



**Duo KAPOW!**  
**Burst**

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## Burst

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## A BURST OF MUSIC by Klaus Møller Jørgensen

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### Niels Marthinsen: *Burst* (1990)

Niels Marthinsen likes to write visually evocative music, a theme that recurs in many of his titles, for example *Monster Symphony* or the trombone concerto *In The Shadow of the Bat*. What actually lies behind the title *Burst* is uncertain. But we can probably safely say that the title should be taken literally – that is, that something in the music bursts out or shatters – or at least aspires or attempts to do so; as emphasized by the way the voices of the musicians form an element in the piece, as desperate screams.

The piece forms one continuous process with great, fast-changing oscillations along the way: now very powerful, now quite faintly; quick runs regularly interrupted by long holding notes and many short, abrupt pauses. In the end the piece culminates with the saxophone in the high register, on non-specific notes, as non-tonal as possible and with the greatest possible leaps. All this gives the listener the experience of something desperate and wildly flailing. The most stable element is a few recurring figures that most of all recall broken chords – perhaps running on the spot? Whether this evokes associations with the lion pacing restlessly around his cage or with some suppressed, unresolved eroticism – each listener must make up his or her own mind ...

### Simon Steen-Andersen: *Study for alto saxophone and percussion* (1998)

Simon Steen-Andersen is particularly fascinated by the possibility of coaxing brand new, surprising things from sound-emitters of all conceivable kinds. It may be done by scratching or knocking on traditional instruments, or by using sounds from quite different sounding bodies in musical compositions.

In the relatively early *Study for alto saxophone and percussion* Steen-Andersen focuses on the encounter between the airborne notes of the alto saxophone and the more robust striking sound of the percussion. And the overarching question here is "Can percussion and saxophone play in unison – that is, the same note?" The note-formation of the percussion is after all generally more diffuse than that of the strung, bowed and wind instruments, and is strongly coloured by the actual attack. But "Quasi unisono" is written above the first bar: the whole of the first

section is to be played 'as if in unison' and that is in fact the feel you get right from the beginning, when a saxophone trill and an item of vibrating percussion – a wood-block – follow each other entirely, even in the subsequent quick festoons of notes.

The whole piece falls into five distinct sections. In the second section the two instrumentalists glide apart and hold a subdued conversation, in some places with a unison character but mostly in the form of a duo over certain fixed phrases. In the third section things pick up speed, and the two try once more to merge together in unison playing without quite succeeding; rather, it become slightly fugue-like as they try to imitate each other's phrases. In the fourth section they make another attempt, and now they are a little more successful, especially with the pronounced stresses on which they can agree. In the last section, the duo-playing from the second section returns in an abbreviated version in which they insist on meeting at the end – only to pitch into a compressed, mirror-image variation on the first, quasi-unison section. The final bars recall the beginning, but the saxophone plays without trills and the wood-block has been replaced with crotales and brass plates that have more clearly identifiable tones. The tonal fusion has been consummated.

### Jexper Holmen: *Oil, for alto saxophone and percussion* (1996)

A plaintive little melody runs around in the head of the just 14-year-old Jexper Holmen. Eleven years later the melody becomes the starting point for a wistfully conceived duo between the dark, soft bass clarinet and the sensitive vibraphone. The result is a sensitive, tremulous piece that plays with the little melody all the way through – perhaps in a fond look back at early youth. The title refers to the generally dark, soft tone of the piece.

The melody is distinctive in involving a number of high leaps rather than stepwise motion. It looks a little agitated in the written music, but played slowly and quietly the experience is rather one of reflection than agitation. The core of the melody is heard immediately in the first bar: a fourth up, a step down, a fourth down and a sixth up. The core motif is first repeated with a little spun-out tail to it, then it comes back in a varied, more major-sounding version.

The remainder of the piece is a quiet game with the whole melody and especially with a series of variations on the core motif, which is for example inverted with changed intervals, rhythms etc. and more or less all through the piece the percussion follows the melody part like a kind of shadow, as the vibraphone, with few exceptions, closely follows the rhythm of the bass

clarinet and adds a little echo to each note in the melody. Just halfway through, the interplay culminates in a fortissimo followed by a small break where the vibraphone alone plays the core motif. After a general pause and another round of duo variations, the piece fades out with a number of phrases derived from the core motif, now as pure shadow, in the vibraphone alone.

