



An Overview on the Artistry of the Concert Accordion in Contemporary Chamber Music

A Performer's Journey Through Shaping
Artistic Identity

NAIARA DE LA PUENTE VADILLO



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DocMus Doctoral School

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ABSTRACT

In my doctoral research, I aim to examine the role of the accordion in contemporary chamber music performance practices through a process of observation, exploration, examination, and reflection as an accordionist. The focus of this project is centered on four doctoral concerts, in addition to my own embodied experience as a professional musician in Finland and Spain, working with various ensembles and musicians.

By integrating artistic processes, outcomes, documentation, interviews, and text, this research aims to contribute new insights and findings to the field of artistic research and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of modern accordion performance, professional career, and education.

This doctoral research project makes an original contribution to the field by exploring new knowledge and understanding related to artistic identity formation, specifically within the community of concert accordionists. By reflecting on the evolving identity of concert accordionists and considering their potential needs, this research sheds light on the present and future directions in the field. In addition to my own experiences and observations, I have relied on the valuable work conducted by predecessors who have researched various aspects of the concert accordion.

The full scope of this doctoral project includes four artistic components (four concerts) and an artistic doctoral thesis comprising an integrative chapter with three interrelated thematic sections. Section One delves into the aspects of the artistic possibilities of concert accordion in contemporary chamber music repertory. Section Two will analyze and examine the evolution of the accordionist's artistic identity formation, while the final section will provide a personal perspective on the evolving identity of concert accordion players and their potential needs within the field and proposes steps for their continued growth and development in the future.

Keywords: artistic research, embodiment, classical contemporary music, chamber music, accordion, artistic identity.

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Naiara De La Puente Vadillo

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1.1 Introduction

As a musician, I have dedicated myself to studying and pursuing a career within the Western European music panorama. Throughout my experiences, I have noticed a notable trend in the career goals of both my peers and fellow professional musicians. Specifically, I have observed that some aspire to achieve excellence as solo performers, while others seek to collaborate with fellow musicians in group settings.

One subgroup of musicians who exemplify the latter trend are those who specialize in solo instruments, such as the concert accordion, but have the desire to create music as part of a collective. As someone who has also been drawn to this trend, I find it fascinating to explore the motivations and creative processes of these collaborative musicians. Over the past decade, I have fully immersed myself in this aspect of my musicianship and have seized every opportunity to enhance my skills in this area. As a result, the contemporary field of chamber music composed for the accordion has become the central focus of my artistic doctoral studies.

I have seldom discussed the reasons behind my choice of the main area of study, as I initially hesitated to determine whether it would be a fitting topic for a thesis. However, as I delved deeper into the nuances of artistic research, I came to realize that my own experiences and perspectives formed an integral component of the study and a crucial source of knowledge. Hence, one of the research aims of my study is to offer a fresh perspective on the accordion by focusing on the performer's role and exploring new aspects through musical performance and reflection.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the essentials of artistic research, I needed to acquaint myself with literature that explored a diverse range of artistic projects. Moreover, attending conferences such as the International Chamber Music Conference, 2018, and Doctors in Performance—Festival Conference of Music Performance and Artistic Research 2016 & 2018, proved to be an invaluable resource as I had the opportunity to gain insights into the works of doctoral students from a wide range of artistic disciplines.

I vividly remember a particular rehearsal where, during an informal conversation with the members of the string quartet I was playing with, we discussed the topic of my research and the reasons behind my choice of subject for my studies. I was struck by their innate ability to communicate with one another through music, their precise and organic gestures, and

their extensive experience as members of string quartets and orchestras. This conversation served as a powerful reminder of the beauty and richness of musical collaboration and reinforced my passion for the study of chamber music.

To comprehend the significance of my pursuit of a doctorate in chamber music, it is crucial to examine and contemplate the events that have shaped my growth as an accordionist. These events include the inception of my musical studies, my academic formation, my involvement in diverse musical institutions over the years, and the realization of various artistic projects. Moreover, it is within these experiences that I recognize the impetus to broaden and intensify my comprehension of chamber music and to reflect upon its significance.

In a subsequent chapter of this academic thesis, entitled “Formulating the Artistic Identity of a Professional Concert Accordionist” I engage in an in-depth examination and analysis of the state of accordion pedagogy. This exploration is founded upon my musical journey, from my early years of musical instruction to the culmination of my university studies, as well as my ongoing observations and conversations with renowned accordion professionals throughout my musical and academic endeavors. These sources of information serve as a crucial foundation for my research.

To situate this theme, it is necessary to provide a historical backdrop of the time in which I commenced my musical studies. In the early 1990s, when I first started learning the accordion at a music school in my city, the pedagogy of the accordion was predominantly geared towards solo performance, rather than ensemble music-making. This was due, in part, to the fact that the accordion is a polyphonic instrument that was not traditionally utilized in orchestral compositions. Additionally, many music teachers at the time were unfamiliar with the accordion and its potential for collective musical expression. Consequently, the instrument was frequently excluded from collaborative activities organized by music institutions.

As an accordionist, my instrumental training was limited solely to individual lessons. Initially, I received 30-minute weekly lessons, which were later extended by an additional 30 minutes. In contrast to instrumentalists who played in orchestral settings, I was unable to participate in orchestra rehearsals, ensemble, or chamber music lessons. Furthermore, it became apparent to me that, as an accordionist, I would not have the opportunity to participate in these types of groups due to the widespread misconception

that the classical accordion was incompatible with so-called classical music. It is imperative to recognize the value of comprehensive music education for all instrumentalists within a school setting. I believe that, regrettably, very little attention was given to the feelings of displacement experienced by accordionists—students between the ages of 9 and 14—at the music school.

It is worth noting that even years later, my peers and I still remember our teacher's arduous efforts to ensure our participation in events such as end-of-year concerts. While decisions made at the central level may have appeared innocuous, they were probably unaware of the adverse effects these decisions had on the musical education of their pupils.

To this day, it remains crucial to highlight the issue of neglecting specific musical specialties in academic institutions. Music schools need to recognize the value of each of the musical disciplines they offer and enable their students to benefit from all the academic and artistic possibilities provided by the institution. Neglecting a particular specialization can result in limited musical education and opportunities for students. It is, therefore, desirable that such neglect should not occur due to a lack of musical knowledge of the instrument or the lack of involvement of the institution's leadership and teaching staff. To further explore this issue, I will engage in conversations with other accordionists to discuss the value given to the accordion or its musical status. Additionally, I will provide my insights on how to enhance the preparation of future accordionists in their musical education.

The early stages of my musical education brought me immense joy and positive experiences during my individual lessons and self-practice. However, upon reflection, I acknowledge the limitation of my education, which largely lacked opportunities for group collaboration. The absence of such experiences led to the realization that I missed out on developing important non-musical skills, which accompany group collaboration. In hindsight, I acknowledge that active participation in group collaboration would have enabled me to hone my artistic skills, expand my musical knowledge, and improve skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership as part of a group. Additionally, I would have had the opportunity to cultivate meaningful relationships with fellow musicians.

Consequently, during the early stages of my musical education, the opportunity to participate in group music-making was scarce. However, I eventually had the privilege of completing chamber music studies as part

of an accordion duo under specific circumstances. Typically, accordionists initially seek chamber music partners from within the same accordion class. My first experience with chamber music was a success and provided me with an enriching experience in which I familiarized myself with the fundamental principles of playing in a chamber ensemble. This opportunity allowed me to develop my skills in cooperative learning, leadership, and effective collaboration during rehearsals to enhance musical performance.

On the contrary, because my chamber music partner was also an accordionist, I recognized that I did not have the chance to acquire the knowledge and experience that arises from collaborating with musicians who play different instruments. Consequently, I argue that it is crucial to integrate chamber music into the early accordion education curriculum as an enhancement to the conventional instrumental music learning experience. Studies have demonstrated that chamber music can substantially contribute to the advancement of musical expertise. In a case study conducted by Perkins and Mills (2008) on a chamber music quintet, they stated that “the quintet emerges as a space in which students can challenge and be challenged, where they can learn deeply and where they can develop skills within and beyond music” (ibid., 14). In addition, I propose that chamber music can offer students a means of enhancing their musical education and developing skills that may prove beneficial to their careers. Later in this thesis, I will delve into the potential qualities and proficiencies necessary for a successful career as a concert accordionist, as well as explore the significance of chamber music in the profession.

It wasn't until my undergraduate studies that I was first introduced to chamber music. While at the university, I had the opportunity to collaborate with a diverse group of chamber musicians, including clarinetists, saxophonists, percussionists, and cellists. I recall vividly the work I did with each of my colleagues and the lessons we learned together. During this period, I became aware of new horizons of musical potential and the importance of working both independently and collaboratively. I also learned how to sharpen my listening abilities and recognize areas for improvement in my playing. Most importantly, I discovered that the interplay of individual and group work brought fulfillment and happiness into my daily life as a musician.

My first experiences with chamber music allowed me to acquire the basic skills and knowledge to enhance my practice and expand my repertoire. Gramata (2015, 3) highlights that the small ensemble setting of chamber

music facilitates increased personal responsibility and heightened awareness of various musical elements. Additionally, chamber music requires performers to function both individually and contribute to a collective sonority. To discuss the benefits of participating in chamber music ensembles, it is important to highlight the various skills and concepts that can be developed through this experience. In my own experience, engaging with chamber music allowed me to focus on specific aspects that enhanced my professional skills as a musician. These aspects include:

- Increasing my performance security and improving my self-confidence.
- Refining my listening skills as an accordionist.
- Developing a sense of belonging to a group, both musically and personally, and understanding the concept of shared responsibility.
- Gaining knowledge of the sound capabilities and characteristics of other instruments, which I have explored in depth in my doctoral thesis.

Since then, I have had the privilege of performing an extensive and diverse range of chamber music repertoire, participating in large ensembles, and facing various musical challenges that have contributed to my growth as a musician. As noted by Deibel et al. (2014, 6), chamber music serves as a vehicle for musical excellence that directly transfers to the large ensemble. The rigorous demands of chamber music practice, including precise intonation, blending of tone within the ensemble, maintaining internal rhythm, and matching style and articulation (Gramata 2015, 7), require a high level of attention and skill.

During my doctoral studies and before, I collaborated with renowned composers such as Ramón Lazkano, Félix Ibarrondo, Mikel Urkiza, and Aurélio Edler-Copês, and performed demanding contemporary music alongside notable ensembles, including Krater Ensemble (2008-2013), SMASH Ensemble (2011-2015), and Ensemble Sinkro (to the present day). Krater Ensemble was an ensemble with a wide instrumental formation, performing premieres with up to nine musicians. The Krater Ensemble's distinctive formation attracted renowned composers to create works specifically for this unique instrumentation. As a result, I had the privilege of performing premieres of pieces composed by esteemed artists such as Ramón Lazkano and Félix Ibarrondo, among others. The ensemble's

reputation for producing high-quality performances of contemporary works further enhanced my experience and skills as a concert accordionist. I had the privilege of being part of new chamber music formats, which I have continued to develop and explore in my doctoral concerts.

I want to emphasize the significance of my ensemble experiences for my development as an accordionist and their role as the foundation for my doctoral work. Being a member of an ensemble has been instrumental in honing my listening skills and reflecting on my work, both of which have been critical in articulating my ideas in writing. Additionally, these experiences have provided me with my first exposure to the role of conductor and the opportunities that come with being part of a group where I am no longer the soloist.

It is worth noting that, as a professional musician, I have experienced situations where formal training in working with a conductor was insufficient, as I will discuss in detail later in this dissertation. While some may assume that a professional musician should be able to navigate any situation with ease, I disagree. I believe that prior training and experience in ensemble or orchestra settings, including working with a conductor, would have provided me with the necessary skills or at least basic guidelines to approach these situations with greater confidence.

As will be discussed in further detail later, the accordionist of the 21st century is a highly versatile and accomplished musician with a diverse range of skills and experiences that enable them to participate in various artistic projects. This new generation of accordionists is not only highly productive but often also possesses an entrepreneurial spirit and innovative approach that has led to the development of new artistic projects and opportunities and contributed to the evolution of the accordionist's evolving identity. Furthermore, they are committed to pedagogy and the creation of high-quality educational materials across various levels. Additionally, in recent years, they have engaged in a critical examination of various topics relevant to the accordion, as evidenced by their published books and articles.

Thus, and as discussed earlier, this thesis explores various aspects related to the accordion, including the musical landscape and practices of accordionists, as well as my own professional background and experiences, and many other observations, reflections, and experiences over the years. Based on these factors, this work includes a final section dedicated to the artistic identity of the 21st-century accordionist. This chapter includes a

personal reflection on what it means to be a contemporary accordionist, as well as an analysis of the identifying characteristics and labor needs of the current concert accordionist, in conversation with renowned accordion players and pedagogues. Furthermore, I examine the pedagogical landscape of accordion education at the primary and university levels, as well as potential employment opportunities for accordionists. In this chapter, I also offer a critique of the current training available to accordionists and propose guidelines for a more holistic training approach to meet the demands of the professional accordion musical landscape.

Overall, this thesis provides a detailed examination of the challenges and opportunities facing modern accordionists, including artistic, and career-related aspects. By analyzing the experiences and perspectives of accomplished performers and educators, it aims to identify the key qualities and proficiencies required for success in this demanding field. Furthermore, this work explores the role of chamber music in accordion performance and education, as well as the potential benefits and challenges of building international networks. Ultimately, this thesis aims to offer practical recommendations for future directions in accordion education and performance, as well as fostering freedom, innovation, and creativity in the field.

As a result, this work is divided into three interconnected sections to provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities facing the modern accordionist, as well as offering recommendations for future directions in accordion education and performance. The initial section introduces the subject of study, encompassing relevant aspects such as the research field, frame of reference, research methods, and materials, essentially presenting the research project. The first section on the artistic work that has informed the writing on the accordion in the context of contemporary chamber music. The second section analyzes and examines the evolution of the accordionist in the realm of artistic identity formation. Finally, the third section reflects on the new identity of concert accordion players and their potential needs within the educational sphere. In addition to relying on personal experiences and insights, interviews with prominent accordionists and pedagogues were also conducted.

Through its careful analysis of artistic and career-related aspects, as well as its focus on the role of chamber music in accordion performance, this work provides a valuable resource for advancing the accordion as a respected and relevant musical instrument in the 21st century.

1.2 The description of the topic

This literary work is a first-person text that primarily compiles and analyzes part of the artistic activity I have pursued during my doctoral studies. Alongside these studies, I have also developed other professional work, both in artistic and pedagogical contexts, which have undoubtedly had a significant impact on enriching my knowledge and shaping my approach to writing this work. My research has involved collecting information and gaining understanding through artistic practices and processes.

The artistic aspect of my doctoral projects consisted of four concerts in which I mainly performed chamber music with various ensembles, featuring an entirely original repertoire for the accordion. Each of the four concerts is closely related to the topic of my written work. To me, each recital is an experimental aspect of my thesis, with new music serving as the overarching theme that connects the four concerts. Each concert has its unique theme, with a range of languages and musical aesthetics that I will further detail in my writing. In addition to providing practical experience for the development of my written work, one of my goals in selecting the repertoire for these concerts was to explore a collection of challenging pieces that I believe led to a more enriched artistic development.

This research documents the knowledge gained through my personal experience of working in the field of chamber music with various musicians and ensembles featuring different instrumentation. Each musical encounter has represented a unique challenge, as I have sought to delve into and work on musical aspects in a conscious and precise manner to be able to analyze and reflect upon them later. In doing so, I have also sought to understand the meaning and implications of incorporating the concept of embodiment into musical practice.

It is important to note that this work is not intended to be a manual for accordionists. Rather, my goal is to provide thoughtfully argued guidelines and ideas that can inspire and even be applied to specific pieces, but more importantly, to encourage exploration and innovation on the accordion. I hope that this research will be inspiring for others who wish to undertake a thorough study of chamber music and that it will offer helpful interpretation guidelines through examples of specific works. Additionally, I hope to encourage accordionists to engage in artistic research and to construct new types of knowledge that can benefit the wider community.

As an accordionist myself, I have found a lack of literature on this subject and have often desired to read firsthand experiences of great instrumentalists who could inspire and guide me. I believe it is important to have texts that invite accordionists to actively research and experiment with their instrument, to seek out new sounds, and to approach their playing less rigidly.

Furthermore, my doctoral studies have served as a transformative process that has allowed me to shape and enrich my own artistic identity. Living abroad and collaborating with musicians from diverse cultural and musical backgrounds has allowed me to expand my musical perspective and enrich my understanding of the art form. This exposure to cultural and musical diversity has been a crucial factor in my musical growth and has ultimately informed my approach to music-making. In the following chapters, I will delve further into the impact of such diverse experiences on my development as a musician and how they have informed my current practice as a doctoral candidate.

This process of reflection on musical identity led me to ultimately write a chapter dedicated to the formulation of what I call the artistic identity of the 21st-century concert accordionist. From this point, I considered looking back at the instrument's history, focusing on the figure of the accordionist as a subject. The evolution of the accordion has impacted the role of the performer, and conversely, the increased skill and new needs of the accordionist have spurred further research and improvements to the instrument.

Throughout my musical journey, I have had the privilege of engaging in conversations and collaborative reflections with prominent figures in the accordion community, including Matti Rantanen, Marjut Tynkkynen, Niko Kumpuvaara and Veli Kujala. In my research, I argue for the importance of recognizing the contributions and efforts of our predecessors in the field of accordion music. It is through their dedication and innovation that current accordionists have access to high-level educational institutions, opportunities to pursue professional careers in diverse musical environments, and ultimately gain recognition within the wider musical community.

1.3 The research questions

My thesis is divided into two distinct blocks. The first block constitutes the artistic nucleus and experimental platform of this research project: four doctoral recital concerts. The first part aims to disseminate information about the concerts' content and context, artistic goals, and implications. Through these concerts, I seek to answer the following research questions:

- What is the role and significance of the accordion in contemporary chamber music?
- In what ways do composers utilize the technical and artistic possibilities of the concert accordion in an ensemble setting?
- What performance practices are relevant to the accordion when playing with other instruments and with instrumental groups, and how do these practices influence the musical outcomes?
- How do the different cultural and historical contexts of accordion music influence the way composers approach writing for the instrument in a chamber music setting?
- What are the challenges and opportunities of collaborating with other musicians in a chamber music setting, and how does this affect the interpretation and reception of the music by audiences?

To address these questions, I provide several musical examples from compositions by renowned composers.

The second block offers an overview of the changes in the accordionist's professional skills. I will delve into the professional outlook of accordionists of the 21st century and examine the new artistic identities that they can adopt in the modern world.

- As concert accordionists, what skills should we master to meet the demands of the classical and contemporary music scene and achieve our artistic goals?
- What are the expectations of a modern accordionist in the present day?
- What is the current state of the accordion in the classical music panorama and what areas should be improved in the early stages of accordion education?

- What subjects should be included at the university level of accordion education to help students achieve their future goals in music?
- What are the professional demands and expectations for accordionists in the current industry?

1.4 The methodology

The methodology of this research project is based on the principles of artistic research and utilizes qualitative research interviewing and autoethnography as a method. Ethical considerations have been taken into account in accordance with the guidelines set by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK).

1.4.1 Qualitative research interviewing

I conducted interviews with several professionals in the music scene and transcribed them using qualitative research interviewing techniques. Following the terminology used by Brinkmann (2013), I employed experience-focused interviewing to obtain the most precise depiction feasible of the participants' experiences. The objective of experience-focused interviewing is to attain the utmost precision in portraying an individual's experiences.

The key methodology I chose was the semi-structured interview. This approach allowed me to prompt the participants, rephrase questions, and adjust according to the situation during the interview. Several authors highlight the benefits of this research method (Brinkmann 2013, Galletta & Cross 2013). Semi-structured interviews also provide the interviewer with greater visibility as a knowledge-producing participant in the process, rather than being limited by a predetermined interview guide (Brinkmann 2013, 21).

I covered a range of topics in the interviews, from broad to specific, which created opportunities for the participants to freely narrate and for me to ask more direct questions related to the study's focus. As Galletta and Cross (2013) describe, the semi-structured interview is structured enough to address specific aspects of the research question while still allowing participants to provide new meanings to the topic of study. I, as the interviewer, was open

to any input the participants had in line with the study, providing room for the production of interesting stories and descriptions.

The main objective of my interviews was to elicit the meaning that the participants attach to the focus of the study and to capture this meaning as accurately as possible. It is undeniable that interviewing is a knowledge-producing practice. Furthermore, I aimed to engage with the participants to generate a profound sense of significance that surpasses the superficial level of words, expressions, and metaphors to comprehend the underlying meaning behind their narratives. As Brinkman (2013) asserts, an interviewer can adopt a proactive, inquisitive approach while being respectful and adopting a not-knowing stance, akin to Socrates in some dialogues to steer clear of treating the interview as an oral examination (*ibid.*, 26).

In addition to the semi-structured interview, I opted for individual, face-to-face interviews. I believe that this method is a more personal and natural way of conversing with someone, as it allows for a more natural and fluid conversation. The use of gestures and body language provides valuable information and facilitates communication. Regarding the advantages of face-to-face interviews over telephone interviews, Shuy (2002, 541–544) highlights the increased accuracy of responses due to the contextual naturalness, greater likelihood of self-generated answers, more symmetrical distribution of interactive power, greater effectiveness with complex issues, more thoughtful responses, and the fact that face-to-face interviews are better for sensitive questions. It is important to note that as the researcher, I conducted the analysis using the stack of transcripts and audio recordings. On the other hand, telephone interviews and video conferencing afford superior prospects for conducting interviews with participants who are geographically distant from the interviewer, as was the case with two of my interviewees.

Throughout my research, I have conducted qualitative research interviews with leading figures in the accordion community, including Finnish accordionists and educators Matti Rantanen, Veli Kujala, Marjut Tynkkynen, and Niko Kumpuvaara. The aforementioned individuals are pivotal to my research as their extensive expertise and experience offer innovative and valuable insights. These professionals have emerged as significant figures in their respective generations and have made a profound impact on the professionalization of the accordion within various artistic and academic domains. Each, with Matti Rantanen serving as a prime example, has overcome obstacles, and established new avenues for the instrument, showcasing the diverse profiles that an accordionist can embody.

Furthermore, the contributions of composers such as Georgina Derbez, Pascal Gaigne, and Aurélio Edler-Copês concerning their works are indispensable. The ideas and insights offered by these composers represent a significant source of information. My main focus is to comprehend the aspects of the accordion that attracted the attention of composers who played a significant role in promoting the accordion as a classical concert instrument and explored its musical and expressive potential in their works. I am particularly interested in their motivations for composing for the accordion and identifying the most appealing characteristics of the instrument to each composer. Obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the challenges that composers face when composing for the accordion in conjunction with other instrument families is a critical component of this research.

Lastly, I consider the comparison of viewpoints between composers and performers to be exceptionally enlightening. Utilizing the score as a point of reference or as a starting point, I scrutinize what the composer intends to achieve, pursue, and explore in a particular composition. Furthermore, I delve into the musical concepts or metaphors that underlie the contemporary musical techniques represented in the score on a more profound level.

1.4.2 Ethical considerations

This research has been conducted in accordance with the guidelines for responsible conduct of research published by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK). In doing so, I have taken into account the work and accomplishments of other researchers by respectfully citing their publications and giving them the proper credit and consideration in conducting my research.

Additionally, the methods used for data acquisition, research, and evaluation are ethically sustainable. The interviewees were informed of the purpose of the data collected from the interviews. The narrators consented to share their life stories, which I, as the researcher, analyzed. The text of the interview is treated as such, and I did not delve into interpreting the reasons why the narrators chose to present their stories in a particular manner.

Scholar Heewon Chang also addresses the issue of research ethics in autoethnographic research in her book (2008) and suggests that the researcher maintain a code of confidentiality throughout the research process. She

concludes her discussion on ethics with the following recommendation, “As you take on a multi-faceted role as researcher, informant, and author, it is important to keep in mind that your story is not created in a vacuum and others are always visible or invisible participants in it” (Chang 2008, 69).

1.4.3 The artistic research

The artistic research process involved utilizing concerts and rehearsals as a unique experimental laboratory, where new ideas could be observed and tested to attain the best musical outcomes and collect pertinent data for the thesis. Consequently, the objective was to make the “studio language” (McCreless 2009) more tangible by keeping an informal rehearsal diary that documented my thoughts and experiences during rehearsals of the pieces that were examined and performed. This approach also aligns with the autoethnographic research tradition, allowing for a more personalized and introspective analysis of the research process.

The scores and annotations by composers served as crucial primary sources, and my analysis of the scores and documented rehearsals with chamber music partners, along with subsequent reflections, are important research materials. The working process was divided into three distinct stages: rehearsal, practicing, and final performance.

Moreover, the chamber music partners who performed with me played a significant role as data sources, as they provided their insights and ideas regarding the working process, including communication and body language, as well as reflections on the relationship between their instruments and my accordion playing. Their way of shaping various musical details has also opened up new avenues for approaching these works, and their contributions have been invaluable to my research. As I previously stated (2018, 41), I firmly believe that interpreting and discussing music with our chamber music partner(s) enriches the experience for all involved and elevates the quality of our performances to their highest level.

1.4.4 The Working Process in the Research Project

During this research project, several professional musicians participated in my doctoral recitals. Section One will present a comprehensive description

of each of the concerts. Through these collaborations and rehearsals, I had the opportunity to observe, gain awareness of, learn, and appreciate various aspects of music-making and the collaborative process of chamber music.

In each of the four concerts, we had the opportunity to listen to various chamber music groups that included an accordion. While it may be argued that working with a single chamber music group per concert would have been more convenient as it would have allowed for a focus on a single instrumental family and facilitated the organization of the entire concert series, I recognize that the diversity of languages and timbres offered by the different chamber groups added richness to each concert, making it a unique project. Furthermore, the working process and subsequent reflections provided me with the necessary tools to continue working with the same instrumental family in the upcoming concerts.

1.5 The frame of reference

Throughout the text, I have referenced various authors. To develop the first section of this study, I utilized a variety of books and articles on artistic research and the cognitive theory of embodiment as a theoretical frame of reference for my research. This consideration was given to several pioneering artistic researchers, theorists, philosophers, and musicologists who leveraged their expertise gained as performers and during the process of music-making to employ performers' own verbalization as a tool for uncovering performing insights.

To establish a theoretical framework for my work, I will draw upon the cognitive theory of embodiment and relevant literature such as works by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2001) and Elisabeth Le Guin (2006), as well as leading figures in artistic research in music performance such as Mine Dogantan-Dack (2015) and Stefan Österjö (2018).

In this group of pioneers, we find Dogantan-Dack, a prominent figure in the new generation of artists who also hold academic research positions. Dogantan-Dack, a musicologist, philosopher, and accomplished pianist, describes artistic research as a contemporary academic discipline driven by the recent influx of expert artistic practitioners into academia (Dogantan-Dack 2015, 29–30). Moreover, Le Guin (2006, 14) highlights the various factors involved in playing music and the embodied experience of music-

making. Building on her concept of “carnal musicology”, I will reflect on my accordion playing as an embodied process and examine the nature of performance from the perspective of a professional chamber musician.

For the second section of the study, which concerns the reflection on the artistic identity of the concert accordionist, I have relied on the valuable work conducted by predecessors who have researched various aspects of the instrument. Notably, accordionists, manufacturers, and pedagogues have investigated different elements of the concert accordion, and ongoing research is being conducted at various institutions.

The initial literature on the accordion explored the instrument’s historical evolution from its origin to the present day, focusing on its organological development (Macerollo 1982; Gervasoni 1986; Monichon 1971, 1986). Another set of literature (Benetoux 2002, 2005; Llanos 2015) delved into the sound capabilities of the accordion and researched the acoustics of the concert accordion.

Additionally, significant publications have been produced on the accordion’s classical repertoire, including reference catalogues and associated repertoire (Macerollo 1982; Gervasoni 1986, in ‘t Veld 1990; Kymäläinen 1994, Jacomucci 2014; Lhermet 2016). These publications offer comprehensive collections of the accordion repertoire in different countries, often arranged chronologically, providing a comprehensive view of the development of writing for the concert accordion. As a result, several accordionists have conducted research on the instrument’s historical significance in various countries and regions (Väyrynen 1991; Algora 2001; Jacobson 2012; Simonett 2012; Rantanen 2019).

In the realm of music, a significant body of literature exists on the playing techniques of the accordion and the institutions associated with the accordion world. For instance, works by Jacomucci (1998) and Lips (2000) have delved into the intricacies of accordion playing techniques and artistry, while Lhermet (2014) has provided valuable information about institutions linked to the accordion. Notably, some of these institutions offer doctoral study opportunities, attracting accordionists keen on conducting research in the field of the concert accordion. Kymäläinen (1994), Väyrynen (1997), Kujala (2010), Kiefer (2011), and Patkovic (2018) are among the accordionists who have researched this instrument, further advancing our understanding of its nuances.

Due to the limited literature on composing for the concert accordion, some accordionists have taken the initiative to write about the instrument's unique features in relation to its organology and sound capabilities. Notably, some of these works (Llanos and Alberdi 2003; Kujala 2004; Buchmann 2010) have significantly contributed to the field, and many accordionists have benefited from their insights when collaborating with composers. Even to this day, these manuals remain a valuable resource for accordionists undertaking joint projects with composers.

To substantiate my arguments and address the research questions, I have consulted reflective and critical texts in the form of articles authored by experts in the accordion field which explore contemporary topics including pedagogy, professional development, and personal reflections (Content 2013, Draugsvoll, 2013; Jacomucci, 2013; Haltli 2013; Lhermet 2013, Milivojevic, 2013). In addition, I will draw on a variety of research articles and literature related to the accordion as primary sources of information.

1.6 Research methods

This chapter aims to delineate and evaluate the research methods employed in this project. To begin, I provide a general overview of artistic research and autoethnographic approaches. Subsequently, I will present the specific methods used in this study.

1.6.1 Artistic research

The fundamental methodology adopted (primary methodological perspective) in this project is grounded in the discipline of artistic research. It is widely acknowledged that there is no universally accepted definition of "artistic research" and its various perspectives. The discourse on the subject continues to evolve and the field remains dynamic, with definitions susceptible to change.

In recent years, artistic research approaches have seen significant growth within academic institutions, particularly in Europe and the Nordic countries, leading to ongoing debates among artist-researchers regarding the nature and terminology of artistic research. This is a contemporary

academic discipline that is still evolving in regions such as Spain, where discussions on the topic are just beginning.

As noted by Finnish philosopher Juha Varto in his book (2008) on artistic research, the terminology, concepts, and ideas associated with this emerging field have yet to be established and are “in process, finding forms and labels” (ibid., 8). Several authors assert that the discipline of artistic research in music has reached maturity and is poised to bring about substantial change in the transmission of musical traditions in Western culture (Östersjö 2018). More recently, de Assis and D’Errico (2019) described it as a rapidly expanding field whose boundaries are in constant and dynamic renegotiation.

Despite these subtle differing perspectives, there is a consensus on the foundations of this discipline. Dogantan-Dack (2015) maintains that there is a more or less established agreement that one of the key features of artistic research is “the exploration of the tacit dimension of knowledge embedded in artistic processes and works” (Hulteberg 2013, 80). Additionally, the issues artistic research “seeks to investigate and illuminate are those of artistic practices and their inherent knowledge” (Coessens et al 2009, 17).

Similarly, Borgdorff (2010) argues that artistic practice is central to the research project and that the creative process itself can generate new insights and understandings (Borgdorff 2010, 46). Thus, one of the primary objectives of artistic research is to shed light on the insider’s expert perspective on art making and to explore the implicit knowledge embodied in the creative process. Finnish researchers Hannula, Suoranta, and Vadén (2014) argue that during the artistic process, one also takes a step of minimal distance toward the practice, reflecting on it and on one’s acts (Hannula et al 2014, 16), since it involves a level of introspection and reflection, as the researcher moves between an “insider” and “outsider” perspective.

Furthermore, Dogantan-Dack (2015) asserts that artistic researchers’ contribution can make to unmask ‘untruths’, and thus advance knowledge, in relation to particular traditions of art-making (Dogantan-Dack 2015, 32). The concept of practice-based or studio-based research holds significance in artistic research. It not only contributes to the discourse of art but also leads to the creation of new products and meaningful experiences in the world of art. In this sense, art practice serves as the subject matter, method, context, and outcome of artistic research.

One main objective of artistic researchers is to articulate and verbalize embodied knowledge, interpretations, and performance observations. As a result, each research study is unique to the individual artist conducting it. For instance, Peter Spissky (2017) highlights the role of movements, gestures, and metaphorical aspects of music. Catherine Laws emphasizes the significance of embodiment and gesture in music understanding (Laws 2014, 134). Elisabeth Le Guin (2006) focuses on historical material and refers to “carnal musicology,” which emphasizes the bodily features inherent in music.

In my research, I delve into the stylistic elements and structures of the selected repertoire, with a particular emphasis on my artistic vision and interpretation focus on my artistic vision and interpretation, developed through practice and performance experiences.

1.6.2 Autoethnography

The present study is also aligned with the autoethnographic research tradition, a qualitative methodology that aims at describing and analyzing personal experiences. Scholars such as Heewon Chang (2008) have explored the use of autoethnography as a method, offering a systematic approach and practical guidelines for conducting autoethnographic studies. As Chang suggests, autoethnographers must be willing to delve into their memories, unearth rich details, and contextualize them in a sociocultural environment.

The study places a crucial emphasis on the results and reflections that music performers achieve through their own playing. Despite the abundance of existing performance analysis and studies where performance serves as the basis for analysis, there is a scarcity of examples that encompass the performer’s own verbalization. Although the voices of performers are often missing from formal analysis and performance studies, they do emerge in other forms of publication for wider audiences, such as in pianist Susan Tomes (2004).

The underrepresentation of performers’ voices in performance analysis studies has been noted by scholars such as Daphne Leong and David Korevaar in their article “The Performers’ Voice: Performance and Analysis in Ravel’s *Concerto pour la main gauche*” (2005). According to Leong and

Korevaar, treating performers as mere objects in these studies has resulted in a lack of consideration for their unique perspectives and experiences.

Apart from the obvious issue of “who knows the most about performance, anyway?” music-theoretic literature on performance and analysis neglects [...] performers’ implicit analyses and the gloriously messy aspects of a work as an activity, involving score, aural, visual, and kinesthetic aspects. (Leong and Korevaar 2005, 17–18.)

As a performer, I find the rehearsal process to be more engaging and meaningful than the performance itself. During rehearsals, I have the opportunity to interact with the work and explore various approaches to bring it to life. This process of shaping and refining details can lead to new insights and interpretations.

The rehearsal process was pivotal in my study as it provided an opportunity to interact with the work and explore the most effective ways to bring it to life. The performers’ consideration of various details also opened up new avenues for approaching these works. As Patrick McCreless (2009) noted, a challenge in relating analysis to performance is finding a connection between analytical language and the so-called “studio language” (ibid., 7). To make the “studio language” more visible in my study, I have documented my thoughts on rehearsing the works under examination through an informal rehearsal diary. Consequently, my study centers on performance processes that are still unfolding.

Nonetheless, I acknowledge that examining past performances can also offer valuable insights into the topics under investigation. The act of performing is a unique experience that may yield new perspectives, and therefore, the documented data from concerts can be a valuable source of information.

1.6.3 Narrative interview as a method

A narrative interview is defined as a research technique in which the researcher poses open-ended questions that prompt the interviewee to recount experiences and events in a narrative form.

In this study, I approached each interview as a unique opportunity to generate novel and insightful knowledge, treating it as a potential site for innovative inquiry. The professionals interviewed were chosen for their expertise in the field, and the questions posed, and ensuing conversations were tailored to their specific experiences and perspectives. Through this approach, the study aimed to uncover new insights and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of music. As Hannula, Suoranta, and Vadén (2014) have stated, what each interview site and situation shares is a unique and special quality that sets it apart—both as a possible encounter and, more importantly in the context of this study, as a singular form of knowledge production (Hannula et al. 2014, 41). Furthermore, as these authors also highlight, it is crucial that both the interviewer and the interviewee share a common understanding of professional knowledge and background, as well as a shared interest in exploring and discussing a particular issue (*ibid.*, 43).

The purpose of the narrative interview is to obtain a first-person account of an individual's life or specific aspects of it, in the form of a self-lived story rather than a series of responses to questions. The interview seeks to elicit an extemporaneous narrative, uninterrupted by the researcher's interjections. As a result, the researcher obtains a comprehensive and tape-recorded story, sometimes spanning several hours, from the narrator (Każmierska 2004, 155).

Qualitative research, which focuses on the unique qualities of the field and individuals being studied, can reveal the tensions within the field through the use of narratives. By examining the emergent meanings and resonances and dissonances, qualitative studies can problematize the sequence of topics and form biographical reports where experienced facts intersect.

Narratives offer researchers a deeper insight into the subject beyond just transmitting information. They reveal the individual's experience and provide a crucial understanding of both the subject and the context in which they are situated.

1.7 The keywords and concepts

The underlying key concepts in this artistic research include the terms: artistic research, embodiment, contemporary music, chamber music, accordion and artistic identity.

1.7.1 Artistic research

The theoretical aspect of my doctoral studies aligns with the fundamental principles of artistic research. In my research, I examine, reflect upon, and experiment with music as an embodied experience. To gather data, I will describe my artistic processes and, as a researcher, analyze these elements within my practice as a performer, striving to develop new insights into the embodied accordion interpretation.

1.7.2 Embodiment

Authors such as Ellingson (2009) assert that our bodies play a crucial role in the creation of knowledge through our lived experiences. Our background and experiences shape both our being and our knowledge, thus defining our place in the world. It can be argued that embodiment represents the story of a body, a tale that cannot be separated from the environment in which it was formed.

In my study, I adopt the approach of cellist and musicologist Elisabeth Le Guin (2006) and utilize the insights gained from the embodied performance of accordion repertoire as the cornerstone of my examination of the relationship between music and embodiment. Starting from her concept of flesh and through my own accordion playing, I reflect on the embodied nature of music-making as a professional chamber musician. This work puts forth the notion that a comprehensive understanding of musical performance in scored music can be achieved through the concept of “embodied interpretation,” which highlights the intricate relationship between embodied experience and musical structure.

Le Guin uses her own experience playing the cello to inform her analysis of the works of the composer Luigi Boccherini and develops a historically informed approach to the relationship between music and embodiment. By examining the striking qualities of Boccherini’s music, such as its virtuosity, repetition, intricately nuanced dynamics, delicate sonorities, and rich melancholic affect, Le Guin demonstrates how the physical experience of the performer can be critical to understanding musical performance.

Similarly, Peter Spissky’s writings on music (2017) highlight the importance of movement, gesture, and the metaphorical aspects of music. The thesis posits that a full understanding of musical performance can

be attained through an embodied interpretation, which brings to light the complex relationship between embodied experience and musical structure. According to Sheets-Johnstone (2011), to be thinking in movement means that a mindful body is creating a particular dynamic as that very dynamic is kinetically unfolding (2011, 424). She advocates that motion is already at the beginning of our lives (2016).

1.7.3 Classical Contemporary Music

My study lies within the field of so-called classical contemporary music. Continuing with the framework of reference, I will contextualize the music performed and analyzed within the classical contemporary music panorama and the role the classical accordion plays in the repertoire composed for it and performed in the doctoral recital concerts.

1.7.4 Classical or concert accordion

The term “classical accordion” refers to the most evolved instrument of the family: the full- range free bass multitimbral accordion. It is an instrument that has achieved maturity to spread throughout the world of classical contemporary music.

1.8 My position as an artist-researcher

As an artist-researcher, I am a professional concert accordionist with a solid academic background in contemporary music. My education has been garnered from esteemed international institutions, and I have forged a successful professional career primarily in Spain. This unique perspective has allowed me to establish close relationships with the musical communities of both nations and collaborate with musicians from diverse backgrounds, all of whom possess a strong academic foundation.

In the realm of artistic research, I am a pioneering figure, exploring this methodology within the sphere of concert accordion. My research draws upon established studies that have explored the accordion from a diverse range of perspectives, while also contributing to the existing literature by

adding new knowledge and perspectives in the field of artistic research and accordion studies.

1.9 The overview of the sections

The thesis is divided into three sections: Section One (Chapters 2.1–2.4) analyses the embodiment of accordion playing within the chamber music ensemble, and Section Two focuses on the forming of an artistic identity of the concert accordionist. The section begins with a historical overview of the development of the instrument to contextualize the current scenario and the potential challenges encountered by performers. Section Three focuses on the artistic identity of the concert accordionist in the 21st century. Ultimately, the section concludes with a reflection on the future prospects of the accordion scene.

Section One, entitled “The Accordion in Contemporary Chamber Music Repertoire: Aspects of the Artistic Possibilities of Concert Accordion” aims to investigate and highlight aspects of performance practices pertaining to the accordion’s role in various chamber music ensembles. As a specialist in contemporary music and a professional accordionist, I aim to explore the unique and unexpected roles the accordion can play within the context of contemporary accordion repertoire. Furthermore, my research will provide valuable knowledge and experience that will be useful in my academic and professional pursuits.

During my career as a solo artist, I developed a strong interest in chamber music and ensemble performance. This passion, coupled with prior experiences in various musical groups, inspired me to embark upon a new trajectory of research within the accordion domain. To the best of my knowledge, I am among the first individuals to approach the accordion world through the lens of artistic research, and no prior research has been conducted on the topic of accordion chamber music from this perspective.

