

English summary

Preface

Attention is a subjective state of mind, a mindscape.¹

What happens in a space when we play together? What happens to us as individuals, when we put ourselves in relation to a text in this space when we play?

På insidan av tystnaden – olika former av soniska och prosodiska händelseförlopp (On the Inside of Silence – Different Forms of Sonic and Prosodic Courses of Events) contains a number of essays and sonic image stories – a sounding image process that becomes a link to the narrative text. Through the use of sound, text and image, and all their mixed forms, and by drawing from my experiences as musician and composer, I will, together with you as listener and reader, find a number of passable ways. Through a triptych consisting of an *audio box*², a *book* (complete with slide show) and a *website*³, I hope it will be possible for you to follow this twisty way toward something.

SOUND

TEXT

IMAGE

In *Förspel (Prelude)* I will tell you a little about my background as an improvising musician and how it all began. With the help of a *transcribed playing dialogue* I then go on to describe what shape a process between two musicians in a playing situation can take. In Act 1 - *Rum och tystnad (Space and Silence)* I deal with thoughts regarding discovering or retrieving “silence” *in between* two events, words, rhythms or notes. An empty space, which is not a void, but space filled with expectations. Where there is trust to be able to wait, hesitate, delay and listen, as well as reliance on silence as a field of force of its own. I then proceed with a study of the conditions of different sounding milieus, where an area of reference emerges through dynamical divergences that expose degrees of transparency. By adding and eliminating sounds in an already existing sound milieu, situations with different degrees of more or less silent milieus are exposed. After that, I go on to explore the relation between

¹ Daniel N. Stern, *Diary of a Baby*, Basic Books, 1990 , p. 84.

² *Music Inside the Language*, LJCD 5254, 2011.

³ www.stensandell.com.

space, body and instrument. What happens in a space when I play? Act 2 opens with an audio play - *Det perforerade rummet*⁴ (*The Perforated Space*), where I test the possibility of illustrating a sounding philosophical model of space, using both sound and image. In Act 3, I look at the state of tension between music and text in the essay *Rum och språk* (*Space and Language*), where questions are raised regarding whether writing itself can have an inherent sound or not, and whether a metaphor can convey a sounding event. I then move on to the concrete process of playing my instrument, and to use a text instead of sheet music, in the section *Rum och process – akustisk metrik* (*Space and Process – Acoustic Metricity*). Act 3 closes with us listening to a concert on my website: <http://stensandell.com/object.php?id=23&l=s> (alt. usb), where the ideas of the process described above are used. In Act 4 – *Just i en ljudande tillblivelse – att komponera i realtid* (*In the Midst of a Sounding Creation – To Compose in Real Time*), I illuminate the ever-present questions regarding the conception of time, and the now and the then in the creating process. The story continues in Act 5 with the audio play *Munnen* (*The Mouth*) (which is included in the CD box set *Music Inside the Language*). Here I reflect on *listening per se*, by not using a printed score as a model but through?– *music to thought to image to text to image to thought to music* – After this follows Act 6 – *Droner, rytmer och rum* (*Drones, Rhythms and Spaces*) – where site-specific installation music meets another sounding space, around questions on the notion of heterotopias. In Act 7 – *Dialogmusik – när två melodier möts och blöts* (*Dialogue Music – When Two Melodies Meet and Greet*), I describe the different course of events when two people meet and play together where there is an ever-present third part – the space – at play. Being able to act and evolve your playing with these three components taking part. A sonic memory emerges before we turn out the lights in Act 8 and lean back to take part of *Borduna 58'20''*⁵. When that which has already been played *leaves* to give place to something new, or something used that is transformed into something else that comes *in* again, *reappears* in the sounding image. Social space in relation to different forms of improvising formations then takes place in Act 9 – *Rum och riktningar* (*Space and Directions*). In this part, I try to build a model of my “playing method”, with the help of concept formations related to: *the playing space as method and learning*. After that follows Act 10, which deals with notions of the on-going going on for too short a time to then be neglected and missed, by making compromises on account of oneself and the market outside.

⁴ A space created in a real-time composed piece for voice and live-electronics, later processed in an audio processing program, 091207 and 100514-20, <http://stensandell.com/object.php?id=22&l=s>

⁵ CD III LJCD 5254, 2011, alt. slide show: *Borduna 58'20'* <http://stensandell.com/object.php?id=19&l=s>.

