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May you stream in interesting times:

Streamed music during the Pandemic Era

Master's thesis in Music, Communication and Technology

Supervisor: Øyvind Brandtsegg

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Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Humanities
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NTNU

Kunnskap for en bedre verden



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May, 2021

Abstract

On the 12th of March 2020, the Norwegian government implemented the strongest restrictions the country has seen in peacetime. This resulted in a closedown of schools and kindergartens, a closure of all gyms and all sport arrangements, and a closedown of all bars. This day also marked a ban of all cultural arrangements in Norway. Over a year later, this situation is still not resolved. Concerts are still heavily restricted, and it seems likely that this situation will remain for quite some time. This closedown has had a tremendous effect on musicians. A vast amount of Norway's musicians, stage-acts, actors and technicians in the culture sector is now out of work and therefore a livable wage.

What happens to musicians under a pandemic? This thesis seeks to gain understanding about the situation that musicians in Norway are facing due to the covid pandemic, what challenges and solutions they are dealing with and how the consumption of culture has changed through the pandemic, mainly focusing on online concerts.

Through several interviews, this thesis maps out the current situation, isolate trends, analyze how the culture sector is dealing with the corona pandemic and gain understanding about where we are going when the pandemic lifts.

Sammendrag

Den 12. Mars, 2020 implementerte den norske regjeringen de strengeste restriksjonene som har blitt gjort i fredstid. Skoler og barnehager ble stengt og alle treningssenter og sportsaktiviteter opphørte. Dette gjaldt også restaurant og utelivsbransjen. Samme dagen markerte også starten på forbudet av alle kulturarrangement i Norge som berørte kulturarbeidere i, blant annet konsert og sal- og sceneaktører, arrangører så vel som support og tekniske arbeidere i kultursektoren. Nå, over et år senere er ikke situasjonen løst. Konserter er fortsatt under sterke restriksjoner, og det ser ut som at denne situasjonen kan fortsette enda en god tid. Nedstengingen har hatt en stor innvirkning på musikers virke. En stor del av Norges musikere og kulturarbeidere er uten både jobb og lønn. Situasjonen er uforutsigbar, siden smittetrykket og reglene endrer seg så mye fra dag til dag.

Hva skjer med musikere under en pandemi? Denne mastergradsavhandlingen samler informasjon av situasjonen som musikere i Norge møter, hvilke utfordringer og løsninger de jobber med og hvordan Covid-19 pandemien påvirker kultursektoren.

Gjennom flere intervjuer har denne mastergradsavhandlingen som mål å skildre den pågående situasjonen, isolere trender, analysere hvordan kultursektoren håndterer med pandemien og å opparbeide kunnskap om hva som kan skje når pandemien tar slutt.

Foreword and the Corona situation

The last semester before this thesis was scheduled to be written, I lived in Belgium. There, through Ugent and IPEM, I conducted a very fruitful and personally rewarding project with music and motion capture. I was very motivated to pick up where I left off when I came back to Trondheim in the start of February and started to plan for a continuation of one project from IPEM as my thesis.

The close-down of campus as of 12. March meant that I no longer had access to MoCap equipment that was essential for my project, and the social distancing restrictions meant that I no longer had the opportunity to assemble people for trials. This situation made it impossible to continue with my studies in the direction I had planned, and I lost progression to the point that I had to change my project. At that time, there was no certainty of when the pandemic would lift, and whether I would be able to go back to campus and continue my studies as intended. Going from the state-of-the-art setup at IPEM, and now being left with the option of a much less advanced (possibly Arduino-based) trial at home, meant that the project was no longer what I wanted, was interested in, or motivated to do. Losing my rhythm and having to come up with something completely different meant that I was not able to finish within the intended time, and I applied for an extension. The covid pandemic caused major setbacks in my thesis. Knowing what I know now about the previous year's lack of reliable campus access, I am glad I changed my project, as I still believe it would not be feasible to complete it as intended under current regulations.