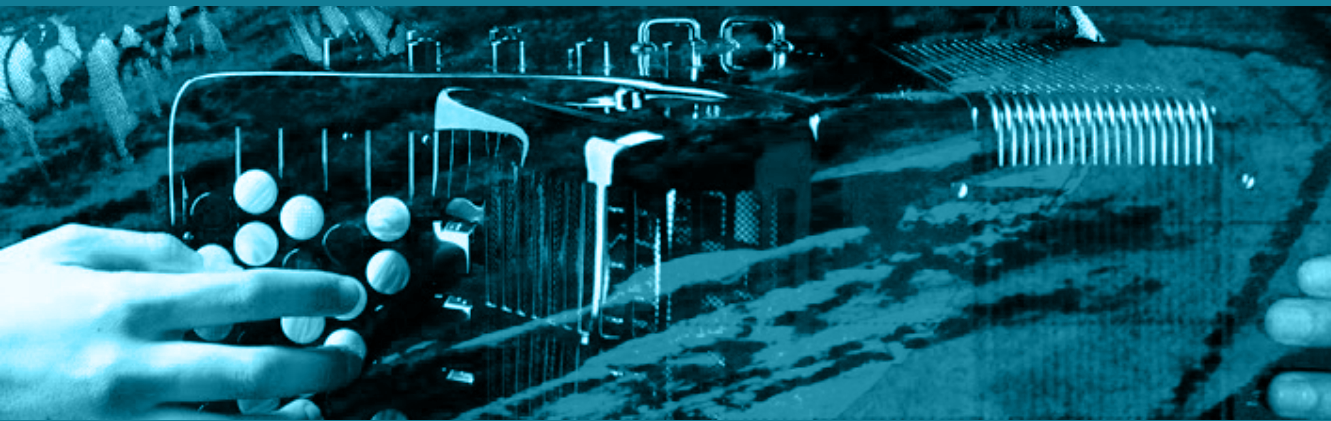
Recently, there has been an encouraging trend of accordionists pursuing doctoral studies at renowned institutions across Europe, including the Sibelius Academy. While there has been significant research on the classical accordion and its repertoire in various countries, its historical evolution, and contemporary techniques, my research seeks to contribute a novel perspective by focusing on the performer’s role and exploring new

dimensions of musical performance and reflection. As such, my work aims to enrich the accordion and chamber music literature.

In Section Two, I provide an extensive overview of the profound changes that have taken place in the musicianship of professional accordionists. Finally, in Section Three, I critically analyze and reflect upon the professional perspectives of the accordion in the 21st century and observe the new artistic identities that accordionists can adopt in today's world. The impetus behind this chapter on accordionists' identities stems from years of observing the diverse range of work undertaken by modern concert accordionists, the wide variety of professional paths available to accordionists, and the varying skills that this artistry may demand.

Given the international scope of the accordion community and my academic context, I have elected to write my thesis in English. By making my research accessible to a wider audience, I hope to enhance its impact on the academic community and benefit the accordion community at large.

SECTION ONE



THE ACCORDION IN CONTEMPORARY CHAMBER MUSIC REPERTOIRE

Aspects of the Artistic Possibilities
of the Concert Accordion

The first section of this thesis delves into the artistic considerations that inform my study of the accordion in the context of contemporary chamber music, entitled “A Performer’s Approach to Contemporary Chamber Music for the Concert Accordion.”

This study is not intended as a historical analysis of the works but rather focuses on particular aspects that are relevant for a contemporary performer. Special attention is devoted to questions related to the artistic possibilities of the concert accordion, musical choices, and decisions based on the characteristics of chamber music instrumentation.

Through my musical collaborations with other instrumentalists, I have witnessed their excitement at the possibilities of the concert accordion, such as its ability to phrase and sustain sounds, and its dynamic range. I firmly believe that such collaborations are the best way to comprehend and learn about other instruments. For me, this has been the most effective approach to understanding my music partners’ instruments and my own accordion, while exploring the working process of each composition.

In Chapter 2.1, entitled “The Artistic Core of the Doctoral Degree: the four doctoral concerts” I delve into the four doctoral concerts, while Chapter 2.2 focuses on the fundamental role of the bellows. Chapter 2.3 “A Performer’s Approach to Contemporary Chamber Music for the Concert Accordion,” provides a performer’s view on the selected compositions, complemented by audio and video excerpts from the doctoral concert series. Additionally, I found it pertinent to include the perspectives of two of my chamber music colleagues, who have played with me over the years and were also part of the doctoral program. Thus, in the chapter dedicated to each of their instruments, I will interweave my viewpoint with the insights of clarinetist Angel Molinos and flutist Iryna Gorkun-Silén. Lastly, I wanted to share a brief glimpse into my conversation with Marjut Tynkkynen about the essential aspects she considers in chamber music performance. In the final chapter of this section, 2.4, I present the conclusions.

To address the questions raised in the introduction of this work, this study presents various musical examples by renowned composers, featuring works performed during doctoral concerts. These examples include pieces by the highly regarded composer Sofia Gubaidulina (b.1931), such as her seminal work, *De Profundis* (1979), a solo accordion composition, *In Croce* (1979), a composition for cello and accordion, and *Silenzio* (1991), for violin,

cello and accordion trio. Perh-Henrik Nordgren's (1944–2008) *Distance-Dreams op.101* (1998) is another work characterized by a distinctive and personal musical language. To complement the bowed strings family, a duo for viola and accordion by Yuji Takahashi (b.1938) was also included in the analysis. Moreover, to examine the accordion's function within a string quartet, Isang Yun and the Basque-French composer Pascal Gaigne (b.1958) were selected for inclusion.

These examples serve to reinforce the arguments presented and provide a representative sample of the current state of the accordion repertoire. Furthermore, this study incorporates musical excerpts from *Plus I* (1999), a composition for accordion and clarinet by the esteemed Finnish composer Jukka Tiensuu (b.1943), and *In Die Tiefe der Zeit* (1994), by Japanese Toshio Hosokawa (b.1955). In furtherance of the study, musical selections from Erkki Jokinen's (b.1941) composition *Rise V* (2002) for flute and accordion have been included. In addition, this chapter will examine other notable compositions, including a work for accordion and recorders by the Mexican composer Georgina Derbez (b.1968).

From each composition, I carefully select specific aspects that I deem essential for the successful performance of the piece. I base my choices on my own experience working with the score and with my fellow musicians during the rehearsal process. In making my selections, I focus on those aspects that I believe are fundamental to the composition's overall success. Of course, it is assumed that the instrumentalists can accurately read the score and execute all necessary technical requirements. The criteria for selecting the works have been the followig:

- High-quality compositions that have stood the test of time.
- Works composed by renowned composers that have made significant contributions to the accordion repertoire.
- Compositions that challenged me to focus on and develop specific technical or musical aspects in a detailed and insightful manner.
- Compositions that are suitable for duet performances, as they allow for a less complex and more focused environment to analyze and work on various aspects.
- Compositions that require meticulous attention to the specific aspects I aim to develop in each piece.

Throughout my analysis, I do not provide guidance on the initial steps of working with the piece. Rather, I concentrate on advising how to effectively approach the key elements and sections of the score. I identify the features that I believe are most critical in achieving a compelling and accurate musical result.

Some musicians argue that meeting with their chamber music partners at an early stage before working on the score individually can be beneficial. This first meeting serves as an initial contact to collectively decide on concrete aspects. However, in a real professional context, rehearsals are often limited, leaving little time before the concert. Thus, I suggest bringing several ideas to the first rehearsal as alternative options. Together with other instrumentalists, we would assess and determine which idea works best for the ensemble.

In my opinion, the optimal working process is to begin with individual work on the composition. An accurate individual approach to the score enables us to master the technical and musical aspects of the piece. Subsequently, we can practice specific elements and passages/excerpts, considering the other instrument's parts. Familiarizing ourselves with the other instruments' characteristics provides significant advantages in developing an accurate picture of the composition. Throughout my text, I focus on technical aspects such as articulations, the use of the bellows, and effects. I also reflect on musical aspects such as the expressive use of the bellows, gestures, and registration.

As a specialist in the field of contemporary accordion music, this chapter aims to undertake a comprehensive examination of various aspects related to performance practices concerning the accordion's role within different types of chamber music ensembles. Throughout this study, I will draw upon my personal experiences as a performer to shed light on innovative ways of playing that align with the principles of artistic research. The objective of this analysis is to expand the current understanding of the accordion's potential within chamber music and to provide a framework for future explorations in this area.

To date, several professional accordionists have conducted research on the classical accordion, and there is a wealth of literature available on the instrument's repertoire, historical approaches to its music, and contemporary techniques. While I will draw upon this valuable work, my research aims to offer a fresh perspective on the accordion by focusing on the performer's role and exploring new aspects through musical performance and reflection.

Throughout my studies as a conference participant, I have had the opportunity to familiarize myself with the works of renowned professionals in the field of artistic research, including David Gorton, Henrik Frisk, and others from my academic institution, such as Mieko Kanno, Anu Lampela, Assi Karttunen, and Päivi Järviö. Recently, several authors have explored embodied interpretations through their own instrumental practice, such as Swedish professional guitarist and researcher Stefan Östersjö.

In this thesis, I aim to investigate the embodied phenomenon of music through analysis, reflection, and experimentation. As a researcher, I will examine these features in my own practice as a professional concert accordionist, seeking to formulate new insights into the embodied accordion interpretation. To provide a theoretical framework for my research, I will draw upon the cognitive theory of embodiment. Several authors have explored the topic of musical interpretation and performance as an embodied phenomenon, including Le Guin's focus on the carnal aspects of performing Boccherini (2006), Karttunen's elaboration on embodied historical awareness in her research on 18th-century French cantata (2006), and other scholars who articulate embodied knowledge, interpretation, and performance observations (Mali 2003; Parko 2016). Throughout the chapter, I will present and contextualize a selection of musical compositions and video excerpts to support my analysis and core argument.

When it comes to communication within chamber music, it is only through playing with others that one can truly develop it. While it is possible to consider and work on certain aspects beforehand, true knowledge is gained in the actual situation. In this regard, I interviewed the accordionist Marjut Tynkkynen to gain insight into her approach to chamber music. Although I have had the pleasure of attending her classes over the years and am familiar with her methods, I wanted to extract some of her most salient ideas. Ms. Tynkkynen (2023) articulates her approach with remarkable clarity, stating that she views the initial rehearsal as a product of individual preparation by each musician. In the early stages of group meetings, she believes that it is essential to communicate through listening and not to speak excessively.

By listening to each other, we gradually become accustomed to playing with other musicians and instruments, and from this mutual listening, ideas are verbalized. Another aspect to which she refers is the interpretation of the score. It is true that composers may not have in mind the sound that a concert accordion can produce, especially in the case of new composers

who have not collaborated with the instrumentalist. In such instances, “the musician must comprehend the composer’s intentions and musical ideas through notation and highlight what we as musicians wish to convey to the audience” (ibid.).

In my rehearsals with colleagues, we have often discussed musical structures using language that is familiar to us, based on what we hear rather than on prior analytical methods employed by musicologists. In this regard, I find myself aligned with the following statement: “Instead, performers tend to approach musical works from the point of expressive ‘shaping’ in contrast to discussion on musical structure that often dominates analytical discourse” (Rink 2002, 36). Furthermore, in the present context, I find McCreless’s assertion to be highly pertinent and insightful:

Performers tend to think and talk about their work more in terms of shape, motion, intensification and relaxation, gesture, climax, and goal than they do in terms of musictheoretical concepts such as hypermeter, motive, linear-contrapuntal framework [], harmonic progression, and formal classifications. (McCreless 2009, 6.)

It is important to underscore that in the context of chamber music discourse, the nuances of articulation, dynamics, registers, effects, and the bellows, which are relevant today, require a prior understanding developed through solo playing. Once a thorough grasp of these concepts is attained, performers can then focus on the more intricate and complex context of the accordion plus other instrumental families. Gorton and Östersjö (2016) posit that embodied knowledge is gradually acquired through interaction with the affordances of a musical instrument. “[This embodied knowledge] it may consist of musical strategies towards the shaping of materials, particular ways of controlling rapid finger work, ways in which an instrument would best resonate with a hard attack and so on” (ibid., 585).

2.1 The Artistic Core of the Doctoral Degree: the four Doctoral Concerts

The four doctoral recital concerts, which took place at the Helsinki Music Centre between 2014 and 2021, served as the artistic core and experimentation platform for this research project. Section One provides

an overview of the content and context of the concerts, their artistic aims, and their implications. Regarding the Concert Series, I will begin by briefly introducing how I designed the four concert programs.

Each concert featured various instrument combinations, including duos, trios, and a string quartet with accordion, carefully curated to create a unique sonic journey. Additionally, every concert included at least one renowned composition, selected as a representative work for the accordion, such as those by Sofia Gubaidulina, Magnus Lindberg, and Ramón Lazkano. Furthermore, I played two compositions for accordion and tape in two of the concerts. Finally, each concert was structured around a thematic concept, namely “Accordion Meets Composers,” “Mysticism—The Perennial Yearning,” “Contrasts—Finnish Chamber Music for Accordion,” and “Sonorities. Coloring the Horizon.”

As part of each concert, I carefully selected a cross-section of works from various styles and periods based on the aforementioned criteria. I aimed to create musical connections and showcase the versatility of the accordion within each concert program. The diverse languages and timbres offered by the different chamber groups added depth and richness to each performance. Additionally, I made a deliberate effort to include works by composers from the three continents where the accordion is most prevalent: Europe, Asia, and America.

One of my primary objectives was to explore the various expressive facets of this repertoire within each concert and to challenge myself by performing compositions as a soloist, in duos, and chamber music ensembles. In addition to curating the selection of works, I took great care in considering the concert venue and provided artistic ideas for lighting arrangements for each performance. This allowed me to discuss together with the lighting designers, Sirje Ruohtula and Jukka Kolimaa, and articulate my creative vision. In essence, my choice of certain colours or atmospheres was informed by the character of the work and its intended impact on the audience. In works inspired by poetry or with symbolic or narrative qualities, such as those of Gubaidulina or Takahashi, I aimed to enhance the intended themes without detracting from them.

These concerts were intricately linked to the subject matter of my written work, serving as an experimental element of my thesis, with new music serving as the overarching theme that unites the four performances. Each concert had a distinct theme and was unique, showcasing a range of musical

expressions and aesthetics. The concerts aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the repertoire, both individually and as a part of the four-concert series.

The most prominent instrumental combination in contemporary music comprises the accordion in conjunction with the family of strings or woodwind instruments, specifically the clarinet family. Undoubtedly, these configurations have been highly esteemed by composers for decades and remain a prevalent choice to date. However, it is worth noting that new instrumental combinations are being explored and offer new and fresh sonorities.

The duo performance represents the central focus of my concert series and is regarded as the premier chamber music format. This particular configuration provides a streamlined and readily identifiable framework that facilitates the exploration of the music-making elements that I elaborate upon in this written work. Through a rigorous process of studying, rehearsing, and performing these concerts, I have gained a wealth of knowledge through collaborations with a diverse range of small chamber ensembles, including duos, trios, and combinations of accordion and string quartets.

From the inception of conceptualising the concert series, it was apparent that Sofia Gubaidulina's oeuvre must occupy a prominent position. Consequently, her compositions are showcased in three concerts, progressively moving from solo pieces to a duo with the cello and culminating in a trio for accordion, violin, and cello. Gubaidulina has already proven to be one of the most influential composers for me, and after performing *Silenzio* (1991), I can confidently attest that my admiration and reverence for her music and expressive conception of the instrument have only intensified.

2.1.1 “ACCORDION MEETS COMPOSERS”—First doctoral concert

My first doctoral concert, entitled “Accordion Meets Composers,” featured a selection of works that are emblematic of the accordion repertoire. These pieces represent the first encounters that composers had with the classical accordion and comprise a compilation of compositions by renowned figures such as Isang Yun, Sofia Gubaidulina, and Gérard Grisey, who, throughout their careers, bestowed significant attention upon the classical accordion.

Each of these works exhibits its unique style and demonstrates a distinct use of the instrument, thereby offering a comprehensive overview of these pioneering composers' perceptions of the accordion and its potential applications during the latter half of the twentieth century.

The significance of these works is that they demonstrate how well-known composers regarded the accordion as a viable concert instrument. These chamber music compositions represented a considerable contribution to the development of music written for the accordion. Each work possesses its unique musical language and reflects the distinct approaches towards understanding the accordion's technical and sonic capabilities.

I firmly believe that the influence of each of the accordionists with whom they collaborated to create these works was crucial. For instance, Tapio Nevanlinna collaborated with Matti Rantanen to create this second duo with the accordion (the first was with the viola), while Japanese composers Isang Yun and Toshio Hosokawa worked with Japanese accordionist Mie Miki and Swiss accordionist Hugo Noth, respectively. Moreover, the celebrated



Figure 1. “ACCORDION MEETS COMPOSERS”—First doctoral concert. Naiara De La Puente Vadillo. Lighting design and photo: Sirje Ruohutula

Russian accordionist Friedrich Lips¹ played a pivotal role in introducing the bayan to the world-renowned composer Sofia Gubaidulina. Consequently, the chamber music works performed in this concert have become integral to the accordion repertoire and are still regarded as significant works.

For the first concert, I decided to include *Passacaille* (1967) for solo accordion, by Grisey. This piece is rarely performed by accordionists. My aim was to show a work written by Grisey, a composer who showed interest in the accordion during the 1960s, and who later became an influential figure in the 20th-century music. In the second section of this dissertation, I will illustrate how the emergence of the original accordion repertoire in the 1990s, particularly in Germany, marked a significant turning point. It is precisely because of this trend that I consider the value of Grisey's work to be particularly noteworthy, as it represents a young composer's recognition of the accordion's potential to create new music, rather than simply relying on transcriptions of existing works.

It is important to note, however, that I do not view *Passacaille* as a musically inferior work. In fact, I found it to be a challenging piece to perform, requiring careful attention to phrasing and a seamless interpretation that avoids any sense of fragmentation. It is worth noting that Grisey was not yet 20 years old when he composed *Passacaille* as an entrance examination piece for the composition class of Olivier Messiaen at the Paris Conservatory. While some may argue that he was an immature composer and that his work lacks musical value, I contend that with this work, which was composed specifically for the concert accordion and utilized concert accordion-specific resources available in the 1960s, he gained admission to study composition at the conservatory. After my performance of *Passacaille*, cellist Marko Ylönen made a noteworthy observation, expressing his gratification at being in attendance at the concert, which he attributed to the performance's opening with Grisey's composition. Through my interpretation, he appreciated the musicality, phrasing, and subtlety of dynamics of my playing in the initial measures of the piece.

The retrospective analysis of the accordion's historical trajectory is an indispensable endeavor, providing valuable insights into the instrument's

¹ Professor at the Gnesin Institute in Moscow, Lips has been one of the leading figures in teaching the accordion as well as a leading performer. He is an active pedagogue who attends international seminars, workshops and master courses, and often serves as a jury member at major competitions.

early days, including the ways in which performers and composers collaborated and how their works were received at the time. Moreover, it allows me to trace the evolution of the accordion's repertoire over time. As a performer, I have had the privilege of premiering works by emerging composers, enabling me to observe the evolution of musical language and notation and the original repertoire.

In addition to its cultural significance, such retrospective analysis demonstrates respect for the pioneering efforts of those who established the accordion within the realm of classical music. These studies have allowed me to familiarize myself with the works, refine my performances meticulously, program the pieces for public performances, and engage in reflection and analysis of the most salient aspects of the works, thereby enhancing my musical education.

In the section dedicated to the chamber combination of the accordion with the strings and clarinets, I will examine *In Croce*, *In Die Tiefe der Zeit* and *Concertino* in detail, focusing on specific musical aspects that my cellist partner and I worked on.

Concert program

G rard Grisey (1946-1998): *Passacaille* (1966) solo accordion.

Tapio Nevanlinna (b.1954): *Foto* (1987) for clarinet and accordion.

Sofia Gubaidulina (b.1931): *In Croce* (1979) for cello and accordion.

Toshio Hosokawa (b.1955): *In Die Tiefe der Zeit* (1994) for clarinets and accordion.

Isang Yun (1917–1995): *Concertino* (1983) for accordion and string quartet.

Performers

Naiara De La Puente, accordion

Angel Molinos, Markus Kaarto, clarinets

Eeva Oksala, Annemarie Astr m, violins

Hanna Hohti, viola

Tomas Nu ez-Garc s, cello

16.9.2014, Camerata Hall, Helsinki Music Center

2.1.2 “MYSTICISM—THE PERENNIAL YEARNING”—Second doctoral concert



Figure 2. “MYSTICISM—THE PERENNIAL YEARNING”—Second doctoral concert. Naiara De La Puente Vadillo. Lighting design and photo: Jukka Kolimaa

The second doctoral concert, titled “Mysticism—The Perennial Yearning”, features an array of accordion works composed by both established and emerging composers who have dedicated themselves to the classical accordion. The repertoire includes pieces by renowned composers such as Takahashi and Gubaidulina, as well as works by the younger generation of composers.

The concert theme revolves around mysticism and spirituality, which serve as a common thread throughout the pieces. Similar to my first concert, “Accordion Meets Composers”, this concert boasts a stylistic diversity that includes compositions from various cultural backgrounds, including Spain, Finland, Japan, and Brazil. To create a cohesive and contrasting programme, I sought a theme that would tie the pieces together. Gubaidulina uses symbolism related to ascension, while Takahashi’s composition for accordion and viola takes its spiritual themes from Dhammapada, a collection of Buddha’s verses. Edler-Copês bases his piece on three of *The Cantigas de Santa María* by Alfonso X, the Wise, while Kaipainen and French composer Gaigne drew inspiration from a variety of texts and poems related to Mother Earth.



Figure 3. Sofia Gubaidulina. *De Profundis* (1978). Naiara De La Puente Vadillo.
Lighting design and photo: Sirje Ruohtula

During this concert, I integrated visual projections of the psalm that forms the basis of Gubaidulina's composition, as well as the Buddhist text that inspired Takahashi's piece.

Concert program

Sofia Gubaidulina (b.1931): *De Profundis* (1978) for solo accordion.

Aurélio Edler Copês (b.1976): *Cantiga* (2006) for accordion and tape.

Pascal Gaigne (b.1958): *Avant la Nuit* (2002) for string quartet and accordion.

Jouni Kaipainen (1956–2015): *Elemental Chanting, op.87* (2009) for cello and accordion.

Yuji Takahashi (b.1938): *Like swans leaving the lake* (1995) for viola and accordion.

Performers

Naiara De La Puente, accordion

Siljamari Heikinheimo and Annemarie Åström, violin

Hanna Hohti, viola

Tomas Nuñez-Garcés, cello

9.9.2015, Camerata Hall, Helsinki Music Center

2.1.3 “CONTRASTS”—FINNISH CHAMBER MUSIC FOR ACCORDION—Third doctoral concert

For my third doctoral concert, entitled “Contrasts—Finnish chamber music for accordion”, I curated a selection of works that showcase the Finnish accordion repertoire by renowned composers born in the 1940s and 1950s, including Magnus Lindberg and Erkki Jokinen, who have also made significant contributions to the development of the concert accordion throughout their careers. These composers were pioneers in the classical accordion scene in Finland, and their work was instrumental in fostering collaborations with Finnish accordionists, with Matti Rantanen as a principal reference.

The concert began with *Rise V* (2002) by Erkki Jokinen, a vibrant and dynamic composition with rich contrasts and the interplay between the two instruments. Jokinen was a crucial figure in the advancement of the concert accordion, and his oeuvre includes the notably intricate *Concerto* (1992) for accordion and chamber orchestra, *Alone* (1979) for solo accordion, and the duo for two accordions *Reflections* (1983), a work composed for Heidi Velamo and Marjut Tynkkynen., as I learned from the latter during our conversation. Tynkkynen (2023) described Jokinen as an energetic and lively individual who delighted in attending rehearsals of his compositions.

Rise V marked my debut performing a duet with the flute. Indeed, the combination of flute and accordion is no longer among the most commonly performed, particularly in the context of contemporary music. Therefore, I was eager to explore the potential that this formation could offer and specifically tackle this piece. Personally, Jokinen’s composition *Alone* captivated me from my earliest exposure to it as a child, and years later, I remained deeply inspired by the composer and eager to perform his music.

I would like to include a quote from Jokinen's student, composer Sebastian Fagerlund, which praises the work of his master and offers insight into his compositional ethos:

I would say that he really taught me the craft of composing; the challenging detailed work of both the technical side of composition as well as orchestration, but most importantly being aware of tradition and your own relationship to it. One thing he taught me, which I fully realized much later, was that we are always surrounded by different aesthetics, stylistic guidelines and invisible boundaries. The thought of absolute 100% stylistic freedom is an illusion, and you can only achieve a real sense of freedom by being aware and knowing as much as possible of the long river of music history that we all are part of and that surrounds us. (Fagerlund 2014.)

In the upcoming chapter, I will provide an in-depth analysis of this work, discussing the challenges it poses and the musical decisions made during the chamber performance.

Another influential figure in Finnish music, now renowned internationally, is Magnus Lindberg. Lindberg's *Jeux d'anches* [Reed play] for the solo accordion is his second work for the instrument, the first being *Metal Work* for accordion and percussion composed in 1984. Both pieces were commissioned by Matti Rantanen, a Finnish accordionist who has been a key advocate for the instrument in Finland and to whom *Jeux d'anches* is dedicated. In fact, stylistic similarities can be identified in both compositions, as noted by the composer in a press interview in 1995: "For me, the inspirational thing about composing is that each piece has something quite new about it, but also something from the previous work" (Lindberg 2011, 8). The title of *Jeux d'anches* is derived from organ terminology and has been used by César Franck, among others, to describe the sonorities of reed instruments.

Writing a piece for solo instrument is impossible in a sense—it has to be done by extreme means, either by going beyond the frontiers normally attached to a certain instrument, or by using one monolithic idea from beginning to end. (Lindberg 1998.)

Lindberg's composition is a highly demanding work, filled with technical complexity and intricate details, but its expressive power lies in the performer's ability to convey its meaning. One could argue that the piece is an explosion of colours in its eight-minute duration, combining melodic and rhythmically complex passages with aggressive and dense textures interspersed with more lyrical sections.

Moreover, Lindberg employs a wide range of extended techniques in this piece, such as bellows-shakes, and explores the technical and sonic possibilities of the accordion, including leaps, registration changes, various combinations of accents, fast virtuoso passages, textures with different sound colours, and long melody lines. Thus, we can assert that the writing is influenced by the specificity of the instrument, as evidenced by the chains of legato chords in MII, the standard-bass system, that create a dense and colourful texture, combined with the performer's right-hand melody line.

Meanwhile, *Gena op.31* (1987), Kaipainen's work, was commissioned by the Finnish Accordion Institute and composed for Tynkkynen's debut concert at the Sibelius Academy in 1987. The composer himself commented on his piece:



Figure 4. “CONTRASTS”—FINNISH CHAMBER MUSIC FOR ACCORDION—
Third doctoral concert. Lighting design and photo: Sirje Ruohutula

Gena was originally composed for the debut concert by the Finnish accordionist Marjut Tynkkynen, and she duly performed it in Helsinki in December 1987. It was my first composition for this instrument and is thus far the only one, although the experience was such fun that I do not think it will prove to be the last. This is absolute music, a combination of contemplative moods and dizzy virtuosity—a ten-minute ‘come fly with me’. Or perhaps rather with *Gena*, the crocodile of Eduard Uspenski’s fairy tale. Uspenski’s story tells of a jolly crocodile in the zoo who plays the accordion and plays with such gusto that the visitors are openmouthed with astonishment. (Kaipainen 1993.)

During my interview with Tynkkynen, the distinguished accordionist who premiered the work, I directed her attention towards *Gena* and probed into the significance that this composition held for her during its debut performance. As Tynkkynen stated (2023), “he was excited about the new possibilities the accordion was offering him.”

Furthermore, Tynkkynen recounted an amusing anecdote about Kaipainen. When he heard her perform his work, he was astonished because, as Tynkkynen (2023) explained, “he wrote such a fast tempo that he thought no one could play it”, yet Tynkkynen not only managed to play it but also increased the tempo in her interpretation. It is worth noting that Kaipainen’s teachers were Aulis Sallinen and Paavo Heininen. Precisely this renowned composer wrote *Exercises op.60* (1991) for Tynkkynen, a technically and rhythmically demanding piece that, according to the performer, “is probably the most challenging work I have ever performed” (ibid.).

I would like to highlight a significant compositional aspect of *Gena*. It starts with a melody presented in the right hand, featuring a significant and representative perfect fourth between the first two notes. This compositional feature remains audible throughout the piece until the end, where the single-tone melody gradually diminishes until the final note. *Gena* poses numerous challenges for the performer, including fast passages that span the low to high range of the button board. In his first piece for accordion, Kaipainen employed a wide range of technical possibilities of the instrument, such as bellows-shakes, leaps, registration changes, combinations of different accents, fast virtuosic passages, and long melodic lines. This diversity of new techniques makes *Gena* an exceptionally demanding and challenging

nine-minute journey for the player. Undoubtedly, the works of both composers require a refined technique and musicality and have endured in the repertoire of accordionists.

Lastly, I would like to offer a reflection on both pieces, as *Jeux d'anches* was composed just a few years after *Gena*. Based on my comprehension of both compositions, I have the impression that Lindberg's work was influenced by Kaipainen's earlier composition. Notably, the structural features are analogous in both pieces: the piece begins with an expressive melody line featuring representative intervals, followed by an extensive development enriched with various technical elements, culminating in fast tremolos and supportive compact chords on the left hand in fortissimo. After the climax, the piece concludes with a joyous passage of tremolos, while a sustained D on the left hand serves as a reminder of the opening of the piece.

Another selection featured in this concert was Otto Romanowski's composition for accordion and tape, which served as a musical bridge between the two solo pieces. Romanowski (2005) described *Hiding* (1994) as a tribute to nature that incorporates a range of natural sounds, including waves, bird songs, and thunderstorms. The composer intentionally presents these sounds without modification to maintain their authenticity and beauty. Romanowski's awareness and appreciation for environmental sounds have motivated him to incorporate them into his compositions, as demonstrated in his debut work for accordion and tape, which he composed working in collaboration with Matti Rantanen. One of the aims of including Romanowski's *Hiding* in the concert was to effect a change in the audience's mental state and concentration, achieved through its use of lighter compositional material and inspiring depictions of the Finnish landscape in spring, replete with a diverse range of sounds, such as birdsong.

The final composer featured in the concert was Pehr Henrik Nordgren (1944–2008) with his work *Distance-Dreams op.101* for accordion and cello. This is his second piece for accordion and the only duo for cello and accordion, composed in 1997. The piece features a powerful narrative in which the cello dominates, while the accordion provides various textures, from dense polyphony to lyrical, virtuosic, and aggressive passages. In the section dedicated to the chamber combination of the accordion with the cello, I will examine this piece in detail, focusing on specific musical aspects that my cellist partner and I worked on.

Concert program

Erkki Jokinen (b.1941): *Rise V* (2002) for flute and accordion.

Jouni Kaipainen (1956–2015): *Gena op.31* (1987) for solo accordion.

Otto Romanowski (b.1952): *Hiding* (1994) for accordion and tape.

Magnus Lindberg (b.1958): *Jeux D'Anches* (1990–91) for solo accordion.

Pehr Henrik Nordgren (1944–2008): *Distance-Dreams op.101* (1998) for cello and cello.

Performers

Naiara De La Puente, accordion

Eeva Rysä, cello

Ilkka Laivaara, flute

18.05.2019, Camerata Hall, Helsinki Music Centre

2.1.4 “SONORITIES. COLORING THE HORIZON”—Fourth doctoral concert

“Sonorities. Coloring the horizon” showcases classical accordion music from distant regions across three continents: Europe, Asia, and America. This versatile chamber music program presents a diverse palette of works from composers with vastly different backgrounds, including both renowned figures and the emerging generation of composers.

Each solo and chamber piece featured in the concert has its own distinct style and unique approach to using the accordion, providing a broad spectrum of the instrument’s possibilities and potential applications. The programme features works from Ramón Lazkano (Spain), Yuji Takahashi (Japan), Sofia Gubaidulina (Russia), Jukka Tiensuu (Finland), and Georgina Derbez (Mexico).

In my opinion, the language and instrumentation used in each piece of music differ significantly from one another. Reflecting on my studies, I sought out new musical collaborations and explored the potential of different partners for the accordion, such as in Derbez’s work for accordion and recorders. Additionally, in keeping with the theme of previous concerts, I have included two duos featuring the accordion paired with the clarinet and cello. The clarinet and accordion will come together in Tiensuu’s

Plus series, while the cello serves as the perfect partner for exploring the meditative world of Takahashi's music.

An important aspect of this project was to highlight the work of women composers, as well as the performers. To that end, I have included pieces by Russian composer Gubaidulina and Mexican composer Derbez, who is part of the younger generation of composers and has been a driving force in advancing accordion music in her native country. Georgina Derbez is a prominent composer of her generation in Mexico, having studied composition in Germany with renowned figures such as Toshio Hosokawa and Klaus Huber. It was during her time in Germany that she first encountered the classical accordion, and it is worth noting that both of her composition teachers have contributed to the accordion repertoire. This may have been one of the inspirations that led Derbez to explore the new sonorities that the accordion brings to her work.

Gubaidulina's music features for the third time in my concerts. Having previously performed *In Croce* and *De Profundis*, for the last concert I presented *Silenzio* for accordion, violin, and cello. Gubaidulina's unique language is evident once again, and echoes of her other works can be heard. She has mastered the use of the accordion, with its distinctive sound



Figure 5: “SONORITIES. COLORING THE HORIZON”—Fourth doctoral concert.
Lighting design and photo: Sirje Ruohutula

treatment and aesthetics, while Derbez explores the more vivid and vibrant aspects of the instrument in collaboration with recorders.

To provide a compelling contrast, it is worth noting that Lazkano's music highlights the virtuosity of the instrument at its highest pitches and explores its full range, while Takahashi's music invites us to introspect and meditate. In *The Dream Carp*, the gentle interplay between the cello and the accordion creates a captivating atmosphere that guides the audience on a journey of reflection and contemplation.

Moreover, it was pertinent to include a well-known Finnish composer in this project, as a representative of the numerous fruitful collaborations that have taken place between Finnish accordionists and composers. Helka Kymäläinen's work with Jukka Tiensuu and *Plus I*, for instance, has expanded the original repertoire for accordion, explored new features of the instrument, and developed music written for it, thus highlighting the potential of the accordion as a classical instrument.

I intended for this concert to be an invitation to embark on a journey that would enable the audience to be emotionally and imaginatively exhilarated by the sonorities presented.

Concert program

Jukka Tiensuu (b.1948): *Plus I* (1992) for clarinet and accordion.

Ramón Lazkano (b.1968): *Aztarnak* (2002) for solo accordion.

Yuri Takahashi (b.1938): *The Dream Carp* (1992) for cello and accordion.

Georgina Derbez (b.1968): *La Forza, Il Sparvier* (2007) for recorders and accordion. *Finnish premiere.*

Sofia Gubaidulina (b.1931): *Silenzio* (1991) for cello, violin and accordion.

Performers

Naiara De La Puente, accordion

Eeva Rysä, cello

Maria Puusaari, violin

Angel Molinos, clarinet

Eero Saunamäki, recorders

13.02.2021, Organo Hall, Helsinki Music Centre

2.2 Winds of Expression: The Significance of the Bellows

*Do you know why I like this monster [bayan] so much?
Because it breathes!*—Sofia Gubaidulina.

In May 2019, I delivered a lecture recital as part of the Siba Research Days event hosted by the Sibelius Academy. The presentation focused on the critical significance of the bellows as a medium for expression and sound generation in the accordion. During the performance, I showcased a range of works in different styles, from a small Finnish folk piece to contemporary compositions, and even delved into the intricate and beautiful world of the chorals for organ by J.S. Bach, highlighting the various ways in which the bellows can be utilised to generate expressive effects specific each music. The research questions I raised during the lecture recital serve as the foundation for this chapter. Specifically, the following questions guided my investigation: How did the accordion breathe? How was the instrument's sound produced? How could I use it to express music within the contemporary chamber music repertoire?

In this chapter, I aim to emphasise the significance of the bellows in accordion playing and its crucial role as the instrument's mode of expression. The accordion "breathes" through its bellows, much like a wind player or a singer. Therefore, in terms of its physical and acoustic properties, the accordion produces sound in a similar manner to other wind instruments. When the accordionist releases a button, the sound ceases abruptly without any decay or fading, unlike the gradual decay of sound in instruments such as the piano or guitar. Furthermore, there can be no sound without the air contained in the bellows and sent to the free reeds. To make the reeds vibrate, we must either expand or contract the bellows, akin to the change of direction of the bow in bowed strings.

To attain a compelling musical outcome, a comprehension of the crucial role of the bellows is imperative. A precise and skillful technique in bellows manipulation is essential to determine the optimal approach to enhance the expressivity of a specific piece of music, whether it be in baroque, classical, romantic, or contemporary styles. Without this understanding, the result will be lacking in quality.

Throughout this chapter, I will refer to various works in chamber music formation and will focus on the use of the bellows as a source of phrasing,

expression, dynamic richness, and articulation. My objective is to demonstrate the diverse applications of the bellows in my performances as an accordionist, which vary depending on the musical context, as well as its new role as an element of contemporary playing techniques in the 20th and 21st-century music. Simultaneously, I seek to elucidate the primary challenges that I encounter in my pursuit of effective bellows usage. To provide further insight, I will supplement my arguments with audio and video materials from the compositions I performed as part of my doctoral degree's artistic component.

In the second section of this dissertation, I will examine how the accordion underwent significant changes in its organology during the latter half of the twentieth century, resulting in the exploration of new technical and musical possibilities. Some of the most representative organological aspects include:

- The use of longer and higher-quality materials for the bellows.
- A wider range of button boards in both manuals.
- The use of higher-quality materials for the reeds.
- The inclusion of more reed voices, which provides more possible register combinations, as well as the inclusion of reeds in *cassotto*.

These developments have enabled new musical possibilities, such as:

- An increase in the tempo of pieces.
- Overlapping between right and left hands.
- Echo effects.
- Leaps.
- Note repetition.
- Trills and tremolos.

A diverse range of effects can be created through the various applications of the bellows, including techniques such as bellows-shake, *ricochet*, different types of *vibrato*, use of the air valve, pitch bending, diverse percussions, and more.

As the concert accordion evolved and its organological and technical capacities were enhanced, new approaches to the instrument emerged,

attracting composers to explore its potential, a topic that will be discussed in the second section of the work. A novel approach to employing the bellows also emerged, with some composers finding in it a source of inspiration and expression. Throughout this chapter, I will explore the various ways in which this new palette of sounds produced with the bellows is utilized.

A clear example of a delightful way of the use of the bellows is Sofia Gubaidulina. I consider it important to highlight a Russian female artist as a leading composer for the concert accordion. Through her unique musical language, Gubaidulina has created a rich and deep repertoire for the accordion that showcases its full potential. She was one of the pioneers in exploring the expressive and idiomatic capabilities of the accordion. In fact, during an encounter with Lips, she expressed her fascination with this unique feature of the bayan, which is present in nearly every one of Gubaidulina's compositions for the instrument: "Do you know why I like this monster [bayan] so much? Because it breathes!"². As such, Gubaidulina's work contains an unusually rich palette of sonorities and a variety of uses of the bellows, including new techniques which I will elaborate on in the following lines.

This first encounter with Lips gave birth to her accordion masterpiece, *De Profundis* (1978), which became a symbol of the new language of the instrument. *De Profundis* is one of Gubaidulina's most well-known works for accordion. Its inspiration comes from religious imagery, a common theme throughout much of her work. The title is derived from Psalm 130, "Out of the depths I cry to thee, O Lord." The piece takes the listener on a spiritual journey, portraying the struggle of the human soul from the depths of despair towards light and hope. Overall, Gubaidulina's *De Profundis* is a powerful and emotive work that showcases the expressive capabilities of the accordion.

Through musical excerpts from her solo piece for accordion and her work *Silenzio* (1991) for violin, cello, and accordion, I will illustrate a range of new features in Gubaidulina's compositions. The following two excerpts serve as examples of the use of the bellows as a living element, which is closely related to the composer's personal aesthetic. In this way, we can observe different uses of the bellows in two distinct musical contexts,

² Lips, Friedrich. *Miserere*. 2003. Art Classics. ART-017. CD. Liner notes.

providing a glimpse into Gubaidulina's unique musical language and the expressive capabilities of the accordion in her compositions.

| **Video ex.2.2.1–I: Accordion's dramatic exhalation following the climax of the piece (Gubaidulina, *De Profundis*)**

| **Video ex.2.2.1–II: The reminiscent breath of the accordion, accompanied by a delicate vocal thread (Gubaidulina, *Silenzio*, beginning of the Fifth mov.)**

Another example of the diverse use of the accordion can be found in the work of Finnish composer Romanowski. In his piece *Hiding* (1994) for accordion and tape, Romanowski demonstrates a very different use of the bellows compared to the traditional approach, where he approaches the expressive possibilities of the bellows and the sound of air to imitate and interact with the sound of waves. The score indicates *Taustalla hiljaisia meren aaltoja* [Quiet sea waves in the background]. At the beginning of the piece, I intended to imitate the sound of the waves and respond to the tape, engaging in a dialogue with it. Rather than simply creating a sound bed for the real sounds of the waves, I aimed to converse with them and develop a joint phrasing.

| **Video ex.2.2.1–III: The air, akin to the sound of waves (Romanowski, *Hiding*, finale of the composition)**

On the other hand, the bellows-shake technique is one of the most widely used extended techniques in concert accordion playing among numerous composers. It has also been used to imitate the *ricochet* effect of the bowed string family. In the works performed during these four doctoral concerts, several pieces employ this compositional resource for various musical purposes. In the following example, the bellows-shake technique is used in the low register of the accordion, with small ascending and descending movements, to create a sonic atmosphere that perfectly conveys the idea on which the piece is based. How is such an expressive and narrative language achieved? By using faster and slower strokes to create phrasing, combined with slower or faster movements of the clusters on the right-hand manual.

| **Video ex.2.2.1–IV: From the depths... (Gubaidulina, *De Profundis*, onset of the composition)**

One of the effects stemming from the bellows-shake technique is the *ricochet*, which can be produced by striking the bellows against the sound box of the accordion with varying numbers of oscillations. As will be outlined in subchapter 2.3.4, Takahashi utilizes this technique in his composition for accordion and viola to emulate the fluttering of a swan in three distinct sections, engaging in diverse dialogues with the viola. In the following excerpt taken from the section, we can observe how the *ricochet* can be accelerated and performed in different dynamics, resulting in an effect of agitation.