In Act 11, we are on our way away from something, toward something else where something extremely crucial happens at precisely that very instant that just was. We conclude this part by listening to the slide show/audio drama *Ängen e överkryssad*⁶ (*The Meadow's Crossed*) with Fredrik Nyberg – text/voice and Sten Sandell – prepared piano/voice/image. Here research work is put into practice: in the act of doing in a space. We then finish the story with *Efterspel* (*Postlude*) and *Efterord* (*Epilogue*). A number of image essays and reflections on where we are in the text also occur, after which *References* of different kinds follow.

The research method I apply is strongly integrated with the act of *doing* – here and now: In what I play. In what I sing and recite. In what I draw and film. In real time. The method is constantly present – (also) when I make a presentation *through* my work, when I explore the mediation as a shaping part of the artistic process.... What happens to my artistic expression when it takes on the form of a dramatized research performance? Do I find something of value or do I just create dead ends in my practice? Do I dare to carry out these lines of thought all the way, and actually articulate a new, characteristic way of expression? The field I find myself in is the subjective doing, in music, image and text. The doing forms new meanings when I, seamlessly searching, move *through* these three different expressions of art. With my research method I want to avoid positioning myself in a field characterized by predetermined points of reference. Hence, I have, in this text, chosen not to make a distinction between *improvisation* and *composition*, but regard them as two, inter-dependent, sides in the seamless searching. It is precisely on *the way through* music, image and text something becomes visible to me. The method allows me to be and act in a context new to me: A research field *to play* in. On. In front of. Behind. The research method is a process that results in the work *on the inside of silence*. Here and now.

Moving along is the process of proceeding through the session at the local level. This process finds its way as it proceeds. Its path is not known in advance. It consists of the relational moves and present moments that strung together make up the session. It is characterized by attempts to achieve a greater and more coherent intersubjective field. This, however, involves much unpredictability about what will happen next because the process is extremely inexact, nonlinear, and sloppy. Because of the nature of the process, it gives rise to many emerging properties, such as now moments and moments of meeting.⁷

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⁶ www.stensandell.com.

⁷ Daniel N. Stern, *The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life*, W.W. Norton & Company, 2004, pp. 244-245.

i am on the inside of silence. a diffuse, dark-gray deafening sound-darkness surrounds me. on the outside, a sun-bleached silence reigns. calm. the membrane cracks. the walls water, condensate. leakage begins. a transmission is in progress. transformation. sound and silence mix. dark-gray meets sun-bleached. tears the surface to shreds. resembles blisters. becomes swellings. bursts again. retires. the inside of silence is now intermingled with light, shredded interruptions. gaps. cuts. perforations. round about, an infinite number of similar events go on. form myriads of pulsating processes. or the opposite.

I walk around in a small, intimate gallery on a street in Stockholm called Jungfrugatan sometime at the end of the eighties. Henri Michaux's images look as though they were made in some sort of dream state. Each image has a fleeting motion to it whilst still being in strong connection with a chiseled act of doing. A motion that gets in the way of a sheet of paper, and happens to get stuck just there for a moment. The images reoccur in my memory once in a while. In his book on Michaux, Per Bäckström writes that "[d]reaming is abundance and play, is like a flow, and this is what constitutes the poetics of Michaux; to try, through the waking dream, to reach the inner motion, to reach beyond language".⁸ In my studying of space as a site for play, creating images becomes the passable way *between* music and text, where superimpositions per se are the essentials of the expression. On the way from something, toward something else, something extremely crucial happens in precisely that very instant that just was. The superimpositions are precisely those structures of space I seek in transitions between music, text and image.⁹

On the opposite side of Jungfrugatan, a group of choreographers and dancers¹⁰ have begun to rehearse a new performance, which my composition *Röstrytmer*¹¹ (*Voice Rhythms*) will be part of, both as an integrated flow of motions in space, as well as a parallel track, independent of outer circumstances. I still have the memory of Michaux's flow images before my eyes as we begin rehearsals. The dancers (execute) stage? the same moment act? of arranging a group of sun chairs on stage, over and over again. The result is a varied and comic scene in a sort of strange Tati spirit. Voice sounds are looped, and pulsate through the room between the different bodies of the dancers. After rehearsal I go home to my children and hear their voices

⁸ Per Bäckström, *Enhet i mångfalden*, ellerströms förlag 2005, p. 50 (translated here by Emil Strandberg).

