Performing, Recruiting and Educational Tour of Southern Sweden

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Title: ‘Performing, Recruiting and Educational Tour of Southern Sweden’

Grant Recipient: Dr. Johan Eriksson, Associate Professor, School of Music

My musical tour of Sweden (May, 2016) with jazz guitarist Steve Kovalcheck was a success both artistically and educationally. The tour was promoted by Radio Nostalgi who featured a 45-minute interview with myself and Royne Nilsson (the station’s jazz expert). Topics covered ranged from differences between the systems of higher education in Sweden and the United States, the School of Music at UM, the current direction of jazz music, my influences and background. Radio Nostalgi also featured my recorded music. The response was positive from listeners and the station plugged our first concert on the hour, every hour for a full week.

Our second event was a whole day of educational outreach for the Kungsbacka Kulturskola including masterclasses and performances. We collaborated with native musicians Magnus Nilsson and Bjorn Cedergren, both leading wind-players in the Goteborg area.

Our first concert open to the public was held at Fyren in Kungsbacka. Steve and myself was inducted into the Radio Nostalgi Hall of Fame for helping preserve and promote jazz music in Scandinavia (see attached picture, p.5). The concert was well attended and well received. The state newspaper, Norra Halland, wrote in its concert review; “Two eminent musicians who showed the art of jazz improvisation at its very best” (see attached review, p.3).

The Estetiska Program (performing arts program) at Aranas Gymnasium hosted masterclasses where we demonstrated techniques and lectured on jazz improvisation. We were assisted by Swedish jazz pianist Hans Akesson.
We traveled to Skane in the south of Sweden and gave performances and masterclasses at the foremost jazz folkhogskole (pre-conservatory) program in the country, Fridhem. The students performed at a high level and we were able to get into some of the finer points of group interplay. The faculty at Fridhem are high level Swedish jazz musicians and will make excellent contacts for future collaborations. They included Mats Holtne (guitar), Anders Vestergard (drums) and Mattias Hjorth (bass).

The duo performed with Henrik Aronsson (bass) and Lars Kallfalt (drums) at premier jazz club Nefertiti in Goteborg. We were joined by Japanese jazz piano great Takana Miyamoto (“Rising Star” in the International Jazz Society). (See attached picture, p.4)

Another highlight was leading Swedish jazz saxophonist Tommy Wiklund coming to our place of residence and discussing pedagogical ideas. Steve and Swedish bluegrass musician Kristoffer Asberg also spent a night performing together for a local audience.

We finished our tour with a duo performance at Mahogny Bar and Café in Goteborg.

The stated goal of this tour was to use my Swedish language abilities and knowledge of the local culture to network with Swedish musicians and educators in order to set up future trips to northern Europe, as well as help recruit students from Scandinavia. Both goals were met above expectations. We have already been asked to return to all of the places where we taught and/or performed, and we are now in communication with teachers and students from both the gymnasium (high school age) and folkhogskole (university age) levels.

Thank you to the UGP program for helping make this opportunity possible.

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