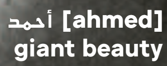
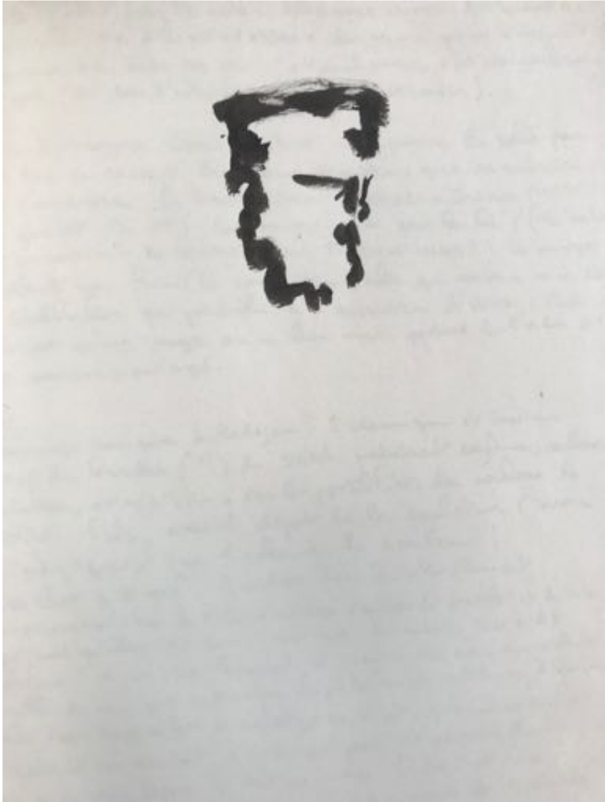


أحمد [ahmed]
giant beauty

أحمد [ahmed]
giant beauty



The images that appear on the outer covers of the box, discs and book are details of photographs taken at the Golden Circle, Stockholm in the mid 1960s: the outer cover by Christer Landergren, and the others by Leif Wigh during a Dexter Gordon residency in 1965. Looking back into these images of Stockholm-space that the music we made at Fylkingen seemed rooted or seeded in, we discovered that, fascinatingly, plants - rubber (Ficus elastica) and Swiss-cheese (Monstera deliciosa) - were resident in the Golden Circle's very modern concrete-curtained-glass-and-metal space. They lived on-stage and in-audience as the music took place and grew across nights, days and weeks around, and about them. This unusual and unexpected (to us) organic, holistic musical, architectural, botanical, volatile balance seems to resonate with something that Abdul-Malik told Bill Coss in a 1963 interview for Downbeat:

Really, a musician should be in excellent condition, physically, mentally, professionally and scientifically [...] I have studied all the elements: animals, insects, plants, space - the universe - old and new jazz but most importantly the Creator.

How can you play beauty without knowing what beauty is, what it really is? Understanding the Creator leads to understanding the creations, and better understanding of what you play comes from this. How can you understand fully without knowing the start, the continuation, and the ending?

What follows is an edited transcript of a conversation between Seymour Wright and John Chantler that took place on Thursday 2 November 2023 in Stockholm after the two had completed mixing the recordings of [Ahmed] you hear on Giant Beauty.

JC I first invited you to come and play at an earlier iteration of the fifth edition festival with the idea that you would just come and play a single concert. I can't remember exactly how we started talking about it being more than one night. I think it was on the back of a comment that it wasn't something that you had ever done before.

SW **Yeah, we hadn't. We'd never done two nights back-to-back.**

JC And not even necessarily at the same place — we'll talk more about the historical idea of these residency-type 'runs', as I think they were maybe referred to at one time — but also touring for, not just this kind of music, but for lots of more minor musics has become less and less possible. So it's also that [Ahmed] had never been on tour, really.

SW **No, no. We tried one time and we did one night in Copenhagen, then we did another in Sweden with a night in Copenhagen in-between on which we couldn't find anything. We couldn't find anywhere else to play in between. And that was it.**

JC I am too young to have experienced these kind of long, residency-type runs from any of the classic groups that did them back when it was a common practice. But I have incredibly fond memories of the multi-night

residency situations that happened when I was at Cafe OTO, when I was in London.

SW Me too. I mean, that was the first access to those kind of things that I had too, really. And they were just amazing. On a human level they were amazing, regardless of the music that happened, or didn't happen. Just to be around two or three days of an evolving thing in the space. Just brilliant.

JC Absolutely. And instead of – 'oh yeah, hey, it was a good gig, or it was less good, or whatever' – then you have to wait a year later, to be able to experience a kind of wider breadth of someone's practice… to be in such close proximity to another experience of that practice, I feel like it very much opens up the possibility to better understand what's going on, and with that enriches that experience of listening.

SW And it also has a kind of narrative aspect, like when the Arkestra got stuck because of the Icelandic ash cloud. Yeah. So every day gradually their numbers were depleted as people could move on to wherever they were supposed to be. But the audience got bigger and bigger, right? And it was over six days?

JC They were packed those shows, yeah. Which of course, they led to another kind of future relationship between that band and the space, as well. I think of some of those early ones. Otomo Yoshihide — obviously a musician who has a wild breadth to their practice. So I think there was a trio with Sachiko M and Eddie Prévost, and then also a quartet with John [Butcher] and John [Edwards].

SW Do you remember who was playing drums?

JC Maybe Tony. Tony Marsh. But, you know, ordinarily you would see maybe one of those things in a visit rather than…

SW Lots.

JC You get to understand how those things might be part of the same practice.

SW And that's one way. But then the other way is to have the same group. Four sets, six sets, eight sets.

JC And this is of course what we did, what happened in Stockholm. I think the only other band that I've seen in the same way is the Necks where I've got to see them play back-to-back, six sets over three days. Which has also done wonders for my concept of what the music that they make is. In the same way that I feel like I have a much better grasp on what [Ahmed] music is. Even

if those are, in neither instance, fixed things. But it's very different: that's a band that's been going for more than 30 years. What's also interesting here, and I think this also relates to the history of these kinds of runs, is that they were for [Ahmed], and I think also in the past they were for bands in formation. You know, like if you think back to the classic jazz sort of stuff, it wasn't like someone who'd been playing for 30 years necessarily goes and does a run at wherever it is, the Half Note, the Village Vanguard, etc. It's a new group, or a new constellation, or maybe it's some of the same musicians, but the music at that point was changing so rapidly, and those residencies were the sites where that development could take place.

SW **You're developing a music, and a group, and also an audience. There's that Abdul-Malik quote that I cite in the thing I wrote the other day that I sent you [for WeJazz] where he's talking about economics and he's sort of lamenting the increasing lack of opportunity.[1]**

[1] "If you could get out of economic problems [...] you could find the time, the energy to create. The lack of this has brought about a serious problem [...] there really is no place for [musicians] to show development. Very few record companies will allow you the opportunity, and no clubs are available where you can work and develop. Clubs used to allow you that – and time to build an audience. How can they expect jazz to develop if they only book established groups, or only give experimenting musicians an occasional two-week booking?" Abdul-Malik interviewed by Bill Coss in 'The Philosophy of Ahmed Abdul-Malik' Down Beat 30/15, 1963, p.15.

And what does he say? Maybe you get 'two weeks' and you have that time to develop an audience or a music. Or something, I'm remembering [maybe] mis-remembering. But I read that and thought, wow — two weeks![2]

JC It sounds pretty good, no?

SW **And also the idea of developing a listening culture as well. It's not just you need to develop what the group of musicians are doing, but it's like you're working with an audience that is committed to coming back, and working with you. Which is, to me, a really important idea. And it**

[2] Interestingly, Henry Threadgill also mentions the two week run, talking about September 1976: "[Air] built a large following in Paris, and we'd do two-week stints there at places like La Chapelle des Lombards. It makes a huge difference when you tour that way: not one-night stands, but extended runs. You have a chance to unpack and breathe a little. A band can really develop when you have that much time." Threadgill and Brent Hayes Edwards, 2023, Easily Slip Into Another World: A Life In Music, p .258.

was nice to kind of be reminded of that.

JC Yeah. It's also the context here within the festival, for example, where, I'm always really encouraged by the fact that quite a lot of people buy a pass to the festival. Most of the audience since it started has been people who sign up for the whole thing. Again, they're not the same group, but people are listening in the context of having listened to everything else that's happening in the program. Which is also why it was interesting to have the same stuff, both with [Ahmed] and the Éliane Radigue program that was happening on the same nights.[3] You know that most of the people who are there are listening within the context of a wider experience of listening together. It's important, my sense is that that

[3] [Ahmed]'s residency was presented parallel to a programme of Eliane Radigue's Occam works for acoustic instrumentalists. The five assembled chevaliers — Silvia Tarozzi (violin), Julia Eckhardt (viola), Deborah Walker (cello), Nate Wooley (trumpet) and Enrico Malatesta (percussion) — performed nine works over the five days including the premiere of a new work for quintet 'Occam Hexa IV' alongside various solo, duo and trio pieces. Sound American No 26 'The Occam Ocean Issue' (edited by Wooley and including interviews with Tarozzi and Eckhardt) provides an excellent overview of Radigue's compositional system and her relationship to the musicians she works with.

also changes how you will do things or will relate to that audience because you know that there is this shared experience, maybe not for everyone, but for a lot of the people who are with you there.

SW **Definitely. Yes.**

JC I'm curious to understand how, linked to the quote from Ahmed Abdul-Malik about the residency situation, how much your knowledge or understanding of how that historical situation works or happened informs or is thought through in coming into doing these five days? Because in my understanding everyone in the group has their own specific, but very deep knowledge of what's happened before.

SW **Yeah.**

JC And the music, and the practice, explicitly relates to that, at the same time as it's not trying to be that. So there was never any chance that, or at least some recognition that doing these five days is not about being the same as one of these kind of historical residencies like Ornette Coleman at the Golden Circle[4], etcetera. But,

[4] Ornette Coleman also undertook a 2-week long residency at Stockholm's Gyllene Cirkeln (The Golden Circle) in November and

how do you feel that history in the process of thinking through or being in that residency experience?

