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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

The Trailer Project

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts

in

Contemporary Music Performance

by

Berglind María Tómasdóttir

Committee in charge:

Professor John Fonville, Chair
Professor Anthony Burr
Professor Louis Hock
Professor Tara Knight
Professor Katharina Rosenberger

2013

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2013

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to Sigga and Svana who are two.

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Lastly I would like to thank my husband Sæmundur Ari Halldórsson for his patience, love, and support.

VITA

Education

- 2013 Doctor of Musical Arts. University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, USA.
- 2001 Diplomeksamen. Royal Danish Academy of Music, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- 1998 Performance Diploma. Reykjavík College of Music, Reykjavík, Iceland.
- 1997 Music Education Diploma. Reykjavík College of Music, Reykjavík, Iceland.

Selected performances and projects

- 2013 The Caravan Concerts, a documentary by Berglind Tómasdóttir. Screening at Skjaldborg Documentary Film Festival, Iceland.
- Bambaló for solo flute by Berglind Tómasdóttir, commissioned by the National Flute Association, Inc. for the 2013 High School Soloist Competition, New Orleans, LA.

- 2012 I'm an Island by Berglind Tómasdóttir at Reykjavík Arts Festival. Harpa, Reykjavík, Iceland.
- Performing the Flute, a video documentary by Berglind Tómasdóttir.
- Screening at Skjaldborg Documentary Film Festival, Iceland.
- 2011 Solo flute recital and a duo concert with Pablo Gomez at CMMAS, Morelia, Mexico.
- Home as in Heima. REDCAT, Los Angeles.
- Rockriver Mary. A performance at MSPS New Music Festival, Shreveport, Louisiana.
- Rockriver Mary. Solo flute concerts in a caravan in various places around Snæfellsnes and Reykjavík, Iceland.
- 2010 Concert at Skálholt Sommer Concerts Festival, Iceland with Pablo Gomez, Tiffany DuMouchelle and Frank Aarnink.
- Concert at Reykjavík Arts Festival with Njúton and The Formalist Quartet.
- Iceland premiere of G. Grisey's Vortex Temporum and a new piece by Atli Ingólfsson.
- 2008 Sound installation at Skaftfell. A collaboration with Birta Guðjónsdóttir.
- Seyðisfjörður, Iceland.
- Concerts in Við Djúpið Festival, Listasumar in Akureyri Festival and Skálholt Sommer Concerts Festival.
- Performance with Tinna Þorsteinsdóttir at Bang on a Can's Marathon at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, California.

2006 Aton Ensemble recital at Nordic Music Days, Reykjavík, Iceland. USA tour with Aton Ensemble. Recitals at UCSD, CalArts, Mills College and Stanford University, amongst other places.
Solo recital at Skálholt Summer Concerts Festival, Skálholt, Iceland.

2001-2008

Different recitals as soloist, with Njúton/Aton Ensemble and the Icelandic Flute Ensemble amongst others, at Dark Music Days, Við Djúpið Festival, Sigurjón Ólafsson Museum Summer Concerts, Mývatn Summer Concerts, Reykjavík Arts Festival, and Young Nordic Music Festival.

Selected recordings

2007 Roto con moto and other works composed for Njúton 1999-2006. CD released through Bad Taste Records.

2003 Icelandic Music by Thorkell Sigurbjörnsson. Soloist with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy. CD released through the Japanese label Octavia Records.

2003-2007

Various recordings for the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service, as soloist, with the Aton Ensemble and the Icelandic Flute Ensemble.

Selected grants and honors

2008-2013

Graduate Fellowship. University of California, San Diego.

2011 Graduate Travel Grant. University of California, San Diego.

Stipend from the Icelandic State Music Fund.

2009 Thor Thors Grant from the American-Scandinavian Foundation.

2008 Artist's Stipend from the Icelandic State (6 months).

Fulbright recipient.

2007 Stipend from the Icelandic State & Reykjavík Loftbrú.

2006 Stipend from the Association of Icelandic Musicians.

2004 Artist's Stipend from the Icelandic State (12 months).

2000 Erasmus Scholarship.

1997 Nordplus Scholarship.

Other

2009-2011

Freelance program producer at the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service, Radio 1.

2004-2008

Radio programming/hosting, and an editor at the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service, Radio 1.

2007-2008

Member of the Nordic Music Days Program Committee.

2005-2006

Icelandic Music Awards Managing Director.

2004-2007

Skálholt Summer Concerts Festival Managing Director.

2002 Member of the Young Nordic Music Committee.

2001-2007

Flute teacher at various music schools in Iceland.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Trailer Project

by

Berglind María Tómasdóttir

Doctor of Musical Arts in Contemporary Music Performance

University of California, San Diego, 2013

Professor John Fonville, Chair

For quite a while I have been fascinated by the effect a concert setting has on a listener's perception of a live music performance. In 2011, I started a project based on that interest, which I called The Trailer Project. This document addresses this project from the 2011 concert tour, during which I traveled around Iceland and gave flute performances inside a caravan, to a documentary I made about the tour, entitled The Caravan Concerts. The documentary also serves as an autobiographical work about my exploration of my musical identity.

Introduction

In August of 2011, I went touring around Iceland. Dressed as a cowgirl, I performed under the name Rockriver Mary and gave concerts inside a caravan. For three days, I traveled around the Snæfellsnes peninsula and parked the caravan in villages and rural places where I then gave flute performances. As a part of Reykjavík Culture Night, my final destination was Grandi, an industrial area by the harbor. The music I played was diverse, ranging from J.S. Bach to Tristan Murail to old Icelandic lullabies, and mostly consisted of works I have played extensively over the years – kind of my all-time favorites.

Documented by the filmmaker Erlendur Sveinsson, this project forms the subject of my documentary entitled *The Caravan Concerts*, an auto-ethnographical and self-exploratory documentary about the search for a musical identity. The documentary consists of footage from the tour: flute performances, my interaction with the audience as well as confrontational monologues. Furthermore, it includes dream sequences that reflect on my thoughts about a musical identity, and which also present an inner self, in contrast to the reality presented in the documentary.

The idea behind the concert tour was to discover the way in which a performance space affects the perception of the music performance, by the listener as well as the performer. Does it matter how we present the music and where we choose to perform it? This paper addresses the project in a broad sense: the concert tour, the making of the

documentary, and how the overall concept continues to be present in my work. It is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is a description of the project, the concept, its aims. I discuss my alter ego Rockriver Mary and the music played during the tour. In the second chapter, I describe the process of making a documentary, a genre often defined as a creative treatment of actuality. Although based on “a real story”, I discuss how I chose to tell this story as the filmmaker as well as the subject, and how this involved constant decision making on what to include and what to exclude. The third chapter addresses the potential of the project and how it has continued to influence my work. Finally, I elaborate on the idea behind the Trailer Project and my results, which indicate that music performances rely heavily on how they are framed and presented while simultaneously, all you need for a musical event to take place is a musician and a listener.

