



KLANGVEJE

A musical hike throughout Denmark

By Frederik Munk Larsen, associate professor

In early July, 2013, I started out on a rather unusual concert tour: “Klangveje – en koncertrejse til fods gennem Danmark”, or in English “Klangveje – a Musical Hike throughout Denmark”. What followed were four adventurous weeks that rewarded me (and hopefully many more) with lots of fun, intense experiences and an enriched understanding of musical interaction and communication. Oh well, and with a pair of rather sore feet too.

Why fly when you can walk?

In recent years I have travelled extensively while performing with various chamber music groups or on my own. The normal routines at the concert venue – setting up, having dress rehearsal, performing, packing up, hurrying home – has often left me unsatisfied or wanting for something more: more time to get a larger “slice” of the place, the audience, the city or even a more nuanced sense of the landscape itself. Could it be possible to combine my urge to perform music that I love, have time to

interact more with the locals and gain a bit of understanding of the various places?

The idea that came up was to simply change my way of travelling – instead of taking the train, car or airplane, would it be possible simply to walk between the different concert venues?

Mapping and interacting

The next step was to sculpture concerts that would be rooted locally. So I started talking to musicians, composers and arrangers connected to concert venues that

geographically would make sense:

I wanted to start the tour North at the tip of Jutland, Skagen, and end it in the east at the island of Bornholm.

For each of the concerts, either locally rooted composers, instrumentalists or singers collaborated with me on the programme. Surely a challenging hike since I needed to walk approximately 30 km a day carrying my instrument and all additional requirements with me.

The partners involved were very enthusiastic and in early spring the main concerts were all planned. So to make this part of the story short, it all turned out really well – it was easy to sell the concerts, get composers to compose, musicians to participate and even to get additional funding for the project from the Danish Artist Council and the Danish Composers society¹. From my work at The Royal Academy of Music, Aarhus, I invited a handful of the students to perform with me whenever I was reaching their spring of origin.

It's too crazy!

Can you walk that far? Will you be able to perform at your normal artistic level? How about rehearsals? How will you transport your stuff?

These were just some of the questions I asked myself and heard from colleagues and friends as the summer approached. And initially these were some of my concerns, along with a lot of different low-level practical issues, such as finding a system that would allow me to carry both my guitar and my backpack at the same time. Fortunately, the guitar shop "Akustikken" sponsored a special guitar case that could be attached to the rest of my equipment.

On the road

After a fantastic first night at Skagen Festival where I performed together with the local choir Klitkoret and singer Christian Wandt in front of an audience of more than 500 in Skagen kirke, the journey really began. The next day, I found myself walking through a landscape of dunes, plantations



and beautiful hills until finally reaching the city of Hjørring where I was welcomed by my guitar student, Jakob Bangsø. He was to accompany me, both in walking and in playing the next days.

The contrast between the warm, lively, intense social and musical experiences at night and the solitude and struggle in the daytime was going to be one of the general conditions of the tour.

Encouraging weeks followed, as I was greeted with warmth and enthusiasm everywhere I went. I guess the extensive press coverage of the tour, especially in the regional newspapers and TV-stations had generated a great deal of curiosity.

Repertoire

The concert programs varied from venue to venue in combining the music composed specifically for the event with standard gui-

tar literature and chamber music. Below is a list of new works composed for Klangveje.

- Svend Nielsen: Ballade, new solo work, premiered at Skagen Festival, Skagen Church, July 5th, 2013.
- Erik Winther: Så var det i de sommerlige Ånger, premiered at Nr. Lyngby Kirke, July 7th, 2013, together with Jakob Bangsø.
- Morten Ladehoff: Syrinx, premiered at Skive Church July, 9th, 2013.
- Bent Astrup: Guitar duo, premiered at Vendsyssel Kunstmuseum, July 6th, 2013, together with Jakob Bangsø.
- Christian Præstholm: Niels Ebbesen-Variationer, premiered in Sct. Mortens, Randers, July 16th, 2013
- Sisse Lunøe Nielsen: Mating, new duo work for guitar and objects, premiered July 14th, 2013 with the composer at Kunsternes Hus, Silkeborg.
- Per Dybro Sørensen: Etude, premiered at Køge Library, July 29th, 2013

Left: THE ROUTE.