⁹ *Munnen – scen 2*, CD I, LJCD 5254, 2011, *Munnen – scen 2*, www.stensandell.com. Music and slide show

¹⁰ Dancers Anne Külper, Kerstin Lindgren, Ingrid Olterman, Gunnar Kaj and others are part of the group.

¹¹ Solo voice, piano and electronics with sampled voice fragments performed in real time. Parts of these voice flows are included in *Munnen – scen 2*, CD I, LJCD 5254, 2011.

when playing OR when at play, mixed with my memories of their sampled voices looped in the dance performance. What do I hear in my memories that erase the borders to the real time sounds that surrounded me at that moment? Now, more than twenty-three years later, I wonder what I really remember. Are the sampled voice flows of my children intertwined in the memory of their real voices in the room? These transformed and faded sound photos confuse me afterwards. Was it really the same day that I walked from a Michaux exhibition to the other side of the street for a rehearsal? The only thing I know for sure is that the small gallery was across the street from the dance studio we worked at. I believe all memories are reconstructions of something that has already taken place, which I wrote some other time some other place.

I start drawing somewhere on a piece of paper without having a clue of what direction it will take, or what kind of image will develop in time. In front of time. In between time. The actual transition from a *then* on its way to becoming a *now*.

I wake and feel some big hard rain-drops on my forehead. Get up and rush in through open church doors. Walk quickly up the stairs of the church tower while I sing and sound to see how the acoustics of different rooms respond to the partials that occur in what I'm singing. I open a door and come to the organ loft where a door on the back of the organ catches my eye. A key is in the door and I walk in among the organ pipes and continue to sound and notice how the acoustics drastically change. The organ sounds with a deep drone in C with lots of air noises that pump and hiss a spastic rhythm. Stay put a while, and, fascinated, listen to the enclosed sound when I notice that the door to the organ pipes has jammed. I am shut in with the organ pipes.

Act 6 – Drones, Rhythms and Spaces – A Thunderstorm Meets the Inside of an Organ



<http://www.stensandell.com/object.php?id=20&l=s>

Borduna Heterotopia

*Music...*¹²

Here we are not dealing with a succession of instants in time, nor with the plurality of thinking subjects; what we are dealing with are the caesurae that break the instant and disperse the subject in a multiplicity of possible positions and functions. Such a discontinuity strikes? and invalidates the smallest, traditionally recognised and the least readily contested units: the instant and the subject.¹³

A thunderstorm I seized the opportunity to record on a day in July some years ago(,) illustrated the whole picture of how rhythmical patterns can be transparent, swarming, chiseled, and amazingly exciting in all their complexity! It began as a shower of hail. But in fact, the drops, landing on the roof, were so incredibly big and heavy, that it sounded like pebbles falling from the sky. This then evolved into full-scale rain, whose sound was a big chaos, containing a great number of quickly changing structures that could only be perceived as a big organic flow of sounds and rhythms. All these structures created their own small cells, in which each pattern was as unique as each snow flake is different. From this swarm a great many sounds and chords emerged.¹⁴ While writing this, I listen to a new recording of “Eonta”¹⁵ for piano, 2 trumpets and 3 trombones¹⁶ by Iannis Xenakis, from 1963. When I first heard this piece in 1976, it was a turning point in my way of playing the piano and how I view my instrument. I then realized piano playing has just as much to do with architectonic principles, blocks, levels, different constructions in layers that partly cover each other, in varying half-penetrable sound-block structures. Behind and over each other, Xenakis’s different stochastic clouds form new backgrounds. After the first introductory piano part, the brass sound arises out of the ringing pedal of Aki Takahashi’s masterful piano playing. Time stops for a moment, and hovers. It was no longer the linear narrative that was important. Instead, it was the big architectonic structures, in different sharp shades of gray, that described densities in the music. States became as important as progress. A new world opened up to me, which I haven’t left ever since that moment. To be able to combine the narrative of music drama with space occupied by various sound columns has since been my predominating vision. Different stories come and go and twine round sound pillars of varying states of character. These sounding pillars of states have everything gathered in one distillate.