PART ONE: THE BACKGROUND

Go anywhere, stop anywhere, escape taxes and rent -- this is irresistible.

– Anonymous, taken from *Garden of Eden on Wheels* ¹

The idea

The project was born out of a class centered around sound installation art I enrolled in at The University of California, San Diego in 2011. The idea can be traced to thoughts about creating an alternative setting for a musical performance. Turning a mobile home, primarily associated with traveling and/or those individuals often referred to as *trailer trash*, into a concert hall came about along those lines. I was fascinated by the idea of being mobile and thus constantly being able to reach new audiences; to play for people that would not otherwise attend my concerts. It would provide me the opportunity to travel to different places, and to place the caravan in different settings seemed both liberating and far away from the rigorous setting of the classical concert hall.

¹ *Garden of Eden on Wheels* (Los Angeles: The Museum Of Jurassic Technology) p. 4

I found the cultural clash of the trailer and the highbrow classical music interesting. I should mention that my interest was primarily me, myself and I rather than reaching new audiences for their own sake. Everything is accessible to everyone today, at least in Snæfellsnes. I was interested in exploring my musical identity by challenging myself in this manner, the intention being to make a auto-ethnographical and, therefore, a self-exploratory study by confronting new audiences under unusual circumstances. I wanted to break out of the concert hall, the formality around classical music and the ritual of classical concerts.

I had grown tired of classical concerts, or more precisely, of playing the flute within the conventional concert hall setting. Perhaps I had never found that a very natural setting to express myself. Who was I? I wanted to try something that would force me to confront my musical self about which I felt I had a vague idea. How does one define one's identity if one's musical identity is just what one happens to get paid for playing during the performance at hand? Apart from the idea of the orchestra musician who has little or no control of what she is to play. I found it uncomfortable not to be able to define myself as an artist through my own music. Yes, I had issues with being "just" an interpreter of other people's music. It would be tempting to engage in a further discussion about classical music education and its lack of cultivating creativity, but I am not going down that road, as that is not the subject of this paper. Its subject is rather the project of taking classical music out of the concert hall and into a caravan, and then turning the whole thing into a documentary.

Preparing the tour

As already mentioned, The Trailer Project was born out of a seminar on sound installation art. During the spring of 2011 the project idea was submitted to the Nordic Culture Fund under the title Moving Music. The following is an excerpt from the initial proposal:

The idea behind the project Moving Music derived from my contemplations on the traditional setting of a classical concert. I first attended a classical concert when I was about 16 years old. The Iceland Symphony Orchestra was playing and I remember being a bit horrified with the whole situation, wondering why everyone was so dead serious.

The aim of the project is:

- Take the classical and contemporary music out of its conventional context.
- To give people in remote and rural areas access to live music performance.
- Experiment with the intimacy of a live performance in an extremely small venue.

The emphasis will be on contemporary music, but the performers will also improvise and play classical music. The idea is to create a friendly and welcoming atmosphere where an audience can enjoy live music, away from the conventional concert ritual. The project is an experiment in listening and an attempt to break the boundaries between performers and listeners. The performers will interact with the listeners by talking to them about the music being played -- the music is a mutual experience of the performer and the listener.

The starting point for the project is that musical performance is the performer's and listener's mutual experience. The long-term goal is to get

a better idea of how we perceive music: is the listening and performing experience in a trailer very different from the one in a concert hall? How does it affect the relationship between the performer and the listener to be in such a close setting?²

This excerpt from the proposal reaffirms my intention to break down “the social barriers”. Furthermore, it demonstrates an interest in creating a new framework for my flute playing, a more laid-back and casual way of communicating with the audience, where the performance space allows (or even welcomes) social contact between the performer and the audience.

Despite its good intentions, the proposal to the Nordic Fund was rejected and it was not until July of 2011, when I received a grant for the project from the Icelandic Ministry of Education and Culture that things got moving. The grant amount, equivalent to about \$800, turned out to be just about enough to rent a caravan for a week and cover the fuel costs for the tour. That’s when I decided to go for it. I scheduled the tour for about a month later, set up a travel blog and started planning the trip.³ I knew the documentation of the project would be important.

On August 9, I wrote:

People have been asking me why I am doing this, why give concerts in a trailer. There are numerous reasons:

² The proposal was sent to the Nordic Culture Fund http://www.nordiskkulturfond.org/?sc_lang=en

³ The blog can be viewed here: <http://berglindmaria.wordpress.com>

I want to share music in an intimate context.

I want to explore my country through a musical experience. (Not so sure about this one though.)

I want to play for another audience than the regular Reykjavík concert goers.

I want to get rid of the “concert hall” and communicate with people through the music I play.

I’m curious to see the reactions.

Why not?⁴

This idea is similar to the original project proposal. From then until the tour began, I was busy preparing the project, and soon found out that reality required some compromises. This is where the discrepancy between the ideal and the reality started to unfold. For instance, renting a caravan in Iceland with relatively short notice was easier said than done, and the options were limited to say the least. Finally I found one, a privately owned and reasonably priced 2007 model. Perhaps not exactly what I had envisioned, but it would work. The Snæfellsnes peninsula was my eventual choice, as it is relatively close to Reykjavík where I was based, and has various towns to visit, in addition to its beautiful landscape. I would, of course, have liked to travel more widely over a longer period of time, but this was what reality offered. I planned the trip to coincide with Reykjavík Culture Night on August 17th, which would be my final destination, and the grand finale of the tour. I was fortunate enough to be able to borrow a

⁴ Berglind María Tómasdóttir, a.k.a. Rockriver Mary: The Trailer Project - Diary
<http://berglindmaria.wordpress.com/>
Iceland <http://berglindmaria.wordpress.com/2011/08/09/iceland/>

Ford Explorer from my parent-in-law with which to tow the caravan. On August 13th I was good to go.

What I've addressed here are the basics of where, why, and how the idea behind The Trailer Project came about. The next chapter focuses on some of my influences while preparing the project.

Influences

“I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.”⁵

This is the opening of Peter Brook's 1968 book, *The Empty Space*. Although Brook's subject is the theatre, those words could easily be adapted to a musical performance -- for any performance to happen the same rules apply. One individual performs music and another listens and voilà, we have a concert. The space is of secondary importance. This is the fundamental rule of a music performance.

Or is it?