*The green line marks the route of walking
– red dots locations of public concerts
Right: From Skagen kirke, July 5th*





The first bars of Christian Præstholt's "Niels Ebbesen-variationer"

Outcome

Looking back, Klangveje both generated new knowledge and reassured me in some of my initial hopes and beliefs. Two important aspects I understood differently after the tour are related to the performance situation itself:

1. The balance between use of muscular effort and relaxation.
2. The balance between mental control and "letting go".

The fact that I was unable to go through the normal routines of practicing and relaxing during the day, but instead arrived right before the concerts changed my perception of the situation. I felt better capable of letting myself "go" with the music, felt that I was sharing the music with the audience and better able to conceive a musical work as a whole – e.g. movements in a piece of music felt more strongly connected to one another. I experienced that when focused on the music itself the amount of physical effort required in the performance was not that big. I think this was partly due to the physical fatigue after walking – I was simply not able to focus on trying to control every detail and had to rely on my preparations and prior ex-

periences. So whatever amount of adrenalin my body produced was a welcome dose; often I felt that my fingers and hands responded even better than in past concerts.

So when focused on the music itself, listening attentively to the textures, sound and motivic gestures, the amount of physical effort required in a performance situation seems to diminish. A certain level of general physical exercise before a performance is likely to enable a calibration of muscular tension, thus finding a poise that enhances the concentration and facilitates a positive mental attitude. Literature on performance suggests that a mental state mainly relying on automated skills, spontaneity and sub consciousness is optimal for performance of music².

When trying to deliberately control every musical detail often the physical effort and muscular tension rises – when letting go and trying to react more spontaneously the muscular exhaustion diminishes. Nobel prize winner, Daniel Kahneman in his 2011 book "THINKING, FAST and SLOW"³ define two systems of thought: System 1 is described as fast, automatic, emotional,

subconscious whereas System 2 is described as slow, effortful, logical, calculating and conscious. The slow, "working" system required for systematic, slow and deliberate learning should thus be predominant in the practice room whereas the fast, intuitive and automatic system is the most important while performing on stage.

This insight is most useful in my direct work with students when preparing for e.g. concerts and competitions.

Passing on learning outcome

Preparing and carrying out Klangveje enabled me to pass on broader and deeper knowledge. The key aspects are:

Performance:

- Working with finding the "Flow" in the performance situation - working with the change between the fast and slow system of thought.
- The different use of same in the practice room and on stage.
- Fine-tuning the balance between physical and mental relaxation and effort
- No forcing the music
- Enjoying the performance itself
- Embracing all kinds of reactions from audience

Selling and Curating:

- Connecting repertoire with a story
- Curation of programmes connected to both partners and venues
- PR relations, handling press
- Planning and dealing with logistics

During Klangveje, the audience often responded very emotionally to the concerts. Did the story of the tour, my long

BIO

*Exceeding instrumental boundaries, guitarist **Frederik Munk Larsen** is pursuing a path of uncompromising artistic curiosity and quality. Determined in searching for the limits of expression he is devoted to exploring musical gestures and textures in the extreme. This approach has led to collaborations with leading european composers and to reviews like "Munk Larsen proves in these works his fluency and enthusiasm, such that rigour and spontaneity crackle through every bar" (The Gramophone, UK) or "Frederik Munk Larsen drew a stunning array of percussive sounds from the guitar.." (The New York Times, US).*

Composers like a.o. Simon Steen-Andersen, Bent Sørensen, or Niels Rønsholdt have written solo works for Frederik Munk Larsen and he has premiered more than 150 works.

A multiaward winner both as a soloist and chamber musician, he was awarded prizes by "DAAD", the "Irgens Berg's artists prize", the 1st prize in Yamaha of Europe's music competition, as well as being a prizewinner in the National Danish Radio's "Chamber-music Competition". He appears on 13 CD's both solo and with various ensembles.