¹² *Juliregn möter insidan på en orgel i kalv*, Sten Sandell 2010, <http://stensandell.com/object.php?id=20&l=s>.

¹³ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith, Pantheon Books, 1972, p. 231.

¹⁴ *Juliregn*, Sten Sandell, 2008.

¹⁵ A homage to Greek philosopher and poet Parmenides.

¹⁶ Xenakis: Works with Piano, mode 217, 2010.

All that does not have to be said is there; however, the surrounding gestures are needed in order to build a thrilling musical space that brings the story to life. The monolithic meets the mobile, the plastic. Sound columns as States in a space, hovering or firmly anchored to something. Fragments of something. Displacements. Shifts. Friction sounds. The July rain went on and on and on, like a sound wall with an infinite number of inner, intricate, rapid motions and sound changes. Rhythm – right on, right after, in between and right before.

The fundamental conditions for this kind of normalization of difference is blindness to the in-between space that lies between the own and the unfamiliar, and above all also already *within* the own and the unfamiliar. That which does not get to speak is precisely this “in-between” that constitutes the life of transition, or the place and time of self- transformation.¹⁷

To examine this ”in-between”, I arrived at the Kalv festival¹⁸ and the church in Kalv in the summer of 2010 to do a first performance of a composition for organ, voice, live-electronics, reed instruments, groups of loudspeakers and drones.¹⁹ The process of work for this performance was that two days before the concert, I recorded site-specific sounds both inside and outside the organ, as well as in the actual church space, which I later brought together with a composition for the above-mentioned instruments.

The church in Kalv is found to have excellent acoustics owing to the wooden ceiling having been restored in the fifties. The ceiling had not been restored according to the historical architecture of the church but had been restored in a way that the new formationstructure? of the arched ceiling removes the distance between musicians and audience. Groups of speakers up at the chancel, and speakers on each side of the pews, meet the organ and my voice from the rear of the church.

An interplay arises between the groups, and sounds move about as the music’s main focus shifts from pre-recorded sounds to voice and organ sounds. In the second act Per-Anders Nilsson – live-electronics, and Mats Gustafsson – reed instruments, are added and strengthen the movements in this space, by reacting to the already sounding material.

And now back to my thunderstorm. What happens when I bring these seemingly completely

¹⁷ Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback, *Lovtal till intet. Essäer om filosofisk hermeneutik*, Logos, Pathos nr 5, Glänta Produktion, 2006, p.158, (translated here by Emil Strandberg).

¹⁸ Nordic meeting place, festival and workshop for developing new music, in the village of Kalv, in Svenljunga, Sweden. The Kalv festival is now in its seventh year, with enthusiasts such as Max Käck a.o. making this festival possible, where new music, performances, dance, pilgrimages and other art installations are presented in close cooperation with, and the participation of, the village’s inhabitants. This year’s theme was Music for Reflection.

¹⁹ Sten Sandell – organ, voice, electronics and composition (00’ - 38’23’’ solo), Per-Anders Nilsson – live-electronics (38’23’’ - 55’10’’), Mats Gustafsson – reed instruments (38’23’’ - 55’10’’).

different places and spaces together?

*Music...*²⁰

We are in an epoch in which space is given to us in the form of relations between emplacements. [...] But what interests me, among all these sites, are the ones that have the curious property of being in relation with all other sites, but in such a way as to suspend, neutralize, or invert the set of relations designated, mirrored, or reflected by them. These spaces, as it were, that are linked with all the others, that nevertheless contradict all the other emplacements, are of two main types. First there are the utopias. Utopias are emplacements with no real place. [...] There are also, and this probably in all culture, in all civilization, real places, effective places, places that are written into the institution of society itself, and that are a sort of counter-emplacements, a sort of effectively realized utopias in which the real emplacements, all the other real emplacements that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted²¹

These are the places Michel Foucault terms *heterotopias*. A new body of sound appears where motion in the space that has been brought together creates a story, in which the enclosed organ sounds from inside the pipes meet a new concentrated sound-site made up of those heavy rain drops hitting the plastic roof of the terrace. High, very insistent leaking organ notes meet low drones with murmuring and hissing columns of air, meeting piercing water drops sounding like pebbles. The high notes shift in sound and pitch if you move around the room while listening, and the murmur makes the space more tangible. White noise enhances the sense of space. Through quick shifts of registration on the organ, the flow of air constantly changes course. Hence, the jerking, kind of stumbling air sounds from the organ pipes. The complex sound structure of the thunderstorm consists of very high, percussive sounds, interfering with each other and forming new diffuse motions, in a low slightly undefined register. The low frequencies are amplified by the resonance in the thin plastic roof. Together with my voiced comments in the form of breathing, overtone singing and cries, this creates a seemingly obvious organic unity, where a state of confinement is evident.²²