⁵ Brook, Peter: *The Empty Space* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1968) p. 9

In *Musicking*, Christopher Small discusses the modern concert hall, describing it as a “sacred space”:

Performers and listeners alike are isolated here from the world of their everyday lives. Commonly, there are not even windows through which light from outside may enter. Nor does any sound enter from that world, and none of the sounds that are made here will be allowed to escape out into it.⁶

Furthermore he writes:

The very form of the auditorium tells us that the performance is aimed not at a community of interacting people but at a collection of individuals, strangers even, who happen to have come together to hear the musical works. We leave our sociability behind at the auditorium doors. [sic] Nor does the design of the building allow any social contact between performers and listeners. It seems, in fact, designed expressly to keep them apart. It is not only that the orchestra musicians enter and leave the building by a separate door from the audience and remain out of sight when not actually playing, but also that the edge of the platform forms a social barrier that is for all practical purposes as impassable as a brick wall. Not even the wraparound design of certain modern auditoriums, such as Berlin’s Philharmonie or Toronto’s Roy Thompson Hall, can disguise the fact that a concert hall houses two separate groups of people who never meet. The technology of the concert hall has produced a gain in acoustic clarity, but that clarity is balanced by a loss of sociability. That, of course, is the way of technologies; none comes without its price. It seems that our contemporary classical music culture feels that the gain is worth the loss.⁷

⁶ Small, Christopher: *Musicking* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998) p. 25-28

⁷ Ibid.

Here, Small addresses what he calls “loss of sociability”, a definition of the classical concert hall which resonated a lot with my own feelings towards the phenomenon. The relationship between the two groups, as described in the text, was something that I wanted to experiment with. I wanted to determine how the music I was performing was perceived by its audience in a more direct way, in a manner similar to Brook’s previously stated idea. Speaking of sociability, however, it could be argued that shared listening is one form of sociability: one senses that one is not alone in the auditorium. Sometimes it is possible to hear people’s reactions: laughter, snoring and coughing between movements. In general though, sounds coming from the listeners are not considered appropriate – on the contrary, they are perceived as a disturbance. Except for applause of course, but only in the appropriate places. It’s all about the listening: the clear acoustics of the auditorium are “balanced by a loss of sociability”.

To pinpoint influences on the project now that two years have passed is somewhat difficult. Influences come from all over. One thing I can say with certainty is that at the time I was occupied and inspired by ideas of displacement, disembodiment and illusion, as they play out in the works of various sound artists, including Cardiff & Miller, Christina Kubisch (her soundwalks and early flute works), Susan Philipsz (Lowlands) and Laurie Anderson (Viophonograph). The disembodiment one finds in works such as *The Forty Party Motet* or the illusion of *The Paradise Institute* by Cardiff & Miller was particularly inspiring. The documentary adds yet another layer of displacement to the idea

of performing classical flute music in a caravan dressed as a cowgirl. Inviting audiences into the caravan through the documentary is an illusion in itself.

In *The Paradise Institute* (2001), Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller explore the experience of cinema:

Viewers approach a simple plywood pavilion, mount a set of stairs, and enter a lush, dimly lit interior complete with red carpet and two rows of velvet-covered seats. Once seated, they peer over the balcony onto a miniature replica of a grand old movie theatre created with hyper-perspective. This is the first in a series of illusions orchestrated by Cardiff and Miller. Viewers then put on the headphones provided and the projection begins.⁸

The illusion of a grand old movie theatre, created within the space of a few square miles, is intriguing. Another layer of this work is the soundtrack the viewers listen to through headphones, a mixture of the soundtrack to the film being shown on the screen and the sounds of the imagined audience:

At least two stories run simultaneously. There is the “visual film” and its accompanying soundtrack that unfolds before the viewers; layered over this is the “aural action” of a supposed audience. The film is a mix of genres: it is part noir, part thriller, part sci-fi, and part experimental. What is more particular about the installation is the personal binaural “surround sound” that every individual in the audience experiences through the headphones. The sense of isolation each might feel is broken by intrusions seemingly coming from inside the theatre. A cellphone belonging to a member of the audience rings. A close “female friend” whispers intimately in your ear: “Did you check the stove before we left?” Fiction and reality

⁸ Cardiff Miller <http://www.cardiffmiller.com/index.html>
Paradise Institute http://www.cardiffmiller.com/artworks/inst/paradise_institute.html

become intermingled as absorption in the film is suspended and other realities flow in.⁹



Figure 1: The Paradise Institute by Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller.

⁹ Ibid.



Figure 2: The Paradise Institute by Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller.¹⁰

This work evokes questions about the illusions created in a cinema. It made me think of transformed spaces.

Another work by Janet Cardiff was influential. *Forty Part Motet* (2001) is a reworking of *Spem in Alium* by the renaissance composer Thomas Tallis. Forty voices were recorded separately and played through forty speakers, placed ovally in a gallery space. The artist comments:

While listening to a concert you are normally seated in front of the choir, in traditional audience position. With this piece I want the audience to be able to experience a piece of music from the viewpoint of the singers. Every performer hears a unique mix of the piece of music. Enabling the

¹⁰ Ibid.

audience to move throughout the space allows them to be intimately connected with the voices. It also reveals the piece of music as a changing construct. As well I am interested in how sound may physically construct a space in a sculptural way and how a viewer may choose a path through this physical yet virtual space.

I placed the speakers around the room in an oval so that the listener would be able to really feel the sculptural construction of the piece by Tallis. You can hear the sound move from one choir to another, jumping back and forth, echoing each other and then experience the overwhelming feeling as the sound waves hit you when all of the singers are singing.¹¹

This piece also includes recordings from before and after the singing, coughing and comments by the choir members, and thereby “lets us in on the transformation that the singers make from ordinary, frail people into vessels of harmonious noise.”¹² I should mention that I have seen a live performance of neither of these works. However, reading about them, and seeing a video documentation was inspiring and got me thinking about alternative ways for presenting music in a concert hall. I was fascinated by the idea of enabling the audience to do their own “mixing” by walking around the speakers, each projecting an individual and disembodied voice. In the Trailer Project, both on the tour and in the film, the same thing happens: the viewer gets to hear the music performed from angles he would never experience in a concert hall. This is why close-ups and shots facing the audience are pivotal to the film.¹³ I was intrigued by the idea of allowing the

¹¹ Cardiff Miller <http://www.cardiffmiller.com/index.html>
The Forty Part Motet <http://www.cardiffmiller.com/artworks/inst/motet.html>

¹² Cardiff Miller <http://www.cardiffmiller.com/index.html>
Bloomberg.com <http://www.cardiffmiller.com/press/texts/bloomberg01.01.pdf>

¹³ Various examples can be found in the film. For instance when I’m playing *Pièce* by Ibert for a couple from Switzerland early in the film or when we hear an excerpt from Tristan Murail’s *Unanswered Questions* towards the end of the film.

audience to perceive the music from an alternative perspective, from the viewpoint of the performer, as in Forty Part Motet and thus reveal the magic. To create the illusion of a grand space within an extremely compact space as in The Paradise Institute seemed to something I myself would like to experience as a member of an audience. And that is always a good starting point.