**Morten Ladehoff** (b. 1978): *Pyr, ami spy, ram isp yra mis* (2003)

"The piece is based on two constructivist concepts, both of which can be decoded in the cryptic title. The word 'pyramis' (Latin for pyramid) is written three times and then split into words of three letters. Since 'pyramis' consists of seven letters, seven different 'words' are formed before the sequence is repeated. This principle is transposed in various ways into musical parameters (pitch, rhythm etc.) and helps to constitute a special musical syntax that runs through the piece. The second concept is inspired by the structure of the pyramid. A pyramid is built from a number of squares that are laid one over the other and progressively reduced in area until the top square only consists of a single unit. This idea can be heard in the piece as a kind of variation type where the 'theme' is first played at its full length and is then trimmed/compressed for each of the two variations, such that the last variation is only a very fleeting reminiscence of the original 'theme.'"

So says the composer himself about the structure of *Pyr, ami spy, ram isp yra mis*. The piece has an abrupt and ostensibly random character, just like the strange syllables in the title. But along the way one recognizes details as elaborations or derivatives of something heard earlier.

To begin with, there are a number of very fast, ascending note-festoons in the saxophone; they are repeated, but now in slightly shorter phrases and with slightly slower note values. This pattern is repeated twice again: each time shorter and slower. At first the percussion is only momentarily present, but it carves out more space for itself, and for a period quite ousts the saxophone.

In the further development, fragments or derivations of the note-festoons appear in interaction with and also partly *in* the percussion (temple blocks with five different pitches). Ostinato-like passages appear with particular figures that run in rings and which are either expanded or contracted; the individual elements of the material are separated and re-assembled in new ways, in new orders.

After just under five minutes the very fast note-festoons from the beginning return, but now they run in rings – there is no dilution as at the start. The score calls it a "gathering-up of

distorted associations", and now comes a much compacted rendering of all the foregoing over exactly 42 (6 times 7) bars; followed by a "Reminiscence of gathering – Distorted associations of preceding associations", an even more compacted version over exactly 21 (3 times 7) bars – the top layer of the pyramid.

**Niels Rønsholdt** (b. 1978): *Drink me, make me real* (2002)

At times it can be hard to get through to your partner, your child or your boss, or in other situations where you feel neglected or misunderstood, or want attention. And the desperate struggle to break through this wall often has an element of repetition: we keep hammering harder on the door to force a way through, but it only gets worse – like the stuck car that simply digs its way deeper into the snow when we try to drive it free.

Rønsholdt's piece is a highly physical account of such a feeling of constraint. For a good six minutes we experience the vain struggle of two musicians to break through with their notes. The resistance is quite concretely physical; the wood-blocks are wrapped up and have to be struck with soft 'whiskers', and the saxophonist has to blow with a loose embouchure so that nothing but air comes out of the instrument. All the same you can clearly hear the violent energy that is applied to the attempt to produce sounding notes.

In the course of the piece, small new elements or figures pop up regularly, but there is no true development. On the contrary, the many small figures are simply repeated in ever-expanding form; it is as if they never leave the spot, only sink deeper in the mud. There is also an element of repetition in the way the two musicians play together with an electronic soundtrack of the same character, which they themselves have recorded – they are so to speak struggling with themselves. When the saxophone finally succeeds in producing proper notes, they are distorted howls, not beautiful sounds. In the end the piece dies out to the sound of an extended series of echoes of these howls. Resignation.

**Kasper Jarnum** (1971-2011): *Der Totenschläger und der Rattenfänger* (2001)

The titles refers to the gruesome folk tale, told by the Brothers Grimm, of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, whose piping delivers the town from a plague of rats; but when the townsmen refuse to pay the promised reward, he uses his musical magic to lure all the children of the town to their

death. Jarnum writes directly in the score that the saxophone first plays the rat-catcher (the liberator) but is then transformed into the murderer, and vice versa with the percussion.

This is thus a kind of transformation music where the instruments exchange roles along the way. To begin with the percussion is highly agitated and aggressive, with banging bass drum, metallic sounds and an apparently random hammering right and left – as against the almost inaudible soprano saxophone with a very slow, quiet melody. Only after a few minutes does the saxophone grow stronger and is in time given higher melodic leaps and quicker note values. Slowly it conquers more terrain, while at the same time the percussion becomes increasing subdued and little by little is restricted to wood-blocks.

A roll on the tom-toms marks the transition to a middle section where percussion and saxophone enter into a dialogue; they play small phrases against each other in a kind of call-and-response, or join each other in a kind of monophony. But after a while the saxophone becomes more aggressive and snarling, and the duet is changed into a duel. The percussion withdraws and shifts into a pure, ethereal, beautiful vibraphone sound, while the saxophone snarls away for a while yet, with powerful eruptions of great, abrupt tonal leaps. In the end, though, the saxophone is left completely out of breath and reverts to the quiet character from the beginning, now over the vibraphone sound.