I also noticed that another part of my life got more difficult. That same date, the 12th of March, I had to cancel two of my immediately planned concerts and was not able to book any further concerts. This influenced my motivations to practice as well as an important part of my social life. When it became apparent that the lockdown would not be over soon, and I was without a project, I decided to refocus my efforts and started sketching this project. This meant that I had to delay my delivery by a lot, but I have been more content with working with this project about how musicians fare in

these times. To actually study the effects of the pandemic during the pandemic has been a unique opportunity. Peer reviewed papers about this topic is only beginning to be released in these times.¹ Even though that makes it somewhat more challenging, it grants the feeling of threading new paths – and that can be rewarding.

The MCT course, which this thesis is part of, has changed a lot during its short life, but going back and reviewing my first notes from the starting week, I think, as of my understanding of the program, there are few courses more fitting for writing about the Covid-19 situation from a musician's perspective than Music, Communication and Technology.

“May you live in interesting times”

- A (disputedly) Chinese curse, sometimes used to contextualize the positives within difficult situations.

¹ Some of the studies that are arriving in these times:

Musicovid, an international research group that researches music during the pandemic era:

<https://www.aesthetics.mpg.de/en/research/department-of-music/musicovid-an-international-research-network.html>

“Kvantesprang eller museskritt? Pandemi som unikt mulighetsrom for digital transformasjon i norske kunst- og kulturinstitusjoner” A project to learn about why some institutions are innovative during the pandemic while others simply lay off their workers. Financed by the Norwegian Arts Council

<https://www.oslomet.no/forskning/forskningsprosjekter/pandemikultur>

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter I will introduce the background for choosing the corona pandemic and the move to a digital performance space as the field of study in my thesis. I will also present the research questions. I will also talk about the field of study in relation to my understanding of the MCT program².

1.1 Background for Choice of Research Field

Throughout my education³ I have sought to make my current academic work relevant to my previous education as well as what I aspire to become professionally, and that is a teacher in Music at an upper secondary school or a folk high school. In addition to that, playing music has been one of the most important hobbies of my life going on 20 years now. An ideal research field for me is therefore something that interests me personally as well something that informs my professional life.

Initially I thought that the pandemic was something I had to wait out, and that my research project had to be continued after the restrictions ended. I did not initially realize that there could be opportunities in *'living in interesting times'*. Planning and setting up concerts and performances is something I have found to be incredibly interesting for as long as I have been playing music. I have done this with my own

² The MCT program is undergoing revisions for students that are accepted in 2021. As of the time of writing, these revisions will be published on UiO's web page.

³ My previous education is Teacher Training(BA), Music(60 ECTS) and Fine arts with specialization in Music(MA)

ensembles as well as in band camps I have been teaching⁴, and seeing how this time period has influenced my own practice as a musician, it becomes very interesting to study it from the inside.

It also provides me with understanding of the musicians' role during a pandemic with examples and experiences about how factors like motivation, network maintenance and performance practice are influenced in a time of musical drought. Most musicians go through a period of drought sometimes in their career, be it of a creative nature or otherwise. The Covid-19 pandemic has sent musicians into a form of involuntary hiatus, where some have struggled, and others have found opportunities. Gaining better understanding of how the culture sector reacts to difficult times is something that could help me to better understand the music student, and therefore help me become a better teacher.

This thesis will focus on the change from physically present concerts to digital concerts that occurred in the weeks following the lockdown in March 2020 and how digital concerts have evolved through the pandemic. It will also look at how the media communicated this shift from physical to digital concerts. The thesis will isolate and describe trends that have been happening as the pandemic progressed. The thesis will also go in depth with one musician, and how this person's musical practice changed through the pandemic.

⁴ For about a decade I have been teaching at the yearly "Sommerrock" band camp in Nesna. This is a course that goes over one week where youths compose their own songs and perform them at a concert. I have also taught at other similar projects.

1.2 Research Questions

As stated elsewhere, I want to use this thesis to better understand the Covid-19 pandemics effect on live performance on a digital platform and the musicians that are living through this. My main focus area will be streamed events, how these have evolved through the pandemic, how they can be classified and understood and how musicians and the media is interacting with regards to the ‘new normal’.