Although the following work on the UC San Diego's campus did not exist in 2011, I would like to mention it here. The following is a description of the piece:

The work known as Fallen Star by Do Ho Suh's Fallen Star is the 18th permanent sculpture commissioned by UCSD's Stuart Collection. It reflects Suh's on-going exploration of themes around the idea of home, cultural displacement, the perception of our surroundings, and how one constructs a memory of a space. His own feelings of displacement when he arrived in the U.S. from Seoul, Korea in 1991 to study led him to measure spaces in order to establish relationships with his new surroundings. He had to physically and mentally readjust.¹⁴

Perhaps that is exactly what I was doing. I had been living in California for three years, and had to mentally readjust as California is different from Iceland in various ways. The idea of playing European music in concert halls in California somehow didn't fully make sense. My current surroundings in The United States with its rich automobile culture and wide open spaces were perhaps my biggest inspiration. The Wild West fueled the idea of being on the road in your home on wheels. And that is how Rockriver Mary entered the picture.

¹⁴ Stuart Collection <http://stuartcollection.ucsd.edu>
Do Ho Suh Fallen Star 2012 <http://stuartcollection.ucsd.edu/artists/suh.shtml>

Rockriver Mary: The Alter Ego

The idea of performing under the alter ego Rockriver Mary came about a month prior to the tour, quite naturally in relation to the caravan. Ranging from The Beatles to Lady Gaga, the use of alter egos is common among musicians. In my case the idea seemed a natural extension of the caravan, a way to detach myself from the world of classical music with its attendant stereotypes. The alter ego had the function of a mask as I was performing in the caravan. It provided me the opportunity to be somebody else, which is a liberating element in itself. The name, Rockriver, is a direct English translation of my own name, Berglind. A long time ago, an American friend suggested this could be the American version of my name – Rockriver Mary instead of Berglind María. When I started playing around with a cowboy identity, I recalled that name and thought it fitted the alter ego perfectly. Wearing a cowboy hat, I was somewhat less myself, and, became someone else. Why did I want to dress as a cowboy? The project, after all, was about figuring out who I am as a musician. I think it was essentially the need to create some theatrical barrier to the performance. I was less *naked* on stage that way. I was in character, a character to whom it made sense to perform in a caravan. And the good thing was that it required no acting, I could still be me but at the same time I was able to hide behind the hat. Although the project was about my search for a musical identity, I still wanted to alienate my personal identity from the project. A built-in paradox there! By creating an American self, performing in a trailer became more authentic: it made more

sense to Rockriver Mary than to me. The outfit consisted of a cowboy hat, a cowboy shirt, a pair of jeans and boots. Furthermore, I always wore red lipstick which oddly enough no one has commented on, despite it being common knowledge (amongst flautists at least) that wearing lipstick whilst playing the flute is difficult. The reason for the lipstick can only be explained by making this confession: I'm vain! I wanted to look good as I was being filmed.

As mentioned before, I had been living in the States for a while and, while being completely fictional and in no way relevant to my everyday life as a graduate student at UC San Diego, it was nevertheless an expression of showing cultural assimilation. I was aware of the fact that the United States is no longer full of cowboys, or at least not La Jolla: not the way I was presenting that identity. I was being nostalgic, referring to one of my first impressions of America. As I was growing up, I read a lot of comics, including the Belgian comics about Lucky Luke and his adventures in the Wild West. The last picture of each book would show him riding his horse towards the sunset while singing "I'm a poor, lonesome cowboy, far away from home". I really liked that image, full of continuing adventures, freedom and open space.



Figure 3: An image from the Belgian comics about Lucky Luke by Morris and Goscinny.

In *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm defines the term “invented tradition” in the following way:

“Invented tradition” is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.¹⁵

¹⁵ Hobsbawm, Eric: *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press/eBook Amazon Digital)

The “suitable historic past” I was referring to, existed in my imagination as a child, inspired by books I read and the television I watched, in which the cowboy and the life on the frontier is highly romanticized/altered. People who live in trailers nowadays are usually not looked upon from such a romantic perspective, the association more commonly associated with poverty, social problems, and terms such as *trailer trash*. In that sense, I was picking up the thread from my childhood imagination, playing around with naiveté.

My first experiments with Rockriver Mary began in the spring of 2011. One of the experiments resulted in a short video in which I play a song I wrote that same spring, entitled I’m a Lonesome Cowboy. In the video, I handle the flute as if it were a weapon, to emphasize the western reference. In May, the video was screened at the Unusual Encounter Festival in the mountains east of San Diego, followed by a live performance of the song. The song is featured in the documentary, both toward the end and during the credits.¹⁶

¹⁶ An excerpt from the song can be heard after I discuss my disappointment with the tour and ride “into the sunset”, a scene influenced by the previously mentioned image of Lucky Luke.



Figure 4: An image from The Caravan Concerts.

In July, I filmed another video dressed as a cowboy in front of a trailer I accidentally ran into at Torrey Pines Gliderport, La Jolla. The song includes lyrics about a girl who travels from Iceland to San Diego to play the flute, but discovers “it wasn’t that much fun to play, the same old flute she had been playing anyway”. In the video, I play a toy piano to emphasize the awkward, built-in proportions of the project, turning a trailer into a concert hall. I used an excerpt from this video as an epilogue or the third dream sequence in the documentary, so as to underline the discrepancy between reality and the original idea.

The third video I made was shot in the hallway of a hotel in Boston, Massachusetts, while I was on my way to Iceland in August of 2011. The video includes the performance of the song Love Me Tender, sung into the flute as I simultaneously play

an accompaniment on the flute. Along with Bach's Sarabande, that song ended up being the tour's most frequently played piece of music. Both are featured in the documentary.