Video ex.2.2.1–V: *Ricochet in accelerando* (Takahashi, *Like Swans Leaving the Lake*, start of Section F)

One of the passionately expressive elements at the disposal of composers is the use of different types of *vibrato*. The sound, regularity, and expressiveness that can be achieved vary depending on the chosen technique. Some composers indicate the desired *vibrato* type using either words or symbols, which can have more waves or indicate changes in speed. In the examples that I will present, there are no specific indications, leaving it up to the performer to determine the execution and, implicitly, the motivation behind it.

In the first example, we will examine how, within the context of Gubaidulina's mystical music, I conceptualize *vibratos* as having a narrative quality. I execute phrasing that creates a dialogue between different groups of notes, placing great emphasis on the silences that punctuate the entry of each group. In addition, I endow the *vibratos* with a sense of purpose. Throughout this passage, I envisage the body as immobile, so as not to disturb the presence of sounds that seem to originate from another dimension.

The musical discourse initiates with three high-pitched chords that enter into dialogue with subsequent appearances of those notes. The *vibrato* technique involves the manipulation of the right hand, applying consistent pressure to the buttons to control the speed of the oscillation, ultimately producing an electric effect. As the entries increase in pace and the tonal range descends, the phrase descends to the lower register, which is accentuated with slower beats to indicate the culmination of the phrase.

Video ex.2.2.1–VI: *Vibrato with the right hand on the button board* (Gubaidulina, *De Profundis*)

As the composition progresses, a novel vibrato technique is introduced. Guided by the musical context and my intention to convey a specific character in the passage, I choose to execute the beats using my left hand while simultaneously phrasing. This approach allows for greater control over each beat, resulting in more pronounced and less electric effects, which align with my intended musical expression.

| **Video ex.2.2.1–VII: *Vibrato* with left-hand beats (Gubaidulina, *De Profundis*)**

At the beginning of the fourth movement of *Silenzio*, the accordion section is marked with the indication “vibr. Sempre”. This movement features interspersed chords in the accordion section that soar above the violin and cello lines. The cello presents a musical cell that varies throughout, formed by *pizzicatos* on the cello and the use of “Sul A” and “Sul G” on the violin. In defining the type of *vibrato* to be used, I took into account the phrasing evident in the accordion chord sequence. Additionally, the cello and violin discourse informed me of the character that could be imparted to each of them. Undoubtedly, having knowledge of the work and the language of the composer was beneficial in undertaking this task.

| **Video ex.2.2.1–VIII: *Vibrato* chords creating a melodic line (Gubaidulina, *Silenzio*, Fourth mov.)**

One of the resources made possible by the bellows is pitch bending. To define it, pitch bending is achieved by simultaneously depressing a specific button while increasing pressure on the bellows, which lowers the original pitch and creates a tone-glissando effect. This compositional technique appears in Gubaidulina’s solo accordion work towards the end of the piece, following a passage of great dramatic tension that culminates, as previously mentioned, in the accordion’s dramatic breath.

Subsequently, the pitch gradually descends by a semitone to A and then to A flat, with specific instructions to execute a bend and return to the written note. During the entry of the third note, the performer must delicately depress the key while applying substantial pressure to the bellows to execute the bend, and then seamlessly return to the natural tuning. Consequently, the challenge becomes how to weave these three notes together into a coherent musical idea.

The performer plays a crucial role in imbuing life and meaning into the phrase. The following example demonstrates that each note can be enhanced with a heightened sense of drama, amplified by the use of semitones. The third note can be exaggerated with the bend while prolonging the return to the written note to create a moment of repose. By gradually returning the key to its original position, the performer creates the effect of an upward glissando.

Video ex.2.2.1–IX: Pitch bending in the low register and return to the written note (Gubaidulina, *De Profundis*)

Performers

Naiara De La Puente, accordion

Eeva Rysä, cello

Maria Puusaari, violin

Hanna Hohti, viola

De Profundis—16.09.2014, Camerata Hall, Helsinki Music Center

Like Swans Leaving the Lake—9.09.2015, Camerata Hall, Helsinki Music Center

Hiding—18.05.2019, Camerata Hall, Helsinki Music Centre

Silenzio—13.02.2021, Organo Hall, Helsinki Music Centre

Throughout the forthcoming chapter, entitled “A Performer’s Approach to Contemporary Chamber Music for the Concert Accordion”, I will explore the sonic characteristics of the accordion, with particular attention paid to the bellows’ utilization as a tool for both expression and phrasing and its interplay with other instruments in the context of chamber music practice.

2.3 A Performer's Approach to Contemporary Chamber Music for the Concert Accordion

2.3.1 Accordion and clarinets

The clarinet has been prominently featured in my concerts, and playing with this instrument has been an organic and rewarding experience for me. Both the clarinet and the accordion possess inherent characteristics that facilitate the flow of musical discourse with all its nuances. Despite both belonging to the wind family, the distinct physical properties of the reeds in each instrument enable them to adeptly respond to sudden dynamic shifts, produce *pianissimo* dynamic ranges, and create sounds that emerge without any initial attack (*dal niente*), as well as craft deliberate fluctuations in dynamics. The technical finesse required to manage the bellows of the accordion can be likened to the control required in sound emission by the clarinetist.



Figure 6: Jukka Tiensuu. *Plus I* (1992). Angel Molinos and Naiara De La Puente Vadillo. Photo: Sirje Ruohtula

In terms of phrasing ability, the clarinet undoubtedly possesses great expressiveness, making it an ideal companion for the accordion. The accordion can imitate or accompany the clarinet in an expressive discourse guided by the management of the bellows. Furthermore, the intensity and direction of sustained sounds can be effectively equated in both instruments. The accordion achieves sustained sounds by constantly pressing and pulling the bellows, without altering the dynamics. This is equivalent to how the clarinetist can produce sustained sounds by blowing into their instrument.

Undoubtedly, the success of the duo in the process of joint work and interpretation was influenced by my chamber music partners. Regarding *Plus I*'s chamber work, working with the clarinet and accordion came naturally to both musicians. As Molinos contends (2023), “they are highly similar instruments, whose timbre blends effectively.” In fact, during our conversations, Molinos mentions how we experimented with passages, explored possible solutions, and shared ideas during rehearsals. It was during these rehearsals that I learned the most about the clarinet’s characteristics, and where Molinos became more familiar with the accordion.

Regarding the clarinet’s contribution to the concert series, I included the accordion and clarinet duo in two out of the four concerts, with each performance featuring one or two works for the instrument. Notably, the concert series included two works for clarinet: *Foto* by Tapio Nevanlinna and *Plus I* by Jukka Tiensuu. Furthermore, the bass clarinet was also featured, as I performed Toshio Hosokawa’s renowned composition for accordion, clarinet, and bass clarinet *In die Tiefe der Zeit*, during the second concert.

My current research focus is on Jukka Tiensuu’s composition *Plus I*, where I aim to examine its specificities and chamber music practice, including the musical choices made for the clarinet and accordion duo. Following this, my attention will shift to the combination of accordion and bass clarinet, complemented by audio samples from my first doctoral recital. As part of my research sources, I interviewed clarinetist Ángel Molinos, with whom I collaborated in performing both works. Our partnership began with our debut concert in 2014, where we presented a piece for bass clarinet and accordion by Finnish composer Jarmo Sermilä, laying a foundation for us to understand each other’s approach to chamber music performance.

▪ **JUKKA TIENSUU. *Plus I* (1992), for clarinet and accordion**

Jukka Tiensuu has had a long-standing relationship with the accordion since the late 1970s, during which he began to take a particular interest in the instrument. His first piece for the accordion, *Aufschwung*, was composed in 1977 and premiered by Matti Rantanen. Since then, he has actively collaborated with various accordionists, making a significant contribution to the accordion repertoire. *Plus I* for accordion and clarinet is the first piece in his Plus series, which includes various instrumental combinations, ranging from duos and trios to works for accordion and string orchestra.

The composition *Plus I* by Tiensuu evokes a playful and dynamic atmosphere, with the clarinet and accordion engaging in a dialogue that oscillates between pursuit, encounter, and exchange. This is achieved through the development of diverse motifs that lead to a climactic moment, representing the apex of the conversation. The clarinet's melody maintains a steady motif that the accordion harmonizes, resulting in an intensified dialogue. After a prolonged moment of silence, which possibly evokes reflection, the accordion introduces the final passage with a striking character.

In approaching this piece, it was essential to become acquainted with the performance notes included by the composer in the score. These annotations provide insight into the meaning of certain aspects of the notation and offer general guidance on interpretation. While the composer occasionally offers suggestions regarding articulation, most interpretive decisions are left to the musicians. Beginning with the second section, once the performers are playing synchronously, the specifications for dynamics become much more concrete.

At this point, I aim to highlight distinctive features observed in Tiensuu's oeuvre. Tiensuu employs traditional notation for both instruments, while also incorporating compositional techniques specific to contemporary accordion idiom, such as tone glissando, *vibrato*, and bellow-shakes. The mastery of the bellows is crucial for executing each of these techniques. Furthermore, Tiensuu features rapid passages or interplay between both manuals, making full use of the technical possibilities afforded by the concert accordion.

In terms of the chamber music dimension, *Plus I* assumes a playful approach to the roles of the two instruments. At times, both instruments are

given equal importance, while at other times the accordion accompanies or engages in dialogue with the clarinet, culminating in unison or other outcomes. Throughout the piece, the composer clarifies the function of each instrument. As Molinos notes (2023), *Plus I* poses an “extreme test of synchronisation.”

Plus I is a technically demanding composition that presents challenges to both instruments in terms of articulation, rapid passages, and, particularly as the piece progresses, extended sequences of ascending and descending semiquaver movements. Overcoming the unique difficulties of each instrument, the most significant challenge lies in coordinating both instruments from start to finish. In the following passages, I will elaborate on specific characteristics of the composition and support my analysis with video excerpts.

The composition requires a seamless blending of the sounds produced by the instruments, which is especially critical in the opening section. Any differences in timbre or articulation could detract from the work, making precise registration indispensable. In this instance, it became evident that using a single-voice registration was crucial to achieving optimal blending of both instruments. Therefore, I chose an (8') in *casotto*, which offered superior accuracy compared to the (16') in my instrument's tuning. This selection was made after careful consideration, as it allowed for the best possible timbral match and ensured the work's cohesion from the outset.

Video ex.2.3.1–I: Example of a total blend of the sound (Tiensuu, *Plus I*, mm. 34–38)

Throughout the entire work, I collaborated with the clarinetist to maintain a consistent single-voice registration. Although adding a (4') registration could have enhanced the accordion's brightness and power, it would have come at the expense of the sound blend. Thus, I made the deliberate decision to continue with a single-voice registration and prioritize sound blending. This required me to match the clarinet's dynamics, even in passages with a *crescendo* leading to *fortissimo*. This decision presented a unique challenge but ultimately resulted in a cohesive sound that contributed to the overall musicality of the work.

Video ex.2.3.1–II: Blend of the sound in *forte* (Tiensuu, *Plus I*, mm. 108–113)

The previous example serves as an excellent illustration of the delicate balance achieved by combining the (8') registration in *cassotto* with the clarinet, resulting in a seamless sound assembly. Therefore, performers must pay close attention to achieving a balance between the two instruments throughout the piece.

In my estimation, the most challenging sections of the composition in this regard were the opening passage and the section leading to the end of the piece. The opening passage required conveying a surprising element that demanded technical precision and responsiveness from both musicians. In the second section, the two instruments engage in a continuous and fluid dialogue, emulating each other with their respective ascending and descending note sequences while maintaining perfect synchronisation. This passage can be characterised by the mutual mimicry of the instruments. Additionally, this section poses the added difficulties of finding an appropriate moment for the clarinetist to breathe and executing precise bellows changes in the case of the accordion, both of which must be performed with musicality and precision.

Video ex.2.3.1–III: Clarinet and accordion engaged in a continuous and fluid dialogue (Tiensuu, *Plus I*, mm. 132–138)

The latter parts of the composition demand a precise tempo and technical mastery. There is no reprieve passage, so it demands a sustained concentration throughout. It is worth noting that the clarinetist faces the additional challenge of tuning each note to the specific requirements of my instrument, a fundamental aspect that is crucial to any performance but attains particular significance in this passage. This musical piece comprises several lengthy passages in which the accordion introduces the principal theme, followed by the clarinet's immediate answer, as illustrated below.

Video ex.2.3.1–IV: A melodic passage where the clarinet chases the accordion (Tiensuu, *Plus I*, mm. 186–198)

The opening section of the composition showcases the clarinet's role, which is particularly intriguing due to the near-identical material shared between both instruments. However, only one instrument is responsible for initiating the playing, requiring the other to respond rapidly and synchronize their

playing. This interplay of roles is marked by numerical patterns, sometimes necessitating the musicians to make independent decisions. The demanding nature of this section lies not only in the requisite nimbleness but also in the ability to emulate the leader's phrasing, dynamics, and articulation accurately.

| **Video ex.2.3.1–V: An interplay of roles (Tiensuu, *Plus I*, mm. 1–17)**

Achieving uniform articulation was crucial in this section, requiring meticulous attention to detail and individual practice. The clarinetist's skillful use of *staccato* and light *legato* articulation infused the piece with vivacity and dynamism. The "leader" and "follower" roles outlined in the composition were approached with a focus on pure listening. There was no option to receive information beforehand through gestures or breathing cues from the partner, nor was there an opportunity to define and agree upon the passage in advance. The silences interspersed between the instrumentalists' appearances were fundamental in creating a surprising effect, which required both performers to be highly attentive and coordinated in their playing.

| **Video ex.2.3.1–VI: A whimsical dialogue (Tiensuu, *Plus I*, mm. 27–38)**

We have observed how this section demanded the follower to respond in a way that is both unexpected and technically precise while maintaining musical coherence with the leader. As the section progresses, the musical material becomes increasingly intricate, featuring mordents, wider intervals, and rhythmically nuanced passages. To perform these passages effectively, I used a combination of finger and bellows articulation as I remained acutely aware of the musical nuances presented by both instruments. The precision and coordination required between the two performers were of utmost importance to maintain the desired musical coherence and convey the intricate musical ideas presented in the section.

Furthermore, Tiensuu employs a range of extended techniques in this playful dialogue, such as tone *glissandi* and *vibrato*. During rehearsals, we isolated and worked on these passages separately to familiarize ourselves with the sonic possibilities and technical demands of each instrument, ultimately establishing a unified approach. Responding to a gradually *accelerating vibrato* requires skillful technique, and sustaining a tone glissando for

several seconds demands meticulous control. The resulting musical effect, in which the accordion's note is lowered by a quarter tone while the clarinet's note is simultaneously raised by the same interval, is truly captivating. Our aim in this passage was to distort the sound in a precise manner, exaggerating it while maintaining its duration, and avoiding any significant variations in dynamic that might overpower one instrument over the other.

The composer's instruction for *vibrato* in this piece is to be wide and expressive. To achieve this, I explored various techniques, one of which was striking my hand against the instrument. This approach allowed me to control the amplitude of the vibration while emulating the clarinet's model. By articulating each initial strike and gradually accelerating them, I maintained control over the speed of the *vibrato*. Collaborating with Molinos was an intense process, driven by our shared determination to deliver a coherent and compelling interpretation of the composition. Mutual listening was crucial to our approach.

| **Video ex.2.3.1–VII: Extended techniques: *vibrato* and tone glissando (Tiensuu, *Plus I*, mm. 40–49)**

The denouement of the opening section, where the instruments engage in a dialogue and gradually proceed in unison until the culmination of the piece, stands out as particularly enjoyable for me. This section requires the accordionist to exercise precise control over the bellows, using it as an expressive tool to support, accentuate, or shape the sound emission, and achieve a more assertive or grandiose sound when combined with right-hand articulation.

| **Video ex.2.3.1–VIII: A charming and gender jocularly (Tiensuu, *Plus I*, mm. 71–85)**

As the instruments synchronize and the musical discourse becomes increasingly linear, the clarinet takes on the role of the voice leader while the accordion provides brief appearances of chordal accompaniment. As the piece progresses, the accordion's accompaniment is interspersed with sixteenth notes and triplet figures that interact with the main voice. The intricate rhythmic structure necessitates great precision, and the melody is occasionally fragmented between both parts in small rhythmic sequences.

The virtuosity of the descending scales and the colour changes created by the alternation of the instruments make this section particularly thrilling and vibrant.

Video ex.2.3.1–IX: The synchronization of the instruments and the lively sequences of notes (Tiensuu, *Plus I*, mm. 116–131)

The technical demands of the composition escalate gradually as the musical dialogue between the clarinet and accordion becomes more agitated. The passage features quintuplets and sequences of triplet sixteenth notes, demanding a *forte* dynamic with *crescendos* that culminate in sound masses of chords on the accordion, accompanied by the precise rhythmic accompaniment. Achieving the necessary coordination in this chamber work required a slow tempo, and careful attention to equalizing articulations, tuning, and phrasing. It can be argued that this was the most complex passage in terms of coordination that we worked on.

Video ex.2.3.1–X: A tumultuous conversation leading to the climax of the composition (Tiensuu, *Plus I*, mm. 200–222)

As the piece reaches its culmination, a moment of silence is introduced to prepare the listener for the conclusion. Playing in *pianissimo*, the accordion echoes and evokes the musical themes developed throughout the work. The clarinet then follows with its final humorous discourse, also in *pianissimo*, and in a measured tempo.

Working on this final coda was an enjoyable experience that allowed us to explore the character of the piece through the use of silences and pauses between the instruments, as well as the subtlety and delicacy of both instruments. The journey concludes with the clarinet's last humorous entry, which definitively brings the work to a close.

Video ex.2.3.1–XI: The closing scene of the work (Tiensuu, *Plus I*, mm. 223–240)

Performers

Naiara De La Puente, accordion

Ángel Molinos, clarinet

13.02.2021, Organo Hall, Helsinki Music Center

- **TOSHIO HOSOKAWA. *In die Tiefe der Zeit (1994), for clarinets and accordion***

In my forthcoming discussion, I will explore the unique blend of the bass clarinet and the accordion, particularly in the lower register, which presents distinct challenges and opportunities for interpretation. While the physical characteristics of the bass clarinet differ from those of the clarinet, I have approached both instruments with the same level of comfort and ease. The bass clarinet-accordion duo has been championed by Dutch musicians Miny Dekkers and clarinetist Henri Bok, who collaborated with mainly Dutch composers such as Jacob ter Veldhuis to create a pioneering repertoire for this formation.

For my first concert, I chose to program Toshio Hosokawa's instrumental work, *In die Tiefe der Zeit* (Into the Depths of Time), which features a unique combination of clarinet, bass clarinet, and accordion. Notably, this particular pairing of accordion and bass clarinet was a second-time collaboration for both players. I worked closely with Ángel Molinos, my previous chamber music partner, for this performance. Our first collaboration dates back to my debut concert at the Sibelius Academy in September 2013, where we performed Jarmo Sermilä's work, *Mechanical Partnerships*. Since then, I have had the pleasure of exploring the deep sonority of the bass clarinet in larger chamber music settings as a member of various ensembles.

It is worth mentioning that the original version of *In die Tiefe der Zeit* was composed for cello, accordion, and strings. In fact, Molinos reminded me (2023) that he used the cello score as a point of reference to examine the similarities and differences between that particular version and the one scored for the clarinets. The composer's comments on the piece are particularly insightful:

In recent years I have been working closely on what I call 'listening deeply to one sound.' Listening slowly, vertically, to the landscape of one sound. Taking the time to watch the

constantly moving scenery of the sound as if gazing at a landscape painting. Listening. Wondering where the sound came from and how it got here. Into an empty, soundless space air flows and strikes a solid object; a sound results. Just listening with rapt attention to the landscape of the birth, creation and extinction of that sound. Like gazing raptly at a cloud as it slowly floats in the sky. (Hosokawa 1997.)

Hosokawa emphasizes the importance of immersing oneself deeply in sound and experiencing its nuances in a “vertical” manner. He encourages musicians to pay meticulous attention to every aspect of a sound, from its inception to its extinction. In his work, *In die Tiefe der Zeit*, the accordion serves as a vehicle for creating soundscapes that advance like clouds slowly moving across the sky. Held sounds directed by the bellows are gradually joined by notes, creating overlapping layers of sound that form the vertical soundscapes that Hosokawa refers to. A cohesive discourse emerges from the moment the sound begins, intensifies, and eventually fades away, holding the soundscapes together. Each moment in this process is critical in creating the desired soundscape.

Hosokawa’s music is deeply influenced by the aesthetics and spirituality of Japanese arts, and the contemplation of a soundscape created by music is a prime example of this influence. His emphasis on vertical soundscapes and careful attention to every aspect of a sound showcases his unique approach to composing music.

In Toshio Hosokawa’s work, the accordion serves as a vital element in creating a soundscape that progresses slowly and steadily, similar to how a cloud moves across the sky. The held sounds directed by the bellows gradually give way to notes, creating overlapping layers of sound that form the vertical soundscapes that Hosokawa emphasizes. These soundscapes are bound together by a discourse that begins from the moment the sound emerges, intensifies, and eventually fades away. Each moment in this process is essential in creating the desired soundscape.

Hosokawa’s music is strongly influenced by the aesthetics and spirituality of Japanese arts, which can be seen in his focus on creating soundscapes that encourage contemplation. The deliberate attention paid to each aspect of a sound, from its inception to its extinction, is a key element in his approach to composing music. By emphasizing the importance of the soundscape

created by music, Hosokawa's work highlights the unique relationship between music and spirituality, which is a central theme in his music.

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate the distinctive characteristics of Toshio Hosokawa's *In die Tiefe der Zeit* by analyzing four selected passages. To gain insight into our musical decisions, I will reflect on comments and observations made during our rehearsals. I aim to highlight the unique aspects of Hosokawa's work and to showcase the interpretive choices we made as performers. Specifically, I will focus on the nuances of the soundscapes created by the combination of clarinet, bass clarinet, and accordion, with particular attention given to the interactions between held sounds and overlapping notes. Through this analysis, I hope to provide a deeper understanding of Hosokawa's musical style, as well as the challenges and opportunities presented by his work.

The piece begins with an extended period of silence, which serves to create a sense of anticipation. The clarinet then enters with the utmost delicacy, marked as *ppp*, accompanied by the accordion in unison, without breaking this atmosphere. Together, they initiate a prolonged and measured *crescendo* from nothing, creating an initial sonic landscape shaped by the ornamentation figure in the clarinet. As the soundscape gradually fades away, a delicate thread of sound remains in the accordion. The clarinet then rejoins with a more articulated figuration, and the interplay of colours created by the textures of overlapping notes in the accordion begins. The clarinet also features less linear writing and introduces the play of *crescendos*, which foreshadows what will be more prevalent in the subsequent section.

As a musical duo, our ability to produce long and sustained phrases was greatly facilitated by my partner's exceptional mastery of the clarinet. Notably, the clarinetist's sustained breath can be compared to the stable bellows with constant pressure on the accordion. As my partner pointed out during our conversation (2023), Hosokawa's desired character for this passage is indicated by the designation of *lontano*. Keeping this concept in mind, my partner approached the piece with great care, delicately bringing out the clarinet's softest possible dynamic to create a sense of distance and space.

| **Audio ex.2.3.1–I: Beginning of the piece: long and sustained phrase**
| **(Hosokawa, *In die Tiefe der Zeit*, mm. 1–19)**

The following passage exhibits a more active character of both instruments, engaging in a dialogue that explores *crescendos* up to *fortissimo* with

sforzando. The accordion's texture is dense, with chords in both manuals that add or subtract notes and create new tonal colours. The clarinet takes on a soloistic role, continuing its discourse by interspersing single tone notes with livelier elements, while the accordion's powerful sound engages in dialogue with it. Dynamics intertwine in both instruments, providing a serene acoustic space for each instrument's entrance, except for the clarinet's first entry.

After a climax in both instruments, they subside into a *diminuendo*, with a sustained note in *pianissimo* preparing for the next section. This transition is especially noteworthy, as it highlights the performers' ability to navigate dynamic changes and control sound quality while exploring dense textures. In our pursuit of creating impactful climaxes in both instruments and achieving a seamless musical discourse, the accordionist faced an additional challenge of managing sudden dynamic changes from *sff* to *ppp*, which demanded utmost control over the bellows. The sudden changes in intensity often resulted in some of the accordion's voices not activating or starting to sound later than others, making it necessary to choose between using soft dynamics or slightly increasing the volume to ensure adequate airflow to activate and make all the reeds vibrate. It is worth noting that in the first case, some voices needed to remain in *pianissimo*, while in the second case, all voices remained sounding, adding another layer of complexity to the performance. A single voice (16') registration was used in this passage, resulting in a perfect blend and compact sound.

Audio ex.2.3.1–II: A more intense and dynamic passage, where sudden and dramatic contrasts in the accordion are accompanied by dynamic variations in the clarinet (Hosokawa, *In die Tiefe der Zeit*, mm. 67–79)

In terms of sound blending between the accordion and bass clarinet, the following passage showcases their effectiveness in the low register. By using a single reed register (16'), the balance between the two instruments is easily achieved. Both instruments play sustained notes, in the lower register of the instrument, and create long lines of sound. The musical discourse is primarily linear, with occasional interruptions from livelier elements in the bass clarinet, which incorporate dynamic variations with *sff* and introduce a new palette of colours through extended techniques such as trills, flutter-tonguing, and airy sounds.

Audio ex.2.3.1–III: Sound blending in the low register (Hosokawa, *In die Tiefe der Zeit*, mm. 150–159)

One of the most significant and momentous passages in the composition is its finale. This ending reminds us of the composition's beginning, with the bass clarinet playing a prominent role and exploring its highest register. With great musical intention, the bass clarinet interprets the E flat with which the work begins, but this time with the bass clarinet and accordion playing in perfect unison. Before that, the clarinet sings in the high register, supported harmonically by the accordion. It is interesting to note how the notes sung by the clarinet were immediately played as part of a chord on the accordion.

Thus, the clarinet has the sonic reference provided by the accordion. This passage poses significant challenges for both instrumentalists. Firstly, the bass clarinetist must display extraordinary control over the instrument, and Molinos demonstrates great technical prowess and sound control in his interpretation, with a general dynamic in *piano* and subtle dynamic changes. Secondly, the handling of the accordion is also complex: the dynamic is *pianissimo*, which means that the chords held in the high range in both manuals, as well as the long phrases, require extraordinary control of the bellows, as well as knowledge of the response of the reeds and exquisite listening to ensure precise note entries and prepare for the clarinet's melody. It should not be forgotten that the soloist in this passage is the bass clarinet, but his musical discourse is supported by the accordion's line. Therefore, mutual collaboration and understanding are fundamental.

Audio ex.2.3.1–IV: Finale (Hosokawa, *In die Tiefe der Zeit*, mm. 207–212)

Performers

Naiara De La Puente, accordion

Angel Molinos, clarinet

16.9.2014, Camerata Hall, Helsinki Music Center

2.3.2 Accordion and flute

- **ERKKI JOKINEN. *Rise V* (2002), for flute and accordion**

Rise V is the final piece in a series of works for accordion and various ensembles by Jokinen, composed specifically for Rantanen. Since 1989, the Rise series has been compiling a collection of short, independent works for a variety of ensembles. *Rise V* focuses on the unique and contrasting possibilities of flute and accordion with remarkable skill and precision. In brief, the piece showcases an impressive variety of articulations and dynamics and a fast-paced, vivid character that demands exceptional precision. Within its brief six-minute duration, Jokinen's composition expertly explores the dynamic range of both instruments, moving seamlessly from *pianissimo* to wide *crescendos* that culminate in sharp attacks.

Furthermore, Jokinen's duo offers a fascinating exploration of the technical capabilities of both instruments, ranging from powerful and vibrant technical issues to the most delicate and gentle playing. The instruments are brought into direct confrontation, allowing their sonorities to overlap and blend. The two performers engage in a dialogue of sorts, with each



Figure 7: Erkki Jokinen. *Rise V* (2002). Ilkka Laivaara and Naiara De La Puente Vadillo.
Photo: Sirje Ruohutula

instrument commenting and reacting to the other, occasionally breaking away for independent solos.

In the composition there are various challenges for the flute including the richness of the articulations, for example, tremolo intensified with the use of the tongue and *vibrato* connected with the glissandos, as well as the flexibility required by the long-lasting melodic phrases. To address these situations from a musical perspective, we undertook an analytical approach, exploring the context, experimenting with various interpretations, and comparing it to the written notation for the accordion.

Overall, *Rise V* combines notable contrasts in character, employed material, *tempos*, as well as the aforementioned richness of dynamics and articulation, which immerse the audience in various sonorous atmospheres, where they can also appreciate the extensive dynamic and articulation possibilities of the accordion. The composition begins with a dynamic and forceful solo by the flute, while the accordion provides supportive and colouristic accompaniment. As the piece progresses, the accordion gradually assumes a more prominent role, leading to a brief yet exciting period of music where both instruments play together with rhythmical precision.

| **Video ex.2.3.2–I: The flute solo and the colouristic accompaniment of the accordion (Jokinen, *Rise V*, mm. 1–25)**

This passage marks a shift in mood, transitioning to a tranquil and otherworldly *piano* section, characterized by long melodic phrases. Here, the two instruments are intended to blend seamlessly, but this unity is abruptly disrupted by rapid and intense *crescendos* in both instruments towards the conclusion of the section.

| **Video ex.2.3.2–II: Blending of the sound (Jokinen, *Rise V*, mm. 30–36)**

As the piece unfolds, the accordion assumes a more assertive role, punctuating the music with accents and executing fast passages with electric trills, engaging in a joyful and rhythmic dialogue with the flute. This lively and animated section culminates in a virtuosic *fortissimo* passage followed by a *grand rallentando* that brings the music to a rest in the lowest register of the accordion.

| **Video ex.2.3.2–III: A joyful and rhythmic dialogue between both instruments (Jokinen, *Rise V*, mm. 40–58)**

Subsequently, the flutist introduces new elements to the composition, leading the way on a journey as they invite the accordion to join in a powerful and rhythmic culmination. It is in this section that the innovative interplay between the two instruments comes to the fore. What starts as a simple and tender exchange between the two gradually gains momentum, evolving into an increasingly lively and spirited exchange that culminates in an intense agitation where the accordion and flute seem to be in close pursuit of one another.

Video ex.2.3.2–IV: Interplay between the two instruments (Jokinen, *Rise V*, mm. 69–80)

Towards the culmination of the piece, both instruments fully demonstrate the vast range of their sound, reaching the pinnacle of their explosive character. The main challenge was to unite the dynamics and the sharp articulations. In my case, I utilized the full range of articulatory possibilities offered by the accordion to achieve a diverse palette of tonal colours. Without a doubt, this passage demanded a robust and assertive approach from both musicians, requiring us to imbue the performance with a strong and distinct character.

Video ex.2.3.2–V: The culmination of the composition (Jokinen, *Rise V*, mm. 101–110)

The conclusion of the composition takes on a more tranquil mood, offering a fresh timbral palette that presents a sharp contrast to the previous material. The tender melodic line is executed delicately in a *piano* dynamic, gradually mystically dissolving the chant. The nuances of dynamics are of great importance, and mutual listening is fundamental. To achieve greater cohesion between the two instruments, I chose to play with a single voice on both manuals. Finally, it should be noted that coordination is one of the pillars of the work, even in passages with a more tranquil character, such as the final one. The accordion's role as an echo of the flute requires it to be extremely precise.

Video ex.2.3.2–VI: The conclusion of the composition (Jokinen, *Rise V*, mm. 114–121)

Performers

Naiara De La Puente, accordion

Ilkka Laivaara, flute

18.05.2019, Camerata Hall, Helsinki Music Center

2.3.3 Accordion and recorder

- **GEORGINA DERBEZ. *La forza, il sparvier* (2007), for recorders and accordion**

Derbez's duo for accordion and recorders (alto and tenor) pushes the boundaries of both instruments, exploring their technical possibilities from powerful and vibrant passages to delicate pianissimo playing, allowing the instruments to interact and overlap sonorities. *La forza, il sparvier* was created after a collaboration with the German accordionist Eva Zöllner, to whom the piece is dedicated. It draws inspiration from Paolo de Firenze's madrigal, *Un Pellegrin Uccell*, which belongs to the *Ars Subtilior* artistic movement.

When I became acquainted with the figure of Derbez, I searched to ascertain if she had composed any pieces for accordion, and subsequently contacted her directly. This is how I came to select the particular work discussed in this thesis. Derbez's remarks (2020) indicate that the subtlety and refinement of the ensemble Mala Punica's performance of *Un Pellegrin Uccel* inspired her to compose this piece. She notes that the ensemble's small liberties and nuances, drawn from the score, provided her with the original idea, which she refers to as the germ for this duo piece.

Before studying this work, I was unaware of Derbez's musical compositions. However, since first encountering it, I was confident that there was significant and specific information underlying its title. Thanks to Derbez's comments, I was able to immerse myself in listening to Paolo de Firenze's work for the first time. I enjoyed discovering the interplay between the recorder and the voice, while also envisioning the sound of the accordion performing the madrigal and the possibilities that this versatile instrument could bring to the music.



Figure 8: Georgina Derbez. *La Forza, Il Sparvier* (2007). Eero Saunamäki and Naiara De La Puente Vadillo. Photo: Sirje Ruohtula

She drew my attention to the opening notes of the piece as a preliminary discussion of the work. She asked me to take note of the specific rhythm formulated in the madrigal, explaining that the initial idea of the work was based on this concrete rhythm. The gesture of the beginning of *La forza, il sparvier* is based on the *sforzando* present in the original madrigal, specifically when the two words, *FORZA – Il sparvier*, are sung. At various points in the piece, both words are whispered in an interrupted impulse by both musicians. Derbez develops the piece from this initial rhythmic element, exploring the different characters and sonorities of the recorders and the accordion with the support of the voices. Throughout the composition, the starting element is recognizable, presented with varying rhythms and notes, but performed with the same vivid character.

The musical composition's structure is readily discernible and features a combination of delicate, melodious passages that build up through the layering of accordion notes. This technique creates clusters with varying sonorities and densities, leading to multiple climaxes throughout the piece.

Derbez makes use of the entire dynamic range to establish each section's atmosphere, smoothly between sections, creating a coherent discourse. The piece's primary character can be described as lively and energetic, with climactic moments occurring when both musicians declaim *FORZA*. Calmer passages are employed to initiate a new buildup towards the next climax.

While the composition employs various contemporary techniques in the recorders, such as the combination of singing and playing, and multiphonics, there are few elements characteristic of 20th-century writing in the accordion, such as the bellows-shake, and the air valve is utilized meaningfully to express the instrument's "breathing" quality. The following paragraphs will highlight selected excerpts that demonstrate the effective use of certain musical elements and passages, which are particularly noteworthy in terms of their balance with the recorders.

The composition opens with an element that will persist throughout the piece, achieving a seamless fusion between the two instruments through the coordination of articulation and phrasing. It is crucial to execute identical *sforzandos* and sudden *pianos*. The recorder, as a wind instrument, allows for all the nuances at the beginning and end of notes and enables the performer to direct the *crescendo* and *diminuendo* until the sound fades out. Similarly, the accordion's bellows can create a dynamic interplay, mimicking the sound of air expelled by animate beings or the waves of the ocean.

The initial motif of Derbez's *La forza, il sparvier* can be interpreted as a recurring call that becomes increasingly insistent, unfolding into more vivid notes in a dialogue between both instruments. The decision to register a single voice in *casotto* results in a seamless fusion of the sounds of the recorder and accordion. In terms of dynamics, adjustments were necessary, such as playing softer than initially anticipated and modifying the attacks on the recorder to achieve a cohesive phrasing and unified *sforzando*. To imitate the *vibrato* effect, the bellows shake was modified with a *vibrato* performed using the right manual, resulting in less interrupted phrasing. Both instruments complemented each other perfectly in the dynamic play, executing rapid *crescendos* and sudden changes with finesse.

Video ex.2.3.3–I: Introduction of the main musical element (Derbez, *La forza, il sparvier*, mm. 1–10)

To conclude the first phrase, the microtonal ascending passage in the recorder sets the stage for a captivating musical moment. The delicate interplay begins as the accordion sustains the MIII, creating a microinterval dissonance with the recorder. From this initial fragility, a new phrase emerges, characterized by the progressive superposition of notes in the accordion, first in the MIII and then in the MI. Guided by a progressively intensifying *crescendo*, and with a *tremolo* effect with overblowing and alternating fingers in the recorder, this intricate interweaving leads to a grand culmination where both instruments unite in a triumphant tremolo. Acknowledging the significance of this pivotal moment, the expressive nature of the passage calls for the use of the bellows-shake technique, enhancing its conclusive and energizing character.

Following a shared breath, the instrumentalists embark on a dynamic journey, commencing from a robust *ff* and gradually dissolving the sonic mass. This gradual dissolution is achieved through a subtle interplay of *crescendos* and *diminuendos*, allowing the instruments to merge seamlessly into an expressive and delicate unison with a captivating *vibrato*.

In approaching this passage, meticulous attention was paid to the dynamic capabilities of the recorder, ensuring that the accordion's dynamics were attuned to complement its counterpart. Moreover, the interplay of phrasing and musicality between the instruments was thoughtfully crafted to achieve a distinctive dolce character, as intended by the composer. Notably, the melody is often shared between the instruments, concealed within the accordion's upper register against a backdrop of dense chords. To enhance the blending of sounds and create an illusion of shared melodic responsibility, the accordion's central register in *cassotto* and the recorder's single-voice register in the MIII range were strategically employed.

Far from being a concluding statement, this moment of tranquility is unexpectedly disrupted by a series of *sforzandos* executed in unison, delicately interwoven with a soft dynamic foundation. These bursts of energy introduce a dynamic interplay characterized by brief regulatory passages, leading us back to the initial musical motif. The return is promptly interrupted by new *sforzandos* and an infusion of fresh colours, brought to life through techniques such as *tremolo* in the accordion and *bisbigliando* in the recorder. The success of this section hinges on achieving consistent character and articulation in both the forceful *sforzandos* and sudden *pianos*, while preserving the lyrical essence of the phrasing. As the second half of the phrase unfolds, a new idea is introduced by the accordion,

featuring a captivating interplay of overlapping notes that beckons the recorder to embrace its inherent lyricism. A cohesive interpretation relies on synchronized phrasing, closely matched dynamics, and an impeccably blended sound that seamlessly fuses both instruments into a singular expressive entity.

Video ex.2.3.3–II: Dialogue in unison and the use of extended techniques (Derbez, *La forza, il sparvier*, mm. 10–22)

The following section of the piece features rapid note sequences that further amplify its lively character. Saunamäki's remarkable finesse and attention to detail offer a truly delightful auditory experience. The accordion enters with a skillful play of echoes, achieved by distributing notes between the two manuals, at a *pianissimo* dynamic level, and with a *legatissimo* effect that creates an exceedingly delicate passage. Initially, the recorder complements the accordion's discourse, gradually building up to a climax that culminates in a livelier sequence. Achieving synchronization during the final culmination on the note A was a challenging task for both musicians before the sound mass dissipates, leading the section back to its original idea. For instance, the following video clip demonstrates a dialogue between the accordion and recorder that progressively intensifies.

Video ex.2.3.3–III: Dialogue between the accordion and recorder, which becomes progressively agitated (Derbez, *La forza, il sparvier*, mm. 25–33)

From this point onwards, the composition revisits the idea presented in measure 25, creating a sonic reminiscence in the upper register. This delicate passage, marked *delicatissimo*, combines sounds from both manuals in the accordion, gradually decelerating in accordance with the metric structure. However, this brief melody is abruptly interrupted by a vivid recorder melody in its higher register, played *forte*, which establishes the new character of this section. From this juncture, the accordion accompanies the recorder's melody with varying degrees of density, employing a constant interplay of *crescendos* and *diminuendos* within a concise temporal span. The dynamic intricacies of this section are of paramount importance, as they contribute to creating the undulating sound in the accordion, providing a harmonic foundation for the recorder's expressive singing. Ultimately, both instruments converge to reach a climactic *fortissimo*, with the accordion assuming a rhythmic character and

the recorder delivering a sequence of rapid notes grouped in various meters, all of which are executed with explosiveness and in the higher register. Following a brief moment of apparent calm and a pause accompanied by a *diminuendo*, the initial character of the section resounds once more, only to be unexpectedly and violently interrupted by the recorder, resonating in the accordion until fading away.

Video ex.2.3.3–IV: End of the second section (Derbez, *La forza, il sparvier*, mm. 34–44)

The third section of the piece showcases the accordion in a soloistic role, similar to a Cadenza, where it displays both its impetuous and delicate traits. Saunamäki's recorder provides support for the accordion's discourse with sudden and forceful entries that add a playful element to the section. The livelier theme and brief figuration heighten the tension as both instruments overlap with varied rhythms, culminating in a trill that reaches the highest register of both instruments, emphasising the insistent character with *fortissimo* and *sforzando*. The accordion concludes the section with an expressive *diminuendo*, gradually fading away.

To enhance the brightness of the trills and provide greater sonority to the *crescendos*, I introduced a central second voice in the registration, highlighting the high notes. Although the phrase could have ended there, Derbez chooses to give it a conclusive and expressive character by employing the sound of air and the expressive phrasing of the bellows, making the accordion serve as a living instrument that breathes.

Video ex.2.3.3–V: Cadenza (Derbez, *La forza, il sparvier*, mm. 45–60)

The final section of the piece is characterized by its subtle and delicate qualities. It features the same musical element introduced at the beginning, but this time with an accentuation of the F sharp note in its higher octave. The E note is occasionally presented at the same interval distance from the beginning, while at other times, a major third interval is used to create a bright colour. The dynamics are predominantly *piano*, with certain entries featuring accents or *sforzando* to emphasize the F sharp note. The overall musical discourse is relaxed, and the accordion creates a mystical and archaic atmosphere.

The tension is sustained through the use of phrasing the sound of air, until the final entries of the voices and accordion. The recorder is used to create the effect of a distant echo with the spoken voice. In this chamber work, the spoken voice is given the same character as the music, and the atmosphere is carefully crafted to provide a release from the tension accumulated in the preceding passages. The accordion's sound resonates like an echo, while both instrumentalists conclude the piece with a whisper of their voices, reciting the words that form the title of the work, "forza" and "sparvier."

