

The Golden Age of Non-Idiomatic Improvisation

FYS 129

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Various Quotes

These slides contain a collection of some of the quotes largely from the musicians that are studied during the course.

The idea is to present “musicians in their own words”.

Maria Dybbroe



Danish saxophonist, improviser & composer (b. 1993 -)

Dybbroe on Melody and Contrast

PA: Is there a common thread between your various projects?

Dybbroe: I think you can definitely say that there is. Still, it is also important for me to have many different projects because they can do something different and are stimulating and inspiring in different ways due to the different people I collaborate with and the different focus areas of the projects. I would never be able to have one solo project like some artists have. I thrive in the alternation between different energies and between working more alone and more collectively. If I have to describe the common thread that I myself see in my projects, I would say that I am generally interested in melodies, and like the contrast between the more abstract and expressive language with e.g. extended techniques and the more harmonic and grandiose, slightly naive melodic. And then form, instrumentation and arrangement mean quite a lot to me in all contexts I am involved in. It is both hugely important and really fun to think a lot about forms and processes and compositions.

Maria Dybbroe, interview “The space in the breath” Passive Aggressive, March 23, 2023, URL: <https://passiveaggressive.dk/maria-dybbroe-pladsen-i-andedraget/>; translated by google translate

Dybbroe on the Sound of her Saxophone

PA: Do you have a particular note or sound on the saxophone that you work with in your music to a particularly high degree? If so, what exactly is that sound capable of?

Dybbroe: I hope that you can hear my sound, that it means a lot to me that it is rich, round and full, which also means that there are quite a lot of alto saxophone sounds that I didn't actually see like - because the alto sax can quickly become pointed and nasal in nature, and I don't mind that much. An alto saxophone sounds best when it has a large and full core, but at the same time an openness at the top and a singability like a woman's voice, which sets it apart from the other saxophones in the saxophone family. And although I, like many other freely improvising musicians, am also concerned with developing a large language of extended techniques on the saxophone, such as are more percussive or imitate other instruments and machines, the more 'traditional' saxophone sound actually means a lot to my enjoyment of playing the instrument. This is to a great extent expressed on the Sidechains album "Vands Transparens", where there are virtually no extended techniques on the entire album, but instead we work with variations of the sound within the 'normal' range and I love this kind of saxophone massage.

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Dybbroe on Approaches to Composing

PA: Do you have certain approaches to composing music? Are they different in relation to whether it is solo material or for larger/smaller groups?

Dybbroe: ...I collect instrumentation ideas in my notebook on a daily basis, which are often used for the compositions I write for Caktus. So here we return a bit to the challenge of multiplying instruments, which I think is a good creative stretch. It could, for example, be 'two independent equal melodies weave in and out of each other in sax and cello, while double bass and second sax move staggered from deep to bright register'. When you have such an idea as a starting point, it is extremely easy to get started. And then there are three phrases I often return to:

1. The first idea is almost always good.
2. You have to finish a piece of music before you can remake it.
3. You have to make the first record before you can make the next one

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Dybbroe on Calmness

PA: There is a particular work of a kind of stillness or slowness (or given space) in much of your work. Is it something you recognize? I'm thinking, for example, of a composition like "swans float in light" from the debut with Sidechains, but also experience it as a general trait that can cover a lot of your music.

Dybbroe: I can recognize that. In life, I generally try to cultivate a calmness and a groundedness, which may also be expressed in the music. It's not that I don't also like wild outbursts and surprises, or playing hugely expressively and at a high energy level, but the two things are not mutually exclusive. And I like the contrast between the wild and unpredictable, and the more fluid poetic, or melancholic and calm. And maybe in our society today we just need a little more calm than fast and lots of stimulation, because there is so much that constantly wants our attention in the form of advertising and media. It may well be my music, therefore to a greater extent I also crave an inner, slightly calmer tempo. I haven't really thought about that much before.

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Dybbroe on the Barefoot Collective

PA: Together with a number of other exciting musicians, you run the record company Barefoot Records. In January, the compilation "Shoeless and shameless" was published, where you have entered into an even closer musical collaboration by playing on, in and with each other's music and compositions. It is a wonderful form of mutation. Can you tell us a bit about the thoughts and process behind it?

Dybbroe: Barefoot Records is an artist collective consisting of 8 musicians and composers, all with a work within experimental and freely improvising jazz, and since 2006 it has functioned as a platform where the members can freely publish their music without any restrictions or assessments . I have only been part of the collective since 2019 and am thus the newest member, but I am actually one of those who have pushed for the fact that we should use each other more artistically.

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Dybbroe on the Barefoot Collective

PA: On several of the releases you contribute to, the titles are often very graphic and poetic. Are the titles an expression of an underlying idea or fascination that forms the starting point for the music? Or is it the music that comes first and the title that follows based on the music?

Dybbroe: Titles mean a lot to me. When you work with such relatively abstract music as I do, the titles are the most tangible thing the listener has to be able to open the music and the listening. Therefore, titles are more important than many musicians will admit. It was in the meeting with friends who worked with lyrics and songwriting that it really dawned on me what lyrics in music mean to many people, and that in instrumental music we actually only have the title. Within jazz in general, I think there are unfortunately a huge number of bad, banal or bland titles, and I would like to do better. On the Cactus album "Under the Sun" I had therefore had 12 different poets write texts based on the music as an opening for the tracks, and on the upcoming Cactus record "Flickering" I myself have written a kind of 'extended titles' for each number, which consists of approx. 4-5 lines of text/poem/thoughts.

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