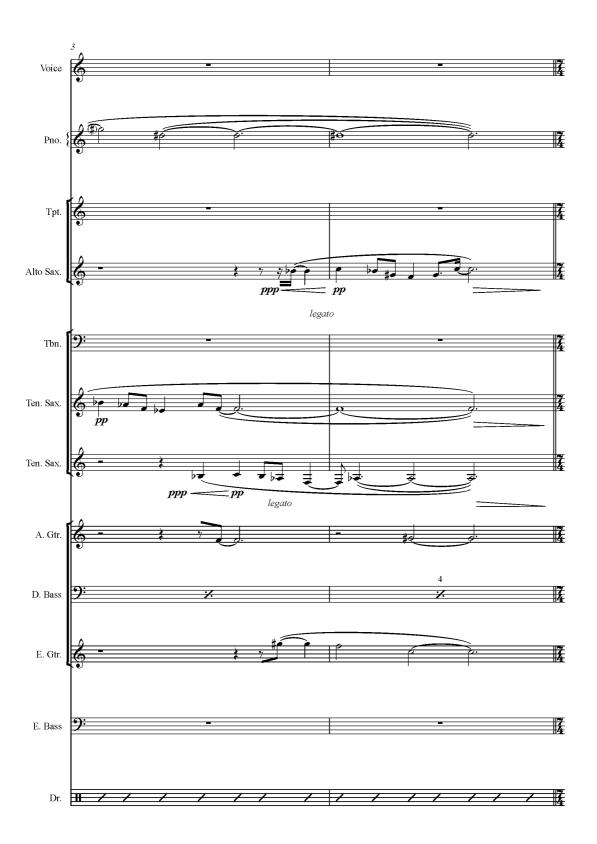






11.3 Version 3, Deep Sea score for Eternity of a moment concert















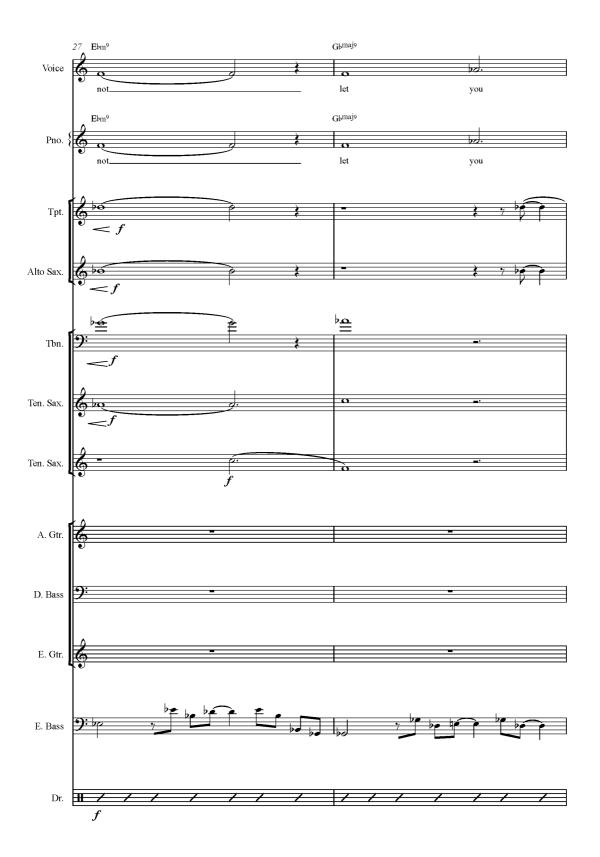




































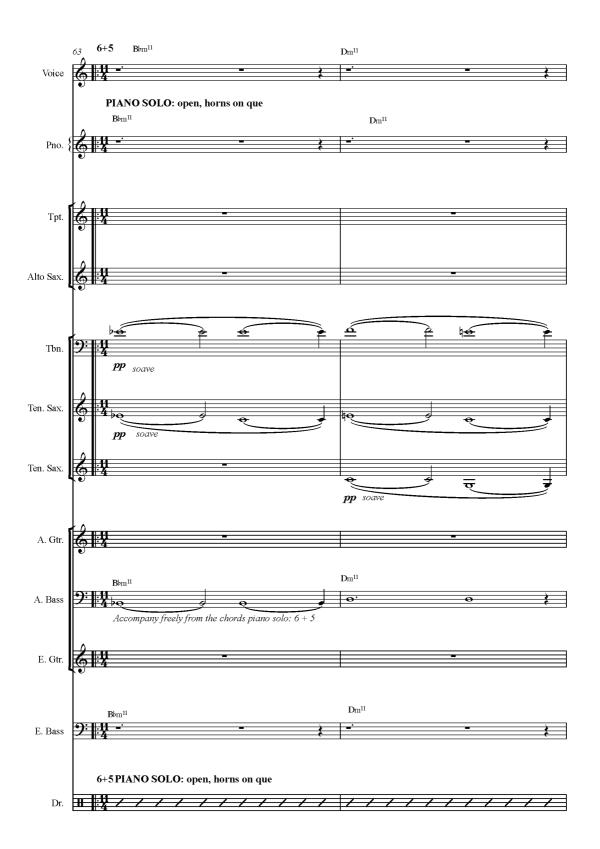