Although all of the videos were merely rough sketches and filmed very spontaneously, they served as important steps towards creating the identity of Rockriver Mary. They were evidence of a life in an environment different from Iceland. While I was performing, I showed the videos on an iPad in the trailer, to give an idea of Rockriver Mary's life in the United States, and to make her seem "more real". The videos suggested she had a past, and that she was from elsewhere. I was controlling the way she could be perceived, to prove and "to show" that she had a past. Photos and videos – both media that inhabit some sort of reality – helped in constructing her identity. As Susan Sontag states in her book *Regarding the Pain of Others*:

...a single photograph or filmstrip claims to represent exactly what was before the camera's lens. A photograph is supposed not to evoke but to show. That is why photographs, unlike handmade images, can count as evidence. But evidence of what?¹⁷

I should mention that I always wore the cowboy hat while I was playing the flute. A signal to myself and to the world that now I was now Rockriver Mary. Interestingly, no one commented on the way I was dressed but it certainly affected people's assumptions on about my identity. An example of that can be found in the beginning of the

¹⁷ [http://www.imagearts.ryerson.ca/michalak/html/CD8320/Sontag,%20Susan%20\(2003\)%20Regarding%20the%20Pain%20of%20Others.pdf](http://www.imagearts.ryerson.ca/michalak/html/CD8320/Sontag,%20Susan%20(2003)%20Regarding%20the%20Pain%20of%20Others.pdf)

documentary, where a group of Danish tourists are trying to figure out what kind of music I'll be performing. Their guess was country music. Little did they know...

The music I performed

I thought a lot about what to play on the tour. What did I want to present to the audience? What was my true musical self? Did it exist? Those were the questions that arose. At some point I thought about playing the ukulele and singing, utilizing my very limited skills as a ukulele player. Thankfully I decided against it, thinking it would potentially result in people assuming that my project was just a joke and that I was making fun of people, which certainly was not my intention. I was dead serious about my experiment. I decided to play the music with which I was most familiar, and which I was most comfortable playing, so as to give the audience the best of which I was capable. This turned out to be a very good decision to say the least; playing in the narrow space of the caravan was hard enough in itself, in addition to the cold weather resulting in a cold instrument, cold fingers etc. I seemed to have forgotten about that while preparing the project; the reality of an Icelandic summer which often is no summer. Perhaps three years in California had something to do with it.

Those following works became the most played music on the tour and can all be heard in the film:

Sarabande by J.S.Bach

Love Me Tender by Vera Matson and Elvis Presley

Unanswered Questions by T. Murail

Pièce by J. Ibert

Various songs, mostly Icelandic lullabies

This list represents some of the standard flute repertoire, perhaps a somewhat random selection of different styles and genres. But there is one thing those works have in common: a relatively slow tempo. Cold fingers make it difficult to play fast, and therefore I chose to play slow paced music. Furthermore, all of those works were “in my fingers”, as I had played them a lot over the years. Eventually, it felt like it didn’t matter what I was playing; I was performing the flute, dressed as a cowboy – that seemed to matter more, the music felt as if it were secondary.

What I have addressed here are ideas, influences and information regarding the Trailer Project. Now, I would like to move on to the subject of how I chose to tell the story via the documentary.



Figure 5: A poster by Frankie Martin for the first screening of the Caravan Concerts.

PART TWO: THE DOCUMENTARY

This is a documentary, and it is interesting, because it is real.

– Liner notes on the documentary *Let It Be*, anonymous

Creating a documentary

The idea of documenting the tour was an important part of the project for various reasons. I knew my memory would be flaky and I would need some sort of documentation in order to be able to analyze and discuss the tour afterwards. Through the images, I would be able to reconstruct and add to the reality. During the editing process I would be able to decide what to include and what to exclude.

With this in mind, it is interesting to consider the nature of documentaries. Commonsense assumptions about documentaries tell us they are about real people and reality and address real stories.¹⁸ All of this could apply to The Caravan Concerts. In his book, *Introduction to Documentary*, Bill Nichols states:

¹⁸ Those assumptions are for instance presented in the following book: Nichols, Bill: *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010) p. 7-10

It is certainly possible to argue that documentary film has never had a very precise definition. It remains common today to revert to some version of John Grierson's definition of documentary, first proposed in the 1930s, as the "creative treatment of actuality." This view acknowledges that documentaries are creative endeavors. It also leaves unresolved the obvious tension between "creative treatment" and "actuality." "Creative treatment" suggests the license of fiction, whereas "actuality" reminds us of the responsibilities of the journalist and historian.¹⁹

A creative treatment of actuality is very applicable to my film; I tried to approach the story in a creative way, whilst telling the story as it happened, or as close to it I could get and wanted to come.

The original intention was documentation by means of a travel log, photos and videos. As previously mentioned, shortly before the tour began I started a blog to document the process of preparing and executing the project. At the same time, I was very conscious of what I wrote down, resulting in a very thorough, if perhaps a little boring, travel log. Nevertheless, it provides a good overview of the whole process. A few days before the tour, filmmaker (and my husband's cousin) Erlendur Sveinsson offered to join me on the tour. His contribution to the project was extensive. Were it not for his involvement, I would not have all the footage, all the beautiful shots of the surroundings and my confessions to the camera (he was constantly suggesting that I talk about what was happening in real time). We ended up being a group of four: my husband Sæmundur Halldórsson, Erlendur, and his friend Judith Rooze, a Belgian art student who took a lot

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 6

of pictures which can be viewed on the project's blog.²⁰ Erlendur and I met briefly before the tour began, and decided to play it by ear, as opposed to organizing the tour around the filming. It soon became apparent though, that it was difficult to completely ignore the presence of the video camera, and in places where there weren't any people around, I started performing for the camera and the film project. Scenic places, with which Snæfellsnes abounds, were difficult to completely ignore while making a movie. As can be seen in the film, I quite frequently addressed the camera directly. Here, Erlendur's input was essential, as he was constantly thinking about how the footage could be presented in a documentary. Fairly quickly, I got used to being followed by a camera, and naturally it didn't hurt that I knew the cameraman very well and was comfortable in his presence. The team, Erlendur along with Sæmundur and Judith, became an extremely important part of the whole project in various ways. This comes through quite well in the film, as we watch them interact with the audience, help promote the concerts etc. Perhaps I wasn't such a lonesome cowboy after all.

²⁰ A selection of Judith's photos can be viewed here:
<http://berglindmaria.wordpress.com/2011/08/31/photos/>

From then till now

...to photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude.

– Susan Sontag: Regarding the Pain of Others

Over a year passed before I started looking at the footage. The original idea was that Erlendur would make the documentary, however that did not work out. When I finally started looking at the footage in the fall of 2012, I realized that at least I had enough material, as I had hours of footage which was a good start. I started picking out scenes that I really wanted to include in the film, both because they were amongst the pivotal moments of the tour, while others I found interesting from a visual and/or narrative perspective. I was convinced that the format of an essay documentary would be best suited to the material, i.e. the inclusion of a voiceover, which would reflect on the images in a personal way. Due, perhaps, to my lack of experience in filmmaking, I soon discovered that the film would be better off without adding that extra layer, the footage itself being fully capable of telling the story.