Undoubtedly, this piece was a revelation in the world of accordion music.

Video ex.2.3.3–VI: Final passage of the piece (Derbez, *La forza, il sparvier*, mm. 75–82)

Performers

Naiara De La Puente, accordion

Eero Saunamäki, recorders

13.02.2021, Organo Hall, Helsinki Music Center

2.3.4 Accordion and bowed string instruments

The combination of accordion and cello is a frequent choice in my concert programmes due to my preference for the sound of bowed string instruments, particularly the rich timbre of the cello. This pairing has been a popular choice for musical duos over the years. In this context, the bow plays a similar role to the accordion bellows, serving as a visually and descriptively rich element that I often compare to a narrator. As I watch the bow glide across the cello strings, a story unfolds. The interplay between the bellows and bow creates a fascinating dialogue that I find truly captivating.

Throughout the concert series, I have presented compositions for accordion and bowed string instruments with a diverse range of musical styles, resulting in a varied approach to each work. This has involved refining phrasing, unifying articulations, exploring timbres to create specific atmospheres, improvisation, and technically challenging passages that

require flawless coordination between the right hand and the bellows of the accordion, among other techniques.

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the compositions performed in the concerts and discuss in detail their key features and aspects of chamber music performance.

- **SOFIA GUBAIDULINA. *In Croce* (1979), for cello and accordion**

According to Gubaidulina (2013), “Every composition is an enormous labor for me.” In an interview with Karen Campbell of the Christian Science Monitor, she revealed that at the onset of a new work, she hears in her head “a vertical sound of colourful, moving, clashing chords, completely mixed up and jumbled. It is wonderful and beautiful, but it is not real.” Her task is to transform this vertical sound into a horizontal line. Gubaidulina emphasizes that the interplay between these two lines, horizontal and vertical, forms a cross, which she keeps in mind while composing.



Figure 9: Sofia Gubaidulina. *In Croce* (1979). Tomas Nuñez-Garcés and Naiara De La Puente Vadillo. Photo: Sirje Ruohutula

Gubaidulina has successfully merged spiritual influences with highly original techniques in her work. This combination proved challenging for Gubaidulina's early career, particularly during the Soviet state's peak repression of creative artists. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, she emerged as one of the most acclaimed composers in the international classical scene. Gubaidulina has demonstrated prolific skills in composing accordion music. Her first encounter with the bayan occurred several years earlier, when she composed her first solo accordion piece in 1978, followed by *In Croce* a year later. In 1982, she showcased her mastery by uniting the cello and accordion with a string orchestra in the masterpiece *Seven Words*.

In Croce showcases the accordion's exceptional ability to execute extended *legato* passages through the use of the skilled bellows technique. Originally composed for organ and cello, the piece premiered at the Moscow Conservatory in 1979. In 1992, the composer reworked the organ part for the accordion. The title alludes to the instrument of Christ's Passion, the Cross, and the music reflects this theme through dissonant harmonies based on sustained semitone clashes. The structure of the piece is based on the shape of the cross, with each instrument concluding with the opening phrase of the other. Additionally, the cross is represented through an *arpeggio* motive that is presented on the accordion at the beginning of the composition and concludes with the cello.

| **Video ex.2.3.4–I: The cross represented in the accordion**
| **(Gubaidulina. *In Croce*, Onset of the piece)**

| **Video ex.2.3.4–II: The cross represented in the cello (Gubaidulina,**
| ***In Croce*, nr. 48)**

Section A is the largest section and provides the primary thematic material for the composition. It features long, linear movements in the instrumental parts. The cello and accordion play in distant registers, with the cello in the lower depths and the accordion in the very high range, moving in opposite directions (with the accordion part moving downward and the cello part upward). The cello line in Section A is characterized by gradual movements, including micro intervals, major and minor seconds, and their inversions, sevenths, which are connected by long *glissandi*.

| **Video ex.2.3.4–III: Excerpt from Section A (Gubaidulina, *In Croce*,**
| **Section A)**

In this context, it is worth noting the accordion's ability to produce extended phrases, which is referred to as utilizing its organ-like or choral playing characteristics. The following example demonstrates the instrument's ability to produce prolonged phrases while maintaining steady bellows, which poses a challenge for the performer. The airflow passing through the bellows must remain consistent, regardless of whether the accordion is contracted or fully expanded. While a string player must concentrate on the movement of the bow across the strings, an accordionist must focus on both the left-hand playing and simultaneously regulate the bellows' action. The following video example highlights the accordion's ability to produce dense chords and play in a choral-like style, while the cello plays a dramatic melody in *fortissimo*.

Video ex.2.3.4–IV: Description of a dramatic scene (Gubaidulina, *In Croce*, nr. 27–29)

Another fundamental chamber music aspect in this work concerns the balance and blend of the voices. To showcase the combination of accordion and cello, I will refer to three different passages. The first passage captures the end of one section and the beginning of the next to showcase how both instruments reach a climax with equal intensity, maintaining the same character and intensity at the start of the second section. The accordion produces clusters, while the cello creates metallic sounds using the *sul ponticello* technique.

Video ex.2.3.4–V: Dramatic dialogue after a climax of the cello and accordion (Gubaidulina, *In Croce*, nr. 23–24)

Thus, we have heard how the instruments engage in a dramatic dialogue, characterized by sequences of ascending and descending movements, varying in speed and concluding sharply. In this example, we will hear how both instruments blend seamlessly in *fortissimo* dynamics and showcase the phrasing ability to create crisp phrase endings. Additionally, the blend of voices is evident as the accordion employs two voices in the middle register.

In the following example, we will hear how both instruments blend together through the imitation of the cello's effect. As in the previous passage, they engage in a dialogue with ascending and descending movements, but with a markedly different character—a tone of question and answer, with

a playful touch. The accordion employs a voice in the *casotto* and light displacements in the right-hand manual. The primary focus of this passage was on attentive listening to achieve the dialogue between both instruments.

| **Video ex.2.3.4–VI: Dialogue with a playful touch (Gubaidulina, *In Croce*, nr. 30)**

In this third example, we will examine the blend of sound in the high register of both instruments, played at a *pianissimo* dynamic level. Following a *cadenza* on the cello, it seeks an almost ethereal sound, with the cello playing a *glissando* on its highest register. Over this sonority, the accordion enters in *pianissimo*, without disrupting the magical atmosphere. From there, the accordion begins its discourse in *legato*, and the cello makes its entrance once the celestial sound fades away. From here, the cello gradually leads a *crescendo*, culminating the work.

In the following musical excerpt, I will show the entrance of the accordion, and how the cello subsequently enters on the top of the accordion's sound, also played in *piano*. The phrasing and blend of both instruments in *piano* and *legato* are impeccable.

| **Video ex.2.3.4–VII: The phrasing and blend of both instruments in *pianissimo* and *legato* (Gubaidulina, *In Croce*, nr. 36–38)**

Performers

Naiara De La Puente, accordion
Tomas Núñez-Garcés, cello

9.09.2015, Camerata Hall, Helsinki Music Centre

- **PEHR-HENRIK NORDGREN. *Distance-Dreams op.101* (1998), for cello and accordion**

Distance-Dreams op.101 is the second piece composed by Finnish composer Pehr-Henrik Nordgren for accordion and the first and only duo for accordion and cello. It was written in 1997, commissioned by SHI (The Finnish Accordion Institute), and premiered by Marko Ylönen and Matti Rantanen in Kaustinen in January 1998.

In its overall narrative scheme, the piece offers a compelling and powerful commentary on life's conflicting emotions. The cello is presented as a dominant and highly expressive instrument, while the accordion complements it with almost orchestral writing. Both musicians must understand and communicate the work's character as a duo. The use of gestural dialogue, derived from the piece's character, was essential in creating this narrative.

The beginning of the piece includes a tempo specification of *rubato ad libitum*, emphasizing the expressivity and dramatic nature of the work. In the final part of the composition, the tempo is slower, expressed as *molto meno mosso*, and the work shows a lighter texture and much softer intensity. At the outset of the composition, the theme is introduced on the accordion with a magnificent voice and a solid *legato*. However, this powerful and soloistic role will quickly shift to the cello, which maintains this role until the very end of the piece. In the final section, the accordion returns in *pianissimo*, evoking the initial melancholic mood.

Throughout the first section of the piece, the composer explores the broad tessitura of the accordion, utilizing the contrast between both manuals. The dense polyphonic textures in the MIII, particularly in the lowest register, create a subdued and melancholic atmosphere that is reinforced by the cello's pedal note in its low pitch.

The piece commences with the accordion playing a melody in the high register that hints at the work's dramatic character. The objective is to craft a commanding and memorable melody that can be used as a motif later on. As a duo, the primary focus was on achieving a consistent and energetic character and a balanced sound, both in *forte* and sudden *pianissimo*. After the instruments swap roles, with the cello assuming the lead, the goal is to maximize expressivity while the accordion supports and even engages in unison dialogue, dramatically breaking with a new phrase and leading into what I will term the second section, characterized by a less lyrical and more rhythmic quality in the cello. The accordion faces several challenges in this piece, including the need to employ the bellows in a static line, phrase lines broadly, and serve as a deep mass of sound to support the cello, an approach I refer to as "organ-like" playing. The following example showcases the narrative and dramatic elements of Nordgren's piece.

Video ex.2.3.4–VIII: Narrative and dramatic characters (Nordgren, *Distance-Dreams op.101*, mm. 1–20)

The registration is written, probably by Rantanen. I have made some modifications to achieve a more musically appropriate result for my instrument and my understanding of the work. I have sought a timbre richer in harmonics by adding the central voice outside of the *casotto* on the MI. In other passages, I have reduced the number of voices and timbral richness to seek greater dynamic contrast and better blending with the cello.

The registration is carefully employed in this section, showcasing Nordgren's deliberate and effective use of timbre to convey the intended mood. Sudden clusters with *fortissimo* accents on the accordion disrupt long lines, creating a distressing and unsettling effect. Meanwhile, the cello maintains a broad melodic line with phrasing.

| **Video ex.2.3.4–IX: Use of the registration (Nordgren, *Distance-Dreams op.101*, mm. 30–40)**

As the music progresses, the texture thickens as the instruments engage in aggressive dialogue, conveying the composer's inner emotional battle. This presents a challenge for both musicians as they must convey this conflict through technically demanding passages and coordinate as a duo. The accordion features various types of attacks, fast virtuosic passages, and dynamic and registration contrasts. At times, the cello takes the lead in the discourse, while the accordion supports it with aggressive chords.

It is imperative to bear in mind that the cello's colossal sound mass demands from the accordion the use of the bellows to help the articulation, rather than a too brief or electric accent with the right hand, which would not enhance the moment's aggressive character.

| **Video ex.2.3.4–X: The narrative of the battle (Nordgren, *Distance-Dreams op.101*, mm. 47–56)**

The subsequent section is, in my view, a noteworthy demonstration of the accordion's prowess to emulate an orchestral multitimbral instrument. Just as previously the use of the accordion may have reminded me of the tone of brass instruments, now I intend to interpret and imitate the volatility of woodwind instruments, characterised by vivid passages featuring ascending and descending broken chords (measures 58–62). This section leads to a passage evocative of the string section and ultimately culminates in a powerful climax for both instruments.

The accordion employs a unique notation system, which involves playing a sequence of double notes with both hands. This produces a nuanced change in timbre, creating the impression that the sounds are emanating from various instruments and directions. From a technical standpoint, playing these passages is far from simple, as it demands a great deal of dexterity and continuity in the sequence. Moreover, it necessitates equivalent levels of agility and articulation in both the left and right hands.

Video ex.2.3.4–XI: Orchestral writing (Nordgren, *Distance-Dreams op.101*, mm. 60–70)

Following this, the cello embarks on a melodic journey, while the accordion introduces a range of elements, including a triplet accompaniment and a revival of nimble virtuosity through sequences of ascending and descending notes. This leads to a coda, which smoothly returns us to the initial character of the composition, thereby achieving a sense of completeness through the process of recapitulation.

Performers

Naiara De La Puente, accordion

Eeva Rysä, cello

18.05.2019, Camerata Hall, Helsinki Music Centre

▪ JOUNI KAIPAINEN. *Elemental Chanting op.87* (2009), for cello and accordion

In his opus 87, *Elemental Chanting* for accordion and cello, Jouni Kaipainen pays tribute to nature with a canticle. The work draws inspiration from Saint Francis of Assisi's *Laudes Creaturarum* and *The Speech of Chief Seattle*, the Head of Indian tribes Suquamish and Duwamish of North America (Anderson 2008), both of whom praised the original nature, its beauty, and the importance of preserving it. Concepts such as "Brothers Wind and Air", "Sister Water", "Brother Fire", and "Our Sister Mother Earth" hold significant value for both speakers.

The piece comprises five interludes, including a prelude, three interludes, and a postlude, alternated with four independent sections named after the elements, each containing programmatic descriptions. In this context, the

term “chanting” refers to the ancient art of reciting poetry, encompassing Gregorian hymns, psalm-singing, and the Buddhist tradition of rhythmic, quasi-melodic recitation whilst speaking. The composition is undeniably programmatic, with every interlude and element providing specific instructions for character and tempo during the performance. The piece is a technically demanding single-movement work lasting fifteen minutes, in which the physicality of the instruments plays a significant role.

This was my first experience performing a piece by Kaipainen. I was initially drawn to the work for its thematic and narrative qualities. However, as I began to delve into the piece, I became acutely aware of the challenges it would present to me as a musician. In the following lines, I will elaborate on the essential aspects I considered necessary to address for each of the four elements, “Brothers Wind and Air”, “Sister Water”, “Brother Fire”, and “Our Sister Mother Earth.”

The piece commences with a prelude, in which the cello delivers an emotive melody. The accordion joins in later, initially accompanying with polyphonic texture and a horizontal line. They subsequently engage in a duet, ultimately converging on a shared melody. The accordion then concludes the phrase in a higher register, serving as a bridge to the next section of the work: *...il frate vento...*

In the opening section, Kaipainen captures the velocity and unrestrained nature of the wind by utilizing sequences of four sixteenth-note cells in the cello, accompanied by sustained chords in the accordion. One prominent feature that punctuates the phrase is the triplet of *staccato* sixteenth-notes, although it can be challenging to discern amidst the dense sound texture. Later on, this element gains greater prominence in a playful interplay between the instruments, engaging in a spirited dialogue with the cello. The sixteenth-note figure then transitions to the accordion, seemingly evoking gusts of wind in various forms, each carefully controlled by dynamics.

The challenge at hand was to highlight each of the elements amidst the abundance of sound material and to determine what is fundamental. One aspect that required attention was the unification of phrasing to describe the wind. I drew inspiration from the cellist’s phrasing of the first phrase. Regarding coordination between us, this section necessitated playing at a slow tempo to enable active listening and to identify clear points of convergence.

| **Video ex.2.3.4–XII: *...il frate vento...* (Kaipainen, *Elemental Chanting op.87*, mm. 20–31)**

After a central section of agitation, both instruments reach their maximum possible dynamic (indicated as *ff possibile*), and the vivid calm emerges with a final virtuosic phrase in the cello. This phrase features changes in figuration and wide chords in the accordion's E, along with the triplet element in the left manual.

Video ex.2.3.4–XIII: ...il frate vento... (Kaipainen, *Elemental Chanting* op.87, mm. 56–63)

The second element is introduced under the title of "...la sor aqua...". The author provides a clue regarding the desired character with the indication of "Doppio movimento. Scorrevole." Three sections can be distinguished based on the material presented in both instruments.

After an introductory passage on the accordion's lowest register, starting from *molto piano* and building in intensity before returning to its starting point, the first idea of this movement is presented. Both instruments feature light phrasing, with the accordion linking a series of quintuplets in ascending and descending melodic games, while the cello carries out the musical discourse with alternating rhythms, creating a sense of liveliness or calmness, akin to the currents of a river. The triplet element used by the cello in *pizzicato* serves as a warning that the water is beginning to move. This musical metaphor illustrates how the currents of the river can accelerate or reach calmer areas.

The duo's work aimed to convey a sense of fluidity in the musical discourse, which was achieved through precise and expressive phrasing while remaining faithful to the dynamics indicated in the score. The score intended to create dynamic contrasts that would facilitate a more fluid dialogue between the two instruments. To enhance the blend between the high register of the cello and the accordion's timbre, I decided to modify the registration marked in the score by adding a second voice to the central register on the right manual.

Video ex.2.3.4–XIV: ...la sor aqua... (Kaipainen, *Elemental Chanting* op.87, mm. 83–101)

In the second section, the accordion takes on the role of the cello, presenting a flowing melody that fluctuates in pace according to the notated score, while the cello provides a bassline in the low register, featuring extensive

figurations and double notes, including a trill. Our task was to recreate the lively character of the cello, by unifying the previously presented articulation, and through careful attention to the phrasing.

| **Video ex.2.3.4–XV: ...*la sor aqua*... (Kaipainen, *Elemental Chanting op.87*, mm. 103–118)**

As both instruments reach a collaborative culmination, the following section comes to an end. The roles are once again switched, with the counterpoint and trills now being passed onto the accordion, interweaving between both manuals. Meanwhile, the cello performs a cantabile melody, with both instruments adopting a *forte* dynamic. Metaphorically speaking, one could compare the flow of water to a vast lake, with the cello capturing the grandeur of its expanse and the accordion evoking the final stages of the journey.

The concluding section gradually decreases in volume from both instruments, leading to a *pianissimo* that evokes complete stillness in the water. The effect is amplified by a slight *rallentando* as the cello's voice resonates in its highest register before resting on the accordion's lowest register, where the same notes (C and E) that began the piece are played as a distant reminder of the journey taken.

In this final passage, we paid close attention to dynamics, focusing on both the joint culminations and the delicate *pianissimo* sections. For the accordion, we aimed to ensure that all notes were present while maintaining the sense of the triplet within the overall feeling of calmness.

| **Video ex.2.3.4–XVI: ...*la sor aqua*... (Kaipainen, *Elemental Chanting op.87*, mm. 119–138)**

The third element, entitled “il frate focu,” is characterized by a strong and aggressive character, with both instruments reaching their highest dynamic level of *fortissimo*. This is achieved through the use of rhythmic and aggressive cells that vividly depict the movement of flames. The composition also employs *crescendos* that culminate in *fff*, combined with bellows-shake on the accordion, creating an effect that seems as if the flames are igniting and releasing sparks. The sound of these sparks inspires the use of high-pitched *pizzicato* notes in the cello, along with ascending *glissandos* that culminate in *pizzicato* notes (measures 175–177).

To effectively convey this fiery character, it is crucial to maintain a stable tempo and a clearly defined rhythm in both instruments. The movement begins with a simultaneous entrance of both instruments, with the accordion's aggressive accent resonating in the cello. The accordion introduces the first rhythmic cell, providing a reference for the cello's entrance. The two instruments engage in a rhythmic play, with the cello blending in sixteenth-note sequences, and the accordion overlaying notes that culminate in bellows-shake. The cello utilizes several contrasting techniques such as *ricochet*, *pizzicato* accents, and descending *glissandos*, while the accordion maintains an aggressive rhythm with intensity. Overall, the use of these techniques and dynamics creates a dramatic and intense character, effectively conveying the image of flames and igniting sparks.

Video ex.2.3.4–XVII: ...il frate focu... (Kaipainen, *Elemental Chanting op.87*, mm. 160–164)

In the following passage, the cello's ascending *glissando* is introduced, which culminates in a double note in the high register that is emphasized with an accent. This idea is then reiterated, leading to a new sequence of articulated sixteenth notes that drive the section towards its conclusion.

To create an increasingly tense atmosphere, Kaipainen presents the idea with different intervallic patterns. For example, the penultimate time they appear in groups of four at a fifth interval, before finally repeating incessantly, representing the work's climax. The accordion, on the other hand, generates tension through the superimposition of notes in both manuals, resulting in dense textures that culminate in explosive bellows-shakes.

Video ex.2.3.4–XVIII: ...il frate focu... (Kaipainen, *Elemental Chanting op.87*, mm. 174–183)

To prepare for the climax, Kaipainen emphasizes the ascending sequence of double-note semiquavers in the cello, increasingly hastening its culmination. The accentuation indicated in the cello is crucial, as this impulse determines the tension and the musical discourse's progression mismatch. In the beginning, they will be accented every four, and in the last ascending progression, they will be marked every three semiquavers, culminating in the accordion's *fff cluster*. Meanwhile, Kaipainen selects

a dense chord that provides support for the cello and grows progressively with it, culminating in an accented cluster in *fff*.

| **Video ex.2.3.4–XIX: ...*il frate focu*... (Kaipainen, *Elemental Chanting op.87*, mm. 183–188)**

After the climax, the cello continues with the same melodic cell, but this time, in a *diminuendo*, creating the impression of the fire dying out and losing its powerful character. From this point on, there is a complete change in timbre and character. The cello plays in its high register, creating an ethereal sound, accompanied by soft dynamics that give a sense of peace and tranquility. The accordion, being a wind instrument, accompanies it with the sound of air that is agitated but gradually fades away, just like fire. Thus, this section comes to a close, and through the final interlude, we arrive at the last element.

| **Video ex.2.3.4–XX: ...*il frate focu*... (Kaipainen, *Elemental Chanting op.87*, mm. 188–195)**

The final section of the composition is integral to our understanding, as it conveys a message of reverence for our planet, referred to as “Mother Earth”. Kaipainen’s indications provide a crucial insight into the character of *Allegretto giusto*. The section commences with a playful exchange between the two instruments, wherein the cello performs a sequence of *col legno* sixteenth notes, countered by the accordion’s *legato* and *staccato* eighth-note sequence. This exchange recurs thrice and presents the primary challenge for the accordionist. The repeated notes must be executed with both agility and precision, while seamlessly traversing the right-hand button board. The cello must enter with exactitude and rhythmic stability on each iteration.

| **Video ex.2.3.4–XXI: ... *sora nostra matre Terra*... (Kaipainen, *Elemental Chanting op.87*, mm. 223–227)**

Subsequently, Kaipainen repeats the same element, albeit in an upward direction, and the cello is no longer the sole responder to the accordion’s rhythmic character. The accordion now engages in the exchange, augmenting the dialogue with dense and *forte* chords. After a few repetitions, the cello brings the phrase to a close with a more emphatic and persistent quality.

The use of bow articulation lends a more rhythmic and aggressive timbre, effectively concluding this section.

Video ex.2.3.4–XXII: ... sora nostra matre Terra... (Kaipainen, *Elemental Chanting op.87*, mm. 228–233)

The cello assumes a leading role at this point, initiating the melodic progression with descending scales executed with *ricochet* and *leggierissimo* articulation, in an attempt to replicate the sonorous quality previously achieved by the accordion. This collaborative endeavor requires technical proficiency and attentive listening from both musicians. As the cello continues its meandering melodic journey, the accordion provides a rhythmic accompaniment featuring dense and articulated chords. Notably, the cello introduces a new element in the high register, a brief melodic line comprising two notes that repeat with a cantabile quality, which becomes more prominent as the section progresses. The success of this section relies on the musicians' ability to navigate the technical demands of the music and communicate effectively to achieve a seamless and cohesive performance.

Video ex.2.3.4–XXIII: ... sora nostra matre Terra... (Kaipainen, *Elemental Chanting op.87*, mm. 234–240)

The following excerpt showcases a sophisticated dialogue between the elements presented earlier, where the cantabile theme assumes a more prominent role with pitch variations on the cello. The accordion's primary function is to sustain tension through the rhythmic accompaniment in the lower register, which is then interrupted by an echo-like motif spanning the instrument's entire range. As with previous sections, the musicians' ability to communicate effectively and impart the appropriate character to each element is crucial, requiring precision in rhythm, technique, and unity in dynamics.

Video ex.2.3.4–XXIV: ... sora nostra matre Tierra... (Kaipainen, *Elemental Chanting op.87*, mm. 244–254)

As the section progresses, Kaipainen carefully intertwines the various ideas, alternating and overlapping between the two instruments to create a tranquil character, accentuated by sudden *pianos* and a lighter texture. The accordion opens with the same motif presented at the beginning, accompanied by the cello's rhythmic element. The cello then takes up the

melodic idea while the accordion plays chords in the left-hand manual. After the accordion's second appearance with a sixteenth note run, it returns to the rhythmic element with *staccato* articulation, while the cello presents the melodic and expressive element. In a simultaneous dialogue, the two instruments continue until culminating in a joint *crescendo* in the postlude, ultimately bringing the work to a close.

Video ex.2.3.4–XXV: ... sora nostra matre Tierra... (Kaipainen, *Elemental Chanting op.87*, mm. 261–266)

Returning to the same idea that began the movement, its ending combines a descending sequence of sixteenth notes in the accordion, accompanied by a sequence of bowed eighth notes in the cello. This leads to an expressive melody in the cello that combines declamation in both the lower and upper registers. The melodic motif becomes progressively more insistent, accompanied by a *crescendo* in both instruments and repetitive chord harmonies in the accordion. After this progression, both instruments reach a climax in the postlude, where the cello showcases its entire musical discourse and expressive and sonic potential, while the accordion accompanies it, creating a compact sound union.

Video ex.2.3.4–XXVI: ... sora nostra matre Tierra... (Kaipainen, *Elemental Chanting op.87*, mm. 268–276)

This final passage is presented with all the possible drama, as a chant that could represent the praise of nature's originality, its beauty, and the importance of preserving it. As the composer indicates in the score, the character of this movement should be static, impetuous, radiant, and luminous. Thus, the duo intends to imbue this grandiose character with powerful and characterful sound while maintaining the idea of stability, probably referring to the accordion accompaniment.

The cello develops its full potential, which has been prepared in the final of the previous movement. To do so, it explores the high range and all the expressiveness that broad-bow phrasing provides. Meanwhile, the role of the accordion, with a continuo-like accompaniment—a syncopated rhythm in both manuals only interrupted by occasional sequences of four sixteenths—and a melody in the lowest register of its left hand's MIII, supports the cello's discourse and accompanies it with its maximum sound potential as well. Achieving a balance between both instruments is fundamental,

and the rhythmic precision of the accordion with those dense chords was very important. All of this makes the sound mass of the ensemble show the impetuous character referred to by the composer. As for the character, I opted for a *portato* articulation, respecting the *staccatos* that appear in the score but seeking a balance between the cello's and accordion's characters.

After the first declamatory phrase, a collective *diminuendo* arrives, as if calming and soothing. This is quickly interrupted by a new abrupt entrance of both instruments as if insisting on their discourse, which will gradually be diluted until the subtle and delicate ending of the piece. In this ending, the phrasing of the accordion will be fundamental, as a counterpoint with the cello, in opposite motion, until the voices cross. Already in the *piano* register, both instrumentalists find the sound subtleties of the cello and accordion and direct the phrase to the most subtle ending.

Video ex.2.3.4–XXVII: ... *sora nostra matre Tierra...* (Kaipainen, *Elemental Chanting op.87*, mm. 276–296)

Performers

Naiara De La Puente, accordion

Tomas Nuñez-Garcés, cello

- **ISANG YUN and PASCAL GAIGNE: *Concertino* (1983) and *Avant la Nuit* (2002) for string quartet and accordion**

As previously mentioned, one of the considerations when programming performances was selecting pieces that would challenge my abilities as a performer. A notable example of this objective was the inclusion of a string quartet in my repertoire. This project marked my first exposure to this musical formation. Fortunately, I had the privilege of working with skilled musicians who were already accustomed to playing together as a quartet. During the first concert, I performed Isang Yun's *Concertino* (1983), which presented a significant challenge.

In the following concert, I programmed Pascal Gaigne's *Avant la Nuit* (2002), the second quintet. I must admit that the experiences were markedly different, with my approach to the second work feeling more natural. The embodied knowledge gained from rehearsals and performances of Yun's work undoubtedly provided me with the tools to tackle the second work more consistently.



Figure 10. Pascal Gaigne: *Avant la Nuit* (2002). Annemarie Aström, Hanna Hohti, Eeva Oksala, Tomas Nuñez-Garcés, and Naiara De La Puente Vadillo. Photo: Jukka Kolimaa

Putting aside any pressure I may have felt to perform well from the first rehearsal, a key issue was to integrate musically into the working group. Undoubtedly, communication was a fundamental aspect of both works. Much of my interest and learning process involved observing, as part of the ensemble, how they communicated non-verbally. Rather than relying on exaggerated or pretentious gestures, each member had identified their role, and with a small look or subtle gesture using their instrument, instructions were given. For example, a glance at the person picking up the discourse of the melodic line, a small gesture before attacking a passage with accents, or a subtle movement of the instrument to invite continuing with the previously marked character.

Verbal communication among the five members of the ensemble was fluid, and I have always been in favor of listening to ideas and opinions from my colleagues, not only about aspects of chamber music but also about my interpretation. For instance, trying different registrations and listening to possible options, considering comments on balance, and even performing the cadence in Gaigne's work to be enriched by their musical knowledge. Ultimately, interpreting chamber music is about reaching agreements, and it is vital to me that, in this case, my music partners—who must be remembered are joining me for this concert as part of my studies—feel

comfortable and that their voices are heard. In addition to the intra-ensemble communicative aspect I have mentioned, what was my primary interest in approaching these works? To answer this, I will briefly discuss the most relevant aspects of each work.

I would define the composition as a concise accordion concerto, written in a single movement, that primarily explores its role as a solo instrument. The strings supplement the accordion's actions mostly in a complementary manner. Throughout the work, there are instances of juxtaposition and combination of accordion and string quartet, solo and *tutti* passages, as well as contrasting sections that prepare for a new phase or conclude a section like an echo. Such analyses can be carried out by scrutinising the score, but it is not until the quintet comes together and rehearses that the work is truly structured, and the roles of the instruments are understood. This is mainly done through active listening.

Regarding Yun's approach to the instrument, he employs virtuosic resources with conventional writing, steering clear of extended techniques. He does so by using chords which he subsequently breaks in manifold ways, varying their density and range. This creative process leads to the development of new elements and vivid passages. These broken chord passages demand precise technical execution, along with meaningful musical interpretation, while involving the displacement of the right-hand manual.

To achieve this, one of the considerations in the individual study was to find appropriate fingerings that would facilitate the execution of these passages, often in sixteenth notes, at the indicated tempo. One of the technical challenges in my practice was achieving consistent articulation between both manuals in these passages. At times, they overlapped, and at other moments, the melodic line was transferred from manual III to manual I. Thus, Yun addressed the exploration of accordion virtuosity in terms of fast and vivid passages. While the right-hand manual employs broken chords or rapid sequences of trills, the greatest technical difficulty of MIII lies in equally virtuosic passages, which include small displacements and finger extensions. Moreover, the writing in this manual includes trills—not in sequences, but in sporadic occurrences—that demand the same level of technical skill as their execution on the right-hand manual. What were the most significant decisions regarding the chamber work?

It was fundamental to have a clear understanding of the accordion's role at each moment. During the solo sections, it required more sound power, always in service to the score, which included numerous dynamic details.

It was also interesting to find a bright timbre that would stand out above the strings. I experimented with the registration possibilities of my instrument in both manuals. In terms of technical aspects, the strings flowed smoothly in their broken chords, ascending scales culminating in accents. Our objective in chamber work was to execute these dialogues and games in a musically coherent and unified manner.

Undoubtedly, *Concertino* is a demanding, physically taxing work, lasting approximately seventeen minutes. As the piece progresses, it becomes increasingly complex, denser, technically more demanding, and in terms of dynamics, more explosive.

The second immersion with a string quartet was with Gaigne's work, which is stylistically very different from Yun's. It also has a conception very distant from that of the Japanese composer. As a brief introduction, it should be noted that Gaigne is a versatile composer who works in different fields, including the movie industry—he is one of the most essential and respected composers in Spanish cinema—as well as theater, dance, and a variety of concert music.

Avant la Nuit, which literally means Before the Night, is Gaigne's first work written for accordion and string quartet. Regarding this work, the composer (2015) describes it as “a piece of transformations and contrasts, which should be performed with artistic expression, or it would lose all its essence.” As stated in the score, *Avant la Nuit* is inspired by a poem written in 1977 by the Scottish-French author Kenneth White (b. 1936).

In July 2015, several months before its performance in concert, I contacted the composer to request the piece. He kindly offered to provide me with some instructions on it, and I also took the opportunity to inquire about the suggestive and narrative title. As he stated, the name of the work derives from the aforementioned poetic quote, as a suggestion, since “the titles I give to my works try to create a suggestive state of listening.” Although Gaigne's writing is conventional, he employs the resources offered by the concert accordion to their fullest potential, including the ability to play fast passages, tremolos, clusters, stereo effects between both manuals and fast note repetition, to name a few.

In this chapter, I will focus on specific passages of the piece that are particularly interesting when approaching the chamber work with the string quartet. I must note that the three rehearsals we carried out proceeded smoothly, with no significant complications in terms of communication or musical work.

Throughout the piece, the role of the accordion and the string quartet is often contrasting, with the quartet’s sound complementing that of the accordion, and occasionally engaging in clear dialogue. This necessitates the quartet’s work to be both solid and precise. The quartet’s interplay is very apparent, and at times they even take on the role of a single instrument. Regarding the rhythmic complexity of certain passages, the quartet navigated them with ease, and except for a few moments that I will address later, coordination between us was not a difficult aspect to resolve. As the composer himself notes, one of the fundamental aspects was to make it an expressive work, highlighting the contrasting passages. To achieve this, mutual listening between the musicians and reaching agreements on phrasing and articulations were essential.

The structure of the piece is clearly defined, and the roles of each instrument are well-defined. The work consists of a single movement, and the composer has marked letters (from A to W) in the score to subdivide it into smaller sections. These indications typically signify the introduction of a new idea or the treatment of previously presented elements in a new way, without interrupting the musical discourse or functioning as disjointed passages that need to be rehearsed separately.

The piece opens with a passage from the quartet, introducing a harmonic-melodic theme with a *dolcissimo* character and *sul tasto* timbre. The dynamics are *pianissimo* with small adjustments that indicate the expressive character of the theme.

Figure 11. Sheet music example. Pascal Gaigne, *Avant la Nuit*, opening bars (Published by the author)

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The image shows the first six staves of the sheet music for 'Avant la Nuit'. The top two staves are for the Accordion, which is mostly silent in the opening bars. The bottom four staves are for the string quartet: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The music begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 52-56. The string quartet enters with a melodic theme marked 'dolcissimo sul tasto' and 'ppp'. The dynamics for the strings are marked as ppp, p, pp, mp, and p throughout the opening bars.

Video ex.2.3.4–XXVIII: Onset of the composition (Gaigne, *Avant la Nuit*, Introduction | mm. 1–6)

According to the composer (2015), “it must be interpreted with expression, one could think of something like Wagner or Berg as a guide. Above all, it is essential that it is not cold or flat, as it would lose all meaning.” This theme later appears in sections such as H and M in the accordion, O in the accordion and strings, and X in the strings. It is important to note the evolution of the theme throughout the piece, “as if the influence of the accordion from ‘A’ caused this deviation” (ibid.). The entry of the accordion arises from the sound foundation presented by the strings with *sul ponticello* sound in *ppp*, and with *ricochet*.

Figure 12. Sheet music example. Pascal Gaigne, *Avant la Nuit*, the entry of the accordion (Published by the author)

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The image displays a page of sheet music for the piece 'Avant la Nuit' by Pascal Gaigne. It features five staves: an accordion (Acc.) and a string quartet (Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello). The accordion part begins with a 'poco cresc.' marking and a 'p' dynamic, followed by a 'poco decresc.' and a 'p' dynamic. The string quartet parts are marked 'poco cresc.' and 'p' dynamic. The accordion part includes a 'ricochet' marking and a 'p' dynamic. The string quartet parts include a 'sul ponticello' marking and a 'p' dynamic. The music is in 4/4 time and starts with a 'poco cresc.' marking. The accordion part has a 'poco cresc.' marking and a 'p' dynamic. The string quartet parts have a 'poco cresc.' marking and a 'p' dynamic. The accordion part has a 'ricochet' marking and a 'p' dynamic. The string quartet parts have a 'sul ponticello' marking and a 'p' dynamic. The music is in 4/4 time and starts with a 'poco cresc.' marking.

Video ex.2.3.4–XXIX: Entrance of the accordion (Gaigne, *Avant la Nuit*, Section A | mm. 7–13)

The blend between the sounds of the quartet and the accordion must be as seamless as possible, with the deep voice of the accordion emerging *dal niente*. In doing so, one must consider the acoustic characteristics of the accordion and be well-versed in the response of both reeds. Such issues and decisions arise in many works. The first question that arises for me is what takes musical precedence: having both notes sound accurately and simultaneously, resulting in a small attack being noticeable, or having the sound emerge *dal niente* so that there is no attack at all. In this musical context, my choice was to minimize the attack as much as possible and emerge from the sound base of the strings. From there, the sound opens up and expands with the help of the strings, and the accordion assumes the role

of a soloist in the high register, reiterating the same musical idea as a call, embellished with a *fortissimo* musical element serving as an ornament.

Meanwhile, the strings continue with their expressive dance, each time intensifying its impact. As for the choice of registration, a single voice for both manuals suffices to highlight the accordion and achieve a perfect blend with the quartet. The first section culminates in a powerful *forte* from the strings, followed by a joint *diminuendo* and *ritardando* with the accordion, leading to the entrance of the next section. This new section features more rhythmic and lively elements, with intricate virtuosic passages and delightful dialogues between the instruments.

Figure 13. Sheet music example. Pascal Gaigne, *Avant la Nuit*, the rhythmical element on the accordion (Published by the author)

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The image displays a page of sheet music for the piece 'Avant la Nuit' by Pascal Gaigne. It is divided into two systems, A and B. System A (measures 14-16) features the accordion (Acc.) and string quartet (Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla., Vlc.). The accordion part begins with a tempo marking of $\lambda = \lambda = 60$ and a dynamic of *pp*, which then increases to *ppp*. The strings play a sustained chord. System B (measures 17-19) continues with the same tempo and dynamic markings. The accordion part is marked *crec. poco a poco*. The string quartet parts are marked *poco a poco al post.* and *senza soud.* (without sudden changes). The dynamics for the strings range from *ppp* to *f* and *pppp*.

The accordion introduces a new rhythmic thematic material in B, which will be brought in by the strings and accordion at different points throughout the piece. Therefore, coordinated phrasing will be essential. One of the observations I made about the quartet's work was precisely their attention to phrasing, and how they communicate the intended character of the piece through subtle movements, in addition to entrances and tempo changes.

Figure 14. Sheet music example. Pascal Gaigne, *Avant la Nuit*, a new theme on the accordion (Published by the author)

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The image shows a page of sheet music for the piece 'Avant la Nuit' by Pascal Gaigne. It features five staves: Accordion (Acc.), Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Via.), and Violoncello (Vcl.). The Accordion part is the most prominent, starting with a tremolo and moving into sixteenth-note sequences. The strings provide accompaniment with various articulations like *pizz.* and *tr.*. Dynamics range from *ppp* to *fff*. The music is in 3/4 time and features a mix of staccato and legato passages.

In terms of articulation, it is important to ensure consistency between *staccato* and livelier sixteenth-note sequences, by playing them *legato*. On the other hand, the accordion will feature tremolos with sudden cuts and *sforzando* attacks. To emphasise this more aggressive and surprising character, it is necessary to combine the articulation of the right hand with that of the bellows to reinforce the attack. Adding a (4') to the middle voice helps highlight the character. Regarding balance with the strings, it will be important to play with dynamics, equalising the *forte* sections and culminating *crescendos* with an electric character.

Video ex.2.3.4–XXX: The new rhythmic thematic material in the accordion (Gaigne, *Avant la Nuit*, Section B | mm. 14–27)

Starting from C, the quartet reintroduces the rhythmic element from which the accordion had begun B, but now with *pizzicatos*. Therefore, it will be my responsibility as the accordionist to consider its sonority when performing the *staccatos* of section B, as the strings mark the articulation of this element. Hence, equalizing the articulation will be crucial. From D, the figuration in the score becomes increasingly faster. The strings prepare the entry of the accordion with agitated tremolos and then create a joint *diminuendo* and *ritardando* to prepare for section E. This section is characterized by contrasts and demonstrates a more aggressive character in all five instruments for the first time.

Video ex.2.3.4–XXXI: Contrasting passage with faster figurations (Gaigne, *Avant la Nuit*, Section D–E | mm. 34–40)

Video ex.2.3.4–XXXII: Presentation of the theme on the accordion (Gaigne, *Avant la Nuit*, Sections H–I | mm. 49–58)

The following sections further develop the ideas presented thus far and combine them. It is in section L where the quartet's dynamics and the accordion's dynamics intersect once again, with more exaggerated dynamics that lead to a clear passage of dialogue between both sound blocks. The interplay of articulations between *pizzicato* and *legato* in the strings, and the colour of *sul ponticello* and *sul tasto*, will be important.

Meanwhile, the accordion remains silent and only makes its appearance on a sustained note from the strings, presented as an invitation. The accordion performs a colourful and lively passage consisting of trills in both manuals, followed by a fast *legato* passage. This dialogue between the two blocks of instruments progressively becomes more prominent, with overlapping interplay, and culminates in a fast progression on the accordion, serving as a final declamation, and ending with *fff* in the strings. After a moment of uneasy calm, the strings return with greater force and an insistent character, engaging in a rhythmic dialogue, while the accordion adorns it with the colour of tremolos.

Video ex.2.3.4–XXXIII: Dialogue increasingly active between the accordion and the strings (Gaigne, *Avant la Nuit*, Section L–N | mm. 66–88)

Following the climactic moment, a melodic passage emerges, sung by the accordion and accompanied by a sweet countermelody in the strings. This section serves as a nexus that leads to what I refer to as the accordion *cadenza*. Here, Gaigne displays both technical and musical prowess, showcasing dynamic interplay, lyrical passages punctuated by virtuosic bursts, and an aggressive rhythmic character replete with accents and *sffz* markings. This virtuosic solo display culminates in *forte* and *crescendo*, towards an *attaca*. From this point on, the work sets the stage for its conclusion.

The five instruments are reintroduced in a staggered manner, marked by accents, with the cello taking the lead. Following a joint *crescendo*, an interplay between the accordion's manuals ensues, engaging in dialogue.