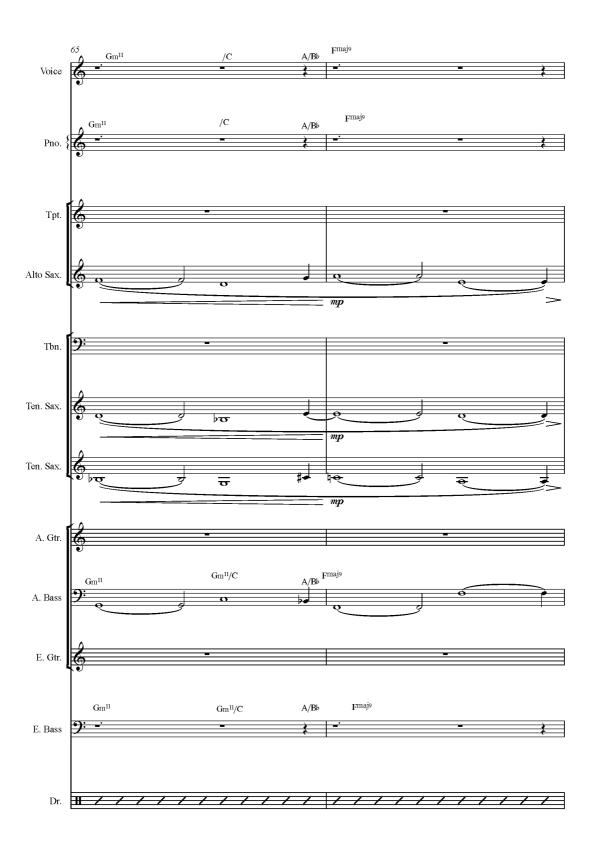


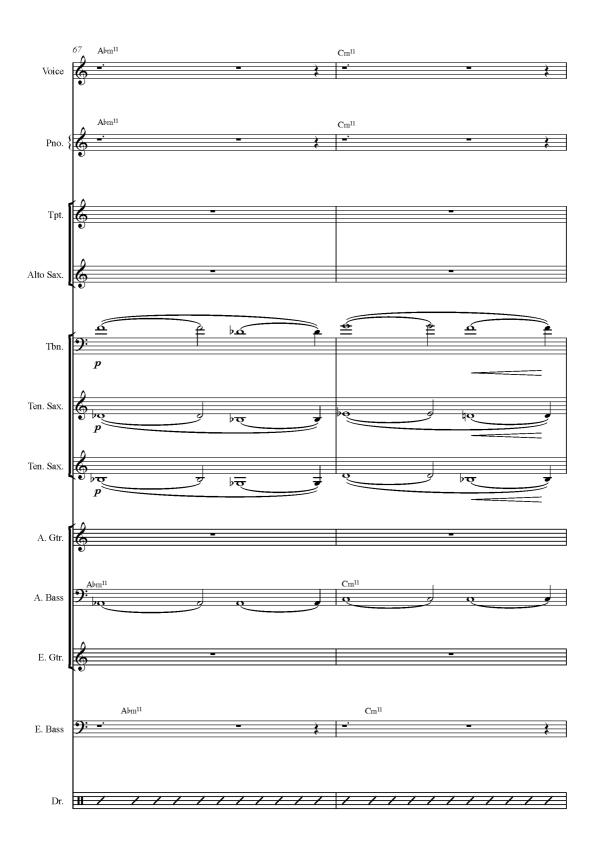


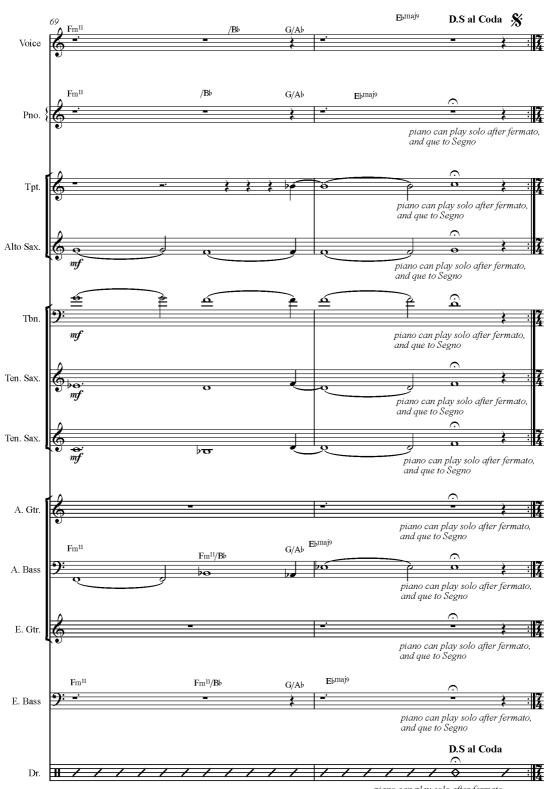




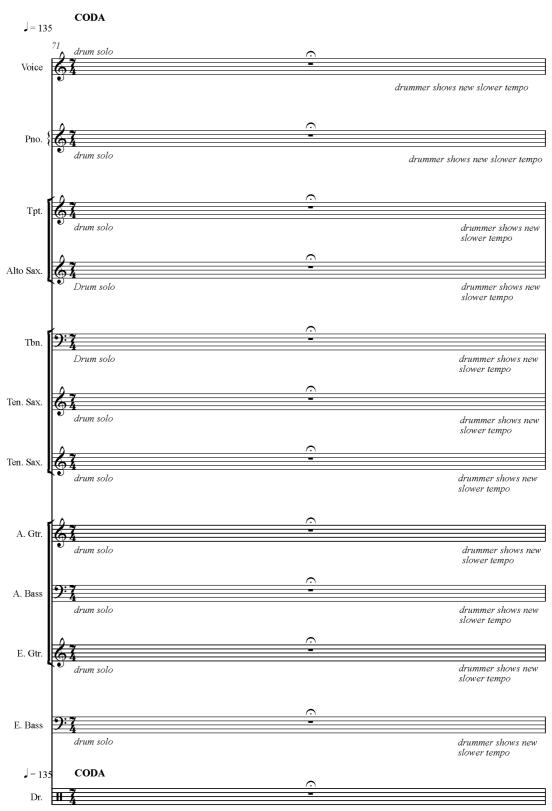








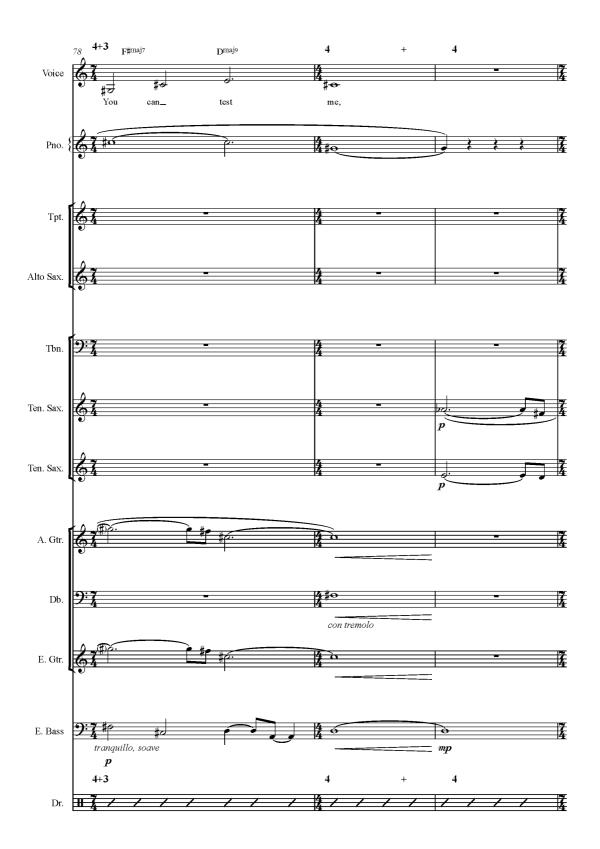