*Klaus Møller-Jørgensen is a music journalist and freelance programme producer for DR. He also works as an information officer for the Royal Academy of Music in Aarhus.*

**Duo Kapow!** consists of **Claus Olesen** on saxophone and **Henrik Knarborg Larsen** on percussion. The two musicians came together as students at the Royal Academy of Music in the wish to create a new and different framework for classical chamber music. Their extensive concert activities range wide, from church concerts and chamber concerts through contemporary music festivals to special projects for audience groups, often with the participation of actors and dancers. Duo Kapow! have travelled widely in the world and in the spring of 2000 they were rewarded for their talent and their urge for musical innovation with two prizes in the DR Chamber Music Competition.

## ET MUSIKALSK UDBRUD *af Klaus Møller Jørgensen*

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### **Niels Marthinsen** (f. 1963): *Burst* (1990)

Niels Marthinsen skriver gerne meget billedskabende musik, hvilket går igen i mange værktitler som f.eks. *Monster Symfoni* eller basunkoncerten *In the Shadow of the Bat*. Hvad der egentlig ligger bag titlen *Burst*, som kan oversættes med "briste" eller "eksplodere" eller "bryde løs", står hen i det uvisse. Men man kan nok roligt gå ud fra at titlen skal tages bogstaveligt. Altså at noget i musikken bryder ud eller går til – eller i det mindste stræber mod eller forsøger på at gøre det. Hvilket også understreges af, at musikernes stemmer indgår i stykket, som desperate skrig.

Stykket udgør ét sammenhængende forløb med store og hurtigt skiftende udsving undervejs. Snart meget kraftigt, snart ganske svagt; hurtige løb, der jævnligt brydes af lange liggetoner; mange korte, abrupte pauser. Til sidst kulminerer stykket med saxofonen i højt register, på ikke-specifikke toner, mindst muligt tonalt og med størst mulige spring. Alt dette giver en oplevelse af noget desperat og vildt omkring-sig-kastende. Det mest stabile element er nogle tilbagevendende figurer, som mest af alt minder om akkordbrydninger – måske gang på stedet? Om dette giver associationer til løven, der vandrer rastløst rundt i sit bur, eller til den indestængte, uforløst erotisk eller til noget helt tredje, det må enhver gøre op med sig selv ...

### **Simon Steen-Andersen** (f. 1976): *Studie for altsax og slagtøj* (1998)

Hos Simon Steen-Andersen er der en særlig fascination af mulighederne for at afløkke lydgivere af enhver tænkelig slags helt nye og overraskende klange. Det kan f.eks. være ved at kradsle eller banke på traditionelle instrumenter, eller ved at bruge klange fra helt andre lydgivere i musikalske kompositioner.

I det relativt tidlige *Studie for altsax og slagtøj* fokuserer Steen-Andersen på mødet mellem altsaxens luftbårne toner og slagtøjets mere kontante slaglyde. Og det overordnede spørgsmål er her: Kan slagtøj og saxofon spille unison – altså samme tone? Slagtøjets tonedannelse er jo generelt mere diffus end hos strenge-, stryge- og blæseinstrumenter og dertil stærkt præget af selve anslaget. Men jo: "Quasi unisono" står der over den første takt: Hele første afsnit skal spilles a la unisono, og det er også den oplevelse man har fra begyndelsen af, hvor

en saxofon-trille og et stykke vibrerende slagtøj – en wood-block – følges fuldstændig ad, også i de efterfølgende hastige toneguirlander.

Hele stykket falder i fem klart adskilte afsnit. I andet afsnit glider de to instrumentalister fra hinanden og fører en afdæmpet samtale, nogle steder med unison præg men mest i form af et duospil over nogle faste fraser. I tredje afsnit kommer der mere fart over feltet, og de to prøver på ny at finde sammen i unisono-spil, uden at det helt lykkes; det bliver snarere lidt fuga-agtigt, hvor de prøver at efterligne hinandens fraser. I fjerde afsnit gør de nok et forsøg, og nu lykkes det lidt bedre, især de meget markante betoning kan de enes om. I sidste afsnit vender duo-spillet fra afsnit to tilbage i en forkortet udgave, hvor de insisterer på at mødes til sidst – for så at ryge over i en komprimeret, spejlvendt variation af det første, quasi unisone afsnit. De sidste takter minder om begyndelsen, men saxofonen spiller uden triller, og wood-blocken er skiftet ud med crotales og messingplader, som har mere klart identificerbare toner. Den tonale fusion er fuldragt.