And I believe that between utopias and these absolutely other emplacements, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, in-between experience, which would be the mirror. The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a place without place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal space that virtually opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives me my own visibility, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent. Utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far that the mirror does really exist, and as it exerts on the place I occupy a sort of return effect; it is with the mirror as my starting point that I discover my absence in the place where I am, since I

²⁰ *Ett åskregn möter insidan på en orgel*, Sten Sandell 2010.

²¹ Michel Foucault, *Heterotopia and the City. Public space in a postcivil society*, edited and translated by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven DeCauter, Routledge 2008, pp. 15-17.

²² *Ett åskregn möter insidan på en orgel*, Sten Sandell 2010.

see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, cast upon me, from the depth of this virtual space that is on the other side of the looking glass, I come back towards myself and I begin again to direct my eyes towards myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in the respect that it renders this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the looking glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since, in order to be perceived, it has to pass through this virtual point, which is over there.²³

*Music...*²⁴

Box for standing is a wooden frame meant to house the artist. By referring to the dimensionality of the artist's body, the frame *enacts* the very space that surrounds that body. It points to it as performing subjects articulating *and* articulated by space.²⁵

*Music...*²⁶

A fictional dream sequence:

I find myself in a room just over 2 m high and 1 m wide.

Bearing the size of the room in mind, one's ability to move is severely limited. The room is fitted up with (a) soft and sound-absorbing material. The room has neither doors nor windows. I hear agitated voices outside the room, somebody or some people are crying. I begin to call out, but nobody seems to react to my call. I start to feel shut in and realize it is impossible for me to get out.

She went on growing, and growing, and very soon had to kneel down on the floor: in another minute there was not even room for this, and she tried the effect of lying down with one elbow against the door, and the other arm curled round her head. Still she went on growing, and, as a last resource, she put one arm out of the window, and one foot up the chimney, and said to herself "Now I can do no more, whatever happens. What will become of me?"²⁷

To find myself and the sound of my own body in relation to the space I am in right now.
Where do I stand and what does it sound like?

*Music...*²⁸

²³ Michel Foucault, *Heterotopia and the City. Public space in a postcivil society*, edited and translated by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven DeCauter, Routledge 2008, p. 17.

²⁴ *Ett åskregn möter insidan på en orgel*, Sten Sandell 2010.

²⁵ Brandon Labelle, *Background Noise: A History of Sound*, ArtBrice, Continuum, 2006, p. 75.

²⁶ *Ett åskregn möter insidan på en orgel*, Sten Sandell 2010.

²⁷ *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll.

²⁸ *Ett åskregn möter insidan på en orgel*, Sten Sandell 2010.

Då ligga
på min obäddade säng och kunna då se,
länge och långt in på förmiddan ligga som jag såg då allt,

Som då
plötsligt och liksom oväntat se
allt det där jag förut inte sett
bara kunnat ana att jag någon gång hört
i små mikrosmå knäpp från fingrar²⁹

Then lying
on my unmade bed and being able to see,
for long, and far into the morn', lying as though
then seeing it all,

As then
suddenly and like unexpectedly seeing
all that I before had not seen
only had suspected that I once had heard
in small micro-small snaps of fingers

Sitting in my childhood home in a big room, and suddenly discovering, in an act of seeing, the entire room at one and the same time. Seeing the whole room, without glancing to one side or the other, with its ceiling, walls, windows, light and furniture. A strange feeling of being in a state of total seeing occurs, a state that begins when flow arises in the music, and I just *am* in the space with all its sounds and impressions. Is there a sounding language in front of, behind, beneath, over, and between us?

Translated by Emil Strandberg and proofread by Lynn Preston Odengård

²⁹ Stig Larsson, "Min mor är en ros", *Likar*, Bonnier Alba, 1993 (translated here by Emil Strandberg).