Concert tours have taken him to festivals in North and South America, Europe, the Nordic Countries and China, both as soloist with orchestra, in solo recitals and with ensembles like Scenatet (DK), Curious Chamber Players (SWE) and Duo Hellqvist/Munk (SWE/DK). In recent seasons he appeared as a soloist with Copenhagen Philharmonic, Aarhus Symphony Orchestra and the Aalborg Symphony in concertos by Rodrigo and Simon Steen-Andersen.

Frederik Munk Larsen was born in 1974 and studied with Erling Moldrup, Roberto Aussel and Alex Garrobé in Denmark, Germany and Spain. He is Associate Professor and head of the classical guitar programme at the Royal Academy of Music in Aarhus, Denmark.



walks and efforts of getting to the places change their attitude? Were the story and the many articles in local media attracting a slightly different group of people? Was it just coincidences, the choice of venues, the way of performing or maybe the music itself?

The only reply I can think of is to get in the boots again and share the questions with others in a future edition of Klangveje.

Notes:

¹ *Kunstfondens bestillingshonorarer samt Kom-
ponist-foreningens produktionspulje*

² See for example Don Greene, Phd, "Performance
Success" (2002, Routledge)

³ Daniel Kahneman, (Farrar, Straus & Giroux,
2011)

KLANGVEJE FACTS

Duration: a total of 27 days, from July 5th-17th and July 21st to August 3rd.

Distance walked: 602 km

Public transportation:

4 ferries "Feggesund-færgen", "Århus-Odden", "Hundested-Rørvig" and "Borholmer-færgen".

Gear

Guitar: Daniel Friederich, 2006

Case: BAM cases, lightweight guitarcase.

Backpack: Osprey

Boots: Hanwag, Yack edition.

Musicians

Klitkoret

Jens Chr. Wandt, voice

Jakob Bangsø, guitar

Sisse Lunøe, object

Mikkel Egelund Nielsen, guitar

Anna Rebekka Falk, Flute

Sponsors

The Danish Arts Council

Danish Composers' Society,

Produktionspuljen

Akustikken, www.akustikken.dk

SNOWMASK

Concerts

15 official public concerts; 3 additional informal concert performances.

Venues

07-04: Skagen Kirke, Skagen Festival

07-05: Vendsyssel Museum

07-06: Nr. Lyngby kirke

07-09: Kirsten Kjær's Museum

07-11: Skive kirke

07-14: Sinding kirke

07-14: Kunsternes hus,

Silkeborg

07-16: Sct Mortens kirke,

Randers

07-17: Aarhus Domkirke

07-21: Shelter, Sj. Odde

07-24: Private Home, Hornbæk

07-25: Humlebæk,

Gl. Mejerivej 6.

07-26: Random Café in

Hellerup, Cph.

07-26: Frederiksberg slotskirke

07-27: Køge kirke

07-30: Bornholms højskole

07-31: Nexø frikirke

08-03: Svanekegaarden

Additional repertoire performed:

Songs by Henrik Rung as well

as works by J. S. Bach, J. Ibert,

A. Barrios, M. Llobet, F. Sor,

J. Dowland, F. Tarrega, A.

Piazzolla and B. Britten formed

the remaining repertoire.

Press

TV: Nordjyske Media, TV2

Nord Interview, recording and broadcast from Aalbæk harbour.

TV2 Bornholm: Reportage and interview, broadcasts on TV2

Bornholm

TV2, "Landet Rundt"

Radio

DRP4, live broadcasting from the hike between Langå and Ulstrup

DRP2: Interview and broadcast of recording.

Newspapers, Printed articles, interviews and reviews:

Jyllandsposten

Kristeligt Dagblad

Nordjyske Stiftstidende

Vendelboposten

Skagens avis

Onsdagsavisen Skagen

Midtjyllands Avis

Ekstra posten Midtjylland

Randers Amtsbavis

Aarhus Stiftstidende

Køge Lokaltavis

Bornholmstidende

Denne Uges Bornholm

Bornholms Lokal avis

Optakt

Links

www.klangveje.dk

<https://www.facebook.com/soundtrails>

www.frederikmunklarsen.dk

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