SW I suppose it's a conceptual project in a way, the whole thing, what we're doing and this is another example of how – it's an idea. So, we see that these things have happened and we can just think about them, or, we can think about them by doing a version of them. And that's kind of what we did. So just to approach playing back-to-back [concerts] five days in a row, in the same space, staying in the same place, working with the same team, you, and the same team of sound people and all that kind of stuff. A lot of the same audience, on the same bill as [other groups] because a lot of those residences, historical residences, they were double bills, or triple bills.

JC Two groups sharing three months together, right?

December, 1965. Recordings from these dates were published across two volumes - The Ornette Coleman trio at the "Golden Circle" Stockholm Vols. 1 & 2, Blue Note, 1966 - with an iconic photo of the trio stood in a snowy Kundsträdgården shot by Francis Wolff. The Golden Circle was located in what is currently ABF house on Sveavägen — also, significantly now, the proposed site for a future Fylkingen venue.

SW Yeah. And we can wonder what that might have been like, or, we can try and approximate a version of it. Which is what we did – to see what happened. And then as we do it, I think we're thinking about it, and each morning [after] we're talking about it as well. So what you hear in the music is partly us reflecting on that, I think. A kind of wondering. And it's like the re-imagining. So we re-imagine – with you – a kind of environment where we can try this thing. To see what happened. Which is what we did. And I think that's a very powerful thing in the music. We approached it in our way. So it's kind of dispersed way, and then we come together when we work on this stuff. I think another important part of it is that we'd all been in Stockholm before. I mean, Joel grew up 5 minutes from the venue, and Pat had played there, and I'd actually played there quite a few times, stayed in the same hotel and everything. And Antonin too I'm sure. So it had these kind of connections already. So it was a kind of return to something.

JC Sure.

SW But also this big departure. A bit like music is, you know, when we think about the pieces that we do.

JC Because you play a different piece on each of the five nights. Three of the pieces you had played before.

SW Nights on Saturn, Oud Blues and Anxious ...and African Bossa Nova. So the only new piece, first time through piece, was Rooh. In my recollection anyway, we hadn't really talked about what ones we might do. I think we decided that we'd start with Nights On Saturn because that was the record that we'd done. And that was only the second time we'd done that piece and I don't think we've done it since, actually. And when we say 'do the pieces', we just say, OK, together we're going to think about this piece or that piece. And that's about all there is in terms of an agreement. And we play the pieces in the loosest possible sense in someway, spontaneously arranged and rearranged and re-imagined.

JC And when we say the pieces, we're talking about a composition or a recording that Ahmed Abdul-Malik had written or performed.

SW It's usually a recording. Yeah.

JC There's no scores or any kind of charts or any stuff like that?

SW There's not for us. There may have been when he did them I don't know. But also we do it ... you know, often they're more a kind of conceptual space. It's an idea, I think.

JC And it might be with some rhythmic, or melodic, or some sense of what sort of space that piece inhabits, that's what informs how you do it. But obviously, they're not covers as such.

SW No, not at all. I mean they are spontaneous arrangements that we do, so we can call them that. They are not covers. And it may also just be one aspect or part of it. So maybe that I choose one aspect and Pat chooses a different aspect.

JC Yeah. Yeah. There isn't necessarily: 'we're going to do Nights on Saturn and we're going to do it in this way'.

SW Yes, we don't [do that]. Occasionally we might decide someone will start. Something like that.

JC Like in Rooh where Joel starts with a bass solo, as a tribute to Abdul Wadud.

SW Abdul Wadud, yeah. Rooh was one I don't think we'd even talked about doing. But then Wadud died that week. I don't remember exactly what day we saw the news?

JC The day before I think.

SW Yeah. So it seemed appropriate. And that piece [Rooh] is called The Soul. And also it's a drone. And then the

Radigue stuff, we'd been thinking about that.

JC You'd started to absorb it?

SW **Yeah. So it seemed a nice … challenge.**

JC I think I actually have a photo of it as well. But also an image in my head of the four of you sitting-slash-standing on the balcony at the back of Fylkingen, spread quite apart, I think Pat's over by the kind of entrance from the office to the balcony. I think he kind of camped there most nights. But, in general across the festival, it's always a real pleasure to take in how the different artists who are visiting take in the other work that's happening there. And it was really nice too, I think. I'd already had a sense that there is a connection across that music, those musics, without it necessarily needing to take that sort of, prima facie, arrythmic drone-type quality that a lot of Éliane's music has. You know, like in the sense that both musics have this constant modulation happening within them. The way Éliane does that and the techniques she does to achieve that obviously are very different. But there's still that parallel there, even when you guys aren't holding a tone. But then to hear you both do that kind of thing at the beginning of that piece and then to see how you got out of it was really fascinating.

SW **Yeah, I think that's important because it really was like: 'well, let's try, let's see'. This is the pitch, let's see. And Joel starts with a bass solo that's very beautiful actually.**

JC It's gorgeous.

SW **Very much about Wadud.**

JC Yeah, again, feeling like it's a concentration just within you. … Obviously we'll talk about this as well, how you're essentially all playing all the time. So to hear his solo in isolation as a kind of way of very clearly hearing an individual voice, because Joel sounds like Joel, [but] at the same time as he's thinking about Wadud and absorbing the qualities and methods or techniques or ideas that were very clear and apparent in Wadud's music without it just being 'I'm going to play these tunes from By Myself'[5], for example.

SW **You can hear him like touching … the way he's touching … it's like he's touching the music. It is really. There's something like a reflection in the tips of the fingers, the way he does it, it's great.**

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[5] Abdul Wadud — By Myself (originally self-released on Wadud's Bisharra Records, 1978, re-issued on Gotta Groove, 2023) is an extraordinary LP of solo cello compositions/performances.

JC And then when you listen to [Ahmed], it's like all four of you doing that all at once, which sometimes makes it harder. It's not as readily apparent, certainly when you're listening live in the room together, right? I mean we've had the fortune over the last few days to listen many times and to be able to isolate to some extent: 'this is what the piano is doing'; or, 'this is what the saxophone is doing'; or 'this is what Antonin is doing', and it's nice to have these opportunities. I think it's fantastic that relative to the number of concerts that [Ahmed]'s done there is a high percentage of those available for listening again. So there is those opportunities to go in and understand or focus on the different constituent parts and how those are relating to these kind of historical feelings, and very not-historical, present ideas and thinking about how you relate to that history, but also to each other at the same time as it's totally possible to not need to think about those parts, and just absorb the whole...

SW **Yeah. It doesn't need to have that layer. Or that layer does not need to be perceived I think. But we know it's there, and we feel it. And that introduction Joel plays is a good example of it. Like kind of how there is a sort of index into history and inter-text and stuff, and you can really feel it there. And then when the others of us, Antonin's cymbals and my ... the drone starts, then Pat comes in, you can also feel the connection with the**

Radigue stuff like what has already happened across three nights, four nights.

JC Yeah and there'd been ... that was the night there was the premiere of the quintet piece. So we'd heard four full programs of Éliane's music at that point.

SW **And it connects with that, but it also connects with the history of that too because it's important to remember that Antonin knows Éliane too.**

JC Antonin came to Stockholm to play Éliane Radigue's Occam Ocean for the festival in 2018 with ONCEIM.

SW **Yeah and he knows her, he goes round and talks to her about stuff I don't know. They talk about amazing interesting stuff.**

JC There's explicit connections rather than you just getting a vibe. Yeah.

SW **And Pat saw Abdul Wadud play live. And has played with people who played with him. And Abdul-Malik played with him too, actually. There's a record where they're both on.**

JC Abdul Malik and Abdul Wadud?

SW **It's a Hamiet Bluiett record.[6] Yeah. So there are all these like, you know, connections.**

JC And there always is, all of these kind of connections.

SW **Yeah, and we're kind of acknowledging that. Thinking about it is an important part of what we do. And then when we all start, because it's actually rare that [only] one of us plays, normally we're all playing. And then when we're all playing, there are these four subjectivities with all of that stuff in the total mix, yeah. Plus everybody else who is there – putting in and taking out.**

JC When we talked about what kind of stuff we'd discuss we talked about the week, the nights and I was thinking this relates to that sort of history as well, that there's some kind of nesting. That there's always things within things.

SW **Definitely. Well, I think for a start there's the memory of the previous nights inside what we do and the physical memory, too, because actually by the fourth night, it was quite … It was funny to do that drone piece because that's, it's a very physically demanding thing to do. And it was already … The fourth night was physically the hardest night.**

JC Yeah, sure. I mean, I think it's worth pointing out that it happened in the summer.

SW **It was baking hot.**

JC It was incredibly hot. I think, you know, Fylkingen, that location. Rest in peace. Which is which is no longer Fylkingen. now. They've just moved out this week. It's not usually used in the summer and I think the festival happened in the summer because I'd had to postpone it, we weren't able to do it in the winter as it was originally planned. And I think it was a surprise, certainly to me and I think to many just how hot it was.

SW **Yeah, it was.**

JC And it made for a situation that was extra-demanding on everyone. Everyone who played… and there was also a commitment required from everyone in the room to accept that 'OK this is maybe not ideal'. I remember, the first night we closed all of the windows for the sound, this kind of bitter irony that the landlords used the excuse of Fylkingen making noise as part of the rituals

[6] Orchestra, Duo & Septet (Chiaroscuro Records, 1977). Wadud (cello) and Abdul-Malik (oud) play together on the first number Glory (Symphony For World Peace) / Orchestra.

towards kicking them out. But more often than not I always found that Fylkingen was more impacted by other people's noise than vice versa.