My research questions are:

- *“What trends/stages in live music streaming during the Covid-19 pandemic can be observed?”*
- *“How has adresseavisa reported streaming attendance on Åge Aleksandersens streaming concert, the 23th of May, 2020?”*
- *“How has musicians such as Sondre Lerche utilized digital platforms during the Covid-19 pandemic?”*
- *“Why has there been a decline in interests in streamed concerts?”*

1.3 The Ongoing Corona Pandemics Effects on This Thesis

As stated in the introduction, I came back from a semester in Belgium at the start of this academic year. I spent this exchange focusing on MoCap and planned to continue this effort in my thesis at NTNU. The 12th of March, NTNU closed down for all student and employee activity on campus (Universitetsavisa, 2020). With the ban on meeting people coupled with the fact that the MoCap system is stationary and located on campus, there was no progression in my thesis. Many of my classmates were able

to adapt their project and work from home but I could not study live human movement without having human beings in the room with me. Therefore, I was not able to deliver my master within the scheduled semester.

The negative effect the Covid-19 pandemic had on my previous project had the adverse effect on my current thesis, even as far as being the inspiration for it. Being a musician, I feel that the Covid pandemic poses immense challenges for my musical practice. Not only is it difficult to perform concerts, but it is harder to stay motivated for practice and musical production. These challenges, and being personally affected by them can be turned into a strength: With personally going through the process of being a musician during the pandemic, I also get a peculiar feel for the zeitgeist of the musician during the Covid pandemic.

1.4 Relevancy and Connection to The MCT Program

The MCT program was initially thought of as a melting pot where people from all backgrounds could apply. The interdisciplinary platform was thought of as an ideal way to mix knowledge and learn from each other, and at the start week we were informed that we had a good opportunity to choose focus points, which I did, finding the MoCap course immensely interesting. When the pandemic hit and I realized my planned project was no longer feasible, I found confidence in the course program to change course.

“This Master’s programme will give you the personal skills and technical tools required to work out solutions to contemporary societal challenges in international and interdisciplinary teams.” (NTNU, 2020)

This is one of the introductory quotes on NTNU's web page about the MCT program, and it is achingly relevant to the corona pandemic.

Additionally, one of the main courses of the master, Physical-Virtual Communication and Music⁵ is about a streamed virtual space, just the kind of arena that became paramount for the culture sector during the covid-19 pandemic.

1.5 Status Quo and the challenges for the working musician

To fight the ongoing pandemic, our society is undergoing major changes. In fact, never before has stricter measures been enforced during peacetime in Norway (Regjeringen, 2020). The 12th of March, 2020 marked a ban of all cultural activity and ground the culture sector to a halt. Stage performers, venue owners and arrangers and others were banned from performing their everyday jobs. It did not take long for musicians to take to the online stage with live streamed concerts. March and April saw a colossal increase in online events, and the public followed suit. 'Everyone' was streaming concerts from home and remotely hanging out through video conferencing tools such as Zoom and Teams.

There was a form of digital optimism during the early periods of the pandemic. People was taking to the web to fulfill their social need (the author of this thesis even celebrated his birthday with 12 friends on Minecraft). Initially it seemed that much of our needs for culture and social life could be filled on the digital platform, but the underlying cultural symptoms of the pandemic was starting to show. Bar and venue owners were not able to pay their rent, let alone pay their employees. Tragic stories

⁵ MCT402 through MCT4023. This course is about working in, maintaining and operating "The Portal". The Portal consists of two virtually interconnected classrooms in Oslo and Trondheim.

from the people that make a living from music have been commonplace through the pandemic.⁶

Passing the one-year mark, we have seen a lot of changes during the course of the pandemic. So many new rules, restrictions and precautions have become part of our every-day life that we must conclude that the Norwegian society is very able to adapt. Which of these numerous changes that will stick, and which will leave with corona is still too early to say, but it is certain that even if we go back to 'normal', it will not be entirely the same.