The role of the strings is to either provide colour to this exchange or to accompany the accordion's explosive passages. As a final climax, all five instruments converge on the rhythmic element in a *fortissimo* dynamic, bringing the interplay of dynamic contrasts to a fitting close.

Video ex.2.3.4–XXXIV: Dialogue distributed in both manuals of the accordion and final climax (Gaigne, *Avant la Nuit*, Section U–W | mm. 113–129)

From this point onwards, the piece achieves a state of calm, and the strings perform a melody that serves as a reminiscence of the vivacity that preceded it. Finally, the accordion is presented in *pianissimo*, recalling the initial ornamental motif which the strings colour, like an echo, until the end.

Video ex.2.3.4–XXXV: End of the work with reminiscences of the beginning of the piece (Gaigne, *Avant la Nuit*, Section X | mm. 133–143)

Performers

Naiara De La Puente, accordion

Siljamari Heikinheimo and Annemarie Åström, violin

Hanna Hohti, viola

Tomas Nuñez-Garcés, cello

9.9.2015, Camerata Hall, Helsinki Music Center

- **SOFIA GUBAIDULINA. *Silenzio* (1991), for violin, cello and accordion**

I am a religious Russian Orthodox person and I understand 'religion' in the literal meaning of the word, as 're-ligio', that is to say the restoration of connections, the restoration of the 'legato' of life. There is no more serious task for music than this. —Sofia Gubaidulina.

Silenzio is a five-movement piece dedicated to Elsbeth Moser, who premiered it on November 16, 1991, to mark Gubaidulina's sixtieth birthday. Each movement varies in character, instrumentation, and musical elements employed, while simultaneously recalling motifs from preceding movements.

Familiarity with Gubaidulina's previous works facilitated my appreciation of her unique musical language in *Silenzio*. Indeed, the trio contains elements that are also present in her previous works for the accordion.

The title of this work refers to the ideal dynamic for most of the five movements. The challenge of producing minimal sound while maintaining an even tone was met with great success. The composition is imbued with mysticism and emotion, as Gubaidulina continues to explore contemporary accordion sonorities, including clusters, air valve, and *vibrato*, to impart her signature touch to the piece. The opening is dominated by extended string dialogues, with the cello mimicking the violin. The accordion serves at times as a supporting instrument while the violin and cello take the lead and engage in dialogue. Simultaneously, the accordion interacts with both instruments and also assumes the role of a soloist, bringing forth nuanced and powerful character to the composition.

In the following paragraphs, I aim to delineate the nuances of the chamber music work in this trio. The success of this piece undoubtedly hinged on the indispensable factors of mutual listening and a shared comprehension of the composition. Prior acquaintance with Gubaidulina's oeuvre and aesthetic facilitated delving into her unique musical language. With this in mind, I will focus on two particular passages. I will not delve further into the aspects of the musical use and possibilities of the bellows, as I have previously discussed them in Chapter 2.2.

Taking into consideration the aforementioned points, I shall examine in detail the opening of the second movement. After the conclusion of the accordion in the first movement, in its low register, a haunting theme is introduced by the cello from its lowest register. The phrase progresses enigmatically, culminating in a tremolo that fades away with a *diminuendo*. Following a brief pause, the same theme is taken up by the violin, but in a higher register, extending and varying it, before also culminating in a tremolo. This is followed by a meaningful musical silence, before the unexpected entry of the accordion in a higher register. Its entry is brilliant, and otherworldly and serves as a stark contrast in timbre and character to the previous instruments. The use of trills and bellows' phrasing creates a sense of articulation from an alternate dimension. I intended to highlight the unique sonority of the accordion and its capacity for expression within the context of Gubaidulina's composition.

Video ex.2.3.4–XXXVI: Successive entry of the three instruments
(Gubaidulina, *Silenzio*, Mov. II, nr. 11–13)

The current musical passage begins with a metaphorical dialogue among the instruments, each expressing its unique voice and culminating in a unified peak. The discourse commences with a *pianissimo* from the cello, and the accordion joins with a harmonious character, their interplay overlapping over a harmonic foundation built on the left-hand manual of the accordion. As the dialogue progresses and dynamics become more pronounced, the violin enters the conversation, seemingly having the final say. The passage concludes on a harmonious note, with the violin culminating the discussion through sustained notes in the accordion and cello's tremolo.

Throughout this musical passage, it was crucial to maintain the coherence and character of each instrument's entry, building on the preceding idea. Balancing the *crescendo* was achieved through the sonorous qualities of the cello and violin, allowing the full sound potential of the accordion to be realized, creating a vast musical soundscape.

| **Video ex.2.3.4–XXXVII: Simultaneous entry and dialogue of the three instruments (Gubaidulina, *Silenzio*, Mov. II, nr. 14–16)**

Following the culmination of the three instruments and a brief pause, the violin resumes the discourse in the form of a coda after the climax. Contrary to a relaxed character, the music continues with dramatic tension and unrest on the harmonic foundation of the cello. Gradually, both instruments enter into a progressive calm, creating an atmosphere of stillness on a sustained note to enable the accordion to resume the discourse. This time, the accordion features a more vocal character and higher tessitura, reflecting a halo of light. In the final section, the violin and cello answer the accordion in *pp* with subtle dynamic interplay, maintaining the tension of the discourse with delicacy and ending the movement in a *diminuendo*.

The accordion solo passage exhibits reminiscences of Gubaidulina's other works for accordion. I consider the phrasing, as indicated in the score, to be of fundamental importance, with the slurs grouping pairs of semiquavers, emphasizing the first note, and creating an expressive melody in keeping with the composer's own language. Concerning balance, we may have benefitted from creating more dynamic contrast, with the cello and violin seeking a more subtle dynamic within the dramatic character.

| **Video ex.2.3.4–XXXVIII: Dialogue after the culmination (Gubaidulina, *Silenzio*, Mov. II, nr. 17–23)**

Performers

Naiara De La Puente, accordion

Eeva Rysä, cello

Maria Puusaari, violin

13.02.2021, Organo Hall, Helsinki Music Centre

▪ YUJI TAKAHASHI. *Dream Carp* (1992) for cello and accordion

The piece *Dream Carp* for cello and accordion was the second composition by Takahashi I performed in the concert series. As I previously outlined in my introduction to each concert's concept, this work presented a significant challenge for me. The difficulty did not solely arise from its technical complexity but rather from my need to comprehend the piece's narrative and poetic elements and execute them during the performance. Additionally, it was crucial to develop the improvisational dimension of the piece. Although I had previously worked on *Like Swan Leaving The Lake* a few years prior, this piece's distinctiveness brought about additional challenges, which I will elaborate on in the following paragraphs.

Furthermore, I will emphasize significant aspects of our chamber work, such as colour, balance, registration, coordination, and, most importantly, achieving a shared understanding of the piece while exploring the composer's aesthetics and music. However, before discussing these aspects in detail, it is necessary to introduce the work.

Written in 1992 for Mie Miki, *Dream Carp* for accordion and cello derives its title from Akinari Ueda's *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*, a collection of nine supernatural tales first published in 1776. Specifically, Takahashi drew inspiration from the fourth tale entitled "A Carp That Appeared in My Dream," in which a monk dreams of transforming into a fish. Throughout the composition, Takahashi employs the metaphor of "the waving" to convey his artistic vision. Each movement is uniquely titled, offering a key to unlocking the listener's imagination and enabling the performers to embody the tale's central characters.

1. Suddenly closing the eyes...
2. Riding upon the waves...
3. Fish scales gleaming like gold...

4. Flipping the tail, moving the fins...
5. The tempting smell of bait
6. Putting the fish into a basket
7. The fish's mouth moving
8. Sudden long sigh

The titling of each movement provides a window into the imagination, allowing performers to assume the roles of characters in the tale.

To fully capture the essence of this oneiric and fantastical piece, the performers must immerse themselves in Takahashi's imaginative world. We approached the performance by creating a vivid landscape and visualizing the different possible contexts of the composition. *The Dream Carp* demands an imaginative interpretation from its performers.

The primary goal of the performance is to immerse the audience in the mystical and meditative world of Takahashi's music, inviting them to experience the symbolic idea of "the waving" and enter a trance-like state. Despite the meditative nature of the piece, it contains a variety of contrasts. The score provides minimal guidance, leaving performers with considerable interpretive freedom.

The performers are tasked with making decisions concerning the number of repetitions, the option to select the order, and what to include and exclude from the piece. Furthermore, there is a lack of registration indications, and the composer intentionally leaves this decision up to the performer. With regard to notation, there is flexibility to use either the I or III manual and based on the musical context and the search for tonal colour, I have been integrating them. As a result, the performers play a crucial role in creating the work, rendering it nearly impossible for two versions of the piece to be articulated in precisely the same manner.

Hence, this music provides performers with the freedom to explore and decide on almost all musical aspects, including articulations, dynamics, registers, tempo, and character. One of the most enjoyable aspects of working on this piece was perhaps the search for contrasting or similar colours to the cello. Ultimately, this requires careful listening and imagination, supported by the inspiration provided by the title of each movement. As such, the working process has become an interesting journey for us as performers, exploring the affordances and resistances of our instruments, sometimes seeking a single voice and at other times searching for contrasting characters.

Dream Carp in its eight movements combines vivid, energetic playing with long phrasing and expressive movements. The variety of articulations is also rich. It is up to the performers to look for and define the character of each movement, since as I previously mentioned, Takahashi only gives the title. I believe that the different ideas of each title should be represented and transmitted through music. This might be the main aim of the piece, and as a duo, it requires both performers a similar understanding of composition. To work on these fundamental aspects, rehearsals did require verbal communication, as both musicians suggested ways of interpreting the piece, tried out ideas and listened to each other until agreements were reached. Undoubtedly, mutual listening was crucial.

The structure of *Dream Carp* features two movements for solo accordion, requiring delicate and expressive playing with smooth movements over the right manual and expressive use of the bellows. The final movement reintroduces the initial theme with a broad melody and long phrasing lines evocative of a deep sigh. Conversely, the second movement, titled “Riding Upon the Waves,” diverges from the solo accordion theme, employing more rhythm and a range of sonorities, including harmonics.

The remaining five movements call for both accordion and cello and demand a dynamic approach to playing, with an emphasis on exploring articulations, dynamics, and sonorities. While the accordionist must be attentive to both manuals, both performers must attend to the character suggested by each movement’s title. Moreover, they should listen to each other’s instruments and employ silence as a third character to enhance the performance. The performers’ capacity to interweave dynamics, articulations, and sonority while attending to the suggested character of each movement title is integral to delivering a meaningful and engaging performance of *Dream Carp*.

To provide a comprehensive analysis of our musical performance and highlight the interpretive choices we made, I will focus on the third movement titled “Fish Scales Gleaming Like Gold...”, as an example. This movement grants performers complete freedom to choose the order of fragments, articulations, registrations, and tempo. We intended to create a contrasting character to the preceding movements and evoke the shimmering sensation implied by the title through the use of contrasting colours generated by the cello and accordion.

Video ex.2.3.4–XXXIX: Improvisation aiming to establish a closer or more distant dialogue between the cello and accordion (Takahashi, *Dream Carp*, Third Movement)

As for the fourth movement, “Flipping the Tail, Moving the Fins...,” both instruments must coordinate to achieve a humorous, highly rhythmic character. The composer provided the cellist and me with guidelines that allowed us to interpret any of the staves, repeat them several times, switch to another fragment and repeat it until we were synchronized.

During the first rehearsal, before making any decisions, we relied on attentive listening and experimented with various fragments in search of the desired character. Once we had established the musical elements we wanted to incorporate, we focused on interpretive aspects, including the fundamental aspect of articulation. Rysä and I agreed to unify our articulation, imparting a light character that was inspired by the movement’s title. As with the rest of the composition, there were no tempo or dynamic indications, so during rehearsals we established the number of repetitions and dynamics necessary to achieve a contrasting play.

To ensure consistent articulation across both manuals of the accordion, prior technical work was undertaken. By dividing the melody between the two manuals, a playful and dynamic interplay of sound was generated, which greatly informed the character of the movement. To further enhance the effect, I utilized the bellows to support my articulation, creating a unique sound that captures the essence of “flipping the tails.”

| **Video ex.2.3.4–XL: Coordinated playing with a unified articulation**
| **(Takahashi, *Dream Carp*, Fourth Movement)**

In contrast to the preceding movements and the final piece, the sixth movement, “A fish in a basket,” embodies a distinct and markedly different character. The piece is infused with a sense of urgency and restlessness, reflecting the agony and confinement experienced by a fish in a small space, as portrayed in Ueda’s poem.

To successfully evoke this particular effect, I relied on a combination of carefully chosen attacks, strategic bellows usage, and rich sonority. The movement is physically demanding, with complex and densely woven chords that I chose to split between both manuals of the accordion. The registration consists of two voices in both manuals (8’ and 16’) to create a fuller and darker timbre. The fast tempo notwithstanding, each note was articulated with precision to ensure a coherent and expressive musical narrative.

To heighten the dramatic impact of the movement, I propose a dynamic play that incorporates contrasting sections of *fortissimo* and *pianissimo*. This dynamic contrast not only serves to amplify the emotive weight of the piece but also provides a structural foundation for the musical narrative. The use of the bellows as a supporting tool for articulation further adds to the flexibility and quality of the performance, allowing for a more nuanced and expressive performance.

Video ex.2.3.4–LI: *A fish in a basket*, for solo accordion (Takahashi, *Dream Carp*, Sixth Movement)

- **YUJI TAKAHASHI. *Like Swans Leaving the Lake* (1995) for viola and accordion**

The process of rehearsing and performing this piece has been an incredibly captivating experience for me. Upon my initial encounter with the score, I was filled with a sense of curiosity and perplexity as I grappled with interpreting the notation and translating it into music. My interest in Takahashi’s work dates back to my teenage years when my sister introduced me to his solo accordion piece, *Like a Water Buffalo* (1985). Written in 1995 for Nobuko Imai and Mie Miki, *Like swans leaving the Lake* takes the title from the following stanza in Dhammapada:

Mindful people depart; they do not enjoy their abode. Like swans leaving the lake they leave this house and that house.
—Dhammapada 91.

The composition is structured into seven distinct sections labeled A to G. Each section features contrasting elements that are modified through repetitions, while other elements develop while retaining the given fingering and modulating pitches. As noted by Takahashi (1995), “the two instruments complement each other like the two wings of a swan.” It is particularly intriguing to delve into the composer’s thoughts and conceptualization of a musical composition:

A musical composition may consist of sections, which are not integrated, and not fixed. A section may consist of formulas. A formula may be repeated, may be transformed gradually through contingency, may be interrupted and abandoned. Or at times it is not necessarily played as a

whole. Varied combinations are built up and broken again from the different partial movements like spinning a thread out of a cocoon, or like disentangling the knotted threads. Sometimes separate movements are held until the suitable moment for each, like a cat pauses before jumping after a moving object. (Takahashi 1998.)

Unlike Takahashi's solo works, *Like Swans Leaving the Lake* combines conventional notation with contemporary techniques on both instruments while also incorporating the human voice. The score features notes from the composer that explain the meaning and origin of the title, provide a brief explanation of the viola notation, and offer guidelines for the placement of performers on stage. Furthermore, annotations by the composer are included, which are crucial for fully understanding his intent.

The accordion writing is highly specified, with numerous changes in registration and colour. The composer also specifies the articulation of both instruments, utilizing techniques such as ligatures, *ricochet*, and *pizzicato*, as well as phrasing with established bows. Although there are no specific tempo indications or references to the duration of each section, this allows performers to make decisions that are relevant to the musical discourse.

It is essential to emphasize the importance of crafting a narrative in our minds, a descriptive story anchored in the work's title, text, and composer's annotations. The *ricochets* in the accordion evoke the fluttering of the winds on a swan, which enables us to draw inspiration and visualize a story, imbuing the materials and textures presented in the work with a more tangible significance.

Failing to do so would result in a disjointed assemblage of effects and sounds that fall short of conveying the message on which the work is founded. Thus, in addition to decoding the work, the most intricate aspect is the chamber work itself, and rehearsals were necessary to shape the piece and render it a compelling rendition.

Firstly, I would like to address the issue of articulation in section A of the work. Being the opening of the work, it had to be persuasive and convey the material clearly. The most challenging aspect of the chamber work was achieving an organic phrasing where the accordion interacts with the viola, responding to its *pizzicatos* in a nimble or measured manner, and underlining and supporting the end of a phrase expressively. We decided to

implement certain modifications in terms of phrasing and hasten the tempo to prepare for the transition to section B.

Video ex.2.3.4–LII: Play of articulations and timbre (Takahashi, *Like Swans Leaving the Lake*, excerpt from Section A)

As mentioned earlier, the use of the *ricochet* effect is pervasive throughout various sections of the composition, serving to evoke the fluttering of a swan. Based on this information, we developed an understanding of what the effect symbolizes in each moment and the character that should be conveyed through the music. For instance, the presentation of the *ricochet* character heard in Section A, including the effect itself, differs from that heard in subsequent sections.

In the first instance, the effect is introduced on the accordion and alternated with notes written in both manuals to create a stereo effect. This is accompanied by a dialogue with the viola that grows increasingly agitated, while the viola plays an ascending melody that is clearly articulated and culminates in *pizzicatos*. In the second example, we hear the *ricochet* presented in both instruments, initially introduced by the viola, which becomes progressively more articulated and even aggressive until reaching the final section, where the viola delivers a more serene and contemplative sound.

Thus, through careful analysis of the score and close collaboration between the performers, we were able to develop an understanding of the composer's intentions and bring his vision to life. The use of the *ricochet* effect serves as just one example of how the composer employs unconventional techniques and notation to create a rich and layered work that challenges both performers and listeners alike.

Video ex.2.3.4–LIII: Melody accompanied by *ricochet* and stereo effect (Takahashi, *Like Swans Leaving the Lake*, excerpt from Section C)

Video ex.2.3.4–LIV: Agitated dialogue utilizing the *ricochet* technique (Takahashi, *Like Swans Leaving the Lake*, excerpt from Section F)

The final section of this musical composition demands special attention, as it showcases the seamless integration of voice and instruments. The

rhythmic figurations are written in long note values and embellished with lively melismatic ornaments, accompanied by the lyrics of Dhammapada 91. Both musicians sing in Pali, in the Theravada Buddhist style, which brings the work to a peaceful conclusion. Takahashi, the composer, provides guidelines for correct Pali pronunciation, and instructs that the voices should gradually supersede the sound of the instruments.

Upon initial examination of the score, it becomes clear that the vocal melody is slow, featuring only a few notes with subtle melodic variations—characteristic traits of traditional Buddhist chanting. During our rehearsals, Hohti and I initially focused on the instrumental parts, omitting the vocals. Our goal was to achieve the phrasing and tone of Buddhist chanting through the use of the instruments. The viola introduces the central theme, which is later joined by the accordion in a manner that echoes the Pali canon, with rhythmic and melodic figurations that mirror those of the viola. Through this dialogue between the instruments, a sense of peace and tranquillity is established, ultimately leading to a seamless blend with the vocal parts. As the instruments gradually recede, the chant of the voices resonates *pianissimo* until it fades away completely.

**Video ex.2.3.4–LV: Dhammapada 91—Blending of the sounds
(Takahashi, *Like Swans Leaving the Lake*, Section G)**

Performers

Naiara De La Puente, accordion

Hanna Hohti, viola

9.9.2015, Camerata Hall, Helsinki Music Center

2.4 Conclusions

In Section One of this dissertation, I have reflected upon my embodied knowledge as a contemporary concert accordionist and explored the accordion's role in 20th and 21st-century chamber music. In doing so, I have examined the artistic possibilities that the concert accordion offers composers, its ability to communicate and interact with other instrumental families, and how composers have utilised its richness to develop their

own musical language, as demonstrated in the works of Gubaidulina. Moreover, using musical excerpts from the series of works performed in my doctoral concert series, I have presented the collaborative musical decisions made with my chamber music partners, the resulting musical outcomes, the challenges encountered, and the strategies employed to overcome them.

The artistic component of my doctoral degree consists of four concerts that showcased a wide range of styles and aesthetics, featuring solos, as well as various chamber ensembles with the accordion and tape. The composers drew inspiration from diverse musical traditions, including Eastern influences from Takahashi and Hosokawa, Finnish early works for accordion, and newer generations of composers from Mexico and Brazil, such as Edler-Copês and Derbez, who incorporated archaic sounds and Renaissance music influences. The programme also included pieces by Gubaidulina, known for her symbolic and mystical works, a piece inspired by a poem by French composer Gagne, and Lazkano's *Aztarnak*, which draws inspiration from the Basque language to evoke memories.

In the chapter titled "A Performer's Approach to Contemporary Chamber Music for the Concert Accordion," I analyzed several musical examples from my doctoral project's artistic components to illustrate the diverse musical languages explored and the collaborative process with my chamber music partners. In addition to exploring the concert accordion's potential within chamber music, my doctoral project involved collaborations with various musicians and ensembles. These collaborations provided opportunities to work with other instruments and explore the nuances of their sound worlds. For example, Jukka Tiensuu's *Plus I* for the accordion and clarinet and Toshio Hosokawa's *In die Tiefe der Zeit* allowed me to appreciate the blending of colours and subtle dynamics possible in the accordion-clarinet combination. Similarly, Erkki Jokinen's *Rise V* for accordion and flute provided a case study for the rich colours and articulations achievable in this duo combination.

Furthermore, I have also explored repertoire for bowed string instruments, ranging from duos to quintets, with works by composers such as Gagne's *Avant la Nuit* and Yun's *Concertino*. Additionally, I have explored works for cello and accordion by Finnish composers such as Nordgren and Kaipainen. Gubaidulina's works also served as foundational pieces for my project and exemplified the accordion's potential as a breathing instrument. Works such as *In Croce* for accordion and cello, *Silenzio* for

violin, cello, and accordion, and *De Profundis* for accordion exemplified her unique language and aesthetics, which I have incorporated into my own performances. Through these collaborations, I have gathered a significant amount of data to analyze and reflect upon. In conclusion, my analysis of various works has led me to identify key considerations for accordionists engaging in chamber music practice.

Regarding articulation, the concert accordion offers a wide range of possibilities, including combined attacks of the bellows and fingers. It is crucial to experiment and search for the best musical solution depending on the musical context and the instrument being played. This way, performers can take advantage of the technical and sonic resources offered by the concert accordion.

Achieving a blending of sounds as opposed to a sound that stands out is crucial. I have explored this by seeking a unified phrasing or by using registration. For example, the clarinet and flute are instruments that can produce sonorities similar to the accordion. In the case of the clarinet, the use of the (8') registration in *cassotto* results in a perfect sound assembly. Additionally, two 8' voices produce a timbre that merges the sound of the accordion with the cello in the higher registers.

In terms of registration, the concert accordion offers a rich range of registration possibilities. In some cases, as demonstrated in this work, composers do not specify the registration. While the reasons for this are not clear, it is worth noting that the lack of specified registrations provides an opportunity for performers to delve deeper into the music. However, the performer's decision must be based on musical choices, and its possibilities can be leveraged in relation to the diverse range and colours of other instrumental families. It is also important to be aware of potential deviations in tuning, which certain registers may accentuate more than others.

Furthermore, it is imperative to take into account how registration impacts:

- The dynamic range that the instrument can achieve.
- The types of articulations it can produce, such as sharper, softer, or more aggressive sounds.
- How the instrument's sound interacts with other instruments in terms of standing out or blending.

Certain registers may pose tuning challenges, as previously discussed. Furthermore, the intensity of playing the accordion can affect the instrument's tuning, particularly in the low reads. Therefore, it is essential to have a thorough understanding of one's own instrument and its limitations to make informed musical decisions.

The accordion provides a broad range of possibilities in terms of dynamics, which are worthwhile to explore, particularly when playing with other instruments. As accordionists, we can push the boundaries and discover new limits. Generally, achieving a louder dynamic on the accordion requires more voices in the registration, while achieving a low-pitched sound, may require more volume of the air to vibrate the reeds.

It is crucial to approach different types of effects, from delicate to more innovative techniques such as percussion, clusters, pitch bending, and bellows-shakes, in a musically meaningful way. These effects may lose their significance if not properly contextualized in chamber music. Thus, it is vital to integrate these effects into the overall musical interpretation to ensure they contribute to the ensemble's expressive potential.

The idiosyncrasies of one's accordion are essential to consider. No two accordions respond in the same manner, and neglecting regular maintenance can result in varying responses. Therefore, when approaching chamber music, it is imperative to take into account the quality of the reed response, tuning of different registers, and other technical aspects of the instrument.

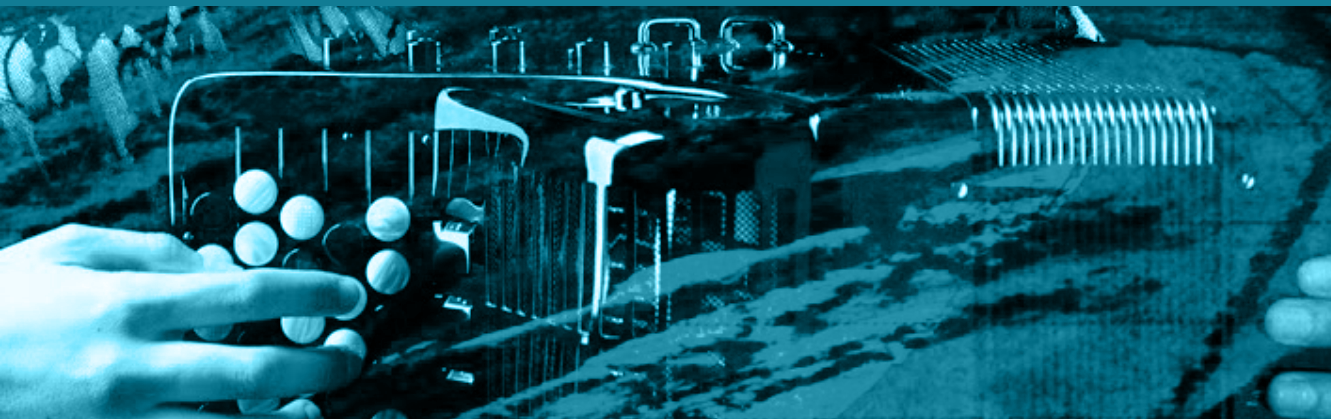
In my research on chamber work, I found the significance of subtle gestures for mutual understanding among musicians to be particularly compelling. Each collaborator I worked with had their unique approach, providing me with a diverse range of communication styles to explore. In particular, my experience with string quartets was enlightening, as it presented the challenge of becoming the fifth musician, rather than just an additional accordionist in the quartet.

The role of subtle gestural communication and reciprocal listening in ensemble performances cannot be overstated, particularly for accordionists. While our strong tradition of solo performance has its merits, there is ample room for improvement in this area, and I believe that addressing it in the academic training of future professional musicians, as outlined in Section Two of this work, would be of great benefit.

Finally, my doctoral project comprised four concerts, each presenting a unique set of challenges to overcome. Despite featuring a variety of ensembles and diverse aesthetic languages, a unifying theme and coherence were achieved. I am grateful for the valuable learning experiences gained through interpreting this music, the contributions of my chamber colleagues, and my ability to contribute to the music and the approach to the work.

Music is not only the stage performance. It is a learning process like a ritual. The training, long preparation, performance, and the final clearing are the necessary steps. Through this process friendly relations grow. This is musicians' life. Music is just an aspect of it. (Takahashi 1998.)

SECTION TWO



FORMING AN ARTISTIC
IDENTITY—AN EVER-CHANGING PATH

3.1 Introduction

In the following pages, I will provide an overview of the transformative changes in the musicianship of professional accordionists. I will explore and reflect on the professional perspectives of the accordion in the 21st century and examine the new artistic identities that an accordionist can adopt in today's world. To fully understand the current situation and evolution of the concert accordion and its performers in terms of professionalization and status, it is necessary to delve into its origins, as well as its rapid development from early, primitive prototypes to models better suited for folk music and eventually to today's concert instrument. Additionally, I will examine the current state of accordion pedagogy and reflect on it. In the final chapter, I will present my conclusions and consider the future of the concert accordion. Throughout the text, I will also reflect on my own identity as an artist, with a focus on the transformative nature of doctoral studies.

The reasoning behind this chapter on accordionists' identities emerges from my years of observation of the diversity of work that a musician of our time can undertake, the variety of professional paths that accordionists have opened, and the diverse skills that this artistry may require. Can we affirm that accordionists' musical identity has undergone a significant process of transformation throughout its brief history?

Professional identity is shaped by a range of cultural, educational, personal and even political factors. With reference to the title of this chapter, one's artistic identity is a dynamic process that is constantly evolving. In the following chapters, I will address some questions related to the educational aspects and examine certain cultural influences that have shaped my musical education. Specifically, I will focus on the education I received at different levels and reflect on how it has influenced my current artistry. In fact, the process of examining my own education in comparison to that of other professional accordionists served as the inspiration for this chapter.

Furthermore, I will explore the diverse paths of other accordionists and examine the rich and varied nature of one's artistic identity. Additionally, I will examine the connection between an individual's artistic identity and their educational background. I firmly believe that analysis and reflection on the field of accordion music pedagogy can help to improve accordion teaching and identify areas for potential improvement. Furthermore, it is

essential to consider the needs of accordionists in the 21st century and provide them with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet these needs.

To address the questions that will arise and bolster my reflections and statements, I will draw upon a diverse array of research articles and accordion literature as sources of information. Furthermore, the contributions of renowned Finnish concert accordionists with varied professional backgrounds who have achieved a substantial degree of success in various fields will be crucial to this study. Additionally, the historical perspective and knowledge on the development of organology and repertoire for the concert accordion will be presented through the lens of Professor Matti Rantanen (b.1952). In this way, the information provided by the globally renowned pedagogue and pioneer of the concert accordion in Finland, Matti Rantanen, will grant us a first-hand view of the development of the accordion and its pedagogy in Finland and Europe.

Furthermore, I deemed it pertinent to engage in conversation with Finnish concert accordionist and former teacher at the Sibelius Academy Marjut Tynkkynen (b.1961). She embodies the first generation of students in the Accordion Class at the Sibelius Academy, established by Rantanen in 1977, and is one of the pioneers of contemporary accordion music in Finland, continuing in the footsteps of her teacher and collaborating with composers in both Finland and abroad. Lastly, throughout the text, my personal and professional background and education in Spain and Finland will also serve as a source of data.

Upon close examination of the field of professional accordion playing, it is apparent that many accordionists are currently engaged in a wide range of projects and high-level collaborations. Was this always the case? Has the professionalization of the accordion led to new opportunities for collaboration and performance? As I consider the various roles that accordionists can undertake in the contemporary professional world, it becomes necessary to consider what these performers require in terms of skills and knowledge. Is there a need to develop a specific set of skills to be successful in the professional accordion music scene? If so, it would be beneficial to reflect on whether current pedagogical practices are adequately addressing these needs.

This is a question that I have frequently pondered, particularly in 2004, when I first interacted with musicians from various countries and had the opportunity to become familiar with modern music education institutions

such as the Sibelius Academy. Answering this question had a significant impact on me, as it emphasized the need for diverse skills, knowledge, and precision to undertake new projects. To gain a comprehensive understanding of this issue, I engaged in conversations with Finnish professional accordionists Veli Kujala (b. 1976) and Niko Kumpuvaara (b.1981).

Throughout this thesis, I will be referencing Kujala and Kumpuvaara and their work as I delve into the topic. While they are central to this discussion, it is appropriate to provide a brief introduction to their work. Kujala is a renowned concert accordionist and currently holds the position of accordion lecturer at the Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki, where he has been engaged in pedagogical work for several years. In addition to chamber music and the accordion, he has been a teacher of the subject of Free Improvisation for many years. His versatile profile and prolific musicianship make him a crucial aspect of this study. Similarly, Finnish accordionist Niko Kumpuvaara represents a profile of a classical concert performer with a diverse range of projects in other musical fields, from pop to jazz, including musical theatre, studio musician, arranger, and any project related to classical and contemporary music, which as he states, is the closest to an academic education that he had. During our meeting, he defined himself clearly: “I am a Freelancer—I am able to do what I am asked. That concerns many things.” I will delve further into the most significant aspects of his musicianship and work as a teacher and place it in context with the topic I am discussing throughout the text.

So, what does it mean to be an accordionist in the 21st century? Can we assert that the identity of accordionists has undergone a process of transformation throughout its relatively short history? And, if so, what kind of artistic identities did accordionists have before the emergence of the concert accordion?

To gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics and qualities of a modern accordionist’s identity in the current musical landscape, it is necessary to examine the transformative changes that accordionists have experienced throughout the short history of the instrument, focusing on the key features that have influenced the shift in the accordion’s status and accordionists’ professional opportunities. An examination of the history of the accordion and accordionists will provide the reader with a thorough understanding of the topic of this research and the reasoning behind it. Additionally, this text will serve as the foundation for understanding the

diversity of aspects that an artistic identity of a musician in the 21st century may encompass.

3.2 Brief Historical Overview

The maturation of accordionists' musicianship and professional careers is closely linked to the organological development of the accordion as an instrument. It is important to note that the use of the free-bass accordion opened up a new musical realm for performers and composers, providing them with an experimental laboratory that enabled the creation of an innovative array of sonorities. The most recent major change to the accordion's organology occurred in 1959, with the introduction of the current converter system, as I will later discuss.

Throughout the history of the accordion, we can see that it is a product of a constantly evolving culture and society. As a result, the popularity and reputation of the accordion have fluctuated greatly. Through the efforts of performers, manufacturers, pedagogues, and scholars, the accordion has now reached an organologically mature state and is a prominent presence in both classical and contemporary music. As Jacomucci states, "Accordion manufacture has become a lot finer too: masters have enhanced their constructing techniques, applying more acoustic criteria to "sound making", both in pedagogic and professional instruments" (2013, 5).

In the mid-twentieth century, academic institutions began to embrace the accordion, and new musical perspectives have led to the concert accordion becoming a part of the contemporary music scene. Additionally, the accordion can still be found in its more popular and folkloric form in various regions around the world.

3.2.1 The origin of the accordion

There have been numerous studies and essays written about the origins and evolution of the accordion's ancestor, tracing the development of metal free-reed instruments in Southeast Asia and the first references to free-reed instruments in Europe. On May 6th, 1829, Cyrillus H. Demian (1772–1847) obtained a patent for the accordion, a primitive wind instrument measuring around 22 cm x 9 cm x 6 cm (Monichon 1985, 32).

It featured three leather folds as bellows and five keys on the right hand, each of which produced two different chords, one when opened and one when closed (Llanos 2015, 40).

In his book “L’accordéon” (1985), French musicologist Pierre Monichon describes the reception of the accordion as causing delirium among enthusiasts of the new sound system. This led to the displacement of mouth organs, such as the *Aura* which was primarily used as a tuning tool and is considered the first mouth organ (Buchmann 2010, 12), by the accordion. Throughout the 19th century, the accordion underwent significant transformations, and numerous models and instruments of the free-reed family emerged in Europe.

Once an instrument circulated, it was subject to a restless continuation of improvements. In fact, the accordion was itself a continuation and a perfection of many late eighteenth-century experiments with free-reed aerophones. (Simonetta & March 2012, 20.)

The popularity of the accordion spread rapidly, reaching Paris almost immediately and gaining recognition among high-class circles. Contrary to popular belief, the accordion was not shunned but rather gained a certain level of status and recognition. According to Algora (2001, 20), by around 1860, there were already thirty-five different methods available for learning to play the accordion and nineteen factories manufacturing them. Therefore, it is evident that the instrument patented by Demian as the accordion was the starting point for extensive organological development in the years that followed.

It is throughout the 20th century that converter mechanisms emerge, transforming part of the standard bass of the left-hand manual into a button board of individual notes. As a result, the left-hand manual, which initially served as an accompaniment to the right-hand melody and was composed of traditional bass-chord structures, will now play a significant role. The various sources do not agree on the date or authorship of the invention.

Through this transformative process, in the concert accordion, the traditional rows of standard bass chords are reconfigured into a new system of four rows of buttons that are chromatically arranged, with the fourth row being an exact repetition of the first. Furthermore, the fifth and sixth rows produce

low notes ordered by fifths, which is analogous to the conventional bass manual. This alteration in the layout of the accordion's left-hand manual is a significant development, and understanding its impact is crucial for comprehending the evolution of accordion music.

It is indeed the the irony of fate that the modern accordion has completely outgrown the very feature that gave the instrument its name. One can observe an increasing dissatisfaction with the standard bass accordion, the name generally used for this type. In the accordion world this concern and unhappiness is reaching an explosive point, and it is partially inspired by the availability of a new and superior type known as the free bass accordion. (Ellegaard 1964, 46.)

When examining the evolution of the accordion, it becomes apparent that as the instrument became more complex and versatile, performers' skills and the professionalization of accordionists' musicianship also improved. As the accordion evolved into its final form, it experienced a significant quantitative and qualitative advancement, resulting in higher status and new opportunities within the classical music world and academic field. This led to productive collaborations between performers and composers, which proved crucial for the development of the instrument by providing the foundation for the creation of an original repertoire for the concert accordion. As Italian accordionist Claudio Jacomucci observes,

The fruitful collaboration with composers led to a cultural elevation of the instrument laying the foundations for a more and more flourishing literature (both concert and pedagogic one); it led to a truly new way of perceiving the instrument creating a perspective that didn't exist before. (2013, 5.)

3.2.2 The first accordionists' identities in the 19th century: the connection between the accordion and folklore

The popularity that the diatonic accordion achieved in the realm of popular music during the 19th century is noteworthy. It can be stated that from its origins and throughout the 19th century, the accordion was primarily

associated with popular and entertainment music. Conversely, the presence of the accordion in serious music was limited. Academic music circles largely ignored the accordion, with only a few references to accordion players (Monichon 1985). During this time, several authors developed methods in different countries, however, the majority of these were focused on teaching popular tunes. It should also be noted that the accordion was still a diatonic instrument, and its organology was relatively rudimentary. Given this, it is reasonable to assert that accordionists primarily performed popular tunes with simple accompaniments.

During the 19th century, the accordion also began to take root in various cultures around the globe (Gervasoni 1986). Today, many of these cultures continue to regard the diatonic accordion as a symbol of their folklore and culture, as is the case in the Basque Country, where I am from. I will further discuss this topic in Chapter 3.2.7, titled “The Accordion as a Symbol of One’s New Ethnicity,” where I will examine its role in shaping my identity as an accordionist.

It was also during this period that two instruments emerged: the concertina³ and the harmonium, which were highly respected free-reed instruments during the 19th century. The concertina received an overwhelmingly positive reception, especially among the Victorian upper class in the UK. Renowned composer Hector Berlioz described its tone as “mordant et doux” [Sharp and sweet], an assessment that encapsulates its unique tonal qualities (Atlas 1996). Both instruments were warmly welcomed in the classical music field and surpassed the accordion in terms of popularity.

The concertina’s acceptance, which the accordion did not receive, can be attributed to several factors: the concertina had a chromatic range, superior harmonic and contrapuntal possibilities compared to the diatonic accordions of the time, and was considered more refined and elegant. Moreover, the prominent performer Giulio Regondi (1823–1872) played a key role in popularizing the instrument among upper-class circles.

³ It is worth noting that the patent for the concertina, invented by physicist Charles Wheatstone in 1829, was filed merely a month after the patent for the accordion produced by Demian. This close temporal proximity underscores the contemporaneity of the two inventions and their potentially overlapping histories (Gervasoni 1986, 42).

3.2.3 The first signs of the creation of an original repertoire

As previously mentioned, the accordion was patented in 1829. When is the earliest reference to an original work for accordion? The earliest reference to an original composition dates back to 1836, six years after the patent of the accordion. The first known original concert composition written for the accordion is *Thème varié très brillant*, composed by Louise Reisner, in Paris, in 1836 and premiered at the Hôtel-de-Ville on April 10, 1836 (Gervasoni 1986, 42). This public performance is considered to be the first concert “in the history of this young instrument” (ibid.). Thus, this reference implies that there was a certain level of interest in acquiring a more advanced skillset in playing the instrument, beyond what was previously assumed.

On the other hand, it could be argued that the accordion had already been presented in other circles, although not necessarily in a concert setting. The British newspaper *The Times* (1981, 5) reported on a performance by Polish musician Johann Sedlatzek (1789–1866), a renowned flutist of the time, which took place on 8 June 1831 in London. On this occasion, Sedlatzek played a piece on the accordion to close the performance. As the music review stated, “At the close of the concert Mr. Sedlatzek performed on a new instrument called the Accordion or Aeolian, which, however, has little beside its novelty to recommend it.” Instead of claiming that this event marked the debut of the accordion in concert performances, I would argue that it represented the first documented appearance of the accordion in a classical music context. Although it could be perceived as a novelty act, I concur with the author that it provides insightful information. Firstly, it implies that Sedlatzek applied his musical artistry to the accordion, and secondly, it signifies that he had achieved a certain level of mastery of the instrument, evidenced by his choice to conclude the concert with a piece played on the accordion.

During this period, the accordionist’s artistry was closely linked to performing small musical pieces. Is it reasonable to assume that there were probably no original compositions written specifically for the primitive accordion? Most likely, for the first few years, there were not. However, it is questionable to believe that performers solely played music that had already been composed. The availability of accordion methods at the time suggests that musicians may have composed or improvised on songs and tunes that were not published in albums. Additionally, as the accordion became a part of the folklore of diverse nations, it is plausible to infer that

folk tunes and improvisations formed a regular part of the daily repertoire of accordionists.

3.2.4 The starting point for a new identity of the accordion players: The accordion in the classical music

In the 19th century, few composers ventured into writing for the accordion. Nonetheless, two significant exceptions have been documented. Russian composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) included four optional diatonic accordions in the third movement (Scherzo burlesque) of his *Orchestral Suite No. 2 in C major*, op. 53 (1883). The opening note of this movement in Tchaikovsky’s musical composition is accompanied by a written statement attributed to the composer himself:

To receive the proper effect of this piece, accordions are very much desirable, but not essential. They should be in the key of E and with 10 keys. The performers of the first and second accordion parts should use their right hands for the 6th and 7th stops, and the performers of the third and fourth parts on the 2nd and 3rd. In both cases the left hand should be used for both large stops. The large notes relate to the sounds produced with the right hand, and the small notes to the bass chords produced by pressing with the left hand. (Tchaikovski 1883.)

