

-7 questions to Anders Jormin-

by Luigi Bozzolan

1. **LB:** You are one of the most influential musicians in Scandinavia in modern Jazz music. Could you tell us some highlights of your career from the beginning till now? Introduce your story in brief.

AJ: That's a long story... My father was a jazz pianist, I heard the jazz of the late 50's on records from childhood- and played standards with my father every evening at home. First on homemade drums, later electric bass before the double bass. I studied classical piano as well- my training as young was very rich and versatile and I also graduated from the Academy of music still quite young. Since then I have had so many great experiences in music. I have had the privilege of collaborating with some of the greatest musicians, it's impossible to name one before the other. But I will always be grateful to have played and recorded with Elvin Jones, Don Cherry, Joe Henderson - great jazz artists who are no longer among us... I am always focused on the present, but sometimes people remind me of all the great things I have been fortunate to be part of!

2. **LB:** Since some years the Scandinavian contemporary Jazz music is starting to win a considerable Italian audience also by means of some really good major label as ECM and ACT. I mainly refer to EST Trio, Bobo Stenson Trio, Jon Balke, Sidsel Endresen, and...Anders Jormin. What do you think about this great cultural phenomenon?

AJ: The scene for improvised music has been good in Scandinavia. Already 40 years ago the musicians managed to find new ways- inspired by american jazz, but not copying it. Rather developing new approaches to improvisation, including new elements in music. The countries up here have also supported improvised music in a most serious way. Improvised music has in Scandinavia been considered an art form for quite long. Not at all supported as much as classical music and opera- but still not forgotten. The frontline musicians have been able to work professionally even though the concert opportunities are limited in small countries like ours. Music schools traditionally hold a high quality. The fact that the countries are small, the amount of musicians have been limited- this has created a warm atmosphere where colleagues appreciate each other and easily collaborate and curiously experiment in music - also across those stylistic borders that seems to have been so strong in many other places. This has developed depth and reflective quality in our conceptions of music, I feel. There are many explanations... ECM and ACT (and other labels!) have presented clearly different aspects of our music. Also the contemporary improvised music scene have today found their labels- great scandinavian musicians can be heard everywhere!

3. **LB:** The Sound. In my opinion one of the main, and great, elements in Swedish music is the quality of the sound, meaning as well as record quality and artistic research. Is it just a my personal point of view, or do you think is a real aspect of Swedish contemporary performers?

AJ: I think you have a point there. Musicians with great and personal sound have inspired sound engineers to be inventive and precise in their work. The great recording engineers we now have up here also challenge the musicians to always keep quality and focus on their sound- maybe we have

helped each other develop through the years. Having a unique sound developed through years of honest and refining artistic work is something many musicians strive for- not only swedes. The more you search for your own inner music, the less you manage to limit yourself within a certain pre-existing stylistic direction - the more natural your sound will be developed...

4. **LB:** Swedish music is strongly related to the folk and popular music origins. How the cultural folk elements have influenced the contemporary Swedish music?

AJ: This is a constant question we get... It is true that we do have a living tradition of an "informal songbook" consisting of older "visor" (folk songs) and poems put to music that many swedes know and occasionally sing. These beautiful songs can definitely be said to inspire and to be alive in many musicians minds. But the true violin and voice-based traditional folk music is still not very well known outside the "inner circle". Through pianist Jan Johansons famous jazz recordings of swedish folk music in late 60's, we anyway got a forever remaining sense and pride of our musical heritage and the treasures to be found- this record is still on top of the sales lists. It has had a strong impact- maybe also, indirectly, on our belief in what we all carry inside... Today, many of the childrens songs people proudly consider to be very "swedish" are composed by the great Georg Riedel- who once came from Tcheckia, I believe...

5. **LB:** In modern music is really difficult to define edges and limits among the several ways to mean the word Jazz. Have you an your own idea of contemporary Jazz? Where is the end of the word "Jazz" and starts an undefined kind of "contemporary Jazz"? And...is it important to clearly define what kind of music are you playing?

AJ: We could write a book around this... I am not so interested in defining stiles or describing music by comparisons. The word "Jazz" has a tendency of carrying a different meaning for every person. Style was for me always secondary to expression, therefore I feel all these efforts to put music into categories being a mistake. I clearly define my music through the way I compose and play. It is there for everyone to share- without categorisation.

6. **LB:** You are one of the founding members and teacher of the Jazz and Impro department at the Academy of Music and Drama in Gothenburg. I had the great opportunity to graduated a Master Degree under your guidance in that Academy. What do you think about the teaching and pedagogy in Music and Art in general in Sweden?

AJ: We used to have a fantastic music school system for kids- this most sadly is disappearing due to economic savings all over the country.. We do still have a great pre-university school system called "folkhögskola"- all my university students have studied 1 to 3 years there before they enter university studies in music. This makes them, compared to many other european students, quite experienced already when starting a bachelors education in music. On the university level, schools have their own profile, more or less obvious. The school in Göteborg, (Academy of Music and Drama) where I teach (and where you spent your Masters years), puts focus on the individual growth of each student in developing their own aesthetics and artistic personality.

7. **LB:** Which directions are you giving to your artistic projects? Are you following some specific artistic research or project?

AJ: *At the present, I lead two projects: AD LUCEM, which is a group w two fantastic vocalists singing my poems in latin + Fredrik Ljungkvist, sax and Jon Fält, drums. We released, highly appreciated, on ECM last year. I also have a quite special trio called LYÖSTRAINI together with Lena Willemark, voice and Karin Nakagawa playing the japanese koto.*

I compose a lot, recently a modern oratorio for choir and sinfonietta, BETWEEN ALWAYS AND NEVER, was released and awarded (Swedish society, SCD1154). I play w Bobo Stenson trio and other great musicians in constantly changing projects..

I am grateful to have a situation where I can choose carefully what to focus on. For me, the artistic direction in what I do, is clear and deeply heartfelt. I search challenges, I try to place myself and my music in open territories where my own paths are yet not obvious...

When it comes to academic artistic research projects, I have for some years now, worked in trio with the great Karin Nelson, church organ professor in Oslo, and Jonas Simonson, flutes. We exchange knowledge and artistry between church music tradition, folk music- and my own kind of music. There is a recent CD, SONGS IN MEANTONE on Footprint records, that someone called revolutionary. At least, it's different.. ☺

Anders Jormin