MUSIC IN THE MAKINGX

INTRODUCTION

This website is meant to give insight into the process I have been through, and still very much am in. It's divided into three separate parts. As the facets of my **artistic** practice are clearly threefold, this site has been divided in the same way. The content available across these three pages includes documents, videos, and audio, and they are there to give insight into the fragmented and often haphazard nature of artistic creation. There is a system of coloured grids to identify which parts are method, reflection, process and result, these are placed as visible as possible, either top right or bottom, depending on your screen size.

ONGOING:

ARTISTIC PRACTICE AND MULTI-DISCIPLINARY INFLUENCE

My artistic research question can be summarized as: "What kind of music or artistic expression emerges at the intersection disperse artistic practices?" The project's title, "Music in the making," reflects my intent to investigate the creative tensions and potentials when these artistic identities interact and integrate. A goal of the project is to achieve new-ness in the artistic result, and to be able to explain why that new-ness has been achieved.

The aspect of facets can of course be expanded further, in addition to my artistic practice I also work as a graphic designer, manage and run a small IT-company, I'm a photographer and a writer, and I work as a consultant for numerous institutions in Norway and Europe, specifically using the [Research Catalogue](#) platform; all of which has impact on my artistic intent and the results. For example, the way I've built this presentation, is very much influenced, and inspired by, the work of Ivar Grydeland's "[Ensemble of Me](#)", a presentation I helped develop and make, first published as a website

on the open source [Drupal](#) platform, then later re-made as an exposition in the Research Catalogue. Grydeland is also one of my supervisors, and a long-time colleague. I find that his presentation, the structure and resulting way of user interaction, works well when presenting artistic research. This is because it places the music and the practice at the very centre, allowing both the question and the answer to stay within the realm of the audible.

Imaginary Prisons:

Theoretical Framework and Delimitation

The other side of a multi-faceted approach is obvious: it's delimitation. When working across many disciplines like I do, I find that even the simplest detail, when examined, can be fragmented further, pieces of it reused, re-assembled, made into something else. "*Else*" is itself contextual, the word can mean an artistic output for the sake of art itself, it can be something actual, like a clever piece of website content for a client (or like this exposition for myself, itself not possible to create without extensive knowledge of code), an album cover, photos and observations that can serve as inspiration for new compositions, and so on.

Because all of the above are true, and I often find myself in a more or less constant state of *creative flux*, moving from one area to another is seen, in my practice, as action in itself. This action means that I'm taking with me either the positive momentum or the negative standstill of that prior activity, re-using and contrasting, to push on into another field. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, in his book *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (1996) writes that "*Creativity is a process that unfolds in a state of flow—a fluid state where ideas, actions, and awareness merge seamlessly*", which, on the top of it, sums up my day exactly.

As these paragraphs themselves show, overflowing and expanding already, the need to delimit a research project is vital to the success of it. For example, the Csikszentmihalyi quote comes from a google (gemini AI) search along the lines of "explain creative flux in artistic practice", and his quote makes a lot of sense to me.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi was a Hungarian-American psychologist, and when I identify him as that, I also have to identify myself as a musician, to get both our scopes right. The sentence still holds true as a descriptive element that I can relate to, but I don't have background knowledge to research it in other ways than from a musicians standpoint,

and as such, using it this way both delimits, and frames, my own research in a way not possible without it.

Like I accept delimitation at the level of understanding these borrowed terms, using them more as helpful metaphors than actual proofs of something they help me frame my research question, on the basis of contrasting with the knowledge I have, and the clarity it gives to the competence I can bring to the table. Contextually, I am a musician operating within the framework of the nordic improvised music scene, not a philosopher, a scientist or a psychologist.

This has direct implications on both the artistic product (that comes from artistic practice), and on the reflections surrounding it (that comes from theoretical practice), but they are contrasting forces still, as the competence I personally acknowledge that I have within the various fields are varying, as they always are.

I assume that this is a known fact for anyone willing to analyze one's own doings, because "inherent in the "knowing something" is the fact that one cannot know everything" (my writing), or as stated by Karl Popper in his book *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (1963): "Our knowledge can only be finite, while our ignorance must necessarily be infinite."

Speaking as a musician, this has direct relevance upon the facets I have identified in my own practice as well, where my own validation, and weighted sorting of them, is deeply connected to how embodied the knowledge of the practice is in me as a musician and a performer.

STRUCTURING:

STARTUP, DECONSTRUCTION, ASSEMBLAGE, AND PERSONAL ARTISTIC CANON

The various stages have, for now, been categorized as a startup, a deconstruction, and an "*assemblage*". In the same way as explained already, here I am, a musician consciously *borrowing* a philosophical term (*assemblage*) explored by Deleuze and Guattari in their seminal work *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), to clarify the seemingly fluid nature many artists experience when creating, but as I borrow it it's necessary to state that it has to be seen and understood within the context of musical practice. I am adapting it as a

metaphor to describe how I place, or frame, creative results and processes, how I see them as *new* or *not new*.

Borrowing terms as metaphors in this way gives weight to my practice; I feel it attaches a notion of something tangible, visible, or understood, to the sense of fluidity that many artists deal with in "the act of creating something".

Further, I very much like the term "palimpsest theory," mentioned by Chris Stover in a presentation at the Grieg Research School in 2024, and upon further investigation, I have discovered how he first integrated it into an article from 2013, titled "*Analysis of Multiplicity*" (page 112) by arguing that to perform analysis is to *"creatively define the analyzed object"*.