SW It's always like that. As soon as you have music that invites a very intense, focused concentration on sound, you hear all the sound. And the outside comes in. Especially with the windows open.

JC But the first night we had the windows closed and it was a total sweat box. It was just … dripping. Sounds unpleasant to think about it, but it was like that.

SW Somebody came up to me after one of the nights and said, 'you don't sweat?!' and I was absolutely drenched. And Antonin's jeans …

JC Antonin had a wooly hat on as well. I'm like 'Are you fucking insane?'

SW This part [thighs] of his jeans were wet.

JC It's all just going straight down.

SW Yeeeeah. It was very hot.

JC So, it was a very particular kind of circumstance. But I also liked that actually, once we opened the windows

and just accepted that, hey, we're here in the summer in the middle of the city. It's going to be … we're part of that. And let's let in whatever happens to come from outside. And I think for the [Ahmed] stuff, [Ahmed] was generating enough kind of energy onstage that you were not …

SW Well you don't hear any external sound in the recording.

JC We don't, no.

SW Physically it was quite … not in a 'oh it's such hard work' kind of way, but just, it was very physical. And that, to hold that thing for a long time, just to see what happened with was great, it was great to do. And then not to know, really not to know what it would feel like. It was very much like a kind of, a leap into a certain kind of void. But, you know, both of those things are traditional approaches to improvisation. It's funny you mentioned 'The Crypt'[7], we were talking about 'The Crypt' last night. Because one of the things that early AMM was interested in was also physical endurance, and to see how it felt. I remember Eddie [Prévost] telling me one time about

[7] AMM's The Crypt – 12th June 1968, 2-LP, Matchless Recordings, 1981.

something he tried to do, where he would play a press-role for as long as he possibly could until he [physically] couldn't do it more. Just to see what it felt like.

JC Sure. And what happens …

SW **In the context of that kind of music.**

JC Sure. Yeah. Yeah.

SW **And that's not an aesthetic choice. That's a that's a different kind of … it shapes the sound that comes out, but the choice to do that is sensory or conceptual.**

JC It has aesthetic implications but it's not done to render a specific aesthetic. But also it's done knowing it has those aesthetic implications, and it's done to understand what those will be.

SW **Yes. And this night felt like it was another … it felt like it was to do with that kind of approach as well. To see how it would feel, what would happen. It's always like that, but with this one, it felt like a big departure from any of the other ways of playing that we'd tried. And in my recollection it was … It's funny when we listened back to it because it was not how I'd remembered it.**

JC My recollection from you know, what I remember my

feeling was at that the time was like, I don't know what they've got themselves into here. I don't know how they're gonna. You know, it felt very much like I … Whilst with the other pieces I feel some sense of like, I don't I don't know how it's going to go, I'm still surprised by the some of the changes, or the way in which the material kind of modulates. I feel very assured that it's going to do its thing in a way that, that works. With Rooh I felt like that that whole introduction section, I can't remember now how long it is, the first 10 minutes or so.

SW **It's quite long.**

JC It felt very much like I didn't know how you were going to resolve it somehow. And then when we listen back the other day, I was quite surprised by how relaxed, how fluid it felt, how it didn't have the same … maybe because I know it [now]. But even at the time, I think when it happened, I was still not sure. It didn't feel as relaxed in its shift as it did when listening back. It's funny how there's a different tension in the moment of listening. Obviously, it's like seeing you all as well is different to this kind of listening in the abstract. And when you're also there live with a bunch of other people together … wishing it to work, too. Like, you know there's some sort of implicit agreement that everyone's there trying to generate the energy to make it happen.

SW Yeah. And it has to happen. I mean, especially, you know, because you said before that we were going to do Rooh and it was a dedication to Abdul Wadud. So then it's … and the same more generally what we're doing is connected with Abdul-Malik. So it has to be, it has to be respectful and correct. You know… we have to make it work.

JC And this relates to ways of doing this stuff within improvised music and maybe you can talk about that sort of connection because I feel like it's not … as you say it's a conceptual project. It isn't just, and I don't say that just as a denigrating sort of qualifier, but it isn't just free improvisation in the sense that there is these decisions that have been, that you have agreed to before, whether it's like we're going to play this piece, but even on a level removed from that decision to play this particular piece, you've made a decision to relate to a very specific historical figure. And that context that they worked with, there's a bunch of things where you can't just do anything.

SW No, we can't.

JC But maybe, you can't do anything anyway all the time. I just wonder if you can talk a little bit about your experience of that in perhaps other contexts and how it's different from the [Ahmed] context.

SW Because we chose that as a point of departure. To meet and think about this music without knowing where that would move us to. And the process was to choose that as an idea, but then to move into it in the ways that we knew. Which are four different ways, but kind of for all of us connected both with improvised musics and more sort of jazz-nesses. And that's kind of what we did. But it has to be, I think, it has to be done very … It has to be done heavily. Respectfully. I feel like we have a duty to push.

JC Sure.

SW In the right kind of way.

JC It's with care, but not trepidation.

SW Yeah, absolutely. Exactly. And the pushing into a space that we didn't know. Because if it's already there, we don't need to do it. Because it's already there, someone else is already doing it. And I think it was about trying to explore a different way for us of doing stuff, you know. So it is emphatically improvised, because we don't really … like, we were just talking about the Rooh one. We don't really know what it's going to be. We've never done it before.

JC There's no agreement that after 10 minutes we switch

into some swing.

SW No not at all. And it's remarkable. When we were listening to the five nights, it's remarkable how they're all almost exactly the same length, within four or five minutes of each other.

JC Yeah. But then the internal structures are very different. There is clearly repeating techniques or methods where you can hear someone does something which you think signifies something has meaning, a gesture, an interval, a texture. But then those methods are not … they're not just laid out in the same way.

SW No, no. When those things do sometimes happen again on a different night they move it into a different direction very quickly. And the material… so it's improvised. But part of the material with which we're improvising is a kind of literary, textual stuff.

JC What do you mean by that?

SW So like memories of things, or things we might have heard, or grown up listening to, or certain sounds, or certain ways of doing things. A bit like you can hear in Joel's introduction a deep connection with the music of Abdul Wadud, but he's not playing like him.

JC Yeah.

SW Playing about it, to do with it. I think that's a big part of the fabric of the improvisation of this group. We all play all the time which is a Classic Brit[ish]-[im]prov[isation] device.

JC SME kind of.

SW Well, SME and AMM

JC In their own ways of doing it. Yeah.

SW And sometimes we play in parallel, and sometimes we play in complete connection, but often it's like…

JC There are four separate lines happening at the same time.

SW Yeah. And it can be two of us playing in parallel and two of us playing in…

JC Or two different sets of parallel, like parallel connected things, but they are in the distinction you have parallel and …

SW Connected.

JC Connected.

SW **The SME way is a much more interlocking, connected micro-thing. And whereas — it's a profound [over] simplification, and in a way a pointless one. Evan calls it atomistic and laminar[8]. So yes, the AMM laminar thing.**

JC Yeah.

SW **It is like there are layers of stuff that move simultaneously or the SME that's much more connected, interlocking, bits of, atoms.**

JC Sometimes I hear you and Pat, for example and it sounds like you're doing something connected, whether it's like these not exactly unison, but locked fingers, or just that there's a very clear relationship between what the two of you are doing and a very clear relationship between Antonin and Joel. But it's still not just the same as it being rhythm section and ...

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[8] Evan Parker set out these two contrasting modes - AMM's 'laminar' and the 'atomistic' SME approach - in a talk during the Actual Music Festival at London's ICA in August 1980, described in Clive Bell's, 'History of the LMC', Variant 8. Summer 1999, p. 12: available at: http://www.variant.org.uk/8texts/Clive_Bell.html

SW **Yeah.**

JC Like the harmonic or melodic instrumentation. It's treated in a way that isn't that. We've talked a little bit before as well about, and this relates to the situation of the residency and the kind of technical conditions of that thing. We talked about how you found it difficult — particularly the first two nights — to arrive at a point where it felt like everything could be heard.

SW **Yeah, where we could hear each other.**

JC Where you could hear each other. And it's interesting how you related this also to... You know, that this isn't... it is a technical problem, but it's also not just a technical problem in that it relates to this idea of both playing all the time, but also, the sort of designated roles or hierarchies between the different instruments: if it's like you can understand why there was some sort of comping thing behind the saxophone, for example, in past musics, because actually that would have made it viable for everyone to hear each other.

SW **Yes. I was reflecting on this a lot after the first and second nights in Fylkingen. Just privately I found it really interesting because suddenly, that's what I mean about the fabric of the group. So we're working at volumes, with sounds that are jazz-like, you know, like proper**

heavy, loud stuff and blocks of sound and, you know, the kit as well. Cymbals, drums — it's there ... interacting in ways that are not like that, typically, you know so, especially the kind of SME idea of they were all doing that thing, but they were all playing insect-type...

JC Small sounds.

SW Yeah really small. Detailed, small sounds. We're playing very detailed sounds but they're big. And then as soon as you switch that on, which we very quickly did on the first night. Bang: straight into it. You can't necessarily hear everything, and it's always different in different spaces. Always spaces are different. And I continue to be sort of perplexed and confounded and inspired by the fact that even when we feel like we've kind of worked it out, we'll go into a new space and suddenly you can hear everything or you can't hear anything.

JC Yeah, or you're in a process of negotiating how you hear, or how you might need to adjust your playing in order to be able to hear. Joel brought it up yesterday, like trying to find things on the bass that meant that he could hear what he was doing, or how he might play differently in order to allow him to hear what others were doing. I find it fascinating how these kind of technologies of the performance have that very explicit relationship to the aesthetics of what's happening. And that you can also accept a certain situation there and allow it to dictate the aesthetics, or you can also push against it and to try to find ways of allowing a different aesthetic expression, either through the way you play in that moment because you no longer have control over some of the other, non-instrumental technologies of the space and the performance context, and that the kind of five night run allows you to also work on the, what you might otherwise call, extra-musical. But I don't like to make that distinction given the acknowledgement of how much it informs the musical. But when you have those five days you can take the time to push the basic technological arrangement so that you have extra space for the technology you have control of in the moment of the performance.