A few years later, in 1898, Italian composer Umberto Giordano (1867–1948) included a diatonic accordion in his opera *Fedora* (1898). The accordion’s status did not change significantly in the following years. By the beginning of the 20th century, the instrument was still largely associated with traditional music, dancing, and taverns. As Doktorski (1998) contends, “the composers used the accordion for comic or entertaining effect—like a buffoon (or at the very best, as a symbol for the common peasant or working-class people)—to evoke the images of a burlesque farce (Tchaikovsky), an Alpine folk-scene (Giordano), or a boisterous and frivolous dance band (Hindemith).”

Indeed, Hindemith’s work could be said to be the most frequently performed. The history behind it is quite intriguing, as the score that is currently performed today is actually an update that the composer himself made in

1952. In 1922, when *Kammermusik Op. 24, No. 1* (1922) was premiered, the harmonium was the instrument of choice in its orchestration. However, as time passed, the popularity of the harmonium declined so much that it became rare. Consequently, in the mid-twentieth century, Hindemith was compelled to rework the score and replace the harmonium with the accordion, which was then at the height of its popularity.

In correspondence with his publisher, Willy Strecker, dated November 28, 1952, the composer Paul Hindemith shed light on the significant alteration made to the orchestration of this composition. He explained that the original score called for a harmonium that was no longer in existence, rendering the piece difficult to perform. To address this challenge, Hindemith opted to rework the score, replacing the harmonium with the accordion, an instrument that was then enjoying great popularity. In his words, “I have rewritten it for an accordion. . . With it the piece will be easier to perform” (Hindemith 1952, 216). This transcription reflects not only Hindemith’s practical concerns for the ease of execution but also his willingness to embrace new and evolving musical trends of his time.

Nevertheless, composers continued to incorporate the accordion into their works, reinforcing its popular role. For instance, Alban Berg (1885–1935) included a brief on-stage accordion part during a tavern scene in his opera *Wozzeck* (1914–22), while Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953) utilized it as accompaniment for Russian folk dances in his *Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution, op. 74* (1936). Even then, the harmonium, which was the most esteemed free-reed instrument during the 19th century, was used in Dmitri Shostakovitch’s (1906–1975) first ballet, *The Golden Age op. 22a* (1929), to mimic the sound of an out-of-tune organ grinder (Doktorski 1998).

3.2.5 The transforming identity of the accordionists at the beginning of the 20th century

By the beginning of the 20th century, the accordion had become widely popular and was established in many cultures. French accordion repairer and tuner Thierry Benetoux, in his book “Sounding Out the Accordion” (2005), analyses the variety of timbres that the diverse family of accordions can produce. He aims to demonstrate why so many musical cultures have embraced the accordion, stating that “the choice owes little to pure

hazard” (ibid.). Indeed, the accordion, being a versatile wind instrument, is renowned for its ability to produce an extensive range of sounds, making it a highly adaptable and flexible instrument.

A significant date in the history of the accordion is 5 March 1897, when Paolo Soprani (1844–1918), the founder of the first Italian accordion factory in Castelfidardo, Italy, patented the chromatic accordion (Monichon 1985, 98). This new instrument synthesized the latest research.⁴ The industrial manufacture by Soprani enabled the spread and standardization of these models, and soon other manufacturers joined.

The introduction of the chromatic system was a major change in the organology of the instrument, allowing for a wider range of repertoire and new opportunities for accordionists. Subsequently, the accordion experienced a rapid expansion, becoming widespread across Europe and the United States. At this point, I would like to bring attention to the extant literature that has delved into the history of the accordion in the 20th century.

There is a wealth of literature available today about the history of the accordion, including its development within a specific national context. However, it appears that this literature seems disconnected, omitting or failing to acknowledge the connections and key figures that facilitated the diffusion of the instrument and its music across borders. Upon examination, it becomes evident that the narratives surrounding the accordion converge from the earliest original works for the instrument, with the cultural center in Trossingen (Germany) and, some years later, Danish musician Mogens Ellegard (1935–1995) playing a pivotal role in the development of the concert accordion and its impact on accordionists’ musicianship, as I will discuss in subchapter 4.1.

In this line, Rantanen’s most recent publication (2019), entitled “The Accordion in Art Music in Finland,” proved to be a valuable resource, enabling me to construct a comprehensive history that united different countries through the examination of the accordion’s evolution. Undoubtedly, to attain a comprehensive understanding of the accordion’s expansion, it is

⁴ First, a new MI keyboard was introduced, featuring three rows that divided the 12 chromatic notes. This keyboard layout remains in use today. Secondly, the “push-pull” action on both keyboards was eliminated. Finally, the “left-hand” keyboard was designed to produce perfect major chords, perfect minor chords, and dominant seventh chords, all utilizing only the 12 basic chromatic notes (Monichon 1985, 98).

imperative to scrutinise the role that North America played in its proliferation. In fact, it is important to examine both Europe and North America during the first half of the 20th century, as the development of the accordion in each region is distinct yet interrelated. By the mid-century, it is evident that the paths of the accordion in these two regions began to diverge, with a decline in popularity in the US and the emergence of new compositional languages in Europe. Through my interview with Rantanen (2021), I have gained a deeper understanding of the subsequent efforts to establish a career for the accordion in the US.

North America is one of the key countries for the expansion of the accordion, a place where its music had a significant impact on the music scene, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s (Rantanen 2021). One of the professionals who has researched the accordion's history is ethnomusicologist Marion Jacobson. In her book (2012), she gives an exhaustive account of the evolution of the accordion in North America. Unlike most of the books written until then, she moves away from the organological or purely evolutionary focus of the accordion, and as she explains, "my intention is to move the study of the accordion away from the traditional subdiscipline of organology and to say something about the processes through which instruments evolve (2012, 13).

Jacobson gives a historical and social overview of the reasons for the evolution of the accordion, starting in Europe and explaining the rise of the instrument in North America, without forgetting its European origins and the fundamental appeal of immigrants, who were the ones who introduced the instrument there; hence the importance of the instrument for the society of the time, both for the immigrants who brought the instrument and for the middle classes of North America who adopted it as their own. To understand the rise of the instrument it is necessary to observe the fact that there were large migrations between Europe and America, between 1840–1940.

My exploration begins with mid-nineteenth-century Europe and moves on to the accordion's emerging audience in American cities at the turn of the century, this book's point of entry into the accordion world. I explain how the piano accordion became the most ubiquitous and popular free-reed instrument in the United States and many other parts of the world. I explore the development of the modern piano accordion through a look at its European roots, followed by a discussion of its evolution as a uniquely American instrument. (Ibid., 9.)

Thus, Italian immigration was significant, as in the earlier period of emigration, the accordion accompanied Italian immigrants throughout the Americas, becoming a defining instrument in various folk and popular music (Jacobson 2012, 21–22). The year 1908 is a crucial date in the history of the accordion, marking a new beginning when, for the first time, the accordion was performed in the United States, and the beginning of the accordion craze (ibid., 22). At this point, one may question what was so attractive about the piano accordion. As Jacobson explains,

From the perspective of the audience, the appearance of the right-hand piano keyboard was novel. From the perspective of the performer, the piano keyboard made rapid-fire virtuoso playing and changing keys easier. And since there was a left-hand accompaniment, a piano accordionist would not have to share the take with a pianist or orchestra musicians. (Ibid., 30.)

Overall, the accordion offered a means for anyone to participate in musical activities. As Swiss ethnomusicologist Helena Simonett states, “the accordion reflected the zeitgeist of the industrial era of the late 19th century. In a time of technical excitement, the new, mechanically sophisticated instrument came to symbolize progress and modernity” (2012, 7). It was the musical expression of the working class, not only that, for European immigrants, it provided a strong emotional link to their roots. Furthermore, the role of the accordion was fundamental in preserving the cultural memory of Italian immigrants, helping to shape a common Italian American identity. Thus, the accordion became an instrument of community identity in a varied musical and cultural environment.

Meanwhile, in Europe, the accordion gained immense popularity owing to its portability, affordability, and the potential for homophonic accompaniment on the left-hand manual. Nevertheless, the upper class gravitated towards the harmonium, which was regarded as a classical instrument. From the late 19th century onwards, the harmonium garnered acceptance amongst the upper class and aristocracy, achieving the pinnacle of its popularity in the 19th and early 20th centuries. By contrast, the accordion was relegated to the status of a popular instrument.

3.2.6 The status and identity of accordionists in the mid-20th century: traditional and classical music

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, the traditional character of the accordion underwent a gradual transformation, leading to the emergence of its own musical language. The nature of the interactions between accordionists and composers differed considerably across various countries and in terms of their respective developmental trajectories. As will be further elucidated later in this study, Germany emerged as a pioneer in this regard, with the cultural centre in Trossingen playing a pivotal role. In contrast, while the development of the concert accordion had already gained momentum in some European countries, Scandinavian countries like Finland took several decades to catch up. Nevertheless, they eventually emerged as a driving force behind the instrument's evolution. At the same time, the accordion continued to maintain its prominent position in popular music in many other countries.

The exploration of novel avenues for the accordion in the realm of classical and contemporary music assumes paramount significance in advancing the instrument's repertoire. In this respect, Germany holds a crucial position, specifically Trossingen and the Hohner factory, a German maker of these instruments. The first attempts to create original pieces for the accordion took place after Hohner established an accordion school in Trossingen in 1927. Since then, fruitful collaborations between composers and players across different genres and regions have led to the creation of a rich repertoire of musical compositions for the accordion, contributing significantly to its growth and evolution as a versatile and expressive instrument (De La Puente 2018, 38).

The emergence of the accordion's own language was influenced by varying interactions between accordionists and composers across different countries. The pioneering role played by Germany in this respect is evidenced by the composition of *Sieben neue Spielmusiken* [*Seven New Pieces for Accordion*] by Hugo Herrmann in 1927, predating the relatively limited utilization of the accordion in works by prominent composers. It is noteworthy that the Scandinavian countries, such as Finland, despite lagging behind initially, played a catalytic role in the development of the concert accordion, contributing significantly to the instrument's advancement. Simultaneously, the accordion continued to retain a significant presence in popular music in various countries.

The position of the accordion in Finland during the first half of the 20th century is a notable one. While many accordionists may consider Finland to be a pioneering country in the development of original accordion literature, such claims are not entirely accurate when compared to the existing repertoire that had been composed in countries such as Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic. This raises the question: where does Finland's success in the accordion lie? According to Rantanen (2021), "We began very late with original music. The good thing is that when we began... [it was] very good music, and professional composers."

Therefore, during the first half of the 20th century, the Finnish accordion music scene was dominated by traditional and classical arrangements. Interestingly, unlike Germany, which focused heavily on original repertoire, Finnish accordionists performed compositions mainly from the United States, as well as transcriptions (Rantanen, 2021). Notably, in the 1940s and 1950s Finnish Championships, music composed in the US was regularly featured. Rantanen notes that only one album of good transcriptions of classical pieces, mostly for standard bass accordion, composed around 1950, came from Germany. How did the accordion transition from popular music to its own distinct repertoire in Finland? Who were the critical figures in this evolution? As he reminds me, it is vital to keep the following fact in mind for the Finnish accordion panorama:

[...] in 1953 the Nordic Accordion Festival was held in Stockholm. From Finland, Lasse [Pihlajama] and Vesterinen were invited, [...] and from Denmark, only one, 17-year-old Mogens Ellegard. And they met there, Lasse and Mogens. Mogens has written and said that when he heard Pihlajamaa playing for the first time it was like a revolution for him, he could never have thought that someone could handle the accordion in that way. Then, in those years, this cooperation began between Pihlajamaa and Mogens. (Rantanen 2023.)

After their initial meeting, Pihlajamaa and Ellegard entered into a series of collaborations, with the latter spending extended periods in Helsinki and building a successful concert career in Finland. This thesis will also explore Ellegard's role in the development of the concert accordion in Finland, which, in addition to his concert career, was influenced by his close friendship with Pihlajamaa, leading him to teach classes at Pihlajamaa's school in Helsinki. In 1964, Rantanen first met Ellegard in Oslo and subsequently

encountered him on multiple occasions at Pihlajamaa's school, where Rantanen became familiar with works that are significant to the original accordion repertoire, such as Torbjörn Iwan Lundquist's *Partita Piccola* (1965) and Ole Schmidt's *Toccata No. 1 op. 24* (1960).

A significant date in the history of the so-called Scandinavian School, which contributed to the evolution of the concert accordion, occurred in 1974 when both accordionists met in Klingenthal with Lars Holm (Sweden) and Jon Faulstad (Norway). As Rantanen notes with a smile, "then we had that... Nordic Team together. After that, it was quite clear what to do in the next years."

Meanwhile, in North America and after decades of success, the accordion experienced a decline as sharp as its rise to popularity. By the mid-1960s, the popular music landscape had changed: the accordion's social status and the public's relationship with it had shifted. The accordion lost its popularity and privileged position, with a "latent lack of excitement for the instrument and the decline of the values it represented" (Jacobson 2007, 216).

Jacobson posits several reasons for the accordion's decline, which included its inability to adapt to new musical trends and its consequent obsolescence. According to Rantanen (2021), the descendants of the earlier generations who had cherished the instrument in America had become more inclined towards contemporary music styles that diverged from traditional polkas or waltzes. The advent of the electric guitar, which gained immense popularity during the rock 'n' roll era in the 1950s, was one of the major factors contributing to the decline of the accordion (Jacobson 2012, 106). Additionally, players who grew up playing the accordion in the 1960s and 1970s switched to electric keyboard instruments as they deemed the accordion to be "old school" and outmoded, along with the connotations of ethnic and folk music that they viewed as unwelcome baggage (ibid., 108).

Jacobson has also proposed another theory for the accordion's decline in popular music within mainstream culture. She argues that the accordion's large size and weight may have been a deterrent to its widespread appeal. Jacobson posits that had the instrument been smaller and lighter, it could have been more attractive to the music industry. However, this hypothetical scenario may have given rise to a conflict between the accordion community and the music industry. According to Jacobson, this conflict would have stemmed from differing perceptions of the accordion as either an artistic pursuit or an "amateur" leisure pursuit and its "proper" repertoire

(2012, 106). In this regard, she asserts that “classical teachers would have discouraged their students from buying smaller instruments because they lacked the full keyboard and a full array of register shifts that were called for in arrangements of classical music for accordion” (Jacobson 2012, 108).

It is interesting to observe that comparable debates continue to arise even after many years. However, it is crucial to recognize that a broad range is essential for performing both classical and contemporary repertoire. Upon studying Jacobson’s work, it becomes clear that these discussions have yet to be fully resolved, although some progress has been made. In subsequent sections of this thesis, it will be demonstrated how accordionists have surpassed barriers and how the division into three categories, as presented by Jacobson, may not be as definitive. In the present day, a multitude of accordion models cater to diverse genres of music, and numerous instrumentalists possess multiple instruments for use in varying musical contexts.

On the other hand, Jacobson (2012) suggests that the academic world may have contributed to the accordion’s decline. She argues that the academic world played a significant role in the perceived decline of the accordion. He contends that educators were preoccupied with the technical and repertoire development of the instrument, and neglected other important factors that could have prevented its decline. As Jacobson states, “As the organized voice of the accordion world was keeping watch over the ‘proper’ repertoire and technique of accordion students, it was failing to respond to the concerns of its constituents over a wide range of issues from accordion repertoire to image to affordability” (ibid., 107).

While Jacobson’s criticisms may hold merit, it is also worth considering that without the academic world’s focus on the instrument’s technical and repertoire development, the accordion may not possess its distinct character and personality separate from popular or folk styles. This sentiment is echoed in an anecdote shared by Rantanen (2021), in which he describes the accordion community as being composed of closed-off circles of musicians’ unions, with rigid and narrow-minded ideas, and a lack of openness to new musicians:

In 1959 Lasse Pihlajama was asked to play in Radio City Hall in New York, [...] but he did not want to go because he had his accordion school here in Finland, and he said that they could ask Mogens to play there. Mogens was someone here.

Despite being a significant figure, for musicians like Ellegard who aspired to secure concert engagements, it was not feasible. Apparently, the musicians' unions did not intend to make it easier for foreign performers to succeed. In one of her previous articles, Jacobson (2007) also explores efforts to promote and popularize the accordion in America during the mid-20th century. One aspect she analyzes is the field of pedagogy. According to Jacobson, teachers discouraged accordion students from focusing on popular and traditional forms of music and instead emphasized classical repertoire. This approach may have reflected a perceived need among teachers to make room for new repertoire, which was deemed more appropriate at the time. This raises the question of whether novelty is often promoted, at the expense of existing forms, to create a niche in a particular area or market. We will explore this question further when we examine the early stages of the original accordion repertoire.

When I began playing the accordion, the original repertoire for my instrument was relatively unknown in my country and only a few teachers had contact with the European pioneers. From the outset, I was introduced to the study of the original accordion repertoire, with minimal exposure to popular or traditional music.

As of now, can we assert that the pedagogy of the accordion instrument also functions as a model of exclusion? I would argue that rather than being exclusionary, accordion education provides students with the opportunity to explore new musical styles, including classical music. Thus, it presents a new avenue without necessarily discarding existing knowledge and practices. Nevertheless, the option to perform traditional or folk music has always been available to accordion players.

The accordion, a versatile and multifaceted musical instrument, has enjoyed a resurgence in popularity in recent years, particularly during the 1980s. This phenomenon was primarily observed in cabaret and burlesque performances, as well as in popular music groups, where the accordion's unique timbre and ability to evoke a wide range of emotions were highly valued. However, despite its resounding success in traditional music genres, the concert accordion has not seen comparable progress in the United States.

In the 1980s, a state university in the United States held a concert in which 500 students were in attendance. It was a very good success, it was nice. But, after the concert, I was

discussing with some people, and they did not recognize my instrument, what is the accordion.... My playing was nice and so, but so far away has been this bellow instrument in the United States.

One possible explanation for this lack of success, as suggested by Rantanen, is that no prominent American composers have written important music for the accordion. The only exception is Paul Creston (1906–1985), who composed a *Concerto for Accordion and Orchestra Op.75*, for standard bass accordion.

In conversations with Rantanen, the reasons for the limited success of European accordionists in the United States were discussed. These conversations revealed that although there had been attempts by European concertists to establish themselves in the American music scene, such as Mogens Ellegard's performance at Radio City Hall in New York, these efforts had largely been unsuccessful. This observation sheds light on an intriguing narrative that reflects the state of the accordion in the United States during that era.

In the 60s Mogens and one of his good friends, Dutch jazz accordionist Mat Mathews (1924–2009), were invited to play at a big accordion festival in the USA, and as Rantanen refers to it, "It was a total fiasco. The reason was that they were playing the button accordion. The whole of America was playing piano accordion [...]."

The lack of receptivity to novel approaches and external perspectives within the accordion community is further exemplified by an anecdote recounted by Rantanen. In the late 1970s, he engaged in a conversation with fellow accordion teachers in which he posed an inquiry: "Do you truly believe that it is essential to adhere to this specific system? Perhaps, an alternative approach, such as using a button accordion, could be considered." The response he received was: "We are aware of what we wish to achieve with the instrument in America."

This entrenched outlook has endured to the present day, with the accordion remaining predominantly associated with entertainment music. Despite this, there are indications that the instrument's future prospects in the United States are evolving. A growing number of foreign accordionists are initiating contemporary music projects in the country, potentially opening

up new avenues for the instrument and expanding its repertoire and performance contexts. As outlined in Section Two, contemporary concert accordionists are currently honing a diverse set of musicianship skills and performing in a broad range of venues around the world.

3.2.7 The Accordion as a Symbol of Ethnic Identity

At the same time, the accordion's repertoire was developing and the collaborations between accordionists and composers were taking place in the classical and contemporary music fields, the instrument became associated with traditional music throughout the world. This raises an important question: what was the accordion's role in shaping the musical expressions of various cultures, and how did it contribute to their identities?

To this day, the accordion remains a revered and highly regarded instrument in many cultural contexts. In recent years, scholars and researchers have taken a growing interest in studying the accordion's cultural significance, with a particular focus on its role in traditional music within different countries. These studies have explored the development of the accordion as well as the importance of its music in shaping the unique identities of various cultures.

An illustration of the accordion's versatility and adaptability in different cultural contexts can be seen in Cormier's (2011) study, which explores the significance of the accordion in traditional Colombian vallenato music. The prevalence of accordion music is also evident in various other traditional musical manifestations in Latin America, including Mexican norteño, Tex-Mex styles, and forró in Brazil. Similarly, in Austria, the popularity of the diatonic accordion surged as it was discovered to be an ideal accompaniment to waltz and polka melodies. This highlights how the accordion has been adapted by people around the world to suit their unique environments, aesthetics, and social and cultural realities.

It can be argued that the incorporation of the diatonic accordion into traditional music is linked to its relatively uncomplicated playing technique, which can be quickly adopted by beginners. Moreover, the accordion functions as a "one-man orchestra," enabling the creation of both harmonic and rhythmic accompaniments to a melody, as observed in Slovak traditional music (Garaj 2021, 48).

However, as the popularity of the accordion grew, some voices opposed it. Criticisms regarding the disappearance of traditional folk instruments and the dilution of authentic folk music began to emerge. What could be the primary reasons behind this negative attitude towards the accordion? Firstly, the range of pitches offered by the accordion was restricted, and the pre-set pitches and chords of the left hand further limited the ability to produce a diverse range of accompaniments.

Musicologist Bernard Garaj, in his article, explores the implications of incorporating a musical instrument, with its unique origin and cultural background, into the instrumentation of traditional music. He highlights the challenges of adapting the repertoire to the interpretive possibilities of the instrument, as well as the issues that arise in the process. In line with Garaj's argument, Leng (1967, 203) asserts that,

[Diatonic] accordions with their firmly stable tuning overtook the development of folk tonal feeling towards major tonality and forced musicians and singers, on the one hand, to choose the appropriate ones, that is, major or ionic songs and, on the other hand, to tonal deformation of the original tunes.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the diatonic character of the instrument was the source of criticism. As Simonett asserts, “the instrument may at one point be the most significant and unique identifier for a whole community or group of people, and yet years later it may be perceived by the same people as impeding progress and integration, only to later be embraced as a symbol of one’s ‘new ethnicity’—as has been the case with the Louisiana Cajun accordion” (2021, 11). According to her, there is a phenomenon where the accordion is initially rejected by a community, only to later become a defining element that represents the essence of their new identity. Is this phenomenon that Simonett addresses also present in the case of diatonic instruments in other regions and cultures?

The diatonic accordion has experienced significant fluctuations in popularity throughout the latter part of the 20th century and beyond. A case in point is the Basque Country, where the accordion was a widely popular instrument in the early 1990s, as evidenced by the large number of students enrolled in music schools. These students explored a wide range of repertoire, including popular and traditional pieces, as well as classical and contemporary compositions. However, a few years later, at the turn of

the 21st century, the Trikitixa, a two-row Basque diatonic button accordion, gained widespread popularity, displacing the accordion from its dominant position.

The cultural significance of the accordion can be observed in various contexts, such as Australian ethnomusicologist Graeme Smith's article (2008), which discusses how Irish traditional dance music players used a diatonic button accordion to play traditional dance music. Smith's article delves into the evolution of playing styles during the 20th century and how players have moved away from the cultural-nationalist connotations that were once associated with the accordion. This illustrates how the accordion has been introduced into other music styles that are not necessarily rooted in its most traditional aspects. Surely, the improvement of musical and technical skills and the development of playing techniques have enabled the diatonic accordion to be a more versatile instrument.

In his seminal work "Modern-style Irish Accordion Playing: History, Biography, and Class" (1997), the author delves into the emergence of a contemporary style of accordion playing that was heavily influenced by the musical abilities and expertise of the players. The mastery of the instrument was noticeably superior, but despite the achievement of greater technical and musical proficiency, the modern style of accordion playing was perceived as a representation of the bourgeoisie. Consequently, this resulted in the alienation of the fundamental musical identity of the Irish accordion. It is worth noting that this phenomenon is not unique to Ireland and is observed in many other musical cultures where the adoption of the accordion has been met with intense criticism (*ibid.*, 440).

In recent years, scholars have increasingly focused on the interconnections between music, the accordion, and cultural identity. Through my own research, I have encountered several unexpected studies highlighting the pivotal role of the accordion in shaping community identity. One notable example is Lesotho, a southern African nation whose people have embraced the accordion as a defining element of their culture. Musicologist Lehlohonolo S. Phafoli (2016), a specialist in African ethnography, explores how Basotho accordion songs function as narratives of self-identity. Drawing on extensive ethnographic research, Makoae contends that these songs serve as constructions of the singers' experiences of themselves as Basotho people, thus contributing to the cultivation of individual, national, and collective identities in Lesotho.

Joel Cormier's dissertation addresses the scarcity of scholarly work on folk music, particularly in comparison to folk songs (Cormier, 2011). His research focuses on the role of the accordion and its repertoire in a constantly evolving world by studying, transcribing, and analyzing accordion pieces collected from players in south-eastern New Brunswick, Canada between 2007 and 2011. Cormier argues that instrumental folk music has thrived in the region, and despite being a newcomer to the area, the accordion remains popular and has adapted to changing circumstances (Cormier, 2011, ii-iii).

In a similar fashion to its adoption in New Brunswick, Canada, the accordion has also been introduced into various other cultural contexts, as exemplified in the case of the Colombian people. According to Viloría (2017), the first accordions arrived in the Colombian Caribbean in the 1870s, mainly imported from Germany, and quickly became the central instrument in *cumbiamba* and *vallenato* musical styles (*ibid.*, 11–12). Currently, the diatonic button accordion is the most widely used type of accordion across the world, with each culture adapting it to suit the specific requirements of their music and sound aesthetics. The diatonic accordion is particularly prevalent in traditional music genres.

In contemporary society, the accordion is no longer associated with a particular social class or as a representative of a certain social condition. Instead, the accordion is an instrument deeply rooted in the culture of the people and, like many other folkloric instruments, is valued and admired by its people. The inclusion of folk studies in music universities has helped to make these instruments and their music more visible in the classical music world. Furthermore, the study of these instruments has led to the professionalization of the field of folk music. It is undeniable that folk musicians, who had never entered the academic world, have spread their knowledge and mastery of the music and instruments among their communities.

The inclusion of folk studies within music universities has further legitimized and elevated the study of these instruments and their music, enabling greater visibility within the classical music realm. This integration has also led to the professionalization of the field of folk music, with musicians sharing their expertise and knowledge among their communities.

During my pursuit of a bachelor's degree in Accordion Pedagogy at the Basque Country in Spain in 2002, I had the opportunity to observe a two-year course in folk music, which, despite not being a formal degree

program, provided a valuable source of first-hand exposure to the work of folk musicians. This experience prompted me to reflect on the pervasive tendency to marginalize folk musicians, a phenomenon that I wondered if was unique to my country. However, this attitude is changing, and the increasing inclusion of folk studies in music universities has helped to give these instruments and their music greater visibility in the classical music world.

During my time as a conservatory student, my peers exhibited a similar disregard for my instrument, despite their limited knowledge or interest in the genre I played. This marginalization of accordionists persisted throughout my bachelor's studies and was especially pronounced when searching for chamber music collaborators. The cause of this hesitancy was not solely their unfamiliarity with the instrument, but rather a fear of contemporary repertoire that arose from a limited understanding of its language and the inherent complexities it presented.

The issue of the accordion's status in music education has been a recurring theme throughout my student years, prompting me to explore this topic further by engaging in conversations with prominent musicians.

3.3 The Development of the Accordion into a New Instrument: The Concert Accordion

As the accordion continued to evolve, efforts were made to elevate the instrument to a concert level. In mid-20th century Europe, the invention of the converter system marked a significant achievement in the organological development of the accordion. By 1960, it can be argued that the instrument had reached a state of stabilization in its evolution.

However, the refinement of the accordion did not stop there. Improvements continue to be made to this day, including the use of lighter materials, advancements in timbre quality and variety, and changes in row distribution. Moreover, the instrument is still being revised and improved upon. For instance, Kujala advocates for improved tuning and a new temperament, which would be beneficial for chamber music performances. Another area for improvement is the stability of tuning in the low basses of the left hand.

It is also important to acknowledge the rising popularity of the quartertone accordion in recent years, alongside ongoing investigations into different

types of accordions, which will be further addressed in section 3.3.1. Overall, it is evident that the accordion has come a long way since its inception, and that there is still ample scope for innovation and development in its design and construction.

3.3.1 Expanding the accordion's sound spectrum: the quarter-tone accordion and the electroacoustic accordion

Before delving into the contents of this chapter, it is crucial to establish a clear understanding of the quarter-tone accordion. By providing a comprehensive definition of the quarter-tone accordion, this chapter seeks to facilitate a deeper understanding of its unique musical properties and explore how it has contributed to the development of contemporary music. To achieve this, I will refer to Kujala's definition of the instrument: "the term *quarter-tone accordion* can mean many different types of accordions capable of producing quarter tones" (2013, 20).

The first time I had the opportunity to listen to a quarter-tone accordion was in Helsinki at the Tempeliaukio Church during the Musica Nova Festival in February 2009. The work was *Velinikka*, a concerto for quarter-tone accordion and chamber orchestra, composed by Finnish composer Sampo Haapamäki in 2008.

I designed a quarter-tone accordion in collaboration with composer Sampo Haapamäki in 2005. It was manufactured in 2006 by the Pigini accordion factory. The main reason for building this instrument was Sampo Haapamäki's concerto Velinikka for quarter-tone accordion and chamber orchestra, which I premiered in Amsterdam with Insomnio ensemble in 2008. (2013, 19.)

During our meeting, Kujala shared the story behind this new instrument and how he came to realize that he needed a new instrument to play one particular composition: "I thought, what if we just change the reed-blocks? That wasn't even a new idea, there have been some entertainment music players who have done it before, for example in French musette", as he specifically mentions in his article on the quarter-tone accordion (Kujala 2013, 19). Thus, instead of creating a completely new instrument they

redesigned keyboards and utilizes the body of a Pignini Sirius concert accordion. As he explains, “all the reed blocks on the right manual and two reed blocks on the left manual were changed to quarter-tone reed blocks.”

One of the questions I inquired about during our meeting was whether he was the first to conceive of an instrument with these characteristics. It is interesting to note that accordionist Kassimir Sterev at the same time developed a different model of quarter-tone accordion, but they were unaware of each other’s work.

Mine is far from being the first quarter-tone accordion. The earliest example I know is widely used in Africa and usually has some tones tuned a quarter tone higher or lower in the bellows closing direction. There is also a rather new quarter-tone accordion developed in Switzerland, which has a completely rebuilt right manual. It might be that also other systems exist. (2013, 20.)

Furthermore, it was surprising to me that this concept was not at all novel. In fact, there are already examples of the utilization of microtonality in Africa (Molina 2014; Farraj & Schumays 2019). In parallel to the Western world, the accordion has experienced a remarkable evolution in Arabic music. Throughout the 19th century, Western musical traditions made their way into the Arab world, resulting in a gradual integration of Western musical elements. This integration was marked by the emergence of the violin and accordion, which gained popularity and firmly established roots in the region by the start of the 20th century (Farraj & Schumays 2019, 40).

This accordion was later modified to incorporate new quarter tones, enabling it to play various maqam scales that the traditional accordion is unable to execute. According to Molina (2020, 4) “the violin and the accordion could be manipulated to create microtonal nuances, adding to the long and rich tradition of Arabic music without fundamentally altering it.” As a result, accordions became an integral part of Arabic string orchestras.

To date, several instrumentalists have adopted Kujala’s approach and obtained the same type of instrument he conceived. Furthermore, this area has seen the emergence of fresh avenues of investigation. Building upon the precedent set by Veli Kujala, Basque accordionist Lore Amenabar is currently undertaking a PhD at the Royal Academy of Music in London, focusing on the Quarter-Tone Accordion. In February 2020, her instrument

was constructed by accordion manufacturer Bugari Armando. According to Amenabar (2020), “It is based on a design created by Dr. Kujala. However, the design and layout of the keyboard is my own.”

Thus, we conclude that the idea of playing a quarter-tone accordion is not a new concept itself and that different research is being carried out and developing new systems, which are nowadays sharing the musical scene. The quarter-tone accordion is present in different countries in the hands of different accordionists too. Consequently, several composers are getting familiar with the instrument and enriching the repertoire, which should be developed further.

Upon examining this range of instruments, it is plausible to consider that one of them may become predominant or serve as a foundation for future enhancements and organological evolution. Alternatively, it may be suggested that this model will not surpass the status of an instrument that garnered some attention in the early 21st century. Thus, we asked Kujala about his thoughts on whether it will have a future. Kujala reflects:

It is a very good question because there are so many systems. There have been existing quarter-tone instruments, and quarter-tone pianos throughout history. But still, they are not popular. The difference with the accordion—and I always tell you the advantage of this system—, is that you do not need a new instrument. Basically, you can build it in. There are not so many, and it does not cost much.

Since our conversation in November 2021, Kujala has continued to perform and compose for the quarter-tone accordion. He has not only created solo and chamber works for the instrument but has also ventured beyond the realm of classical contemporary music. Kujala has innovated in the field of performance by incorporating the quarter-tone accordion into experimental jazz and improvisation projects (Kujala 2013, 20). This demonstrates the instrument’s potential to expand the possibilities of the accordion beyond its traditional uses in contemporary music and free improvisation. Kujala’s work serves as an example of how musicians can use the quarter-tone accordion to explore new and exciting musical possibilities across a range of genres.

Another accordionist whose research and dissemination work I find noteworthy is Harri Kuusijärvi, a Finnish musician. His innovative project

involves the development and investigation of a self-designed electroacoustic accordion and the exploration of its technical and sonic capabilities through the commissioning of new collaborative works. Kuusijärvi is also composing works for this instrument. Having heard the instrument, I can attest to its unique and exciting sonic capabilities. His project represents a valuable contribution to the expansion of the accordion's musical realm and serves as an example of how musicians are pushing the boundaries of traditional instruments through creative innovation.

Recently, Kuusijärvi premiered Finnish composer Minna Leinonen's new piece *Dis)similar*, for electroacoustic accordion, cello, and live electronics at the d(XII)e Festival (Helsinki, December 3, 2022). In line with this, he states (2022) that "working with composers is an effective way to explore the identity of the new electroacoustic instrument. This is the second original piece for electroacoustic accordion (excluding my own compositions) and the first to be played live."

3.4 Conclusions

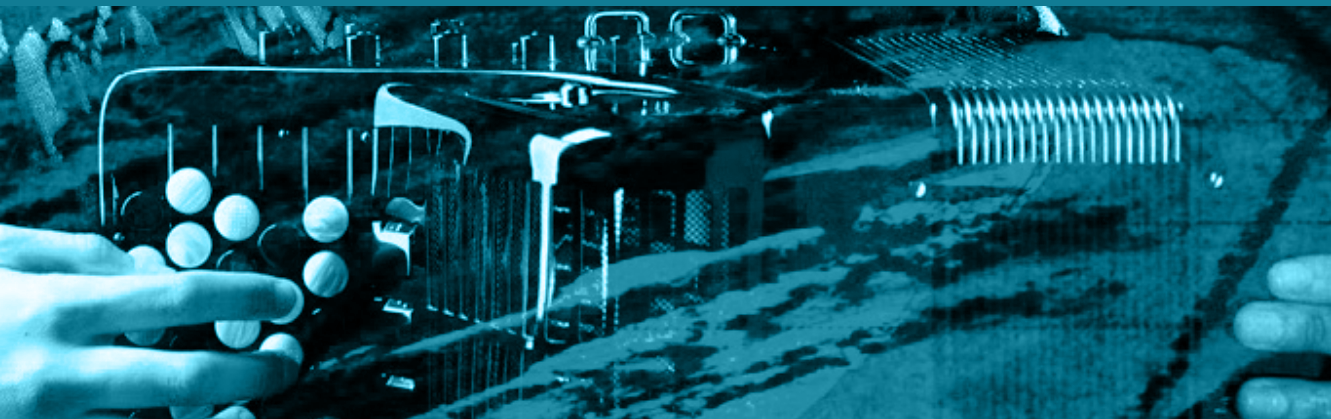
In conclusion, this chapter has presented several musical perspectives on the accordion, drawing from my personal familiarity with the instrument. It is important to note that these perspectives coexist with others and will continue to do so in the future. It is clear that accordionists have a strong desire to explore and experiment with new musical dimensions.

Throughout this chapter, we have observed the co-evolution of the accordion and accordionists' needs for new professional opportunities and repertoire that is tailored to the concert accordion. To address the unique demands of performers, accordionists have collaborated with composers to create original compositions. Furthermore, the quest for a more complex and demanding repertoire has necessitated an enhancement of technical mastery and musical knowledge of the instrument. Ultimately, this has resulted in a transformation of accordionists' identity that was hitherto unprecedented. This situation serves as a springboard for my exploration of the artistic identity of concert accordionists in the contemporary era.

In addition to the evolving concert accordion, new accordion models are emerging, collaborations with composers are increasing, and the musical possibilities of the instrument are expanding. These developments also

provide accordion performers with greater employment opportunities. Ultimately, it is difficult to predict which of these instruments will be most popular with the public and composers. However, new models will certainly continue to challenge and expand the sonic capabilities of their predecessors.

SECTION **THREE**



**THE ARTISTIC IDENTITY OF
PROFESSIONAL ACCORDIONISTS
IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

Before delving into a comprehensive examination of my artistic identity, it is important to first provide an overview of the significant transformations experienced by professional accordionists. These changes, which are ongoing and continuously evolving (Hargreaves, Miell, & MacDonald, 2002; Turino, 2008; Green, 2011; Thomson 2021), greatly impact our identity as performers. In this thesis, I will refer to these transformations as “The artistic identity of professional accordionists in the 21st century.”

The evolution of the professional identity of accordionists since the mid-20th century is a complex topic to explore and reflect upon. One of the most significant changes observed is the transition of accordionists from a popular music context to the professional musicianship that is recognized today. It is important to note that not every country has undergone this evolution at the same time and in the same way, and thus, it would be unwise to make comparisons across continents. Therefore, I will focus specifically on the Western world and Europe, as it is the context in which I belong and the region where my questions and reflections originate.

However, I consider it necessary to examine the situation in North America and provide a brief historical contextualization of the early 20th century, in which the accordion experienced an unprecedented surge in popularity and exerted a significant influence on the evolution of the instrument, resulting in the development of new models and expanding its reach to new territories.

Although each European country has its unique history, I argue that they all share a common root—the folkloric or popular origin of the instrument—and that in most of them, if not all, the instrument has been developing in the same direction: towards the concert accordion.

4.1 The Concert Accordion and Its Impact on Accordionists' Musicianship

After nearly a century after the invention of the accordion was patented, it is imperative to examine the historical roots of its development, with a particular focus on Germany as a catalyst for contemporary advancements in the field of accordion music. Initially, it all began in Trossingen, a small town in southern Baden-Württemberg, where a factory produced harmonicas and accordions since the 19th century. In the 1920s, this town

set the precedent by collaborating with renowned composers. As French accordionist Pascal Content observes (2013, 12), it was swiftly recognized by both the company and the city of Trossingen that the combination of teacher, performer, and composer yielded the creation of fresh compositions and valuable literature in the field.

To be considered a reputable instrument within the realm of classical music, it was imperative to develop an original repertoire for the accordion. In the 1960s, a new path emerged for the concert accordion, distinct from the German school, which continued to follow its own trajectory, and the Russian school, which was deeply rooted in tradition. I am referring to the “Scandinavian school,” as represented by the pioneering accordionist, Mogens Ellegaard. Ellegaard played a crucial role in providing the necessary impetus for this development. His early collaborations with Nordic composers resulted not only in the creation of new pieces for the instrument but also in the opening of a new path that many accordionists in different European countries subsequently followed. This ultimately led to the development of an extensive original repertoire for the accordion. Ellegaard’s pioneering efforts marked the beginning of a series of productive collaborations that continued in the years that followed.

In this line, I find it immensely interesting and a great joy to have discovered an original source of information in which Ellegard himself reflects on the early commissions of works for accordion, and to understand how these collaborations laid the groundwork for subsequent generations. Upon reading the text, it becomes apparent that in some respects, the approach to commissioning works has not changed much over time. When undertaking a commission, it is crucial to bear in mind that “any composer who undertakes the job of writing music for any instrument will naturally have to know something about its technical and musical potentialities and limitations” (Ellegard 1964, 28).

The author reflects on the importance of the composer’s quality and how this does not guarantee the quality of the resulting work, even going so far as to assert that any musician who invests money in a commission to a composer runs the risk of wasting it: “There is always an unpredictable element in the creative process: The final result cannot be guaranteed in advance—by money, or anything else” (ibid.). Therefore, the collaboration between performer and composer must be close, so that the composer can become familiar with the technical and sonic qualities of the instrument. I concur with Ellegard’s argument that the accordionist must be a skilled

musician, as only then can they provide the optimal interpretation of the instrument.

Subsequently, Ellegaard's path was followed by Rantanen, who, upon completing his studies in Copenhagen, proposed the inclusion of the accordion in higher education of music in Finland, specifically at the Sibelius Academy. As a result, in 1977, the Accordion Class was established, which has since become a center of reference and innovation within the accordion world. Through this class, contact was promoted between the German school, whose leading exponent was Hugo Noth, and Russia, represented by Friedrich Lips and Viacheslav Semionov. This was achieved through concerts and masterclasses by these guest teachers (Rantanen 2019, 22–23).

It can be argued that the integration of the accordion into the higher education curriculum of the Sibelius Academy represented a crucial moment in the history of the instrument. Through his efforts, Rantanen played a crucial role in driving the development of the accordion repertoire. To achieve this, he deemed it essential to establish connections with composers and to demonstrate the capabilities of the instrument to them. The advancement of the instrument itself has had a positive impact on the repertoire that was subsequently composed for it. Furthermore, the practice of the original accordion repertoire, specifically contemporary music, necessitated the development of new interpretive techniques, as well as precision in musical notation. Ultimately, this required a new approach to understanding interpretation:

Players moved from an approach based on an emotional approximation to one grounded in the performance of precisely notated details, from an intuitive sense of the instrument to a highly analytical mode of expression.
(Rantanen 2019, 40.)