#### **Jexper Holmen** (f. 1971): *Oil, for altsaxofon og slagtøj* (1996)

En lille, klagende melodi rumsterer i hovedet på den blot 14-årige Jexper Holmen. 11 år senere bliver melodien udgangspunkt for en melankolsk anlagt duo mellem den mørke og bløde basklarinet og den sensitive vibrafon. Resultatet er et følsomt, vibrerende stykke, der hele vejen igennem leger med den lille melodi – måske i et kærligt tilbageblik på den tidlige ungdom. Titlen hentyder til stykkets generelt mørke og bløde klang.

Melodien er karakteriseret ved at indeholde en del store spring frem for trinvis bevægelse. Det ser lidt voldsomt ud i noderne, men spillet langsomt og stille er oplevelsen snarere eftertænksomhed end voldsomhed. Kernen i melodien hører man straks i den første takt: en kvart op, et trin ned, en kvart ned og en sekst op. Kernemotivet bliver først gentaget med en lille udspundet hale på, så kommer det igen i en varieret, mere dur-agtig udgave.

Resten af stykket er en stille leg med hele melodien og navnlig med en række forskellige variationer over kernemotivet, som f.eks. bliver vendt om, spillet på hovedet, med ændrede intervaller, rytmer osv. Og stort set hele vejen igennem stykket følger slagtojet melodistemmen som en slags skygge, idet vibrafonen med få undtagelser følger basklarinettens rytme tæt og føjer en lille genklang til hver tone i melodien. Knap halvvejs kulminerer samspillet i et fortissimo efterfulgt af et lille break, hvor vibrafonen alene spiller kernemotivet; efter en generalpause og

endnu en runde duo-variationer klirrer stykket ud med en række afledninger af kernemotivet, nu som ren skygge, kun i vibrafonen.

#### **Morten Ladehoff** (f. 1978): *Pyr, ami spy, ram isp yra mis* (2003)

"Stykket er baseret på 2 konstruktivistiske koncepter, der begge kan afkodes i den kryptiske titel. Ordet 'pyramis' (latin for pyramide) er skrevet 3 gange og derefter delt i ord à 3 bogstaver. Da 'pyramis' består af 7 bogstaver, bliver der dannet 7 forskellige 'ord' før sekvensen repeteres. Dette princip er på forskellig vis overført til musikalske parametre (tonehøjde, rytme osv.) og er med til at konstituere en særlig musikalsk syntaks, der er gennemgående i dette stykke. Det andet koncept er inspireret af pyramide-strukturen. En pyramide består af en række kvadrater, der lægges ovenpå hinanden og stedse reduceres i areal, indtil det øverste kvadrat kun består af en enkelt enhed. Denne idé kan høres i stykket som en slags variationsform, hvor 'temaet' først spilles i fuld længde og derefter beskæres/komprimeres for hver af de 2 variationer, hvorved den sidste variation kun er en ganske flygtig reminiscens af det oprindelige 'tema'."

Således komponisten selv om opbygningen af *Pyr, ami spy, ram isp yra mis*. Stykket har en abrupt og tilsyneladende tilfældig karakter, lige som de mærkelige stavelser i titlen. Men hen ad vejen genkender man detaljer som bearbejdnings eller afledninger af noget tidligere hørt.

Til at begynde med kommer der en række meget hurtige, opadstigende toneguirlander i saxofonen; de gentages, men nu i lidt kortere fraser og med lidt langsommere nodeværdier. Dét mønster gentager sig endnu to gange: kortere og langsommere. Slagtøjet er i begyndelsen kun momentant tilstede men tilkæmper sig stadig mere plads og får i en periode helt fortrængt saxofonen.

I det videre forløb optræder stumper eller afledninger af toneguirlanderne i samspil med og til dels også i slagtojet (tempelblokke med fem forskellige tonehøjder). Der opstår ostinat-lignende episoder med bestemte figurer, der kører i ring og som enten udvides eller indskrænkes; materialets enkelte dele splittes og samles på nye måder, i nye rækkefølger.

Efter knap 5 min. vender de meget hurtige toneguirlander fra begyndelsen tilbage, men nu kører de i ring, der sker ikke en udtynding som i starten. Partituret kalder det en "Opsamling af forvrængede associationer", og der følger nu en stærkt komprimeret gengivelse af alt det foregående, over præcis 42 takter (6 gange 7); efterfulgt af "Reminiscens af opsamling – For-

vrængede associationer af forrige associationer”, en endnu mere komprimeret gengivelse over præcis 21 takter (3 gange 7) – pyramidens øverste lag.