SW Yeah. I mean that folds out into two different things. Because there's the, you know, we're all learning how to play actually, you know we're at different stages still of learning how to play, and we've been doing it for ten years now together, and we all play differently now than we did ten years ago, for sure. In this group and beyond that. I certainly do. You know, if I listen to the first things we recorded, I kind of knew what I wanted to do, but it was not, you know. .. But now if I listen to what we've been listening to this, I've learned to play sounds ...

JC You can hear the learning.

SW Yeah, I can use sounds now that are … Lots of different sounds that work in different ways, that allow me to like be inside the music, and hold on to what's going on. So there's that. But then there's also, as we're doing it we're learning that stuff. So I did, I remember thinking after the first night in Fylkingen. Thinking about how I couldn't really, I could hear Pat, but I couldn't hear him in the way that I wanted to hear him. And we stand in a way where we can see each other peripherally. We should, you know, it's not like I'm in front or anything very deliberately. And then I was thinking about how that — I'm sure it's an obvious thing to many people — but to me it was this sudden sort of epiphany that, oh yeah, that caused … So in like the Coltrane quartet, where he's at the front and Elvin's playing. The way they could, or couldn't, have heard each other. Well, I wonder how much they would have heard of everybody and how much they just needed to know what was supposed to be happening and when so that things fitted together. OK, so there's the horns and the piano, the rhythm, the solo all of those roles then are kind of mapped into that thought. So you kind of fold out. And then the evolution of voices, and the evolution of the objects of the technology, like the nature of the drum kit and say how Rashid Ali's kit is different to Elvin's kit and, you know, all of that kind of stuff. And then, on the second we started to play, and I carried on thinking about it. Yeah, I was thinking about this last night, and I'm doing now. Yeah.

JC And the thinking is there in the loop, at the same time as the playing.

SW And that's one way that as we play we can … and that's just me, I don't know about the others … I imagine that similar versions of stuff are happening? Or then on the saxophone I'll do something and I'll be: 'oh, that's … that's like such and such'.

JC It makes you think of some of those people on that bandstand and what they would have been thinking in their kind of similar context, sixty years ago.

Or just to certain sound you know, you get to a point where a set of circumstances take you to a place on the instrument, in the context of an event, that: 'ah, that's how you do that!'. Suddenly.

JC And I imagine that, that there is a lot of shared knowledge and history amongst the four of you.

SW Yeah.

JC And that the others will also, maybe they don't hear it in exactly the same way that you hear it, but they do hear something. Hearing how you and Joel talked about some of [the recordings yesterday during mixing]… like immediately picked up some of the references in listen-

ing to the thing, like: oh now it's this kind of stuff... like it relates to this particular artist. My sense is, but maybe you can qualify this at least for yourself, how much you're picking up on that stuff from what [the] others are doing in the moment...

SW **Yeah, we are. Like maybe an example was the other day, well, last week I was visiting my parents and my dad had a record that he must have always had but I'd never listened to. Duke Ellington's Piano Reflections, which is piano trios from the fifties. And the bassist is Wendell Marshall. And there's one track, Kinda Dukish[9]. And we listened to that record maybe four or five times when we were there. And the bass really reminded me of Joel, really a lot. And I'd never heard that record before. I might've heard one or two of the tracks, but I'd never heard that. And then yesterday when we were talking I said, I was listening to this. And he was: 'oh yeaaahhh'.**

JC Like that's the one, you know that's an important record for him. And you could hear it.

[9] The trio of Duke Ellington, Wendell Marshall and Dave Black, recorded NYC December 3rd, 1953 the last track of Side B on Piano Reflections Capitol Records, 1972.

SW **I've heard that record hundreds of times because I play with Joel. That certain way of finding space in the [music]. Because that was ... it was the way the bass, acoustic, very acoustic bass, finds a space between the drums and the piano in that thing, just the way the lines actually go down. It's like a really particular thing that Joel also does, you know, I think typically frequencies tend to go up to find the space, things kind of come to the surface, some kind of surface but he also knows how to find a way down and through. And it's ... so why do I mention that? Because that's a way that the knowledge then comes back. Knowledge of something, some kind of text comes through another way, like through the physical practice of doing stuff. But it was enough. Then when you encounter the text to be like – I've read this.**

JC You've seen the echoes of that text.

SW **Somehow, yeah. And then it can also be like, it can be with time as well. Like Pat, I realised the other day when I was writing that thing [for WeJazz], that a week after Pat played first with Antonin and Joel [in summer 2013, in Paris] he played in Birmingham in a pub called the Hare and Hounds with Warren Smith who's a drummer who had been part of a rhythm section with Ahmed Abdul-Malik for months and months and months and**

months in the mid-sixties.[10] So there's that. And that was before we'd started playing together as a quartet. So there's all these weird, weird connections about time and space and all that kind of stuff. That are of course also immediately present, you know. But they're very… I mean they are and they aren't, you know, and as soon as you know about them they become resonant in a different way than when you don't.

JC The resonance is made it explicit anyway. And even if the resonance is there beforehand.

SW Yeah. But at the same time, I always constantly have to remind myself that, you know, who am I to be making this? Much of the music we're working with was made in a very different time, a different place, by very different people than me. The British Improvised stuff is slightly different, it was a different time, different place, but it's people I know quite well, and I've spent quite a lot of time with. And even then, to reflect on how the saxophone was. Say when we play, if there's something, that makes me think maybe of something that Evan would have done in the seventies, say, and how that is connected with an

[10] They recorded together on the [Makanda] Ken McIntyre Quartet LP, Year of The Iron Sheep, United Artists Records, 1962.

idea of, his idea of Dolphy or Coltrane, or not being like that, but also being like. So then it all kind of comes back again.

JC Because obviously they were … That stuff that you have this perhaps closer relation to, Evan's playing, for example, but Evan also at the time in the seventies was like you're referencing the seventies stuff, he's also in the seventies thinking very much, I imagine, about… I mean, Evan was obsessed with Coltrane, you know, but not Coltrane.

SW Yeah. He'd seen them and Jimmy Lyons and Cecil and then come back. He also didn't want to play like them, you know, so that was another… it was like moving away from something that was still very much physically informing the things.

JC And it's in the same sense that you also don't want to sound like Evan Parker.

SW Yeah I don't want to. … and it's more than that, I think it's … I wrote it in my [new solo] thing, 'it's not OK to copy'. I mean, that is I know an extreme thing, it's in some ways it's a problematic ….

JC Sure there's a lot of learning happens through a process of copying as well.

SW Yeah. But I think it's important to … there's much, there's a lot of rhetoric about finding your own voice, stuff like that. And again, it's a very complicated thing. But if people have already done it, and are doing it, then we, there it is really. We don't need to. I mean, it's fun, but we don't need to come to Stockholm and give that to people for five days. We need to do something different that justifies and respects the privilege of that opportunity. And I feel that's what we were trying to do. And each time we play, that's what I think we're trying to do. And another nice thing about the nature of … because we're all very dispersed in different places. I suppose we see each other kind of often, but not all the time and we can go for … I see Pat at OTO, because he plays there a lot. But we can often go for months without all four being together in the same place. Maybe more than that actually. But that can be quite nice because then we've all been doing other stuff, and learning new stuff, and listening to new stuff, and meeting different people. And, this is something that I think is also important, we live very different lives of doing stuff, and that's all part of what then comes into the mix of the meeting. And everything's kind of changed around, so it's, it all flows in so the way - our way - of making music together is, it's like the idea of the piece is like a space that we decide, OK, this is the space, the topic.

JC This is the space we're going to bring things to.

SW And then in we come and we trust each other and in a way that makes that enough as a point of departure for a thing to happen. Yeah. And then it's that space in a physical space, in an economic space, you know, it's a very interesting … But it's an open space, so it's open to all of those different things. Because …

JC Yeah, it's not that you go in and you're going to play just this tune, and you do it, and it doesn't need you to bring anything else to it other than a certain level of skill and capability. There's a bunch of other meanings that can be brought into that.

SW I feel like it's open to the context. So the people that come, the people who make space are also important. It's not hermetic in that sense.

JC Yeah. This is where it's also nice that in such an opportunity you're able to visit, revisit pieces, spaces that you've inhabited before, in this other space. So it's like the difference between the rendition, version, of Oud Blues, for example. In Stockholm it followed Éliane Radigue, then a very sparse Magnus Granberg composition, whereas in Glasgow it was in a nightclub, and relates to a rowdy nightclub thing.

SW Six hundred people in a night-club, yeah.

JC And it would be, I want to say wrong, but it would be absurd, I guess is perhaps a better word if that didn't do something to the music.

SW But I think also it's interesting that you mentioned that because listening back to it it's really interesting because I think that was the second time we'd done that [piece] in Stockholm and yeah, in Glasgow, which is the Astral Spirits record that we did.[11] I mean it was like a lot of people, they were all dancing and shouting and it was a very collective ...

JC Experience.

SW Heuristic fun. But really, again, we didn't know what we were going to do, or how.

JC That was the first time you've done that piece there in Glasgow?

SW Yeah. And it was only the second time that we'd played since the pandemic. So for two years we'd hardly played. We played in Berlin.

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11 Wood Blues, 2-LP, Astral Spirits AS230, 2024.

JC For the Jazz Festival?

SW Yeah, and then that was the time after. So we'd had a lot of time to think about it. And it was a very, you know, everything was kind of just opening up then, so people, the energy was ...

JC A moment, it was a special moment. Yeah.

SW But then to have that opportunity — another intensely precious opportunity, but completely different — that we had also been looking forward to for ages in Stockholm was very special. And then I think in the first five or ten minutes you can kind of hear the memory of the other version. You can almost feel, you know, we talked yesterday about how it in some ways sounds like the hardest one.