It is important to note that the “new music” repertoire is not merely focused on virtuosity or spectacle. Instead, the core of this repertoire lies in the composition itself. This requires a deep understanding on the part of the performer, which necessitates an expansion of their studies in music theory, among other areas. Additionally, a new awareness of the performer's body as a fundamental aspect of instrumental performance is required. Furthermore, it is worth highlighting that since the first contact that took place in Germany, Russia, and the Scandinavian school, professional collaborations between performers and composers have become a regular practice. The instrument

serves as a small laboratory where these collaborators can explore, discover new possibilities, and reflect on their musical ideas.

I have often pondered whether any other instrument has undergone such a successful evolution in terms of its organology and repertoire within such a relatively short historical period as the accordion. Is it presumptuous to assert that the development of the concert accordion is a noteworthy event within the classical music scene of the 20th century? As Norwegian concert accordionist Geir Draugsvoll notes, “especially the last 50 years has seen a developing curve much more aggressively pointing upwards than in almost any other instrument” (2013, 22).

Upon examining the evolution of the accordion within the musical landscape and its presence in diverse music globally, it becomes clear that there has been a significant shift in the perception of the instrument since its last major organological development. In just sixty years, the accordion has made its mark in the realm of classical music, and it is undeniable that the instrument has undergone remarkable progression, gaining increasing relevance in contemporary musical expressions.

At present, it can be argued that our instrument is taught in numerous conservatories and academies across Europe (although the prevalence varies significantly by country). There are even dedicated classical accordion “schools”, streams and styles (Jacomucci 2013, 5). In the same line, Contet (2013) affirms:

The current development of our instrument through the vector of original music composed for more than a century by a growing number of composers reinforces the idea that there is not a single accordion in Europe or the World and that, there are several compositional streams with many ramifications. (2013, 13.)

Certainly, certain nations have a longer history of incorporating the accordion into higher education institutions, and these differences are reflected in the unique styles of original repertoire composed for the instrument. Additionally, as Jacomucci notes, there are distinct accordion schools that may prioritize techniques on the manuals, emphasize a particular style of expression through the use of the bellows, or focus on a specific type of repertoire, such as a greater emphasis on transcriptions.

To gain valuable insight into the development of accordion music as well as to discuss other relevant topics that will be explored in this chapter, I sought the input of Finnish accordionist Niko Kumpuvaara. Kumpuvaara is a respected and accomplished accordionist in Europe, known for his versatility and success in his home country. As such, he is a valuable resource for gaining insights into the accordion's versatility and its presence in new musical contexts. As a former colleague of Kumpuvaara at the Sibelius Academy during my undergraduate studies, I had the opportunity to become familiar with his musicianship early on and observe the various paths he took in his professional career.

Can the accordion be considered on par with other classical instruments typically found in orchestras in terms of prestige? Does the instrument receive equal treatment compared to so-called "orchestral instruments"? My argument is that there is still much work to be done in terms of increasing awareness of the accordion and its musical potential, as well as achieving greater recognition in various performance settings. In alignment with Kumpuvaara's perspective, the following evaluation resonates with me:

The accordion is on the way to the top of classical music, with the biggest orchestras and the biggest conductors. There is a long way to go, but when someone has done the pioneering work, it is in any way easier for others to do it.
(Kumpuvaara 2021.)

Kumpuvaara expresses his gratitude towards the pioneers who paved the way for the accordion in classical music, acknowledging that "what is also important in my musical career, is to thank the previous generations [who came before me]." I concur with his observation that the evolution of the accordion in classical music owes much to the efforts of these pioneers, as well as to those who have followed in their footsteps and explored new possibilities for the instrument.

Moreover, Kumpuvaara emphasizes that it is thanks to the pioneers' establishment of a classical career for the accordion that he can pursue his own musical ambitions today, and it is possible for me to do what I am doing. Nobody thinks that it diminishes the value of my classical musicianship. He highlights the fact that this was not always the case in Finland in the 1980s, as the accordion was still fighting for recognition in the classical world.

4.2 Transformation of Class: From an Entertainment Musician to the First Concert Players

While I will not delve too deeply into the historical aspect of the accordion's evolution, I believe that certain pivotal events have shaped its current state. Various authors have conducted historical surveys of the accordion's development in specific countries, and I intend to provide a brief overview of these events to contextualize and understand the most significant impulses for the instrument in a chronological manner. Therefore, before delving into the current state of the accordion, it is necessary to examine the rise and decline of the instrument as a popular music genre throughout the 20th century and to consider the broader historical context in Europe at that time. Furthermore, given Finland's pivotal role in the development of concert accordion repertoire, pedagogy, and educational materials, it is essential to provide a brief contextualization of why this is the case.

When we look back to the end of the 19th century, we see the first attempts to play classical repertoire, mostly transcriptions of classical works. Several accordionists excelled in playing classical repertoire, such as the Deiro brothers, in the United States (Jacobson 2013, 27). Guido Deiro (1886–1950) was a prominent figure of the time and can be said to represent the accordion's "golden age" (ibid, 16), although this was driven by a large group of individuals.

We may question whether the diatonic accordion allowed for the interpretation of classical repertoire. Given the limitations of the diatonic accordion, the accordion had incredible success as a single free-reed instrument, with the piano accordion, which broke with past practices in many ways. What was so appealing about the piano accordion? According to Jacobson,

From the perspective of the audience, the appearance of the right-hand piano keyboard was novel. From the perspective of the performer, the piano keyboard made rapid-fire virtuoso playing and changing keys easier. And since there was a left-hand accompaniment, a piano accordionist would not have to share the take with a pianist or orchestra musicians. (2012, 30.)

The rise to fame of Guido and Pietro Deiro (1888–1954) played a crucial role in establishing the piano accordion as a popular instrument in American

culture, particularly in vaudeville and related entertainment forms. Furthermore, their contributions to the accordion music scene extended to composing their own original pieces such as marches, rags, waltzes and mazurkas. The piano accordion's popularity among vaudeville audiences can be attributed to several factors, such as its versatility in accompanying other instruments and singers, which made it a valuable asset in settings where an orchestra was not available.

Despite the early success of the free-reed instrument, the accordion that was prevalent at the time was not the concert accordion as we know it today, but rather an instrument that was less organologically advanced and primarily used for entertainment music. It was only just starting to gain acceptance in the concert scene.

Meanwhile, and in contrast, in other European countries, the accordion was widely used and highly valued as a folk music instrument. Consequently, it was a prominent presence at festivals and celebrations and deeply ingrained in the culture of many regions. As I was working on this text, I was reminded of the stories that Rantanen shared with us (2012) as part of his course at the Sibelius Academy about the history of the accordion in Finland.

Additionally, during my interview with him in November 2021, I sought clarification on certain aspects of the instrument's evolution that I was unable to place chronologically. The development of the accordion on both continents was not linear, but rather the contacts and influences between the two continents were ongoing. The success of the accordion in North America also had an impact on Finland, and this is where the importance of Paul Leander Norrback (1930–1995) becomes apparent. He was a successful accordionist who, through his travels, became familiar with the Italian-American accordion classics, Pietro Deiro's compositions and arrangements, and subsequently introduced them to Finland.

4.3 The Concert Accordion and Its Coexistence with Its Traditional Past

Does the current scenario differ significantly from the past? Examining the current musical landscape, it can be argued that the accordion has undergone a transformation, an evolution that has enabled it to expand into new contexts and, as a result, new repertoires. As an entertainment instrument, the accordion

retains a privileged position in many settings, yet the diatonic accordion has taken on a prominent role in several regions of Spain.

Furthermore, the accordion has also made its way into new realms within the entertainment industry. This transformation has led it to become a part of various musical groups, such as techno or metal music, and this trend continues to be deeply ingrained in certain countries. It can thus be seen that the inclusion of this instrument in new musical circles has led to a re-evaluation of the musician's identity: accordionists have created a new space for themselves to participate outside of the classical realm.

If we were to inquire within our circle and in various countries about the accordion and its relationship to the instrument in recent times, many would likely associate it with its presence in popular or family celebrations, or as an accompaniment to dances at festive events. Others may have personal experiences or anecdotes related to the accordion. The significance of the accordion as a popular instrument is undeniable, and it remains deeply rooted in traditional cultures, maintaining its closeness to the people in many places today. What is certain is that this extensive use of the accordion has shaped its historical development. It can be argued that the instrument's popular roots have also influenced the reputation and status of contemporary accordionists and pedagogues. Have the popular origins of the accordion conditioned the prestige of contemporary accordionists and pedagogues?

It is a fact that the reputation of the accordion and the status of its players have varied across different countries throughout history. Moreover, the way accordionists are judged and valued can differ between rural areas and classical music circles. As accordionists, we may be burdened by the past, which has often influenced our education and made it more challenging to take on new challenges. While some may disagree with this statement, it is an issue that I have already addressed when discussing my personal experiences and how the instrument's historical past has influenced my artistic identity.

To gain a better understanding of this topic, I sought the perspectives and experiences of Kujala, Kumpuvaara, and Rantanen. It was particularly relevant to hear Rantanen's views as he introduced the concert accordion in Finland and whether he felt that his background as an entertainment musician had hindered his career as a classical accordionist. This issue has undoubtedly had an impact on the present and the formation of my artistic identity.

When I was 10-20 years, often when I met some high-class musicians, even an academy professor, and they heard my playing, they really said: very fine, thank you, you are very skilful and so talented. But when it came to some music teachers, ... I have always had so many fine, good responses from very high professional musicians, so that of course I was thinking that was important. (Rantanen 2021.)

Additionally, upon examining Rantanen's musical career, it is evident that folk music has been a prominent aspect of it, as seen in his discography and the inclusion of folk works in his concerts. During a conversation with him, he conveyed that he had never rejected playing folk music and did not perceive it as an obstacle to pursuing his career. In fact, I found it intriguing that for the main concert celebrating the 60th anniversary of the accordion class at the Sibelius Academy, he incorporated contemporary music with Finnish folk arrangements, highlighting the importance he places on each musical style.

Can we assume that the concert accordion was always regarded in the same light as it is today? Did pioneers have to distance themselves from the image of folk or popular musicians to establish it as a legitimate concert instrument? Did a similar situation occur in Finland? Marjut Tynkkynen, along with Helka Kymäläinen and Heidi Velamo, was a student in the first year of the Accordion Class at the Sibelius Academy under the instruction of Matti Rantanen. During our conversation, she shared that in the early years of the Academy, they focused exclusively on original accordion music (2023). This decision seems logical given that the instrument had just been introduced into the curriculum and had to establish its own path as a concert instrument. In line with Kumpuvaara's earlier statements, he asserts that the first generations of concert accordionists in Finland would have lost credibility if they had appeared on the front page of a culture magazine as a dance band member while simultaneously trying to establish a career in classical music.

In conclusion, it is evident that breaking away from past practices was a widespread tendency during the early stages of the new repertoire, across various nations. As previously discussed, North American accordion pedagogues emphasized teaching classical repertoire over popular or folk music. In my personal experience, I encountered a similar situation when I began playing the instrument in Spain. Although I was not part of the pioneer generation of accordionists who played classical or contemporary

music, my generation was among the first to be taught by teachers with close ties to European schools.

What was the situation in Finland? Were the first generations of students encouraged to play one style over another? Both Kujala and Kumpuvaara have never felt restricted to playing one type of music or another, and they both feel that in their early days, they were not treated as inferior musicians. Similarly, they do not believe that their musical education was limited. Each of them made their own choices once they were admitted to the Sibelius Academy.

Both instrumentalists, Kumpuvaara and Kujala, made a conscious decision to distance themselves from the folk or popular music of their country. However, their choice to move away from traditional music was not driven by a desire for status or recognition as musicians. They hold the view that the accordion is not a lesser instrument and have never encountered any negative attitudes towards it or towards their students in the music schools where they have taught. They both have a deep appreciation for folk music but have chosen to focus on other genres that better align with their artistic passions.

When Kujala was accepted into the Accordion Class at the Sibelius Academy, he observed a division between classical and popular performers. As a means of bringing closure to a chapter, he participated in the Golden Accordion Competition, a nationally recognized event that highlights virtuosic skills in entertainment music. Subsequently, he devoted his attention to studying classical and contemporary repertoire during his initial years at the Sibelius Academy.

It is evident that there is currently a highly versatile instrumentalist, who, as previously highlighted in the interview, has demonstrated an impressive proficiency in a wide range of musical styles, including jazz. During our conversation, Kujala provided valuable insight into the significant changes that have taken place in Finland's musical landscape. During the 1990s, while Kujala was studying, most musicians he knew concentrated solely on playing classical music. In fact, he even hesitated to mention that he was studying jazz, as he was uncertain whether it was appropriate to do so. When we consider the efforts of accordionists to create new paths, we can better comprehend Kujala's reflections. As he rightfully asserts,

Accordionists have always been very OK with the fact that you play jazz or something like that, but maybe for some classical instrumentalists..., it was at least not necessarily helping to get rid of the bad image of the accordion.

As he aptly points out, accordionists have always been accepting of jazz and other non-traditional genres, but some classical instrumentalists might have viewed such diversification as a hindrance in the process of changing the accordion's negative image. Kujala himself is uncertain about the exact point when playing jazz began to be viewed positively. As he puts it, "at some point, it started to be viewed positively to play jazz," and since then, it has been highly regarded. Kujala's journey serves as an example of a student's motivation and determination to pursue music that genuinely interests them.

Although Kujala's and Kumpuvaara's careers as performers have similarities today, their beginnings with the accordion were quite distinct. Both started playing the traditional music of their country, but at some point, both made it clear that they were willing to explore new paths. Kujala grew up in a rural area, where the traditional music he played was highly valued; as he says, perhaps not by his classmates, "but they never made any issue about that." Later, once he started studying at the Sibelius Academy, he decided to focus on contemporary repertoire and jazz music.

In contrast, Niko's case has more similarities to mine, but it was not a decision made by his teacher. At an early age, he decided "when I was 6 years old, I made this kind of decision that I would only play classical music. I stopped everything. From then on, until the Sibelius Academy, I was only focused on classical repertoire. It was the same thing the first two or three years at the Academy." After those first years, he decided to start learning the basics of jazz, first with Kujala as his teacher, and later he continued his training in the jazz department.

Hence, it is evident that in Finland, a country with a rich tradition of the accordion as an instrument for entertainment and folk music, pursuing a music career beyond the traditional and folk genres is possible, and there are opportunities to expand musicianship in other fields apart from the classical scene. Although both Kujala and Kumpuvaara appreciate and respect folk music, Kujala admits that it is no longer his main passion, and therefore, he does not actively seek opportunities to perform it, as other musicians specialize in it. It is noteworthy that folk music studies are integrated into

the music curriculum at the Sibelius Academy, and among musicians, it is highly regarded, as much as other genres of music.

As musicians, it is important to reflect on how the traditional roots of our instruments have impacted our education and career paths. Has it been a motivating factor or a hindrance to our development? In the case of the accordion, it is evident that the status of accordion players has evolved over time. While the instrument is widely used in folk music, it is now also recognized and appreciated by classical performers to a greater extent than it was in the past.

It is truly fortunate for accordionists to possess an instrument that has such strong roots in folk music, while also breaking barriers and opening doors within the classical music scene. Personal perspectives and preferences may vary, and therefore, I will delve deeper into this topic later in the thesis when discussing my own experiences and how the historical background of the accordion has shaped my journey as a student. Undoubtedly, this has had a significant influence on the present and played a crucial role in shaping my artistic identity.

4.4 Formulating the Artistic Identity of a Professional Concert Accordionist

In the realm of classical music, the accordion has undergone rapid evolution and become an integral part of contemporary music. Although some may question whether the accordion is a classical instrument, it is undeniable that the instrument is forging new paths that were previously unimaginable. The advancements in organology that have been crucial in elevating the accordion's status have been complemented by the tireless efforts and determination of accordionists. Pioneers like Mogens Ellegaard, as well as accordionists from different countries, have contributed to the instrument's growth and dissemination.

The historical evolution of the accordion has transformed the class of accordion players and changed the role of the musician. Although the classical accordion landscape is not entirely homogeneous, it is possible to identify markers that reflect the transformation of the identity of modern accordionists. These markers will help me to formulate a set of characteristics that might be part of the artistic identity of a professional

concert accordionist. The insights gained in various contexts have prompted me to reflect on aspects such as:

- As a concert accordionist, what skills are necessary to meet the demands of the contemporary music scene and achieve artistic success?
- What are the current expectations for accordionists in the modern musical landscape?
- What is the current state of the accordion in the classical music world, and what improvements can be made in early accordion education to promote its growth?
- What subjects should be included in university-level accordion education to better prepare students for successful careers in music?
- What are the professional demands and expectations for accordionists in today's music industry?

In this study, I aim to investigate the underlying factors that have led to the frequent association of the so-called entrepreneurial spirit with business skills within the field of accordion performance. Is it a product of an innate inclination or intrinsic motivation, or is it a response to external expectations and demands? Personally, I find it concerning that the performance opportunities available to accordionists were often limited in comparison to other instrumentalists, both in academic and non-academic settings. Although competitions provided a platform for performance, they were frequently the sole option accessible to accordion students. However, winning such competitions may only result in a restricted number of concert performances. Although I am no longer actively involved with Spanish music institutions, my observations suggest that there may be a gradual shift in this trend.

As I progressed in my academic studies, I realized that creating opportunities for oneself was often essential for performance success. Additionally, I recognized that certain skills were necessary to seek out concert opportunities, skills that were not taught in the accordion class. Therefore, I identified the need for an “entrepreneurial spirit,” which may manifest as a natural inclination, intrinsic motivation, or a practical requirement. Recently, my institution has recognized this need and has introduced various career skill studies to assist students in navigating the professional music industry, including courses such as “Working Life

Skills of an Artist: Lecture Try,” “International Creative Business Basics,” “Artist’s Network Visibility,” and “The Working Life Skills of an Artist: How to Write Applications.”

Beginning from this premise, I argue that it is crucial to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge for their future careers early on in their degree program. In fact, I question why this preparation should not begin even earlier. As educators, it is our responsibility to present an accurate representation of the current landscape of the accordion field to our students and provide them with the support and guidance they need. Ideally, institutions should offer specialized training to address this need.

However, in situations where this is not possible, accordion teachers could provide their students with valuable advice and insights. By doing so, we could empower our students with the knowledge and tools they need to succeed in their formative years and establish a solid foundation for their future profession. Ultimately, this would enhance their overall academic experience and ensure that they are well-prepared to navigate the professional music industry. Norwegian accordionist Frode Haltli’s reflection is worth mentioning:

I have thought quite a lot about how I can prepare my students for a professional career. It is unfortunately not enough just to be a talented, clever and hard-working student, even though that is the necessary foundation.
(Haltli 2013, 7.)

This statement by Haltli is worth mentioning as it has been illuminating for me. It was not until the conclusion of my research that I came across Haltli’s article, and I believe it is essential to present it as he has articulated it. Ultimately, accordion teachers have the responsibility of educating students with musical talent and other musical aptitudes. However, without supplementary training in non-musical areas, viable career prospects are unlikely to emerge. It is essential to question why accordion teachers generally do not communicate this to their students, or why students are allowed to study accordion at the university level for four years or more without receiving adequate guidance on the professional landscape.

It is crucial to understand that being an exceptional instrumentalist alone is insufficient. If a teacher is unwilling to provide guidance and support to their students, this not only raises ethical concerns but also presents a

serious issue regarding the students' career prospects. In such cases, it would be more appropriate for teachers to be honest with their students and avoid leading them to pursue a course of study that is unlikely to yield any tangible benefits. What factors may contribute to students graduating without a comprehensive understanding of essential elements in the professional accordion industry? Nevertheless, I acknowledge that different institutions may adopt distinct pedagogical strategies, and I will delve into this matter in my subsequent analysis on the accordion pedagogy field.

In addition to understanding how to seek out job opportunities and being proactive in organizing one's own concerts, could we identify certain critical factors that are essential for success as a concert accordionist? According to my professional accordion mastery, it is a combination of skills, a proactive attitude, and opportunities that enable an accordionist to achieve success. In a conversation with Kulaja, we concurred on the idea that being an active individual and creating one's own projects enhances one's professional impact. In other words, when one has the motivation, playing skills, and the ability to devise a plan to execute a project, the likelihood of success increases significantly.

However, how does one devise a plan to execute a project? How many of us have experienced frustration in attempting to develop a concert plan, feeling unsure of where to begin, what the final document should look like, or to whom it should be addressed? Many of us may have forgotten the struggles we faced in our early stages in this field and may also be aware of the lack of knowledge we still possess. Nevertheless, I believe some of us remember those who helped along the way or the lack thereof. As accordion teachers or pedagogues, I believe it would be wise to reflect on the needs we had and still have and support our students in their efforts to devise a project plan.

As part of the knowledge required for this field, we can assert that the ability to create networks is crucial for the development of a musical career. As Kumpuvaara states, it is vital to be "in the right place at the right time." This alignment can also happen by chance. I would argue that in most cases, this is how it occurs, and one becomes aware of it only after the fact. In contrast to several of my accordion colleagues, Kumpuvaara does not see himself as a proactive musician. Instead, he places more emphasis on his social network, by doing a good job and leaving a positive impression. In accordance with his perspective, being reliable and doing the work

properly is fundamental: “hen you get the call. Then you have a chain of things you have done.” He is also open to any musical proposal he receives: “I always say yes.”

I concur with this statement. Being a professional musician, in terms of musical quality and engagement with the project, will help in building a successful career. The first contact or opportunity may come from someone who knows you. It is important to note that before the advent of social media, there were limited options for self-promotion, so one had to rely on personal connections and reputation. Once established, these connections will remember you for future projects. This was the case for me when I started working for Krater or Smash ensemble, for example. Whenever another project comes up, those musicians will remember you.

In agreement with Kumpuvaara, Kujala believes that to succeed in the professional scene, it is necessary to have networks and that social skills are beneficial for networking. What about having a network of other professional accordionists? Kujala refers to other accordionists who may assist you in the future, whether it be by inviting you to a festival or hosting a masterclass. “Often, some of your playing colleagues might later on during their careers become festival organizers.” It is a common occurrence that individuals with whom one has studied, such as classmates or colleagues, may later play a crucial role in shaping one’s career trajectory. The significance of holding a teaching position at an institution in facilitating dialogues and exchanges among accordionists cannot be overstated. On the other hand, some accordionists have chosen to avoid networking and have focused solely on building their career outside of the accordionist community. I believe that for various reasons and interests, some accordionists have been sceptical about being part of such networks.

In conclusion, networking appears to be a crucial aspect of building a career. Do we know how to network? Of course, the way one creates new connections with people and develops them may vary depending on one’s personality and skills. As I was writing this, a story that Matti Rantanen used to share in his seminars came to mind. Rantanen emphasized the importance of networking and used his colleague Ellegaard as an example of how he structured his schedule when he was fully immersed in his music career. According to Rantanen, to achieve his professional goals as an accordionist, Ellegaard allocated two hours for practicing in the early morning and several hours for writing letters to accordion colleagues, producers, composers, etc.

It is evident that the development of a network and social skills is a crucial aspect to take into account. In this regard, one could inquire about the number of diverse projects in which accordionists have been involved. It is imperative to utilize our skills and networks to participate in the most relevant projects. The question then arises: in what types of projects can I, as an accordionist, become involved?

As previously mentioned, accordion players often take on the role of producing their own projects. This opens up new opportunities for innovation and creativity, as one can conceive and design entirely unique projects. Is this level of versatility comparable to that of other classical instrumentalists? How many of us are involved in producing projects? What playing skills and knowledge are necessary to participate in a diverse range of projects or to explore new paths? These are questions that I have touched upon throughout this chapter, and in the following lines, I will attempt to delve deeper into them.

4.4.1 Multi-skilled musicianship of the accordionist

During my time as a bachelor student at the Sibelius Academy, I was struck by the wide range of music that Finnish accordion students were able to play. In weekly individual accordion lessons, they focused on the original repertoire for the instrument as well as transcriptions, which was not dissimilar to my education. However, in addition, they were able to take lessons on improvisation skills and sight-reading classes. This broad spectrum of musicianship was particularly evident in their ability to improvise and perform in other music styles such as pop and jazz.

Years later, I have pondered whether this type of education was forward-thinking; by providing students with skills and support from the early stages, it enabled future professionals to be multi-skilled and diversify their musical choices. It was in Helsinki in 2005, that I first experienced listening to an accordion in a new context for me, beyond the realm of popular, folk, or classical music. Hearing an accordionist accompanying an opera singer instead of a pianist was also a novel experience for me. There is always a trailblazer who paves the way and helps others to continue developing or innovating in that field. Could it be that no one has dared to break through that barrier? The barrier exists between the opera world and an instrument with popular roots, such as the accordion. I have always believed that my

colleagues were fortunate in their education as musicians; an education that made them become versatile musicians from the early stages of their childhood.

However, is it all about education? Is there something that could be changed in the music education of accordionists to better prepare them for the professional world? I believe that accordionists need to be proactive and seek out work opportunities, but this may not be the case in every country. Furthermore, it's worth considering if this phenomenon is specific to the accordion or if it applies to other instrumentalists without permanent positions. When interviewing Veli Kujala, a leading figure in the Finnish accordion scene, I found that he embodies the characteristics of a prominent concert accordionist with versatile and multi-skilled musicianship. He has opened new paths for the accordion in Finland and maintains a classical accordion profile while also being involved in various other music styles.

When I posed the question of whether he had pioneered a new identity for accordionists in Finland, he replied that it may have been the case. As he reminisced, approximately fifteen years ago another accordionist had told him that he had gotten the idea to play "that music" from him. He stated, "Nevertheless, that was a long time ago." I regard him as a reference for an accordion performer profile that combines exceptional musicianship and the ability to perform various musical styles. I was aware that he was a prolific and versatile artist, but during our conversation, I learned more about the breadth of his career. Kujala has been involved in a range of musical settings, such as studio recording, contemporary music, chamber music, ensemble music, as a soloist with orchestras, free improvisation ensembles, and jazz music. In the past, he has also played in a heavy metal band.

To define his profile, I sought a suitable term. During our conversation, I asked him to describe what it is like to be a modern accordionist from his perspective. I acknowledged that the term "modern" may sound strange or even inappropriate, however, I wanted to hear his assessment and his opinion on how to rephrase it. We ultimately concluded that an accordionist with his profile could be referred to simply as a "concert accordionist," who utilizes his concert accordion's musicianship to perform various styles beyond classical and contemporary music. In summary, we can refer to him as a "versatile concert accordionist."

To forge a versatile profile as an accordionist, one must possess a strong foundation in instrumental skills and techniques. Additionally, an

individual's motivation and personal interests play a crucial role in their exploration and engagement with different music styles.

The better you are everywhere, the better future you will probably have [...]. The fact that I have been doing a little bit of everything [...] does not mean that everyone else has to do it, and it might not be everyone's cup of tea. (Kujala 2021.)

Furthermore, it is important to consider the unique musical and intellectual abilities of the individual that contribute to their versatility as a performer. Overall, a combination of these factors contributes to the development of a diverse and adaptable accordionist profile. Kumpuvaara agrees on it and affirms that,

Studying classical accordion has given me the most important skills on how to play the accordion, and in a way, all begins from there. Then, it is a matter of interest. [...]. When you are grown up and you have studied, we know how to study music, we know how to practice.

Rantanen holds a similar perspective on musical education, recognizing that regardless of the genre of music, the possession of the necessary skills, which he refers to as “fingers-hand-brain,” will enable an individual to approach any type of music.

I do not consistently prioritize the genre of music. My primary objective is to assist each student in effectively handling their instrument, thus enabling them to reach a truly high level of musicianship.

Thus, he maintains that the genre is not of paramount importance. What is more crucial is how we play, regardless of the music being performed. Playing the concert accordion and studying its complex technique and repertoire has provided the skills to explore new repertoires and music. It is interesting to note the importance of having an interest or motivation to tackle new complexities. As with many other fields, having an interest or motivation alone does not guarantee success in achieving a task. Kujala, Rantanen and Kumpuvaara cleverly point out that mastering the instrument has made it possible to play other music styles on the accordion.

One of the questions I asked Kujala was whether it was natural to play the accordion in different music styles, such as pop and jazz. He replied, “It

is not natural. At the time I started, the accordion was not widely used.” In Finland, the accordion was a popular instrument during the 1950s and 1960s, but as Kujala states, it lost some of its popularity in the 1980s, as it was mainly used for popular music.

However, the current landscape is drastically different. Today, we can easily find the accordion in pop bands within the Finnish music scene. Kujala reflects that this change is a testament to the adaptability and versatility of the instrument. He agrees regarding the presence of the instrument within theatre productions: “Someone else would likely have composed the music, rather than an accordionist.” Therefore, we can assert that the presence of the instrument creates a demand for it. In other words, someone must come up with the idea and pave the way for the instrument and future players. As he goes on to explain, another way to create new opportunities for accordion playing may be to view the accordion as a versatile, polyphonic instrument that can be used to imitate or create “a folk-like sound and say, ‘Okay, let’s use the accordion for that’.”

4.4.2 Accordion pedagogy—Music education for future professional accordionists

In the 1970s, higher education institutions in Europe began to open their doors to the accordion. This trend was led by countries such as Denmark, Germany, Norway, and Finland, where prestigious academies such as The Danish Royal Academy (1970), Hochschule für Musik Trossingen (1972), The Norwegian Music Academy (1975), and The Sibelius Academy (1977) began to offer courses and programs in accordion performance and education. As Lhemer (2013) notes, this was a significant step forward for the accordion as a respected and legitimate instrument within the realm of classical music.

Moreover, as stated by the aforementioned author, 25 out of the 28 countries in the European Union, as well as the remaining countries in the Schengen Area, offer higher education opportunities for the accordion. This demonstrates the increasing recognition and acceptance of the accordion as a legitimate instrument in the world of higher education and highlights the widespread availability of formal training for aspiring accordionists across Europe. Furthermore, it is noteworthy to mention that the accordion is currently taught at the Master of Music level (or equivalent) in more than

50 academies throughout Europe, both within the European Union and the Schengen Area (ibid., 10).

Undoubtedly, the field of pedagogy is crucial for the cultivation of future musicians. In particular, the field of accordion pedagogy is of paramount importance. It is clear that each European country has had, and continues to have, its unique development in this field. From a personal perspective, I am well-versed in the Spanish and Finnish contexts. My experiences as an exchange student in 2004, my master's studies and doctoral program at the Sibelius Academy, and my time spent living in Helsinki have provided me with the opportunity to be an active participant in the field and to observe it closely. Furthermore, the conversations and interviews that I conducted during the last year with esteemed individuals such as Matti Rantanen, Marjut Tynkkynen, Veli Kujala and Niko Kumpuvaara served as a valuable source of information for my understanding of the field of accordion pedagogy.

In considering the questions to ask each of the participants, I focused on identifying aspects that each of them could provide in-depth information about. Specifically, Rantanen was identified as a key source for understanding the evolution of the concert accordion and the development of the instrument in its early years within the context of a prestigious institution such as the Sibelius Academy. Tynkkynen, as a member of the first cohort to complete a bachelor's degree in accordion at the Sibelius Academy, was able to offer unique insights into the education received, as well as the repertoire performed, concert activity, and professional opportunities available to accordionists during that period. Kujala and Kumpuvaara, both of whom studied at the Sibelius Academy and have followed similar professional paths, were able to provide valuable perspectives on the contemporary landscape of accordion education and performance, including how they have supported and mutually benefited from each other's careers.

As I have highlighted in the introduction of this thesis, one of the factors that prompted me to pursue a professional career in the realm of chamber music and to ground the artistic component of my studies in this field is partly influenced by the instrumental education I received before my university studies, specifically, by the scarcity of group musical activities, or limited exposure to chamber music (with accordion and in duos). It is widely acknowledged that a comprehensive musical education at all stages of learning is crucial for the development of aspiring professionals.

Furthermore, the knowledge and skills acquired in the early stages of learning are invaluable in the creation of new knowledge.

It is not my intention to elaborate on the merits of a comprehensive musical education, however, as a professional musician with the aforementioned background and experience, I do believe that I am well-positioned to reflect on this topic and to advocate for an education that equips future accordionists with the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake various projects and to be the creators of their work. Ultimately, the success of this endeavor depends on the presence of interest and commitment to teaching, otherwise, a low percentage of students will be able to pursue a career as a concert accordionist. With this in mind, I have chosen to explore this issue and seek the perspectives of professional accordionists who have engaged in teaching activities.

4.4.3 Artistic education vs entrepreneurial education

A recurrent theme throughout my doctoral program, and one that I have discussed with my fellow students, is the need to equip future professional musicians with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the complexities of the world beyond academic institutions. This includes the development of a professional artistic portfolio, the acquisition of marketing strategies, the utilization of social media platforms, the understanding of cultural agents and networks of venues and programmers, and a host of other essential competencies that, owing to their multifaceted nature, cannot be fully incorporated within university studies. Nonetheless, I contend that a minimum level of training and guidance should be mandatory to provide future professional musicians with the tools to succeed in their chosen careers. This is a sentiment that was previously articulated by Norwegian accordionist Frode Haltli in 2013:

I have thought quite a lot about how I can prepare my students for a professional career. It is unfortunately not enough just to be a talented, clever and hard-working student, even though that is the necessary foundation.
(Haltli 2013, 7.)

In recent years, there has been a marked increase in the availability of courses and initiatives aimed at supporting the professionalization of musicians and

their future careers. For example, institutions such as Uniarts Helsinki, in collaboration with Globe Art Point and the Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taike), recently organized the “Boost your Future” career networking event which aimed to enhance the career competencies and employability of students and aspiring professionals within the creative industry. Additionally, the Open University, the Docmus Doctoral School, and the Arts Management Department at the Sibelius Academy, offer training programs that are specifically designed to support the professionalization of musicians.

In line with this, during my interview with Veli Kujala, I enquired about the initiatives implemented at the university level to support students in achieving their future goals in music. My motivation for this question was rooted in my own experience as a master’s degree student in accordion, where I observed a lack of resources focused on this topic. In response, Kujala highlighted the recent lectures on the working life of accordion players that he had organized for degree students at the Sibelius Academy.

I maintain that equipping future professional musicians with the relevant skills and knowledge to succeed in professional musical life beyond academic institutions is essential. In fact, I would argue that this knowledge is of equal importance to the development of technical and musical abilities. Coincidentally, while working on this manuscript, I was informed of the doctoral defense of a fellow student at the Arts Management Department of the Sibelius Academy. The practice-based doctoral dissertation of K. Kuznetsova-Bogdanovitsh (2022) examines the role of entrepreneurial education and mindset in assisting arts students to engage with the market, economy, and working life more broadly. As Kuznetsova-Bogdanovitsh asserts (2022, 123), given that artistic learning is the primary focus of arts universities, entrepreneurial education should be integrated throughout the studies and closely aligned with the core artistic identity of learners.

This idea of integrating entrepreneurial education and artistic studies throughout the musician’s career brought to my memory a comment made by a professor years ago while we were in class: “Naiara, you study to play in concerts.” At the time, I was focused on “improving” my skills, but it was only later that I realized that the ultimate goal of my studies should have been to perform in concert halls and showcase my work. My reaction was a silent answer, but this realization highlighted the gap that existed between my education and the working world. In the same line, Haltli (2013) claims: “I think it is important to start where you are situated:

engage in your academy, meet fellow students, try to find people you like personally and musically!”

Future professional musicians must establish connections within their educational institutions and collaborate with musicians from various specializations, as they will often become their colleagues in the professional realm. As an accordionist, I have observed that generally, we study for more hours than other instrumentalists, perform complex contemporary works, and often experience a solitary working environment, primarily performing solo concert programs or preparing for competitions (a topic which I will delve into further in this thesis).

In retrospect, I had similar thoughts during my early years as a musician: what steps were necessary to secure performance opportunities? Who should I approach? Was there a protocol for approaching organizers? Why were accordionists’ concerts not regularly scheduled, particularly in my region? At the time, it was uncommon for ensembles, orchestras, or other groups to actively seek out accordionists, thus, many professional accordionists had to take initiative to pursue performance opportunities. My own experiences have provided me with answers to many of these questions, and as such, I believe there is scope for improvement in this field of training within universities.

4.4.4 The elementary education and its non-restrictive nature for the future musician: A reflection on the field of pedagogy

This text aims to emphasize the importance of providing diverse and non-restrictive education during the early stages of musical development. It is often assumed that all accordionists begin their musical journey by playing classical music. However, during my years of research, I have encountered numerous professional concert accordionists who had a different experience, with some combining popular music with the so-called ‘serious music’ in their lessons. My own experience was quite different as my accordion training was heavily focused on one specific direction, and folk tunes of my region were rarely incorporated into the original repertoire for the accordion, which included compositions from Russia, Sweden, Germany, and Finland, among others. Furthermore, as previously discussed, I believe the lack of chamber music lessons was a limitation in my own education.

I was not familiar with the musical education of other international young accordionists until I studied outside of my country for the first time. My only interaction with students from other countries was at the international music competition held annually in the Basque town of Arrasate. However, the only category in which they participated was the highest level, catering to university students, thus making it impossible to hear young performers.

With that in mind, I was particularly interested in understanding the accordion education in the early stages of Kumpuvaara and Kujala. To date, I am familiar with their musical careers and have observed an evolution since 2004, when I first met them. Kumpuvaara's focus at the time was on contemporary music interpretation, and in Kujala's case, it allowed me to experience the accordion being played outside of the typical "cult" repertoire for the first time. As Kumpuvaara (2021) explains:

I started when I was four, and I played everything that pop-up into my mind. When I was six, I made this kind of decision that I would only play classical music. And I stopped playing everything else. From there on, to the Sibelius Academy, I was just focused on classical stuff, I did not play much anything else than classical music. The first two-three years at the Academy, were the same.

Contrary to my idea, Kujala did not follow the classical path from the early stages. As he says, he experienced the opposite story.

My dream was to become a jazz player, so at the same time I started with the classical and contemporary accordion, at the age of thirteen-fourteen, I started to listen to jazz and try to play it by ear. At that time, I never thought about making a career with the concert accordion.

We have just read about how students may have their own interests and determination to play one music style or another. What then is the role of the teacher? When students have an inner motivation to try new things, I believe that a teacher should provide guidance and nurture that interest. As we saw in the example of Kujala, his interest in jazz music led him to find his own way of performing it on the accordion. The innovative aspect of Kujala was his use of the free-bass system to perform jazz on the accordion, which he developed independently. At the age of 18, Kujala had no reference to previous performers doing the same, but later discovered

that in the 1950s there was an accordionist in the Netherlands who also used the free-bass system.⁵

This highlights the importance of allowing students to explore and find their own interests. I am confident that numerous technical and musical elements of accordion performance can be analyzed and implemented within various musical styles. Additionally, there is the consideration of the instructor's proficiency and understanding in finding alternative methods for teaching specific concepts or incorporating diverse repertoire.

During my studies of the accordion, I have come to realize that acquiring knowledge through both self-study and engagement with the contributions of others is essential for the development of professional skills and the deepening of musical understanding. It is undeniable that gaining a thorough understanding of the knowledge imparted by one's teachers throughout one's years of study is crucial, as is the process of enriching oneself through the incorporation of external perspectives and the reworking of one's own knowledge.

Furthermore, it is crucial to consider that to furnish our students with the most comprehensive education possible, we should invite specialist artists in the subject matter. This approach serves as a means of introducing new styles that may not have been studied in the lessons, but that are prevalent and should be made available to students, to broaden their knowledge and potential future professional opportunities.

However, in the context of guest lectures, I believe that it would be more beneficial to approach topics in a manner that allows for the extrapolation of these concepts or ideas to apply to a range of pieces, or one's musicianship. By focusing on the transferability of skills and knowledge, rather than providing specific guidelines for a single piece, these lectures could provide valuable insights that can be applied to a wide range of musical situations. In addition to serving as a source of motivation and inspiration, guest lectures that challenge attendees to think critically about problem-solving and encourage them to explore their own musical interests could foster a more dynamic and self-driven approach to learning.

⁵ During my conversation with Rantanen, I discovered that the accordionist in question was Mat Mathews (1924-2009)

One of the queries I posed to Kumpuvaara pertained to his perspective on the diversification of accordion education in the early stages. He opined that such diversification would be advantageous for all stakeholders, including the teacher, as it would render their job more dynamic and versatile. Kumpuvaara highlighted the flexibility of the institution where he works as a key factor that enables him to tailor his classes to the specific needs of his students. He provided an example of a student who was considering abandoning accordion playing, and how, upon a request for assistance from another educator, he formulated a bespoke program for the student, thus demonstrating his commitment to catering to individual student interests. As Kumpuvaara himself stated,

For this person, it opened a totally new path. He is not going to be a professional musician, but he plays very good jazz already. A rare case in music schools. The student wins, the school wins because the student stays and I win: I need to study jazz pedagogy, a method to teach jazz, [...].
(Kumpuvaara 2021.)

Undoubtedly, for a teacher to have the resources to adapt to the musical needs and interests of their students, they require a comprehensive education. While it is not a common occurrence, instances where accomplished musicians also serve as educators can result in a noteworthy contribution to the education of accordionists. In other words, the more proficient the educator is, the more experience they possess in performance, the more extensive their knowledge base, the more versatile their abilities and the more comprehensive their education, the more tools they will have to instruct their students.

4.4.5 Possible markers for succeeding in a music career as a concert accordionist

As part of the chapter dedicated to multi-skilled musicianship, it has been observed that musicians who have achieved and maintain a successful career possess a versatile profile that enables them to explore different musical domains, including the creation of new areas for the accordion. In conversation with Kujala (2021), he astutely reflected on the tendency for musicians to envy the accomplishments of other performers in their careers, and the advice he imparts to his students:

It is never useful to be envious of some fellow accordion player. It does not help and, probably, without that person the project would not have existed, or it would have been played on another instrument and not on the accordion. Therefore, everybody creates their own work opportunities and, thus, it is very important to keep eyes open in multiple directions. Of course, it is fundamental to have certain skills, at least adequate skills.