After I had figured out the main components of the movie, I decided to tell the story chronologically, simply because it made sense. I wanted to tell an honest story about human behavior and interaction through music. A story about how I gave classical flute concerts in a caravan in Iceland and how I mostly felt displaced in doing so. For the

sake of the story, I exaggerated the social failure with which I was confronted. In order to get a better idea of the documentary, I will now discuss the various elements of the film.

Brief analysis: The three elements

The footage can be divided into three elements:

1. the musical performances and the soundtrack
2. the interaction with the audience
3. the inner self: the confessions and the dream sequences

I will now discuss each element, and how they play out in the film.

1. the musical performances and the soundtrack

Due to the nature of the project, the performances that took place within the caravan are essential to the film. They are the fundamental element and the *raison d'être* of the whole project. I decided to use some of the major performances of the tour. The following events took place inside the caravan, and are all featured in the film: the first performance of the tour in Eldborg, where I performed for a group of Danish tourists; the second stop of the tour at Vegamót, where I encountered a couple from Switzerland; a performance for two children at nighttime in Hellissandur; a group eating ice cream that I

played for in front of a gas station in Grundarfjörður and finally the various performances on Reykjavík Culture Night. All of those performances were different from one another, and together they represent the diversity I encountered on the tour. The other musical performances in the film are the ones that took place in The Volcano Museum in Stykkishólmur and the gas station Vegamót, where I performed as I failed to persuade people to come inside the caravan. The scene in Vegamót leads into the confrontation where I express my disappointment with the project. Both performances that took place inside express a failure of the project, which had the mobile space at its core.

The dream sequences present a completely different soundscape and I discuss them separately.

In a previous version of the film I had added soundtrack based on my song called The Song, an instrumental version played by my friend Phil Skaller. I later realized that it was unnecessary, as the film was already full of sound and music: the live flute music plus the sound of the wind on location, which is present in almost every outdoor scene on the tour. In addition, there are two studio-recorded songs in the film. One is Love Me Tender, which became the most played song on the tour (we also hear fragments from that song played live in the film). The other song featured in the film is the project's *anthem* I'm a Lonesome Cowboy.

2. the interaction with the audience

The interaction with the audience has two different functions in the film: to show the audience's reaction to the music, and to inform the viewer about what is taking place

on the tour. An example of the former can be found at the very beginning, when a Danish man steps out of the caravan and shares his view on the performance, or when we see people walk pass the caravan without paying it any attention. Yet another example would be images of the audience during the performance, such as the scene when the two children are listening to a lullaby. An example of the latter is when I am explaining the tour to the Danish woman at the beginning of the film, or when I am attempting to get people to come and listen inside the caravan. The interaction with the people I encountered ties the film together and often says more than a thousand words.

3. the inner self: the confessions and the dream sequences

The confessions serve as a way to communicate with the audience of the film, and to keep them updated about my feelings. I ended up using relatively little of the monologues we had filmed, partly because it felt they were largely unneeded, as a lot of them are simply reflections on transpiring events, which is evident as one watches the film. Another reason is that some of it appears to be too directed for the style of the film, too calculated in a way.

I particularly liked the images of myself driving the car while discussing my search for an identity (at some point, I considered showing different images during those monologues); a vehicle takes you from one place to another which reflects nicely on the artistic journey I myself was undertaking.

The idea of another self as presented in the dream sequences can be traced to a project I was working on in 2012. This grew out of my studies on music and national identity and how certain clichés can be attached to music. The clichés around Icelandic music mainly involve nature, mythology and some sort of DIY-feel. The way I chose to play around with these ideas was inspired by ideas born out of 19th century nationalism. In a previous paper on my experiments with music and national identity I wrote:

The costume I wore in the scenes is influenced by one of the Icelandic national costumes, more precisely the one that belongs to the *maid of the mountains*. Ideas of a woman representing a nation were common in Europe in the 19th century. Examples of that are the German *Germania*, the French *Marianna* and the British *Britannia*. The female personification of Iceland is simply called *the mountain woman*, or *the maid of the mountains*. A drawing from 1866 by Eiríkur Magnússon, (a librarian in Cambridge, England, who translated Icelandic folk tales into English) became my primary source of inspiration. In a letter dated that same year Eiríkur explains:

The painting of a woman represents Iceland, she is wearing a crown made of ice which flames burst out of. The raven is sitting on her shoulder: Iceland's most peculiar bird, a carrier of news and knowledgeable, who is Óðinn's old friend -- the poets' favorite god, [sic] the woman is holding an old manuscript, a symbol of our literature and history.²¹

²¹ Vísindavefurinn <http://visindavefur.hi.is/> (The Icelandic Web of Science <http://www.why.is/>)
<http://visindavefur.hi.is/svar.php?id=6696>



Figure 6: The Maid of the Mountains, painting by German painter J. B. Zwecker according to Eiríkur's ideas.

In a visit to the National Museum of Iceland in January 2012, the idea of turning myself into some sort of a maid of the mountains came about. I became fascinated with the somewhat innocent spirit of the old images.²²

²² Tómasdóttir, Berglind: *I'm an Island* (Unpublished, 2012) p. 13

The otherness of the dream sequences present the inner self inspired by those ideas and occur in the film in relation to the confrontational monologues that take place in the car.

All three of the dream sequences show relatively static footage, as opposed to the handheld and shaky camera in the rest of the film. The first one was shot in Krýsuvík, Iceland in June 2012. Dressed as the Maid of the Mountains, I am sitting in front of an abandoned barn, playing a homebuilt instrument called hrokkur.



Figure 7: From dream sequence #1. Photo: Sæmundur Halldórsson

Inspired by hurdy gurdies and spinning wheels, this instrument was conceived and constructed in cooperation with sound artist Joe Mariglio. I wanted an instrument that I could physically embrace (like a harp), and that would reference manual labor such as the spinning wheel. The name refers to “rokkur” – the Icelandic word for a spinning wheel.

The “h” refers to “hjól” which can mean both “a bicycle” and “a wheel” in Icelandic. Furthermore, the verb “að rokka” in Icelandic means “to rock” which gives it a double, or even triple, meaning.

The music is a layered drone piece, played on the hrokkur, a remix from the first song composed for it, Veröld fláa, which can be heard in the second dream sequence. That one was filmed in the Imperial Sand Dunes in California in August 2012. Again dressed as the Maid of the Mountains, it shows me walking up a hill in the desert while we hear the song Veröld fláa sung and performed by me played on the hrokkur.



Figure 8: From dream sequence #2. A still from a video shot by Frankie Martin.