JC Yeah. I feel that, for sure.

SW There was something, a kind of tantalizing memory of a really good one that we'd done that was great, but then also a knowledge that...

JC Still have to make this one good [laughter]

SW Yes. And that it didn't need to go in that way. Yeah, but it's like you can hear ... It's really interesting to compare

the two because it couldn't be more different. So it's brilliant that they're both emerging, but it's … Yeah, you can see the memory like it's like a …

JC Shadow.

SW A perfume. Yeah. Like I scent, just wafts through, this kind of thing, and then it's gone. And OK, here we are.

JC You've got to deal with the present situation.

SW And we do. We go in a very different way. I think that's a good example of what we're interested in, and what we're trying to do every time we play. The idea of, it's to do with the past and history and things, our personal ones, and a canon, different canons. But like standing up to that, you know, in many senses of the word – like not avoiding it, but also not…

JC Reckoning?

SW Challenging it, interrogating it, looking at it and thinking about it, but moving on, moving forward. And I think when it's successful, the feeling of [Ahmed] is like that. Ontologically. That's kind of what it is. It's like we're at this point where we're going that way forward, but in time. But we're also thinking about this other stuff. And if there's a way of that becoming a shared thing with a

public, then it's brilliant, I think. And when it's productive, I think it is. And hopefully it's open enough for that to work on lots of different levels of like … literacy is the wrong word … but like different levels of subjectivity and kind of different approaches to the textuality of like human stuff and time. And also then when I listen back to it, it's nice because my version of those things, I can access in the listening.

JC You can hear it?

SW Yeah, I think so. And the records we've done too, I think. In all the records we've done, it's present. It's present in the sound and the objects.

JC I think for people who were there, they'll be able to bring another set of meanings to that.

What follows are six sets of reflections from people who were there at the festival on one, or more nights: violinist Silvia Tarrozi; composer Magnus Granburg; trumpeter Nate Wooley; poet and sound artist Pär Thörn; composer and current chairwoman of Fylkingen Valerie Mol; and Lars Grip jazz critic and former editor of Sweden's long-running jazz magazine Orkesterjournalen.

Thanks to John Chantler's vision I had the chance to share an entire Edition Festival with [Ahmed]. John had the idea to start each evening with a concert of Éliane Radigue's music and to end it with an Ahmed one. And that for five days. I am involved in Radigue's music since longtime and at the Festival I've performed almost every night (with my collegues Deborah Walker, Julia Eckhardt, Nate Wooley and Enrico Malatesta). For those unfamiliar with Radigue's music, it is almost always an experience of the birth of sound from nothing and, after a time of permanence and slow transformation, its disappearance. It is very delicate and powerful music at the same time, which immerses you in a deep and unhurried listening experience, organic and outside of time. Experiential as well as musical.

There, every night, after our concert, and a second set that changed each time, Ahmed's musicians would take the stage. And they were a river in flood. It was as if they had already been playing since before they came in and could have gone on forever. Always playing one piece, each night different, stretching and progressing through time and space in an organic, experiential way. It felt like attending a ritual of which the musicians were expert celebrants.

I already knew some people in the band and some were already my friends. I admire them greatly and know their value. Together they had a special strength. The rhythm section, double bass and drums, know each other well, no doubt, and can express their virtuosity freely, without having to demonstrate it, but in a kind of ecstatic pleasure. The saxophone is incisive and often ostinato. He likes it, I think. And his obstinacy forces the group to concentrate their forces and efforts to keep the point, not to disperse. And the pianist always seems to have the keys to open and resolve the music, both when it might (perhaps) run aground and when it unexpectedly veers off the rails. He has a 'happy' attitude, which also makes the listener happy.

Every night the quartet brings a new song, takes it apart, puts it back together again, follows the music on unknown paths, sometimes back, sometimes not, but always remains in motion, flowing like a river in flood.

Silvia Tarozzi

Listening back to these recordings of [Ahmed]'s performances from the Edition Festival in early August 2022 I am not only reminded of, but rather transported back to these hot, late summer nights, reliving the excitement, curiosity and expectation that the music seemed to arouse in audience and performers alike. The excitement of being part of a collective adventure, curiously and excitedly following the ensemble in its process of discovering and realizing the multitudes of musical realities, potentials and possibilities co-existing in the musical code that is the compositions of Ahmed Abdul-Malik. A music where stratas of thought and action converge and diverge, where modes of individual and collective, musical existence are superimposed on one another, sometimes as sounding realities, always as silently sounding potentials patiently waiting to be realized, all complexities joyfully and confidently kept together through a deeply human and all-pervading sense of swing.

Magnus Granberg

Music's hidden rite is its physicality: concealed from the listener; too abstract for metrics or competition. (One can appreciate the reproducible grace of a gymnast or the motive power of a sprinter, but it takes more imagination to understand the vitality contained in starting a note.) As I crouched on the catwalk of Fylkingen watching [Ahmed] play, my mind wandered onto the topic of the musician's body again and again. My thighs and back cramped up, and my achilles tendons stretched uncomfortably in my folded position, but I persisted, invested with the energy of the band, receiving the product of their fleshliness as I battled my own.

When you use your body to make music, an incredible amount of intensity is directed toward making—becoming—a sound. The mind directs the flow of your body's strength to that end, bypassing the safety valves between creative intelligence and muscle memory, guiding lungs and limbs toward a gesture that exists in a suddenly knowable future. If you're a spiritual person, it is a transcendent action: the exhaustion of the body in order to achieve something higher. If you're a pragmatist, it is simply using the right tool for the job. Regardless of ideology, the result is anatomy pushed to the limits of brute strength and delicate precision.

The negative effects of this exertion are always felt too late, after the body has been committed by the mind and its desire for sound. Musicians understand this glorious struggle. Witnessing it as an audience member leads to a twinned or mirror experience; the static listening body mimics the buoyant tension and release occurring on stage, reliving the times we've ignored the signs of exhaustion in order to hunt a sound in the distance. As I follow the movement of Antonin's velocity—transferring a blistering shuffle from limb to limb—my arms and legs cycle a ghostly ache and relief. Joel's dance behind the bass becomes a desire to stretch the body long, imploring it to move. My breathing slows and stops as a monument to Seymour's restraint before he coils and expels a block of spectral noise. Pat becomes pugilistic, his hands turning over and attacking the keyboard knuckle-first, and my near-pristine fingers yearn for that euphoric moment of violence.

When a runner wins a race, their spirit is used up in victory, dissipating into the roar of the crowd. When [Ahmed] plays a set, their fire is not only sustained, but is injected in amplified form into the audience. This is why we should pay attention to the energy artists expend. It augments our appreciation for communion, the rapture of sharing space and time with these people and with each other. Their exhaustion is a gift, not a measure. It's an embrace, not a feat of strength. The musicians will pay later, but what it has purchased will be worth it.

Nate Wooley

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Pär Thörn

Scenrummet — the beautiful black box knew exactly what it was while none of us really did. If concise or dense descriptions highlight certain elements of the late 8-sided room, other elements recede and it continues playing its tricks on every past visitor reaching back for their memories, as it always did in all its different incarnations during its 37 years of being.

To some, Scenrummet engulfed them as soon as they walked through the double black doors, appearing compact and limitless at the same time, especially when only the dancefloor was hit by a few analog, warm spotlights. To others, among those sound engineers from the Swedish Radio, the space was acoustically unflattering, if not downright bad. Indeed, the impulse response measurements I made after the final concert on 29 October 2023 showed a substantial peak around 3- to 8kHz.

Scenrummet was where [Ahmed] played these five nights of hot jazz (using Le Corbusier's words on Louis Armstrong). Where I listened, sweating because of the lack of proper ventilation. The recording of [Ahmed]'s harmonically dense and relentlessly driving music is, however, wonderfully airy and tells me how mischievous Scenrummet was, actually always giving space to smooth, unforgiving and confounding sonics and disparate arts.

That was also its given purpose, being one of the only purpose-built independent concert/dance/performance spaces for experimental music and intermedia art in Sweden. This makes the loss of Old Fylkingen even more painful. The space itself always brought newness and freshness, not in a gimmicky way, but in a way that made you curious or nervous or irritated. Scenrummet was a black box where almost everything could be done and was not only Fylkingens pride, but also an important space for other organisations and artists in town and in Sweden.

Valerie Mol

Fylkingen is a scene for music that is rarely portrayed in the mass media. The scene was in an old 18th century brewery at the foot of Stockholm's highest mountain - Skinnarviksberget. Here, 60,000 bottles of beer were brewed per hour when the old brewery peaked around 1950. The 350 brewery workers who worked here around the turn of the last century are all dead and buried.

The brewery is long gone. A small part of the colossal Renaissance-style complex with Gothic gables and fairy-tale towers housed Fylkingen. The dictatorship of the market has recently led to the closure of the scene that occupied perhaps one hundredth of the imposing building on Söder Mälarstrand in Stockholm. There was little money to be made from a venue where strange music was played and which was not populated by an audience with money and status.

This night - one of the last before Fylkingen was evicted from the big brewery - was packed. Three more nights would be sold out as [Ahmed] played out their craft and performed.

Four people with different names step onto the stage. Together they call themselves [Ahmed].

I press a button on my mobile phone. I think it's the record button but later realise it's the timer I've started. Fifty-three minutes and forty-seven seconds later, I see four sweaty musicians on stage, amidst the cheering. One of them is my son - Joel Grip. I stop the timer and formulate a phrase in my head that music cannot be measured or weighed. Music is beyond grasping. It IS not, but BECOMES in the moment, and then vanishes. Perhaps it is this volatility that allows us to be so deeply touched by that which has no extension in time, space or is measurable. A boundless, ungrammatical language, lost in the midst of its presence, able to be received by all.