This sentence aligns very well with how I work, both as a musician and as a researcher. In both cases, I creatively define the object, and then I analyze it. The object, in surroundings such as these, can be many things, depending on the viewpoint and the current scope, but in my research, the object is the "Professional Self", as defined through the actions, the practice and the results that have come from it.

One could also say I creatively define existing research, interpreting it, turning statements into metaphors, to allow me to use them as such, and, hopefully, avoiding the de facto value which would most likely shift my perception of it, changing an otherwise intriguing statement into something that is out of reach because it pulls me into another field, or discipline, altogether, in which I am out of bounds, and do not have what it takes to argue the point the sentence initially made. Stover's sentence on palimpsest theory, as mentioned above, is from the field of music theory, something that has never been of particular interest to me. Nevertheless, like the initial mention of Csikszentmihalyi and his way of talking about creative states from a psychological point of view, or assemblage theory, for that matter, holds value, metaphorically speaking, and makes perfect sense when viewed inside the framework of my project.

MOVING ON:

CONCEPTS AND MANIFESTATIONS THEREOF

Having established some ground rules, the above way of thinking allows me to enter a theoretical explanation of (my) artistic practice, and the terms I borrow along the way serves as helpful metaphors to explain and validate the views I present. Palimpsest theory illustrates how layers of earlier experiences always remain visible in the present,

assemblage explains how I see new-ness in both practice and artistic result, and creative flux explains the state of being-in-creation that I experience more or less every day, all the time.

Borrowing terms like this is not uncommon at all; re-usage across disciplines happens often, perhaps especially within the field of artistic research. Pauline Oliveros' concept of Quantum Listening (Oliveros, 2005) is one example, and a simple browsing of the recent activity feed on researchcatalogue.net will most likely reveal other examples. As such, I see it as a valid way of connecting what I'm doing, to what others are doing. As it happens, it means that I'm approaching the aspect of trust yet again, but another facet of it, this time in relation to theory, and not in relation to practice, as before.

What I aim to do with this approach is to identify conceptual importance in my own practice, recognizing that key factors, when the "Professional Self" is the object of research, are to know where my current objects of creation come from, how they materialize, and where they are placed in relation to my artistic backdrop.

My method has been, and still is, to seek new insight by employing methods like random or deliberate assembly of fragments—known or unknown—to create new works, and by reflecting upon these connections, both inwardly and outwardly, allowing for an ongoing creation that is cyclical and canonical. By this I mean that the realization that not all works are of equal value when reflected upon, can be said to be a form of standardization inside the professional self, in which an artist creates a personal artistic canon, a set of results that, because of significance, are later seen as standards to which later works are compared.

To achieve new-ness, then, means breaking free from these canonical patterns, something that can be reached by deliberately exposing oneself to the unknown, or forcing the unknown to occur. I have used a random assembly of recorded snippets, new (human) artistic connections, and a spirit of unhindered venture, thereby uncovering perspectives and trajectories that otherwise would not have been discovered.

For quite some time I have been exploring like this without having a defined goal outside of "creating and completing something". From this I have distilled new knowledge that has yet to reach its final form or artistic result. The process itself remains fluid and open, and the exploration continues to shape the work in unexpected ways.

Approaching the mid-term, I have a series of results that should be included, both musical and otherwise artistically framed. They, and the path towards them, are visible as

fragments and presentations on the following pages in this exposition, but for the sake of overview, they main objects are:

1) Itzama - single track release, dance performance, music video and installation
2) Spirit of Rain - album release
3) In Rome - installation piece, conceptual
4) Blues for no - video and installation piece
5) 1&2 / Grab a hold - two releases (new) with Hans Martin Austestad
6) Ensemble³ - (conceptual stage, in progress), improvisational piece for two musicians and generative audio
7) Lullaby for non-clarinetists - video, composition for Ensemble³

Brian Eno said, in an interview with The Believer, that "Whenever you listen to a piece of music, what you are actually doing is hearing the latest sentence in a very long story you've been listening to—all the pieces of music you've ever heard" (link here, section III paragraph II).

I think this is a nice paragraph to end with. It connects musical creation and musical interpretation, both from the perspective of the creative artist, and also from the performer / audience viewpoint. I have a need to address this side of it too, because I am currently seeing the act of performing as a separate entity that can be (but doesn't have to be) separated from the act of creation, and I see it like that because the amount of theoretical effort required to be able to place "new" against my artistic backdrop inside the context of a PhD, has the consequence that my artistic result at the moment seems to be conceptual, something that later can manifest itself as a performance.

Ensemble³ is an example of this. Explained in further detail in this website, it's a concept that comes from an effort to address the previously mentioned cyclical and canonical elements in my professional practice, and also very much relates to my theoretical machine, an invention I came up with for my very first presentation at ARF spring forum, 2023. This way of working primarily means that there are, at present, no results that I feel are ready for manifestation, or, to use a more common term, to be played live. There will be, but as of now, I have nothing but fragments.

To end, again, I hope that this text gives insight into how I see the process, how I intend to present it, and how I am using terminology, references and theory to navigate this very fragmented and surprisingly fluid space I've both created and, at present, occupy. My intention was never to *write about it,* it was always much more about *showing it*, and from this point forward, that is what will happen.

- Jonas Sjøvaag, March 2025