piano can play solo after fermato, and que to Segno, be ready to give time with cymbals in segno



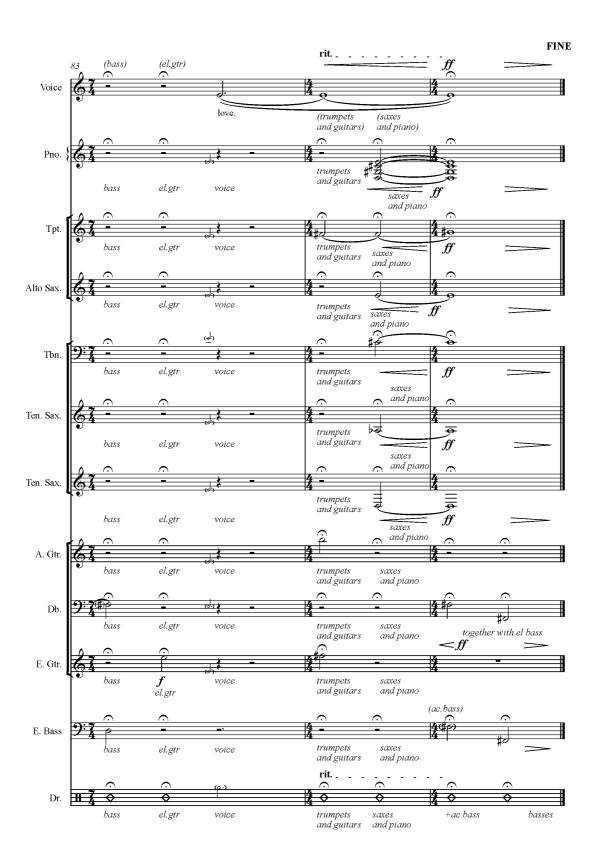
Show through playing ritardando solo (short, minimalistic, cymbal based) the new slower tempo of aprox 135!











12. VIDEO EXTRACTS

- 12.1 Version 1, author has the video, trio performance, Gothenburg, Sweden, May 2016
- 12.2 Version 2, author has the video, Parma Jazz Frontiere, Italy, November 2016
- 12.3 Version 3, public video, Eternity of a moment, Gothenburg, Sweden, November 2016