[ahmed] starts at an intense level this evening at Fylkingen. Then the intensity increases again and again. As a listener, I keep thinking "this is the finale". But it doesn't come in the uninterrupted "song" that lasts almost an hour. It escalates to slightly hysterical levels. Escalates and escalates. The audience can't sit still.

Fylkingen has a tiny audience with a genuine interest in music. Here, perhaps, it is sometimes more about thinking than feeling. I notice that you can't sit still in the pulsating rhythm, not even Fylkingen's controlled audience. People begin to stand up and sway together in the cascades of sound.

The fermentability of the old brewery seemed to have found new life. It bubbled and fermented. The foam flowed out and all the dead old workers seemed to rise from the oblivion of the beer barrels, they wiped their moustaches and wondered what the hell was going on.

Making beer is a craft. Making music in that old brewery is also

a craft. Hands on the instruments - piano, saxophone, bass and drums! Feverishly present like a blacksmith who must hurry before the material cools. No digital aids. Computers have no intuition. I remember Joel's grandfather using his colossal forearms to turn red-hot iron into art in the forge, or carving the raw wood from pear, birch or oak into shapes that the eye could later follow and enjoy.

Suddenly, in the middle of brewing, the music cuts out [SE: "tvärnitar"]. Fifty-three minutes and forty-seven seconds of bewildering sound. No one in [ahmed] has indicated anything visible. Everyone in the group knows, for some incomprehensible reason, that right now, at this very second, we stop.

Poof!
Silence.
How did this happen?
Who met whom in the band during the journey? Who indicated that "now we stop"?
No one visible.
To begin, to live and to end.

We in the audience have to catch our breath before giving back by slapping our hands together repeatedly. Some people are making noises, as if from a reptilian brain. Not exactly a well-balanced comment. Just - out with what has entered and accumulated as fermenting beer, or an untainted piece of iron inside.

What comes in, must go out.

The power of craftsmanship. Don't break the chairs at Fylkingen, even if you feel like it. You are well-behaved. Where will the stored energy go?

Joel grew up right next to the big brewery on Skinnarviksberget, Stockholm's highest point. When the large brewery was built at the end of the 19th century, Skinnarviksberget was divided into two halves. The dynamite paved the way for traffic from the neighbourhood of Södermalm down to the shores of Lake Mälaren. On one side Skinnarviksberget. On the other, Mariaberget.

The large brewery ended up right next to the ravine that split the neighbourhood in two. An alley on Mariaberget - the other side of the blasted ravine - is a reminder of the split. It is called "Lilla Skinnarviksgränd" but is no longer on the mountain that gave it its name, namely Skinnarviksberget. Joel happened to end up on the same side as the big brewery, on Yttersta Tvärgränd. The alley that lay at the end of the town, after which there was no town. Just forest, meadows, grazing animals and windmills. The large brewery was not even at the sketch stage when the alley was named in the 18th century.

Coming out of Fylkingen this evening, I see boats rushing with passengers between all the islands of Stockholm, below the big brewery that no longer brews beer. And now it doesn't brew

music either. Only commercially viable businesses are now housed here.

In my ears on the way home to Reimersholme, [ahmed]'s vibrant energy mixes with something that surprises me: Beethoven's Violin Concerto (Op. 61). It rises and rises and, like [ahmed], is built on a strange alloy of brittleness and strength.

As if a blacksmith hammered out beautiful shapes from a dead piece of iron. Such is [ahmed]'s music. As an old music journalist, I like to label the ever-increasing sound masses. I walk home along the shores of Lake Mälaren and don't give a damn.

Jazz? Dance music? Swing? Improvisation? Folk? [Tjohej?]

It swings right into the unexplored recesses of genetics, perhaps near the cerebellum. The boats on Lake Mälaren are rocking too, this evening.

Dance if you can manage it.

Cry your shirt wet.

Laugh, or remember that tomorrow is a day too!

Lars Grip

JC But even when people were not there present... I was at the first record, I was there. So I also bring to it the feeling of the barn, and just generally the kind of social environment of Dala Floda. That festival that Joel was involved in is extremely present in my listening.

SW Yeah, that was the first concert. It was really the first concert and it was two years after we played in private in London at the Vortex in the daytime. Billy Steiger came and recorded it, and then we didn't play for two years, I think.

JC Until then. But at the same time I've listened to other [Ahmed] records and can still take a lot or, you know you always bring your own experiences to any kind of listening, and I think that there's plenty of stuff going on in the music, where it's nice if you were there, but you didn't have to be.

SW And it changes a lot, too. It's a long time since I listened to that record, but when we were in Glasgow the day before we played, Edward George did a talk — the first Strangeness of Jazz — and he played that record, and I hadn't heard it for ages. On a huge system it sounded... I was really shocked when I heard it, how it sounded and what we were doing. Sometimes it is very bad, but sometimes it is very good to have to hear something you've done just before you do something else as a

reminder of ... what you've done, and therefore what not to do because you don't need to. It can be a very refreshing thing. Yeah the barn, it was a really important thing, important space. But again it was like a space that in different ways we were familiar with, that we'd been to before. I'm lucky because with [Ahmed] now I've been lots of other places, played in places that I'd never been to. But Hagen, we'd all had histories of being there and Fylkingen, too, in Stockholm.

JC I think it generally speaks to, beyond those specific locations, the richness or importance of these kind of spaces that people can return to, even if it isn't day after day, being able to you know ... there's some other text you've written about, I remember about the henge.

SW The Jazz Henge.[12]

JC The Jazz Henge. And when you visit a space, you can both bring its history and your own particular historical relation to it.

SW Yeah.

[12] Seymour's article 'Jazz Taphonomy?' in WeJazz (No. 8): Shadow Shapes, 2023, pp. 22-27.

JC To inform that. Perhaps this is where it's nice to think about Fylkingen moving — hopefully, potentially — to a new location which is the same location where The Golden Circle was.

SW That's great.

JC You know, it's like these kinds of ... Not that you have to suddenly be that place, but some acknowledgement, recognition, reckoning with what's happened before.

SW Yeah. And it's not always nice things either, you know.

JC No. And sometimes these are sites of unpleasant wrongness that needs to be, also needs to be reckoned with.

SW Yeah and remembered. And not hidden. I think, you know, just most fundamentally – thought about. Yeah. I mean I think to go back to Abdul-Malik and why we were interested, because we'd all ... it felt important, because we all ... we've grown up with in different ways the artefacts, the published artefacts, of jazz and then the public practice of late 20th century, the early 21st century improvised musics and that. And it was clear to me that what gets published and fixed is not the story. It's like a story. Maybe story is the wrong word, but it's like everything is much more complicated, and rich than just the access that some people have to publication, which makes

amazing things, yeah but ... And Abdul-Malik seemed like one glaring example of someone who did this amazing stuff and was clearly ... you don't have to look very hard to see how present he is in so much hugely important music, and his own records are brilliant. But then when you try to look a bit harder there's almost nothing. It is like, how can no one really have talked about it? So when you start to think about history, and what's present and what's not. It seemed important to think about him, somehow. Encourage a thinking about him in terms of thinking about him, but just more generally in terms of like, 'well hey hang on, there's more here'. This all comes from much more.

JC So in a way you talk about him in order to recognise not just him that's not talked about, but everything that's not talked about.

SW **Yeah. And the one time there was an interview with us, a short interview in The Wire by Frances Gooding.[13] I re-**

[13] "Pat Thomas corrects a widely held misconception about the visionary bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik. 'There's this mythology about [him being] Sudanese ... Sudan just means black,' he explains. 'So when he says he's from Sudan, he's not just imagining it, because he actually speaks Arabic, and bilad-as-sudan just means the whole of Africa, it means the land of the blacks'."

member Pat saying about Sudan and in Arabic and what it means in Arabic, and it was like really nobody has ever said that before, but Pat knows because he puts these things together. And that felt like just one of many, very powerful examples of a kind of insight. You make a space for a conversation. And, you know, we've all been thinking about these different things, and then suddenly there's this kind of insight that's there, that would otherwise still not be you know, Pat would be saying it [but people wouldn't know].

JC But it would be out of the public record in some sort of way.

SW **Yeah. So that's all part of the thinking about the past. And then we're thinking about all kinds of other stuff, too. Even that Fylkingen used to be a brewery. I hadn't realised that until this time.**

JC The building where it was located.

SW **This time as in last summer. For some reason it hadn't**

In Frances Gooding, 'Open Synthesis: Improvising supergroup Ahmed explore the Saharan dreamspaces of bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik' 2017, Wire (405), pp. 20-21.

been quite a thing that I'd realised. So I was thinking about that quite a lot too.

JC So this next bit – we're going to talk about economics.

SW Yeah, well, when you invited us to come and do the five days, it was obviously a brilliant thing. And I thought, yeah, brilliant. But then I wonder why, you know, when I think about where else we might, just the four of us might be able to do such a thing. Yeah, we can … we do four nights in April at OTO next year [2024]. But really, then I'd start to struggle when I think of other places, where we might be able to do it. And then I, to me, and not just us, but more generally, I think it's an amazing thing to have the opportunity to see a music evolve and a group of people do something over four nights, five nights, two weeks worth of work. And then it always leads me to reflect why is it that it can't happen more? And of course, partly it's to do with the economics of space, and I understand that. But at the same time, it could be something that lots of people would want to come to, you know. So why is it so difficult? Or is it difficult? I don't know.

JC I don't know if it's necessarily that it's difficult. You know if you think about, for example, the way that John Zorn programs The Stone, that was done to make it easier, you know. He fixes however many people who are going to do the residency that year, gives them their week. That's a lot less work than whoever's doing the coordinating to think about 50 people.

SW Yeah.