#### **Niels Rønsholdt** (f. 1978): *Drink me, make me real* (2002)

Det kan til tider være svært at trænge igennem overfor partneren, sit barn, chefen eller i andre situationer, hvor man føler sig overset, misforstået eller savner opmærksomhed. Og den desperate kamp for at bryde igennem har gerne et element af gentagelse: Vi hamrer stadig hårdere på døren for at få hul igennem, men det bliver kun værre – som den fastkørte bil, der blot graver sig dybere ned i sneen, når vi forsøger at køre den fri.

Rønsholdts stykke er en meget fysisk skildring af en sådan indestængthed. Gennem godt 6 minutter oplever vi to musikeres forgæves kamp for at trænge igennem med deres toner. Modstanden er helt konkret fysisk: træblokkene er pakket ind og skal anslås med bløde whiskers, og saxofonisten skal blæse med løs embouchure, så der kun kommer luft ud af instrumentet. Alligevel hører man tydeligt den voldsomme energi, der bliver lagt i forsøget på at frembringe klingende toner.

I løbet af stykket dukker der løbende små nye elementer eller figurer op, men der er ikke tale om nogen egentlig udvikling. Tværtimod, de mange små figurer bliver blot gentaget i stadig udvidet form, det er som om man ikke kommer ud af stedet, kun dybere ned i skidtet. Der ligger også en gentagelse i at de to musikere spiller sammen med et elektronisk lydspor af samme karakter, som de selv har indspillet – de kæmper så at sige med sig selv. Da det endelig lykkes saxofonen at frembringe regulære toner, er det vrængende hyl, ikke smukke klange. Til sidst dør stykket ud til en længere række af efterklange af disse hyl. Resignation.

#### **Kasper Jarnum** (1971-2011): *Der Totenschläger und der Rattenfänger* (2001)

Titlen henviser til det grumme folkeeventyr, gængivet hos brødrene Grimm, om rottefængerens fra Hameln, der med sit fløjtespil befrier byen for rotteplagen; men da byboerne ikke vil betale den lovede dusør, bruger han sin musikalske magi til at lokke alle byens børn i døden. Jarnum skriver direkte i partituret, at saxofonen først agerer rottefænger (befrier) men siden transformeres til morder, og vice versa med slagtojet.

Der er altså tale om et stykke transformationsmusik, hvor instrumenterne bytter roller undervejs. Til at begynde med er slagtojet meget voldsomt og aggressivt, med knaldende stor-

trome, metalliske klange og tilsyneladende tilfældig hamren løs til højre og venstre – over for den næsten uørlige sopransaxofon med en ganske langsom og stille melodi. Først efter et par minutter bliver saxofonen mere kraftig og får efterhånden større melodiske spring og hurtigere nodeværdier. Langsomt erobrer den mere terræn, samtidig med at slagtojet bliver stadig mere neddæmpet og lidt efter lidt indskrænkes til udelukkende at omfatte wood-blocks.

En hvirvel på tomtom'erne markerer overgangen til et mellemstykke, hvor slagtojet og saxofon går i dialog med hinanden; de spiller små fraser ud mod hinanden som en slags call-response, eller følges ad i en form for enstemmighed. Men efter et stykke tid bliver saxofonen mere aggressiv og snærende, og duetten forandres til en tvekamp. Slagtojet trækker sig og slår over i en ren, sfærisk og smuk vibrafonklang, mens saxofonen nogen tid endnu snerrer løs, med kraftige udbrud af abrupte og store tonespring. Til sidst mister saxofonen dog helt pusten og falder tilbage til den stille karakter fra begyndelsen, nu hen over vibrafonklangen.

*Klaus Møller-Jørgensen er musikjournalist, freelance programmerarbejder i DR og arbejder desuden som informationsmedarbejder på Det Jyske Musikkonservatorium.*

**Duo Kapow!** består af **Claus Olesen** på saxofon og **Henrik Knarborg Larsen** på slagtojet. De to musikere fandt sammen som studerende på Det Jyske Musikkonservatorium med et ønske om at skabe nye og anderledes rammer for den klassiske kammermusik. Deres omfattende koncertvirksomhed spænder vidt, fra kirkekoncerter, kammerkoncerter over ny-musik festivaler, til særlige projekter for publikumsgrupper, ofte med deltagelse af skuespillere og dansere. Duo Kapow! har været vidt omkring i verden, og i foråret 2000 blev de belønnet for deres talent og musikalske fornyertrang med 2 priser ved DR's Kammermusikkonkurrence.



Duo Kapow! Henrik Knarborg Larsen and Claus Olesen

### DDD

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