The third dream sequence is an excerpt from a previously mentioned video I shot in Gliderport, La Jolla in which I am playing a toy piano in front of a caravan. The odd proportions between the piano and myself reflect nicely on the project – the idea of turning a caravan into a concert hall.



Figure 9: From dream sequence #3. A still from a video shot by Berglind Tómasdóttir.

PART THREE: THE AFTERMATH

How did it go? The results

Documentary film speaks about situations and events involving real people (social actors) who present themselves to us as themselves in stories that convey a plausible proposal about, or perspective on, the lives, situations, and events portrayed. The distinct point of view of the filmmaker shapes this story into a way of seeing the historical world directly rather than into a fictional allegory.²³

It's interesting to examine my documentary with this definition in mind, especially the latter part, keeping in mind that I am both the subject and the filmmaker. The film is certainly about real people, and tells a real story. I tried to make the story interesting, which meant I needed to exaggerate and emphasize certain things. I tried to emphasize the failure of the project, how my performances were displaced and lacking the appropriate social context. Yet, when things worked out and I had appreciative audiences such as the Swiss couple or the two children, it was fantastic; a caravan became a concert hall.

As is evident upon viewing *The Caravan Concerts*, it soon became apparent that finding audiences was one of the major challenges of the tour around Snæfellsnes. There simply were not that many people around. The bulk of the audience consisted of foreign tourists, the local people seemed too busy running errands. In any case, they did not

²³ Nichols, Bill: *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010) p. 14

bother to take time out to listen to a flute player in a caravan. I became the lonesome cowboy who was far away from home, completely displaced. In that sense, the project is reminiscent of the following experiment conveyed in 2007, when The Washington Post conducted an experiment in context, perception and priorities, “as well as an unblinking assessment of public taste: In a banal setting at an inconvenient time, would beauty transcend?”²⁴ They asked violinist Joshua Bell to play at the L’Enfant Plaza Station in Washington, D.C. just before 8 a.m. on a Friday, in the middle of the morning rush hour. Armed with his Stradivari instrument, Bell played some of what are considered to be the highlights of Western classical music, including Bach’s Chaconne from Partita no. 2 in D Minor. In short, out of some 1100 hundred passers by, about seven stopped to listen, and 27 gave him money. The lesson of this experiment might be that there is a time and a place for everything. The article states how Joshua Bell’s playing became “art without a frame”. Another similar example would be when Sir Paul McCartney was mistaken for a busker while performing in a street car in New Orleans earlier this year. Those who realized it was the former Beatle, described it though as a “once in a lifetime experience”.²⁵ The similarities between these three events, the displacement of each artist at each time are evident and indicate that the framing is important to a music event.

²⁴ The Washington Post [http://www.washingtonpost.com/Pearls Before Breakfast http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/04/AR2007040401721.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/Pearls-Before-Breakfast/http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/04/AR2007040401721.html)

²⁵ Ultimate Classic Rock <http://ultimateclassicrock.com>
Paul McCartney mistaken for street busker in New Orleans <http://ultimateclassicrock.com/paul-mccartney-street-busker/>

My performances during Reykjavík Culture Night were very different, and created a contrast to the overall experience of the Snæfellsnes trip. For about eight hours I performed for a constant flow of people coming into the caravan prepared to be surprised, as people often are when attending a carnival-like event such as Reykjavík Culture Night. Nevertheless, at the end I was very displaced there as well, as becomes obvious towards the end of the film. Being surrounded by people drinking alcoholic beverages, while attending a live rock music concert next to the caravan, did not complement my performances particularly well. The end of the film sums this up quite well when I play a piece of music and no one is listening.

I did manage to share music in an intimate context, in the sense that the concerts took place in the compressed space of the caravan, which sometimes – but not always – resulted in a more intimate listening. I also explored my home country through a musical experience, playing for a different audience than usual. Furthermore, I did away with “the concert hall” by creating my own one on wheels. The setting affected the way I communicated with people. It drew attention to my identity, and perhaps away from the music (although this was not a goal in itself). In this sense, I succeeded in attaining most of my goals, as described in my blog prior to the tour.²⁶ Through the documentary, however, I was able to accomplish all of the above in a more successful way than during the tour itself: with the help of a camera, the listening can be very intimate, I got new audience – the filmgoers and I got rid of “the concert hall”. At the time of writing, The

²⁶ Berglind María Tómasdóttir, a.k.a. Rockriver Mary: The Trailer Project - Diary
<http://berglindmaria.wordpress.com/>
Iceland <http://berglindmaria.wordpress.com/2011/08/09/iceland/>

Caravan Concerts has been screened at one documentary film festival, Skjaldborg, in Iceland. The bulk of the audience consisted of film enthusiasts who would generally not attend my flute concerts.

For most of the tour, performing felt like a mixture between playing background music in a public space or at a party, and playing at an outreach concert where the audience consists of people that you *reach out to* – they are not necessarily there out of their own interest. The bulk of the people I encountered did not stop what they were doing to take some time out to listen. The people that did so were mostly foreign tourists. This might be because they were more open to experiencing and perceiving their surroundings, be it horse-riding, biking around the country, or listening to a flutist perform in a caravan. And they were not in a hurry. A performance I gave for the Swiss couple we encounter in the film was among the highlights of the tour. They were on a six week cycling tour of Iceland. As can be seen in the film, I played Jacques Ibert's *Pièce* for them. They told me that they frequently go to free concerts at the conservatory in their hometown, and that the standard of musical performance there is really good. It is interesting that two of my best listeners in the caravan were regular concert goers who knew the do's and don'ts of the game.

I was a bit surprised that the most frequently asked question revolved around my identity, not what I was doing or playing. I introduced myself as Berglind and/or Rockriver Mary, and added that I was living in the United States. Other questions revolved around where my origins (i.e. when foreigners were asking, which was usually

the case), the assumption being that I was not Icelandic, but – despite my American identity – not from the States either. Another common question was whether I was a professional; if I played in a symphony orchestra etc. This particular question probably arose from the need to categorize me somehow, i.e. to know if I was “real” or not. The Swiss couple asked what kind of music I mostly played, and a good many people asked if I was selling CD’s (which I wasn’t but perhaps should have). Presumably, the latter was a good sign. As previously mentioned, no one commented on my outfit or on why I was traveling in a trailer. By telling people I was studying at a university, which I hesitated to do (I was frequently confronted with a question about my occupation in the States), I revealed myself – it became clear that I was doing something “academic”, and somehow made the project feel less authentic. For the same reason, I hesitated to speak publicly about the tour, although I ended up presenting it in the main newspaper in Iceland. Due to the small size of the society, one interview in a newspaper is all it takes. As can be seen in the film, at least one person I encountered had read about the tour in the newspaper.