JC Than to think about 250 people. So in some sense, there are some opportunities for it to be easier. I think about a place like the Glenn Miller Cafe in Stockholm, for example, could quite easily, at least without difficulty have a group play for a week. And I don't think it would necessarily have that big an impact on the amount of people who come, but it would make a big difference to the kind of music or some of the opportunities, certainly for some of the musicians who might even ordinarily play at Glenn Miller. And maybe they're playing now four times a year, but with three or four months in between each time they play. Obviously that's a tiny place which has its own special sort of situation, and economy and an audience that's maybe partly based on enthusiasts and partly based on people who just want to go out and have something to eat with some nice jazz. Yeah I mean I wonder. Part of me is curious about where the sort of desire for that potential depth of experience was lost or where there was some kind of idea that having many more different things was better, or at least a better commercial prospect?

SW I think it's partly to do with the nature of the practice itself. Because I know with Au Topsi — Joel's place — where it was set up, in part I think because he wanted people to play for a week, or two weeks, but then it became difficult to find people who wanted to play with the same band for a week or two weeks. And with other types of music it's kind of the opposite of what people want to do. They have a different kind of practice altogether. But if it's a thing that always seems strange, then it's hard to create a culture of it being normal. Isn't it? You know, I remember you said to me that one of your friends said to you: 'five nights of [Ahmed], that's a lot of [Ahmed]' [Laughter] Yeah and it is.

JC Someone who, up until recently had programming responsibility at a venue.

SW But I'm kind of aware that a lot of people would think that, actually. Especially people who maybe have that responsibility because it's more than just the music. It maybe connotes a problem for people, you know: how can you get people to come listen to this thing for five days or ten days? Because it implies that for many listeners that's maybe a problem — it's not what people want.

JC Yeah, it's interesting. Obviously there's an opportunity to come many times and listen many times. But there's also an opportunity for lots of people to also listen once, to come in once, to dip in, right? And if you think about how still today that dance and theatre productions work. Is that something will come and it will be in a space for weeks, months, years sometimes, obviously with a more commercial sort of side of things. But even stuff that is difficult, quote-unquote difficult, but is demanding, challenging experimental work will do multi-night runs in that kind of context. And part of it linked to there being an extended kind of development process for that work where the economics of it is like, we can't spend three months developing a work that happens for one night kind of thinking. Part of it is that it's audience capacity stuff: dance takes up a lot of space, the audience take up less space in the smaller spaces. But I think something that also comes with that is a kind of energy that can be built up over time from the audience generating some kind of enthusiasm for the work that spreads. You know, it's like opening night happens. People are like, I mean, I felt this happened over the days with [Ahmed] as well, that I think for some of the people that were there, the Éliane Radigue material was the reason that they came, and was a more sort of assured prospect. They knew what they were going to get from that thing, and they had committed to come to the festival for that. And then they stayed for the [Ahmed] and were like, 'whoa'. And their enthusiasm for that became infectious and more people wanted to come and experience that, and I think that it would be nice to

have the potential for these kinds of things where a run of shows becomes … I don't think they're ever going to be like, you know, we're talking the difference between time pre- and post-TV, for example, but like through kind of television you have these broader community events that they impact more people even when they haven't necessarily been in the room, the same room together. That you share space by, someone was there one Tuesday and someone was there the following Thursday, but you've been part of a thing that's happened. And that opportunity to kind of reach more people through that because, I think I don't know whether it's people are busier now, or, at least have more demands placed on their time for their commitments across all facets of their life, from their engagement with culture to other things linked to basic survival and sustenance. That everyone finding the same day to go see something is harder.

SW **Yeah. Which is more of a reason for it to happen in this slower, several-day way.**

JC And it's harder, on the artist side of things, to join up a series of events that makes a week of work for some stuff. I mean some people don't have a problem but for lots of stuff a week of touring if it's possible is incredibly demanding like we were just talking over lunch about how I quite enjoy seeing these kind of things that Ken Vandermark writes about his schedule and stuff, and some of the stuff I've seen is they have like nine, ten hours of travel between things, because the network of venues and opportunities to present work has shrunken to the extent that it's no longer so straightforward to do things with reasonable travel distances in between. Which is going to inevitably have an effect on the music. I think you talked about that you guys would meet in the morning and talk about stuff, and you can develop, even if it's only over five days, there's still an opportunity to develop a daily ritual around how you do the work.

SW **I think that's really important actually. Because then if there's a ritual and even a routine, then that doesn't need to be the music that provides the ritual and routine. And it invites, can be the space of, moving away from all of that stuff, which is to me an ideal thing. I suppose before in my life, I've had that. And then music has been a way of not having that actually. Yeah, I'd not thought about that. But I think also that promoters are key, promoters for want of a better word, organisers of stuff, are key to, are an important part of this. I might have said: last year, or this year, there was a potential for us to play three times in Norway in the first half of this year and in the end we played one time partly because of disagreements about exclusivity and all that kind of stuff. And it made me sad because, to flip it around, it would have been a great thing to have three people collaborate on, on pre-**

senting three different versions of the same thing, within a six month period, in the same country.

JC Yeah it's not … it doesn't feel like it's so much of an ask, right?

SW Yeah. And I'm sure there are lots of other things that I don't know about behind the scenes that are part of it. But still it seemed like a kind of … the cup could be half full or half empty. You know, and it can be like, mmm, that's not going to work. Or it could be like, well, how can we make this work? Because the music feels like if we're given an opportunity, if someone says 'these nights, you want to come and play?' then yeah, we'll come and play, we'll work out how to fill the [time] space, you know? And at no point was there, when you said come and do five nights, at no point was there ever a kind of … We said to each other, what are you going to do? But the challenge was not the prospect of five nights back to back… It was never going to be anything apart from a really rewarding challenge.

JC Generative kind of experience.

SW Yeah, we really didn't know what we were going to do, but there was no apprehension about running out of materials, or something like that.

JC Or having to necessarily, like, repeat yourself in a way that was disappointing.

SW Yeah. And there is repetition, inevitably. And that's really interesting. But I think that also we learned a lot from that about what we were doing as well, and then that, it got me thinking about repertoire and material and all of those kinds of things too. It would have been really nice to talk to people who were there every night listening because there wasn't really time in the end to do…

JC As much of that.

SW Not really, partly because by the time we'd finished, actually, it was hard to talk.

JC Totally exhausted.

SW Soaking wet, my mouth like jelly after we'd finished for a bit. So often the talking then is the next morning, after this. And then it's us talking to each other because everyone else is gone. Well not everyone, because some of the others, you know Nate and Silvia and those guys were around.

JC I wonder on this kind of question of the economics and stuff… I mean, for me, obviously having the same fifteen or however many musicians there were at the time is a

bit cheaper in terms of the travel expenses and stuff like this, but it wasn't primarily an economic thing. Some of my thinking in doing that was about thinking about Fylkingen, thinking about the kind of programming that happens at Fylkingen. What I might want to see if Fylkingen wasn't just it's particular confluence of things where it's like a membership organisation, a place for developing work, and maybe not always, the focus isn't always on it being a presenting organisation. Just like if there was such a space that could allow these kind of deeper opportunities to understand or learn about or just to experience a kind of body of work… that was the primary motivation. And then, that there's different ways of doing that, with the Éliane Radigue stuff is like listening to a bunch of different pieces.

SW **I've always found when I have the opportunity to go and see a group several nights in a row, it's just, to me it's amazing because it asks questions of the group too, and it's a kind of test to not just do their stuff, you know? I've always wanted to have the opportunity to see people like four nights in a row. And it's great. Not always, and sometimes people do do pretty much the same thing four nights in a row.**

JC Yeah. And I keep coming back to these two things that I think about in relation to Stockholm, is when Ornette Coleman played at The Golden Circle, and when Cecil

Taylor was also there,[14] which is when Albert Ayler also briefly was playing with that group or kind of sat in I guess.

SW **Yeah.**

JC And how did they do these residencies then? Were they playing the same material every day? Or how was it shifting?

SW **Yes. It's hard to imagine really.**

JC Yeah, certainly hard to know.

SW **Yeah. And it wasn't recorded. Some of it was, but a lot of it wasn't. That's the other thing: we knew everything was being recorded when we were doing ours. And that does in some ways change things in a way. But I don't know, it's hard to imagine. And that's why like what we do, at an imaginary distance, again, it comes back to this, it becomes a conceptual re-imagining of these prospects,**

[14] A two-week Golden Circle residency across October and November, 1962. Two tracks 'Spontaneous Improvisation' and 'Flamingo' were released on LP as Cecil Taylor's Jazz Unit, The Early Unit 1962, Ingo-Sixteen, year unknown.

of these things. Someone who was, I mean there must be people who we know who were at some of those.

JC I brought it up recently. I went to visit CC Hennix who was here for a week or two after she performed at the festival this year. I went round to visit her, and at the time I was reading this book about Albert Ayler, so it just came up, that I was reading this book and it was interesting to read about how, you know, Albert had played with Cecil when he was in Stockholm. And you know she lit up and was like, 'oh, yes, I was at those shows'. Obviously because she was a jazz drummer, like in an early kind of musical practice. It's kind of really wonderful to think about who was there and clearly for her, it had been, you know, just hearing reference to it brought a kind of energising force back – [clicks fingers] – like this, you know, instantly. And I think even a one night concert of that kind of constellation of course, is going to have a massive impact. I mean I think particularly with musics that have such a density, a richness, and maybe not an immediately obvious structural formulation, like [Ahmed], like Cecil's music, to be able to immerse yourself in that over time, and even if, you know, I think for all of the countless Cecil Taylor records I've listened to that still remains somewhat inscrutable. But at least for the [Ahmed] stuff is somewhat less inscrutable now having been through that five-day period of immersion.

SW Yeah, for us too. Of course the only place we can actually do it is in concert, in public. You know, we can't really do it anywhere else. Partly because we're all in different places, but it wouldn't make sense to do it.

JC It doesn't feel like it's something that emerges through a process of rehearsal.