The topic of envying other accordionists and even attempting to discredit them is quite prevalent, I suppose as in other specialties or society in general; it is a subject I have not previously considered, but perhaps the tendency is more pronounced in our field due to the limited job market—although I reiterate the possibility of creating new spaces—and by discrediting others, they may believe that those opportunities will end up in their hands. Nonetheless, I would like to emphasize the second idea, where he emphasizes that it is the actions of a specific individual that make a project successful, thereby reinforcing the idea of being the creator of your own projects. To achieve this, he considers it important to be aware of what is happening in the music scene. Haltli shares this opinion when he advises his students, “As well as concentrating on your studies, it is important to get out there and play some music, keep your eyes and ears open to other kinds of music than your main interest” (2013, 7).

According to the descriptions provided by Kujala and Haltli, it can be inferred that the job opportunities for accordionists are linked to their ability to create job opportunities, be an active player, and be aware of the music scene to formulate their own ideas.

On the one hand, it is advisable to have a proactive attitude towards the music scene, not just related to the world of the accordion. Being aware of what is happening in the music industry gives an understanding of the current situation; by conducting research, one can become familiar with the work of previous accordionists. Is this sufficient? I would argue that to open new paths, it is crucial to look towards the future and envision new territories where one, as an accordionist, can fit. I believe that this is what every pioneer has done.

In the same vein, another crucial aspect that Kujala highlights is the possession of performance skills. In my opinion, this should be the primary and most valuable skill. At this stage, I have questioned how many of us

have not taken the initiative to start a new project or accept an invitation for a new musical venture because we did not feel sufficiently proficient in the music or did not possess the necessary skills. As teachers, we must guide our students. Is it necessary to be an expert in a field to begin a new project? As Kujala states, “You do not necessarily have to be the best. You need to be proficient at your instrument, not a beginner, good at a professional level.” Nevertheless, without a doubt, “The better you are in all areas, the better your future prospects will likely be.”

Musicianship is the term that I have heard most frequently in conversations with my peers. Kumpuvaara asserts unequivocally that “Musicianship is the most important aspect, followed by the instrument... secondarily. [...]. The greater the musicianship, the smaller the role of the instrument becomes, as it is simply a tool for expressing musicianship.” Similarly, Serbian accordionist Milos Miligojevic, based in London, states that “Accordion players must first become musicians and then accordion players. A knowledge of classical music repertoire is an essential way to learn the differences between styles” (Milos 2013, 26).

When examining Kujala’s formation as an artist, several markers that have aided him in achieving his goal in addition to his playing skills can be identified: motivation, determination, and a proactive attitude towards acquiring education in jazz basics, for example. At this juncture, I would also like to highlight another factor that is not under the control of the performer: the academic instruction offered by one’s institution and the availability of courses that are not part of the curriculum. This was the case for Kujala when he applied and was granted the opportunity to take jazz lessons at the Sibelius Academy’s jazz department. Kumpuvaara also speaks to similar experiences in obtaining the education necessary to develop his musicianship:

Everything is available these days, especially in Finland. Also, during my studies at the Sibelius Academy: if you want to learn jazz improvisation, you can learn it while you study classical accordion... not as your main thing but as a secondary study. When you already have the possibility to start studying it, then it is easy to continue.

As he states, initial exposure facilitates continued work in a new field. Often, the first contact is sufficient to make it successful and develop it further in the future. Based on his experience, in the modeling of musicianship, it is

evident how crucial it is to have the opportunity to receive education in other fields that are not one's main area of study. The flexibility of the curriculum towards a degree and the willingness of teachers to offer their subjects to students from other departments are fundamental. The Sibelius Academy serves as an exemplar of the success of this combination. Regarding potential fears of not being as proficient as trained jazz instrumentalists, he asserts that "You do not have to be as good as a saxophonist in improvisation when you are proficient in your instrument."

I believe that not a few of us have felt nervous and intimidated when playing with musicians who were highly educated in another musical field. I used to experience it every time I embarked on a new project that wasn't solo playing: as part of a contemporary ensemble with a conductor, playing with a folk music ensemble, recording an album with jazz musicians, and other occasions. The initial reaction may have been to wonder how to manage to do it at the highest level, and the second was to prepare as well as possible to minimize that feeling of insecurity; being as ready as possible for the scheduled date was a guarantee of enjoying it. I believe that this initial uncertainty leads one to work hard enough on the task and to perform to the best of one's ability. As Kumpuvaara states, "Musicianship will always be appreciated if you can find a way while doing convince with it. It is something that you must rely on."

On the other hand, there may also be a type of student who never questions their work and who has little self-criticism of their playing. During the study years, and in cases where the initial reaction is "I can do it, because I am a great performer", the final musical result may not be as satisfactory as it could be. This is a personal observation based on experiences that I have seen repeated on several occasions.

It is not my intention to suggest that one should impede themselves from undertaking musical projects, but rather to acknowledge that musicianship is crucial for attaining success. Kumpuvaara advocates for the taking of initiative and not questioning the capability of the accordion to interpret the specified music: "This is what we should do, do not be so shy about what we can play, something will work better, something will work worse. In orchestra and chamber music it is good to expand the need of the repertoire."

To summarise, as previously stated, once one accordionist opens a path and creates the space or need for the instrument, more accordionists

can continue it. In this way, the performer transforms their identity into something else or a more diverse profile, and the accordion also benefits from it: it becomes more familiar to the audience, embraces new venues and its presence becomes more natural. Additionally, it can generally be said that the status of the instrument is elevated.

4.4.6 Accordion pedagogy and chamber music collaborations with composers

After engaging in discourse with Rantanen, I must admit that my once rigid view on the necessity of integrating accordionists with other instrumentalists from the onset of their education has undergone a reevaluation. Rantanen's training involved participation in accordion orchestras, as well as in a duo with Merja Ikkela and in a trio that performed Pihlajamaa's compositions. As he stated, participating in an ensemble was an invaluable learning experience. When he had the opportunity to perform with a cellist for the first time on Finnish television, it was certainly exhilarating, yet it did not feel entirely foreign—it simply presented itself as a situation where he was collaborating with another musician.

In my discussions with Kujala, I highlighted this issue and presented the rationale behind the topic as previously discussed in this thesis. Kujala informed me that in the Autumn term of 2021, he initiated a course in collaboration with the Department of Composition and Music Theory at his institution. The chamber music ensemble consisted of piano, accordion, kantele and guitar, and they focused on Jukka Tiensuu's compositions. Notably all four instruments are non-orchestral. Kujala explains that this approach allows for a unique and diverse musical experience for both the performers and the audience.

Composers do not learn to write for them [these instruments] during their studies. In orchestration studies, they work with orchestral instruments, but they do not learn the ones which are mainly much more used in contemporary music than in any other [field].

The objective of the workshop is to demonstrate to composition students how to effectively compose for this unique quartet. A key aspect for the accordionists is the need to articulate their instrument in a manner that

composers can easily understand and create new pieces for it. In this process, students receive guidance from their teacher during the initial lesson, which focuses on the presentation of the instrument. Additionally, at the same institution, and open to all instruments, there is the NYKY Ensemble, a contemporary music group led by Professor Tuija Hakkila and a project that has been ongoing since 2009. The group holds several sessions throughout the academic year, under the direction of various teachers, and serves as a platform for experiencing contemporary music. It is through such projects that students can gain familiarity with ensemble playing, the role of a conductor, etc.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to consider the various other opportunities available as part of the optional studies. During the current academic year, there are at least two courses that focus on ensemble playing: the Contemporary Music Ensemble, offered as part of the optional studies, and the Performance Practices and Repertoire Research, intended for master students. The goal of the first course is to impart to students the ability to understand and perform 20th and 21st-century music, to develop concert programs for ensemble playing, to manage projects, and to collaborate on musical projects. The second course, on the other hand, is geared towards providing students with the knowledge and skills to use historical and analytical studies of music in planning artistic programs and in interpreting them.

4.4.7 Accordion pedagogy and studies on free improvisation

The current landscape of contemporary music appears to place an increasingly significant emphasis on improvisation as a skill. This is particularly evident in the curriculum for the academic year 2022–23, which includes the offering of the course *Advanced Free improvisation*, in addition to the already offered *Free accompaniment and improvisation 1–2* within the undergraduate program for accordion.

To secure a future as a musician within the realm of contemporary music, it is essential to stay informed about the current state of the industry and to identify areas where the presence of accordionists is particularly sought after. Undoubtedly, chamber music represents one such area, with a higher demand for accordionists in comparison to solo performances. Additionally, Kujala proposes a new field of endeavor:

[...] Probably if you want to go straight contemporary part, you must have good chamber music skills, and know what is to play as a soloist, of course alone and with the orchestra. It would be good to have some improvisation skills that do not have to be harmony related anyway, but you need contemporary improvisation skills, which is more and more composers going in that direction.

In light of this, the research project being undertaken by Helsinki-based Italian pianist and improviser Libero Mureddu came to mind, in which Kujala was a participant in at least one concert. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to discuss this topic with Jaak Sikk, a pianist and fellow presenter at a conference in Tallinn (2019). Currently, he is a Lecturer in Contemporary Improvisation at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, which offers a Master's Program in Contemporary Improvisation. Therefore, it can be argued that this is an area in which the accordion can naturally establish its place. This is supported by Kujala's assertion that, "it is not so far away from contemporary music, except for the lack of scores to read, but it is basically the same music."

In response to my inquiry as to whether the development of skills in the field of contemporary music is essential for pursuing a career as a contemporary musician, he maintained that, at the very least, an openness to such development is necessary. He posits that one cannot solely rely on personal development; it is always crucial to collaborate with others. Of course, certain aspects can be honed individually, but effective communication can only be achieved through interaction with others.

On the other hand, the tradition of accordion competitions has long been recognized as a valuable pedagogical resource within the music community. Throughout history, these competitions have provided accordionists with a unique opportunity to come together and exchange musical ideas, converse with teachers, schedule concerts, and more. I find it interesting to look back and see what concept pioneers such as Ellegard had about competitions in the 1960s:

The modern music world is undoubtedly more competitive than ever. The ratio between supply and demand is alarming, and only the fittest survive. A music context represents just another means of establishing a categorical comparison between musical performances. But how does one choose a

winner in a music context? [...] And it is rather impossible to find some strict, categorical measure by which a musical performance can be scored as superior or inferior to some other musical performance-by so and so many points. (Ellegard 1965, 40.)

Thus, Ellegard not only critiques the very essence of competitions but also describes the highly competitive nature of the music world at the time. In this regard, and building upon his earlier statements, he continues with an observation that may be valid today:

It is therefore understandable that the music context is a highly controversial institution in the music world. It might be regarded as a showcase for an artist who wants to demonstrate his skills in the hope of attracting favourable attention. And it is true that some fortunate musicians started a brilliant career through a prize in some important music context. (Ellegard 1965, 40.)

Although advancements in mobility and teacher exchange programs have made accordion competitions more commonplace in recent years, they remain a significant event in the school year for many students and their instructors. In fact, many teachers actively encourage their students to participate in these competitions. However, it is important to acknowledge that competitions can also have both positive and negative impacts on participants. As such, it is essential to consider the potential benefits and drawbacks when deciding whether or not to participate.

Accordion competitions have served as a catalyst for the advancement of the instrument, as having a set date on the calendar and a repertoire that must be performed at the highest level poses a constant challenge and pressure to study. Consequently, they can undoubtedly provide a valuable opportunity for concert training with serious repertoire, but at the same time, they can also be limiting in terms of developing a career as an accordionist. This is because the programs performed in these competitions are often not representative of the concert programs that would attract programmers. Because of this, it is of interest to consider the arguments put forward by Haltli:

I think the horizon is too narrow if you are only aiming for competitions and adjusting your repertoire with that as a primary goal. [...]. If you are a pianist or a violinist there is

at least a professional market after the competitions where you in principle can make a living from playing the same repertoire, this is not the case with the repertoire played in most accordion competitions. (Haltli 2013, 8.)

Although several accordionists have established successful careers outside of the accordion community, it is noteworthy that such individuals may find themselves in need of community connections once they secure a professorship at the university level. These connections provide a valuable means of attracting students, facilitating exchanges between professors, arranging concerts at diverse institutions, and more. As such, it is essential to recognize the significance of community ties when seeking to advance one's career in academia, even in fields where these connections may not initially seem pertinent.

4.4.8 The figure of the professional accordionist as a researcher

It is not within the purview of my research to provide an exhaustive compilation of written literature on the accordion. The literature on my instrument that I have consulted has served as a source of information throughout the first section of this chapter, wherein I have referenced the work conducted by accordionists who have primarily focused on the historical aspect of the instrument. In recent years, accordionists have begun to engage in reflection on issues related to composition, collaboration with composers, pedagogical concerns, and even offering insights into their artistic practice.

Throughout this chapter, I have cited the work of several accomplished accordionists, presented their reflections, and engaged in scholarly dialogue with them on specific topics outlined in their literature. With regard to the academic realm, it is notable that several accordionists are currently engaged in the development of their doctoral theses at various European institutions, including the Sibelius Academy, and others have recently completed and published their theses. I am convinced that there are currently new publications, research and dissertations in progress, and there are likely publications of which I am unaware and that are not accessible to the broader community, as it can be challenging to stay informed in an international context.

It is without a doubt that this is an area of study that is likely in its nascent stages, and it is expected that a considerable number of accordion performers will delve—both within the academic sphere and beyond—into contemplations on the present and future state of the accordion. It is worth mentioning the esteemed Italian accordionist and educator, Claudio Jacomucci. I had the privilege of first experiencing his performances at a concert in San Sebastián, Spain, where he was already deviating from the conventional standards of accordionists. His innovative approach, which incorporated elements such as the concert space, lighting, and attire, was groundbreaking for the standards of the time in the mid-1990s.

Claudio Jacomucci has been a pioneering figure in fostering collective efforts to reflect on the accordion's musical landscape. He is the driving force behind the collection, *Modern Accordion Perspectives*, which features “articles and interviews on classical accordion literature, pedagogy, and its artistic and professional perspectives” (Jacomucci 2013, 2). Specifically, the project entitled *Modern Accordion Perspectives #2, CRITICAL SELECTION OF ACCORDION WORKS COMPOSED BETWEEN 1990 AND 2010*, was a collaborative effort between sixty-six accordion professionals from diverse backgrounds, who aimed to collect and catalogue a significant number of works with varied aesthetics and origins.

I invited a number of renowned accordionists and young talents to write their considerations on the recent developments of classical accordion literature, pedagogy and its artistic, professional perspectives. A collection of articles and interviews entitled Modern Accordion Perspectives was published in 2013. (2014, 4.)

Afterwards, a year later, the contributors to the aforementioned articles assembled to deliberate and emphasize the conclusions drawn from the reflections:

During this meeting, it became clear that there is a big gap between the extremely rich literature composed for/with our instrument in the last 20 years and the anachronistic and partial programs of academic studies and competitions, between the huge variety of performing projects existing and the lack of vision and creativity of the average accordionist in presenting him/herself on the professional scene. We all agreed on the fact that the lack of information (or the excess

of undefined information) could be one of the causes of this stagnation. (Jacomucci 2014, 4.)

It is clear that the conclusions drawn in this text pertain to the field of education—specifically, the academic curriculum—and that the authors understand that the current repertoire and pedagogical materials used (at the time of writing, 2013) might differ in quality and characteristics to the works being composed for the instrument today. Additionally, the authors advocate for a greater degree of creativity and commercial acumen when designing projects and marketing them to producers. While there may have been a shift in this regard since 2013, it is also worth considering whether the authors themselves, as teachers and market experts, may have contributed to this lack of information.

Furthermore, one may question how many of them have pursued musical careers in which creativity is a key component. While the lack of information may indeed have been a contributing factor, it would have been beneficial to have access to the specific conclusions drawn by the authors. In general, it appears that there has been significant neglect in guiding future professionals, and it is possible that the so-called “accordion bubble” has resulted in a disconnection from current musical trends and an unawareness of the “real world.” As Kumpuvaara states, when young students go to him and ask for advice, he advice that they can visit “the bubble”, but not to consider it to be an important thing. If one becomes too entrenched within that circle, nobody outside of it will have a genuine interest in what occurs within. This statement serves as a valuable reminder that while it may be beneficial to participate in insular communities or subcultures, it is essential to maintain a broader perspective and avoid becoming too isolated from the larger world. By doing so, individuals can ensure that their work and ideas remain relevant and accessible to a wider audience beyond their immediate circle.

4.5 Conclusions

The accordion is an instrument with a rich and diverse history, deeply rooted in folk music and increasingly valued in classical music. As a result, the identity of a professional concert accordionist is complex and multifaceted. In this section, I have delved into some of the key aspects of this identity,

drawing on my own experiences and observations as a student and as a professional accordion performer and pedagogue.

One of the defining characteristics of a professional concert accordionist is a deep appreciation and understanding of the instrument's history and cultural significance. This involves not only technical proficiency but also a broad knowledge of different musical genres and styles, as well as an awareness of the social and historical contexts in which the accordion has been used.

At the same time, being able to navigate the changing cultural and artistic landscapes of contemporary music is a significant advantage for professional concert accordionists. It allows them to experiment with new styles and techniques while maintaining a strong connection to the instrument's roots and traditions. In addition to possessing technical and artistic skills, having strong business and marketing acumen is also highly beneficial. This involves developing a brand and a unique artistic voice, as well as building a network of contacts in the music industry and cultivating a strong social media presence.

Finally, we can affirm that the artistic identity of a professional concert accordionist is shaped by a deep commitment to the craft of music-making and a willingness to constantly push oneself to new heights of artistic expression. This involves ongoing practice and study, as well as a dedication to personal growth and self-reflection.

In accordance with Thomson's (2021, 23) perspective, I can assert that the continuous development and transformation of my artistic identity is an active and evolving progression that results from my engagements with others and the environment around me. Within the sphere of my solo accordion performances, I can discern how these components, which consist of my personal experiences, musical encounters, and the curation of particular distinct characteristics, have contributed to molding my identity and subsequently impacting my approach towards playing the accordion in concerts.

At the outset, I would like to challenge whether my musical education during my formative years has restricted my growth as an accordionist. In comparison to other classical instrumentalists, did my training provide me with the necessary skills to effectively navigate the professional challenges I have encountered? As I previously stated, my early music education opportunities between the ages of nine and nineteen lacked sufficient chamber music learning experiences, as well as a sense of collective music-making and belonging to a group. However, I took a proactive approach

to seek out the training and experiences that I felt were missing from my education. By doing so, I was able to broaden my musical perspective and gain valuable exposure to cultural and musical diversity through residing abroad and collaborating with musicians who approached music from varying perspectives. Overall, my positive attitude towards seeking out new opportunities, overcoming obstacles and being an active participant in my musical development has been crucial in shaping my growth as a musician.

In the context of constructing the new identity of an accordionist, the question of equality is an important aspect that merits further examination. The underrepresentation of female professional musicians in the field has been well-documented with various initiatives being undertaken to rectify this imbalance (Pendle 2010; Pendle and Boyd 2010). These include cataloguing outstanding female musicians, compiling lists of notable female composers, and publishing articles on the most prominent women in music of a particular country, among others. One notable example of this is the book *Women in Music: A Research and Information Guide* by authors Karin Pendle and Melinda Boyd (2010), which aims to provide a comprehensive and enlightening tool for those interested in understanding the roles, activities, and accomplishments of women in music. As the authors themselves acknowledge, the sheer volume of material on this topic has become such that it is now impossible to list it all, “material on women, their musical activities, and their works has appeared during recent years that it would be impossible to list them all” (Pendle and Boyd 2010, xi). Another valuable initiative is the online resource by Fronczak (2016). The website serves as a useful starting point for discovering and locating music written by women throughout history. This resource provides a platform to showcase and promote the work of women composers.

In the field of accordion music, there appears to be a dearth of scholarly examination of the role and representation of female accordionists. This text aims to address this gap in the literature by considering a series of questions that have arisen from my observations and reflections over the years. My thesis posits that within the accordion music scene, there is potential for a shift in which women may assume more prominent and academically relevant positions.

To contextualize this argument, I will begin by providing a brief historical overview of the representation of female accordionists within accordion literature. The limited references to female accordionists within such

literature suggest that throughout history, the presence of female accordionists has been relatively scarce. However, it is important to note that the absence of representation does not necessarily indicate a lack of presence or participation. Therefore, this assumption should be critically evaluated. It is acknowledged that there are not many notable female figures within the accordion music scene that have been documented from the instrument's origins to the mid-20th century.

Despite this, references to various female figures have been passed down through literature written for the accordion. In a previous chapter, I referred to Loise Reisner, who composed and premiered the first known original work for the instrument, *Thème très varié*, in Paris in 1836. We have also examined the history of the accordion in North America in the 20th century, where the musical landscape was dominated by men. However, some women stood out and achieved recognition among the masses by performing the music in vogue at the time. Jacobson highlights the work of several accordionists who achieved great success in the country with music intended for entertainment.

Accordion playing, like most other forms of “serious” music making, was primarily a male occupation, but female players appeared in vaudeville: Suzette Carsell, Helene Criscio, and the “romantic and delightful Spanish accordionist Opalita.” All three played as part of duet acts: Suzette with her sister, Criscio and Opalita with their husbands. (Jacobson 2012, 34.)

In terms of literature specifically written for the accordion, it is not until 1994 with the doctoral thesis of Dr. Helka Kymäläinen⁶ that an accordionist becomes a Doctor of Music and the author of a reference book. Throughout this work, I have referenced other women, and in turn, I have noticed a lack of articles or texts written by female accordionists themselves.

More recently, there is no doubt that the figure of accordionists has become more prominent and acknowledged. When examining the so-called Scandinavian school, particularly in Finland, Rantanen consistently

⁶ Kymäläinen, Helka. 1994. *Harmonikka taidemusiikissa: Ohjelmiston kehitys ja soittimelliset erityispiirteet : special instrumental features of the accordion, the main accordion techniques and figures and their musical notation, catalogue of works = The accordion in classical music*. Sibelius-akatemia ; Suomen harmonikkainstituutti.

highlights the exceptional work of his peers, Sirkka Kellopuro and Merja Ikkelä, and references them in his book (2019) which is dedicated to the history of the accordion in Finland. It was in 1974, when for the first time, the three of them applied for a scholarship from the Finnish Ministry of Education to commission a work from three prominent figures in composition at the time, Einar Englund, Matti Rautio and Aulis Salinen (Rantanen 2019, 49).

Undoubtedly, the first generation of accordionists who graduated from the accordion class of the Sibelius Academy was exceptional. Helka Kymäläinen, Heidi Velamo and Marjut Tynkkynen continued the work begun by their mentor, Matti Rantanen. In the 1980s, they continued to collaborate with numerous composers both within their country and internationally (2019, 51). Subsequently, this work has been carried on by numerous graduates of the Sibelius Academy, however, in the list of notable former students who continued to create repertoire in a remarkable way from the 1990s onwards, the names of female students are no longer prominent.

Concerning that first generation, it is worth highlighting the work of Marjut Tynkkynen, who has been praised by Rantanen himself as an outstanding concert performer on multiple occasions and has collaborated with renowned figures such as Kalevi Aho. Both Velamo, Kymäläinen, and Tynkkynen have continued to engage in their work at the Sibelius Academy in various departments for many years, and their contributions to the development of concert accordion have been undeniable, both as performers and educators.

Other figures of the same generation who have earned respect and reputation, and who have consistently been referenced by our teachers, include the German-based Professor Mie Miki, and the work of Miny Dekkers in the Netherlands. Another prominent figure who has been very active, including serving as a member of a jury in competitions, and collaborating with figures such as Sofia Gubaidulina, is Swiss Elsbeth Moser.

There is no denying that the presence of women in the music industry has significantly increased in recent years. It would be impossible to compile a list of notable figures without including a significant number of female musicians. The number of women graduating from higher education institutions has risen, and in my own experience during my undergraduate studies in the Basque Country, my class as well as the following year's class were composed entirely of women. This trend has been observed in

other courses as well. Moreover, the notable participation of women in music competitions cannot be overlooked, as female musicians have earned recognition and acclaim in a variety of international and instrumental competitions. However, it is worth considering the representation of women in specific roles, such as freelance accordion concert performers. One could also ask how many of the concert performers we are familiar with are women.

An aspect that requires further examination is the representation of women in permanent professorial positions for accordion and related subjects within European universities. The data provided by Lhermet in his thesis (2016) could serve as a starting point for research, even if some years have passed since its publication.

In addition to the need for further examination, it is also essential to consider the potential implications of the representation of women in permanent professorial positions for accordion and related subjects within European universities. A study could be carried out to analyze the results of the data provided by Lhermet's thesis and to identify any patterns or trends that may exist. This study could also explore the reasons behind the limited female presence in these positions and consider any potential solutions to address this issue.

Considering everything, the identity of a professional concert accordionist is multifaceted and complex, encompassing technical, artistic, cultural, business, and personal aspects. As I continue to develop my own career as a concert accordionist, I look forward to exploring these different facets of my identity and deepening my understanding of the richness involved in it.

5. A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE OF THE CONCERT ACCORDION MUSIC SCENE

Upon examination of the present state of the concert accordion, it becomes clear that the evolution of the accordion as an instrument, and as a component in a variety of projects of diverse nature, is incontestable. It would not be an exaggeration to assert that it is the instrument that has undergone the most significant evolution in the last seventy years. The question that remains open is: What potential improvements can be made? What steps should be taken in the future?

I argue that, despite the significant progress made in achieving parity with other classical instruments, there are still certain aspects in which the accordion lags behind. However, it is important to note that this should not be seen as a limitation, but rather as an opportunity for growth and innovation. On the contrary, the fact that the accordion was not included in certain musical formations has created new opportunities for innovation and creativity. The unique qualities of the accordion, including its ability to surprise audiences, create new opportunities for performance and artistic expression. As the music landscape continues to evolve, it is clear that the accordion will play an increasingly prominent role in the field.

Even today, an accordion recital can captivate and surprise the general public, making any project that includes the accordion novel and attention-grabbing. Thus, any project that includes the accordion can capture the attention of audiences and receive praise. In conclusion, the accordion's continued growth and prominence in contemporary music underscores its value and potential as an instrument.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that the classical contemporary music world presents challenges for accordionists seeking to make a living solely from performance. Due to a variety of factors, including limited performance opportunities and a lack of recognition in some traditional classical circles, many accordionists choose to supplement their income through teaching positions in educational institutions. Hence, we can affirm that most of the active concert accordionists hold teaching positions in educational institutions. This trend is particularly prevalent at the conservatory and music school level, where accordionists are in demand as educators. Therefore, it is important for accordionists to not only cultivate their performance skills but also gain knowledge in pedagogy to succeed in their careers. As Draugsvoll astutely points out, "Most of us will also teach

during our professional lives, and it is therefore just as important to have a pedagogical education as well” (2013, 23).

The Norwegian accordionist, Frode Haltli, serves as a paradigmatic example of an accordionist who dedicates a significant portion of his artistic endeavors to performing in a diverse array of styles and musical formations. As a researcher in this field, I consider that it holds great merit for him to expound upon what he perceives as essential for the cultivation of a successful career as an accordionist.

The only way to survive as an accordionist today is to be creative! You need to invent your own job, you need to always be ahead in your musical thinking, always planning new projects. You need to work with partners who have the same hunger as you (they could be musicians, dancers, artists, whatever). And you need to communicate to promoters and audiences that what you are doing is something unique!
(Haltli 2013, 8.)

The previously mentioned ideas align with the observations made by Kujala and Kumpuvaara. Nevertheless, it is crucial to consider to what extent accordion educators convey these guidelines to their students during their academic studies. As musicians face various challenges, it would be advantageous for educators to provide guidance and assistance in the early stages of project development. This can facilitate a more effective learning process and equip students with the necessary tools to tackle obstacles in their future careers.

In addition to the challenge of devising an original and alluring project for the market, financial constraints often serve as a limiting factor in the design and implementation process. It is important to note, however, that some countries have taken steps to support artists in this regard. For instance, Finland has a rich tradition of providing grants through private foundations to aid artists in achieving their goals. Despite these efforts, it is still crucial for accordionists to be resourceful and creative in finding ways to fund their projects and bring their artistic visions to life.

Undoubtedly, a significant number of artistic projects in Europe are realized through grants provided by various public and private institutions. However, it is worth considering whether students in the field are sufficiently informed and trained in navigating this landscape. Not all individuals may possess

the skills or resources necessary to take on the role of producer, and some may be unaware of the available opportunities. Thus, it would be beneficial for educators and academic institutions to provide training in this subject matter, as it is increasingly necessary for today's professional musicians to possess a wide range of skills beyond their musical abilities. Developing skills in grant writing, fundraising, and project management can be instrumental in securing funding for new works, organizing performances and tours, and building a successful career as a concert accordionist.

By integrating training in these areas into their curriculum, educational institutions can better prepare their students for the realities of the modern music industry and equip them with the tools they need to thrive as professional musicians. From personal experience, I have witnessed many accordionists struggle with grant applications due to a lack of knowledge or guidance. Providing prior information and guidelines would have greatly facilitated the process and prevented unnecessary frustration. By doing so, aspiring accordionists can better understand the financial constraints and opportunities of the market, and effectively realize their creative visions.

The issue of repertoire circulation, which refers to premiering works that are subsequently not performed again at other festivals, is closely related to the topic at hand. While grants are often provided to promote new works, it is not uncommon for premiered works to never be performed again. This highlights the need to challenge the preconception that there is a lack of compositions for the accordion. As Lhermet (2013) observes, the accordion “does not suffer anymore from a lack of musical works, but rather from a huge problem of circulation of the repertoire throughout Europe” (ibid., 11).

Many accordionists may feel that the effort put into preparing for a premiere is not rewarded with further performance opportunities. The requirement to propose a premiere to gain access to festivals may also contribute to this issue. Consequently, a significant number of works may never be known by other accordionists. It is therefore imperative to provide easier access to information about these works, enabling accordionists to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the broad range of compositions within the accordion repertoire.

Hence, the reasons why many of the premiered works nowadays are seldom performed again or on rare occasions differ significantly from the situation described by Ellegard in an article in 1964. In the early stages of collaborations with composers, Ellegard refers to the number of works

commissioned by accordion associations, “during the past few years various accordion organisations have announced proudly—and with regular intervals—the commissioning and completion of new original accordion works by well-known composers. ...”, which raises a question that I have asked years later: “Why is it that most of the commissioned works are rarely heard—after their first gallantly arranged premiere performance?”(ibid, 28). The reasons he cites are the shortage of qualified interpreters, as “few accordionists possess the technical skill, the musical maturity, and the demanding comprehension of artistic values in contemporary music, which would qualify them as interpreters of the commissioned works”(ibid). Additionally, he asserts unequivocally that the most conspicuous reason for the failing popularity of the new original accordion literature “is to be found in the works themselves...” (ibid.).

It is indisputable that it is currently unfeasible to have full control and awareness of the entire accordion repertoire. As stated by Rantanen himself, he has lost count of the number of works composed each year in his home country. Nonetheless, it is accurate to say that when a distinguished composer creates a composition for the accordion, this information tends to spread beyond geographical boundaries. For example, I recall works such as Magnus Lindberg’s latest solo accordion piece, as well as the concerts of Kalevi Aho and Sofia Gubaidulina. Despite this, accordionists typically learn about new compositions through their immediate circles of performers. In this regard, Jacomucci suggests the following assertion:

In the past, the accordion community was promptly informed when the pioneers of contemporary accordion literature wrote a new and innovative work for the accordion. Nowadays it is almost impossible to know what is going on in an international scale and we don't realize how big the portion of important original literature is that we do not know. (2014, 3.)

There is evidence to suggest that the number of works for the accordion has seen a significant increase since 2014. Establishing effective communication channels between accordionists and teachers would undoubtedly benefit the accordion community. Inspired by Jacomucci’s proposal (2013), accordionists Lhermet and Vicens have created a database to collect, catalogue, and make new works available to the public. This project provides important information such as the composer, publisher, and details of the work’s premiere, thereby promoting a better understanding and circulation

of the accordion's repertoire. By collaborating with accordionists and institutions, this database fosters the growth of the accordion community.

In light of the research and analysis conducted throughout this thesis, it is clear that several key factors are critical to the development of a successful career as a concert accordionist. Through the examination of a wide range of sources, several consistent themes have emerged, with a primary emphasis on the importance of being a skilled musician, regardless of the instrument being played. Rantanen, for example, emphasized the value of his musical training, which was shaped by weekly attendance at concerts of the orchestra in Kulttuuritalo (later in Finlandia Talo) and listening to countless recordings of great pianists.

However, beyond formal study, it is also essential to step outside the classroom to build connections with other musicians and create networks. Becoming a well-rounded musician, not just an accordionist, can help to facilitate this process. Kumpuvaara echoed this sentiment, highlighting the benefits of surrounding oneself with excellent musicians and learning from those who are even more accomplished.

In relation to concert programming exceptional creativity is also essential in proposal submissions, adopting a broad perspective of the musical spectrum and being audacious in their suggestions. To develop and present a successful proposal to concert programmers, a specific set of knowledge, skills, and abilities are required, some of which may already be provided by educational institutions or accordion teachers, while others may need to be acquired through additional training. Additionally, instead of prioritizing individualism, fostering connections between various schools and performers, avoiding negative critiques of others' work, and supporting students could be more beneficial. Looking towards the future by exerting one's best effort and placing emphasis on musical excellence above any other consideration can help achieve greater success.

In which direction will the accordion develop?

I have always answered that I can see quite a good future for the accordion if the most important composers are composing music for us, because when the instrument has important music, then it is also played in the future. (Rantanen 2021.)

To argue his position, Rantanen posits a parallel with the case of the harpsichord, a musical instrument that boasts a wealth of repertoire and which, after a period of relative obscurity, has reemerged onto the musical scene. The collaboration between performers and composers is deemed to be of paramount importance in this context. Furthermore, the author contends that it would be beneficial for there to be a greater production of “masterpiece” works by established composers. I believe that collaborations with young composers are highly likely, and some of these composers may go on to become renowned figures within the field of composition, whilst continuing to demonstrate a strong interest in the instrument. Within the contemporary landscape, I highlight the need for an increase in orchestral concerts. In this line, Kumpuvaara affirms that,

The accordion is on the way to the top of classical music, with the biggest orchestras and the biggest conductors. There is a long way to go, but when someone has done it a little bit it is in any way easier for the others to do it.
(Kumpuvaara 2021.)

Are there any potential areas for improvement in the current design of the concert accordion?

As previously mentioned in 3.2, various improvements, albeit small, are being made to the concert accordion at present. However, I believe that there are still areas that could be enhanced, which would render the concert accordion more appealing to composers. Furthermore, these improvements would be of great benefit in the realm of chamber music performance. It is not uncommon for issues concerning tuning, the uneven sound between the manuals, and sound projection to arise during chamber music performances. These are issues that I sought to discuss with Kujala (2021):

I think many accordionists agree that one of the main problems with the accordion is its tuning, since we have equal tempered instruments. A possible solution is to use instruments with a different tuning than the tempered one. Another temperament that would make the accordion sound better.

Kujala highlights several key areas that he believes should be addressed to improve the accordion, and he refers to Susanna Kujala’s accordion, which is tuned in “Bach temperament.” “Overall, I think that, at least for the Well-

Tempered Clavier, the instrument sounds very nice in comparison to the equal temperament”, he states.

One of these is the sonority of the free-bass system of the left-hand manual. According to Kujala, if the left manual were to be redesigned, it could potentially improve sound production without the need for a standard-bass system. The standard-bass system takes up a significant amount of space, and Kujala believes that alternative solutions could be developed. However, he acknowledges that this would require substantial research and funding, and he is therefore not optimistic that accordion manufacturers will pursue this. Another issue that is of concern to accordionists is the difference in sound capacity or sonority between the high and low reeds. On many accordions, when an ascending chromatic scale is played, the instrument produces a subtle and progressive diminuendo, resulting in lower tones being louder than higher ones.

Another key aspect is cooperation and shared knowledge. I am convinced that the accordion community will become more substantial and visible if established players start collaborating. It is unclear to me whether creating additional accordion platforms is necessary to unite our collective power. Lhermet suggests “the creation of a new European Accordion Cooperation or Association as a network for the exchange of ideas and further development of the accordion and its place in the music world” (2013, 11).

While a European-level association could serve as a communication platform, perhaps what is truly needed is collective involvement and a desire to bring the accordion out of its isolation within the accordion community, away from the “accordionists among accordionists” of accordion competitions and festivals. This could be facilitated by building international networks. Perhaps the first steps towards future collaborations could involve expanding our focus to include teachers and students as well. Currently, European exchange programs make this possible, and as such, our reflections and decisions would have a greater impact.

We must not forget the importance of encouraging accordionists and teachers to spread their knowledge on the wide horizon of the original accordion music, as it may enrich their repertoire and therefore provide them with new and heterogeneous material so that they may be able to relate to the music world with more attractive projects, indeed more appropriate to the time in which we live. (Jacomucci 2014, 5.)

I concur with the idea proposed by Draugsvoll of combining forces and knowledge to further advance the future of the accordion's musical landscape, while also preserving "the local characteristics and traditions which have made the accordion such a popular instrument" (2013, 24). As previously stated, I do not believe that we should reject the instrument's history, or the various genres of music being created with it today.

It is undeniable that there are now more innovative ways to share knowledge compared to a few decades ago. Modern technology and its various capabilities can facilitate this cooperation. Many universities now utilize advanced video conferencing as a supplement to traditional teaching methods. However, I believe that personal interactions are more productive and rewarding, and with the support of the European Union—or local institutions depending on the location—it is possible to arrange these encounters or exchanges of students and teachers. The sharing of information, constructive discussion and exchange of experiences and cultures would be beneficial for all parties involved: accordion playing would continue to enhance its status on the global stage.

As for another topic, I also believe that it is important to continue promoting the work of other accordionists, regardless of whether one is personally acquainted with them or not, and to recognize and appreciate the value of their contributions. A more diverse and vibrant musical environment for accordionists can be achieved by focusing on producing high-quality work, rather than attempting to diminish the achievements of one's colleagues to stand out. As Kumpuvaara states regarding the situation in his home country (2021), "Everybody is playing its own gigs. No-one is taking gigs away from other people. This is the way everybody should feel, and we should always be joyful when an accordionist gets success."

In this regard, the efforts of Claudio Jacomucci are particularly noteworthy. As we got acquainted with him, he initiated a new project a decade ago, bringing together a group of professionals and facilitating the exchange and visibility of their ideas and careers, ultimately enriching the musical landscape.

Historically, accordion contests have served as a gathering place for accordionists from different regions or countries to come together and exchange experiences, among other things. These events tend to be intense, with packed schedules featuring only accordion music. There is a recurring debate among accordion teachers and performers regarding the benefits and

potential drawbacks of such contests for students. In my personal view, the determining factor is whether these events represent a genuine opportunity for growth and dialogue for attendees. It seems to me that, in the past, creating these spaces for the instrument was truly necessary and crucial to its development. In the present day, when the accordion is more widely accepted as a concert instrument and is featured in a variety of projects, it may be particularly interesting to highlight this aspect.

As we look towards the future, I argue in favor of instrumental competitions in which the accordion is included as part of chamber groups, ensembles, or any other interdisciplinary proposals, which are representative of the real world and where employment opportunities exist. Paolo Picchio advocates for a competition that “favors wholeness, the artistic project, creativity, inventiveness, and cultural value” (2013, 62–63). This concept supports the idea of competition as a form of pedagogy. I believe that, in the present day, it is widely understood that programs performed in competitions are rarely subsequently performed on professional stages. If this is the case, it seems desirable that accordion competitions serve as a source of knowledge, motivation, and showcase for performers. In conjunction with this perspective, I also consider the thoughts of Miloš Milivojevic, a Serbian accordionist currently residing in London:

When working with other musicians we need to be creative, inventive and open-minded to the possibilities of various artistic approaches. In doing so, I find it beneficial to think of ourselves not only as accordionists or musicians but as artists primarily. With this attitude we can merge music with dance, drama and the visual arts, assimilating everything and creating memorable and perhaps even original world-class performances. (2013, 27.)

In light of the issues I have been discussing and reflecting upon, and in alignment with my statements, which are based on my personal and professional experience, the context in which I have conducted my studies and projects, as well as the data collected from interviews, I would like to present my perception of the present situation and propose potential changes that could be implemented in the educational system to enhance the future of professional accordionists.

If we accept that accordionists have undergone a significant transformation as musicians, we must question whether the infrastructure of the education

system has been adapted accordingly. I emphasize the need for training in the field of chamber music; or, more precisely, the benefits of performing as part of a multi-instrumental ensemble in collaboration with other musicians. Based on the reasons I previously stated, being educated on the basis of chamber music should be a fundamental aspect of the curriculum from the early stages.

Along the same line, an education that promotes equity and is diverse and open-minded, is beneficial in developing more proficient musicianship, but it is not limited to this; it is also about exposing opportunities and preparing students for them, which will enable them to chart their own paths, define their preferences and make their own choices. Therefore, it would be desirable to provide students with knowledge and skills that align with their future needs. This way we can provide them with a holistic education and offer ideas and projects that will aid in their personal growth and the formation of their artistic identity.

In summary, this thesis provides a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of modern accordion performance and education, identifying the key qualities and proficiencies needed to excel in this challenging field. By exploring the role of chamber music and the benefits and challenges of integrating accordion studies into music education, this work offers practical recommendations for future directions. Furthermore, it promotes artistic freedom and innovation, encouraging the development of new approaches, techniques, and repertoire to enrich the musical landscape and expand the accordionist's and the audience's horizons.

It is essential to remember that each musician must compete only with themselves, striving to constantly improve their skills and artistry and to provide their students with the best possible tools and guidance to navigate the music world successfully. I firmly believe that there is ample space for everyone and that much more can be accomplished if future and current concert accordionists concentrate on producing exceptional work, and place emphasis on musical excellence above any other consideration.

This thesis hopes to inspire accordionists to push the boundaries of their art and contribute to the ongoing evolution of the accordion's role in contemporary music.

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