Figure 10: An interview from the newspaper Fréttablaðið. The little house in the background nicely replaces the caravan, using the Icelandic flag as curtains.

I came as a pleasant surprise to some of the audience, although this was a minority. To most of the people, especially the locals, I felt as if I were in their way. The exception was when I had children as listeners – to them, playing in a trailer seemed like a natural choice. They simply listened, and did so very carefully, as can be seen in the film. This project confirmed that children make great audiences. For most of the adults, I was out of context and didn't make sense. Those who stopped to listen, needed some sort of a confirmation of who I was; they needed to "frame" me somehow.

Driving the SUV while towing the caravan proved exhausting, especially when it was windy, as was frequently the case. All the driving and the cold windy weather made it a challenge to be constantly performing for strangers in the caravan. To play within the very small, cold, and acoustically dry space of the caravan made performing in a concert hall with its ideal acoustics seem easy by comparison.

The audience for Reykjavík Culture Night was very different from audiences in Snæfellsnes. When people go downtown on that day, they want to be surprised. I received a lot of very positive comments on the project over the course of the day – how enjoyable it was, unusual, creative, etc. Also, a lot of very supportive friends and family visited me in the caravan. As evening arrived, though, it became more and more evident that I was out of my “natural” setting: the classical concert hall. The caravan was parked right outside a venue where rock bands were performing, and as they started playing, I noticed the beautiful harmony between the performers and the audience. The music was a part of a culture and a community; it had some sociability. I stopped playing when people started getting seriously intoxicated. I was out of context, or “art without the appropriate frame”.

In the trailer, the audience’s main questions revolved around my identity. The closeness, between myself as a performer and the listeners, forced me to confront myself with questions about my musical identity and what I stand for in music. The overwhelming effect of the whole experience (the driving, the weather, etc.) took its toll and it became largely dominated by the overall performance of the trip. Giving concerts in ideal circumstances seemed easy in comparison to this experience. Thus, it could be

argued that the tour emphasized the benefits of performing classical flute music under ideal conditions: within a defined space for people who are there to listen, or to perform within “the right frame”.

How did The Trailer Project affect me as a musician and an artist? Perhaps it made me appreciate the sacred space of the concert hall, the ideal setting in which to play classical music for people who are there to listen. It is, after all, difficult to play the flute with cold fingers, in addition to feeling as if one is forcing people to listen. It also made me confront what I stood for as a musician. Why do I play the music I choose to play? For whom do I play it, and what am I trying to achieve? Those are all very valuable questions for a musician. In this way this experience was important to my development as an artist.

Was the experiment successful, and what were my results? For a start, it is evident that the audience is very dependent on the presentation of music. People want context for your existence as a musician. When I had audiences that enjoyed listening, it was all I needed; I created “a concert hall” within “an empty space” and it was just perfect. Most of the time I felt too displaced, out of context, and people could not have cared less about what I was doing. In the film, I tried to emphasize these results.

Potential of the project and how it has influenced my work

Between the tour in August 2011 and starting work on the documentary, I continued developing the ideas behind the project. In October 2011, I performed in the back of a pickup truck in a music festival in Shreveport, Louisiana. I played an improvised piece of music; a sound collage created with the help of a looping pedal which consisted of sustained flute sounds clustered around C. I wore the same cowgirl outfit as I had on the Snæfellsnes tour.



Figure 11: From MSPS Festival, Shreveport, Louisiana.

In April 2012 I performed in the back of a van that was parked outside UC San Diego's Conrad Prebys Music Center. The performance was a part of an exhibition entitled Klangpark, which presented the work of students enrolled in a class on sound installation art. This time, my outfit was inspired by the Maid of the Mountains (as discussed in greater depth in another chapter). Still performing under the name Rockriver Mary, the performance was durational, I played the hrokkur and sang occasionally for about four hours.



Figure 12: Performing at Klangpark. Photo: Dirk Sutro

The reason I bring this up here is to illustrate the development of the project between the Snæfellsnes tour and the making of the film. The music I was performing was completely different from what it had been before. Yet, the idea of a mobile space remained in the forefront. The music was no longer classical flute music, but rather my own music, inspired by ideas about nationalism in music, reflecting the search for my personal musical identity. In this sense, the project had drastically affected the sound of my musical output. Furthermore, the overall project had become more theatrical, the costumes were more extreme (the use of makeup in Louisiana made the cowgirl look more bizarre, the outfit in the Klangpark performance was extremely theatrical, and I did not engage in conversations with the audience, which had been a large role in the Snæfellsnes tour. Although I had done away with the concert hall, I had created a different kind of *barrier* between me and the audience.

The original ideas behind the project are still very much present in my work. The projects I am currently working on revolve around the perception of a space and the social context of performing music. The idea is to invite audiences, one to five people at a time, to listen to me play the flute within a tiny space, a performance which shares more similarities with a practice room situation, than the presentation of a performance. The sound material consists of relatively quiet sounds, including multiphonics, hissing sounds, and other “inappropriate” sounds. Another version of the idea revolves around creating the illusion of a large space within a small one, with the help of microphones channeled into the ears of the listener via headphones.

Why the need for alternative spaces? Why am I interested in performing in small spaces? Why illusions? I believe these questions can be answered by referring to Peter Brook's opening words in *The Empty Space*, about how one can "take any empty space and call it a bare stage."²⁷ The need to experiment with the social surroundings of a music performance derives from my intention to get to the core of my musical output.

²⁷ Brook, Peter: *The Empty Space* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1968) p. 9

Conclusion

What has been addressed here is The Trailer Project; an ongoing project about transformed concert spaces and the documentary entitled The Caravan Concerts. The film is an auto-ethnographical work about a concert tour I did in 2011 in which I, dressed as a cowgirl, gave flute performances inside a caravan. While heavily influenced by the work of different artists such as Cardiff & Miller, I started developing ideas of transforming a space into a concert hall. The western outlook of the project can be explained by the fact that I was living in California and wanted to adapt to the iconic culture of the Wild West. As portrayed in the film, the results of the experiment demonstrate that music performances are dependent on framing and presentation. Yet, if approached with an open mind, audiences can enjoy classical concerts anytime, anywhere, even inside a caravan. Relating the story of the caravan concerts through a documentary added a new layer to the project; the film became a new canal for my musical output, detached from the original setting. The illusion was carried one step further.

From 2011 onward, this has been an ongoing project which has developed into various performances, some of which have become more theatrical and, more recently, somewhat more minimal. All of them share the concept of a transformed space, which has become a special interest of mine. Because any space can be a stage, and all we need for a musical performance to take place is a performer and a listener.

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