SW No, well, no, it doesn't. It's like the 'infinite rehearsal'. Wilson Harris' Infinite Rehearsal.[15] But no, it doesn't. But then we never had any rehearsals, so I don't know. Imagine if we did? But then why would we do that? Why not do it everynight [in public]? You know, because then it feels a more generous to me anyway, it feels a more generous thing.

JC To share it? Yeah.

SW Yeah. And to make it. But also that the sharing is the thing, it's like you can go and prepare for something else, but it requires a certain way of listening, a certain sort of… For example, if I go to three or four nights at OTO to see something, I know that I'm going to be there

[15] The Infinite Rehearsal is the second novel of Wilson Harris' Carnival Trilogy, published by Faber, 1987.

for three or four nights. And I think I listen in a different way. And I know that the people playing know that they're going to be there for three or four nights. And, you know, if I know them they also know that I'm going to be there. And it's a very a different time. The way time works is different. I often think about Steve [Noble]'s double kick when he played with the quartet with Brötzmann and Jason and John.

JC This is the one in February this year?

SW Yeah. And the first time [in 2013], too. He uses the double kick extremely sparingly and on the second day, at one point it just appeared. Having just not been there at all. And same to see Peter's tenor that he didn't touch. It's there, but he doesn't need to show you everything. You know. And that was, just to look at it sort of lying there like a cat or something, was a very …

JC There with its potential.

SW Yeah.

JC Knowing that there's two, three or four days or however long is there.

SW It might be required, but it might not be appropriate. But it's there because everything's there. … Yeah … But it

would be great to have more opportunity to do these kind of things. I can think of places where it could happen, you know, if I start to make a list, the places where it does like OTO, but there are not many other places where it seems to happen regularly, in Europe anyway.

JC No. Not that I know of.

SW And also like just in terms of concerts and fees and things. If someone said to us, well, you know, if one set costs this much money, to pay us, but to do three or four nights for a little bit more money. Plus, you know…

JC The basic things.

SW So the answer from us I'm sure is 'yes please'. Because it's like such an amazing thing to be, you know?

JC Yeah, totally. And I think it's interesting isn't it, that there's like a good chunk of the costs in organising something is those initial basics of setting up a thing. I mean, for you guys it's a relatively low economic ask for other stuff it's like the amount of time that goes into rigging or, you know, like getting the technical stuff sorted, plus the travel, etcetera. Oh it would be so much nicer to do more than a night. And if you think about it, you know, like kind of ongoing discussions about sustainability and …

SW **Exactly.**

JC Especially where these opportunities are kind of local opportunities as well. That instead of you having to, or someone having to, pay for a rehearsal space, they do a run of public things where they get paid, ideally. And the potential for that to accelerate the practice compared to a private rehearsal. I mean, obviously people need to be at a point where they are ready for a degree of public-ness, but sometimes it's also like that ability, I find at least fascinating, to see stuff being worked out, to be party to that process of discovery rather than only seeing a finished thing.

SW **Yeah. Me too. That's really is one of the things I'm most interested in. And I suppose like another version of that is a regular thing like the workshop, the Friday night workshop in London[16] — or to meet every week with the**

[16] The Friday night improvisation workshop was initiated in November 1999 by AMM founder Eddie Prévost at Community Music in Borough, London. It has taken place weekly since then with very few breaks. Public in the sense it is open to all, but not an audience - all participants have opportunities to play, and listen during its several hours. It continues at the Welsh Chapel, also in Borough.

same people and play, which is something I also have done and still do in different ways. But it's not. It's different. Different to do it in public and make the public event that process is different. Yeah, it's great to do. Thank you for making it possible to do, it's brilliant.

JC Thanks for coming.

SW **Great thing to do.**

JC I wonder what the economics of, for example, those early ... Obviously they were doing it to make a living, like those residences were part of paying the rent, right? Like when Coltrane's band was doing a run at the Village Vanguard, they would be getting paid.

SW **Yeah, probably not very much. I mean, it would be really interesting to understand that more and not romanticise it, because I imagine.**

JC No because it could have been just poverty wages, for example. I don't know. I mean, obviously I think at different points it was. But you know, and clearly, like someone like Ornette made a stand at some point and was like, I am not going to do that shit.

SW **Yeah. And the spaces they were, I imagine they were complicated. I mean OTO is a complicated public space a**

lot of time. It's open a lot of the time, and it's a fascinating, it's an even more fascinating space because of that. The kind of flow. An ethnography of Cafe OTO would be a fascinating thing, really, because there's so much going on. And it's a relatively organised sanitary, 21st century, version of that.

JC You know, I mean, you see these like these pictures, I think is from the Half Note, like this One Up, One Down — John Coltrane[17].

SW The stage in the middle.

JC Live at the Half Note, like it's tiny, it's like a thing that's been cut out of the wall that the band's been jammed into.

SW But other ones were not like that. The Village Gate. I wrote a thing about the Coltrane At The Village Gate. I was reading about the Village Gate, and [apparently] it was huge, it could seat 200 diners.

JC Oh, wow that's big.

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[17] The John Coltrane Quartet Live at the Half Note 1965, Impulse!, 2005.

SW But then I suppose you need a lot of those spaces, and a lot of people. But I also wonder how much time, and where, they also spent playing in the day, and if. Because it's not inconceivable that a lot of the playing was actually done in public in the relatively infinite night-time. You know if there's lots of spaces that are open, then you can move between them and slot into differently formal contexts for practice. Practice as in the idea of doing stuff, not practicing. I often think about, I imagine say off, Kingsland Road and Stoke Newington High Street there were like ten, fifteen places between 8pm and 8am, where a version of a practice that you could just kind of socially and physically slot into doing in a more or less populated space was happening, with your mates, and you didn't have to go to bed and you could afford to just, you know, you could, kind of the economics of being in those spaces, doing stuff would allow you to have somewhere you could go back to and be asleep. Then that would be, that would be a very interesting prospect, I think.

JC Certainly would be very different to how it is.

SW Now there's OTO and the Vortex and occasionally the wild John Edwards does a gig at both on the same night, and that's like some crazy thing.

JC But back in the day it was ...

SW But there are other more late-night places too actually like The [Total] Refreshment [Centre], and different clubs. So there are places. But yeah, then if there were lots of places and you could kind of move between them, and do stuff, could be really … which may have been more how it was. Don't know.[18]

JC Hard to know.

SW Impossible for me to know.

JC And obviously inextricably linked to the general kind of economic situation of life.

SW Yeah.

JC Stuff costs more, it costs more to be alive.

[18] There is - it seems - no book about how that time in New York. About how spaces like the Five Spot, Village Gate, Vanguard, or locales like 52nd Street 'worked' in socio-economic terms, how ideas, money, individuals moved through them night-by-night. Nor of London now. (Imagine one, a bit like Lee Chadwick's In Search of Heathland, Dobson 1982, with her blend of history, maps, close survey of the layers of life and evolving space, detailed diagrams, diaristic observation.)

SW Yeah.

JC At least to cover the basic stuff.

SW Yeah, it does. And it's just gets… I mean, the other thing like now, even within two years of London you can feel how much more expensive it is. But you don't get paid anymore. Actually. Everything's got a lot more expensive, but the fees haven't.

JC I think it's not just for music.

SW No.

JC It's also for the listener. The economic situation is worse, which also has a … if you can go out once a month instead of five times a month. It's…

SW Yeah. But then this also then reconnects with what we were talking about, about the speed of turnover of a thing to have something, something more resident in a space that people can come back to, or come for a bit of. We'll see. It'd be great to have more opportunity to do it.

JC Yeah, it's something to think through in terms of when we think about what kinds of spaces do we need in our cities. Where we live, what should they be able to facilitate? How big should they be? How could they be

structured to allow different kinds of factors to emerge?

SW I think that's a great and fascinating kind of paradox of Cafe OTO, actually, because it wasn't designed to be a … The space itself was not designed as a performance space. It was designed for something completely different. And many things, if you, I think just on paper, if you were to design a performance space, you probably wouldn't have like one wall full of windows onto the street for a start. Many things, a low ceiling, you know.

JC Oh no, it's got lots of classic things that are: don't do this.

SW Yeah, but almost all of them, in fact, contribute to making it such a remarkable, not a 24-hour space, but it's open more than it's closed each day, every day of the week. And because there's no stage a certain kind of human theatre around this core of sounds is possible. And the way the space works in the daytime and then you can see in and out and the way the light works, it's all, it's all this flow of stuff through it all the time. It's a very interesting space.

JC Just the level of public-ness that's say in contrast to Fylkingen, that Fylkingen doesn't have that level of public-ness because it's both classic blackbox, which is good for some things, but you isolate yourself off from

the world. It's also it's not really in a place with a heavy footfall or anything like that. And even if Cafe OTO is on a kind of back street, not the main street, it still has a lot of passing traffic.

SW Yeah, loads of it. I remember Fylkingen, before it was renovated had doors with glass with wire in. You know for fire. Because I remember playing that with the saxophone and we were talking about it last night before it was renovated, I remember. I remember it was much more rickety before. And I don't remember anything really about the event very much. But I do remember that, because I know I did it. I did it there. You could see through to the outside a bit. You had a sense that it was not, it wasn't a hermetic rubbery thing like it was when we played.

JC I think it would be interesting to see how the new place also functions in that it's kind of within a residential neighbourhood. How will it relate to the people who live in that area? And I think there's some commitment to acknowledging that location and how it how it might need to behave in that relationship.

SW Yeah. Cool. There we go.

fylkingen
10—14
august
2022

fifth edition festival for other music

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أحمد [ahmed]
giant beauty

fönstret 9—13

compositions by ahmed abdul-malik,
re-imagined and arranged by [ahmed]

pat thomas piano
seymour wright alto saxophone
joel grip double bass
antonin gerbal drums

produced by john chantler and seymour wright.

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fönstret 9–13