⁶ Here are some example stories from the lives of those who work in the cultural sector. I include them in a footnote to provide further reading:

<https://www.vg.no/nyheter/meninger/i/0KokP2/25-under-25-naa-risikerer-vi-aa-miste-en-hel-generasjon-musikere>

<https://www.nrk.no/kultur/musikere-ma-velge-mellom-gitaren-eller-a-ha-rad-til-livet-1.15356515>

<https://www.nrk.no/vestland/frykter-brutalt-korona-krakk-i-utelivsbransjen--heldig-om-jeg-klarert-redde-en-pub-1.14956830>

Chapter 2: Theory and Methods

2.1 Interviews

Interviews are a tried-and-true method for gathering qualitative information. Since the questions I seek to answer are centered around the experiences of a respondent during an extended period of time, it is natural to use interviews as a method. Interviews are a good tool for answering “*why*” whereas observation is well suited to answer “*what*” (Postholm, Jacobsen 2011). Interviews are also very adaptable. The interviewer can specify her questions and get answers about very concrete subjects, and still, with an open form, allow the interviewee to talk about things he thinks are important, that the interviewer did not necessarily think about.

Holstein and Gubrium (Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. 1995). tells us that it is important to recognize that the interview is not a neutral technique and does not yield unaffected responses from the subject. The interview must instead be understood as an interaction between the interviewer and interviewee which naturally results in socially negotiated answers, that are subject to the context the interview was held under (see also Fontana & Frey, 2005). The relation between the interviewer and interviewee, as well as the setting are therefore factors that affect the answers given in the interview. Site and setting should therefore be taken into context. This poses additional problems during the Covid-19 pandemics because the infection control rules need to be considered. The interviews conducted in this thesis has mostly been performed online. It is hard for an online interview setting to be as good as a face-to-face meeting, since the participants must communicate through an extra medium. The computer that one communicates through adds a layer of abstraction and distance that is not needed when meeting in person. This compromise has nevertheless been necessary in all but one interview, due to precautions relation to the infection control rules. This is expanded upon in chapter 2.1.3.

In my case I will be interviewing people I do not know. As an interviewer, it is therefore my role and responsibility to create an environment that invites the interviewee to open up about the subject and feel inclined to share their insights. As this thesis is in English, it has been necessary to translate the interviews. To maintain an organic interview setting, I conducted the interviews in Norwegian. The interview quotations in this thesis are therefore my own translation of the conversation with the respondents.

I have done interviews both in my bachelor and previous master. I view it as a trainable skill and I look forward to every time I get the chance to go through the process again. Each interview is different, and it is up to the interviewer's ability to ascertain the answers and respond with adequate follow-up questions. Setting overarching goals for the interview instead of focusing too much on specifics can be a good tactic. Often, the situation arises where the interview subject has something they would want to talk about, that does not directly correspond with your planned questions. In such cases it is up to the interviewer's ability to read the situation. If read correctly, it is possible to deviate from the script and follow the subject. Done correctly, this could yield results that illuminate something that was not initially thought about, but it could also prove to be a red herring. It is important that the interviewer weighs the choice to follow or to steer back to the original plan well.

The type of interview I will be working with is referred to as *Open Interviews*. One can understand Open interviews in relation to *Closed interviews* (also called structured interviews). Open and closed interviews exist on a spectrum. Closed interviews are predetermined. They consist of questions that strongly correlates with an answer. A typical question could be "*How old are you*", where the answer could be "34". On the other end of the spectrum are open interviews. A typical question here could be "*Can you tell me about your experiences with playing in a band in your youth?*". This question naturally leads to a longer answer that could vary drastically from person to person.

When formulating questions for interviews, it is helpful to take this spectrum into consideration. Closed questions are suitable for gaining factual information whereas open questions are better suited for gaining insights into a person's experiences. As stated, an interview structure exists on a spectrum, so using these types of question in tandem can lead a very insightful and informative interview. With open questions, the interviewee has the opportunity to steer the answer towards their own unique insight on the topic at hand. This format has the possibility to provide a lot of nuance, but open questions tend to be more complex and time consuming to process. With the benefit of the interviewee speaking more freely, the possibility of going off-topic increases. The interviewer needs to be aware of this potential pitfall to best avoid it. The open interviews format allows for follow-up questions which can be used to get the interviewee back on the subject one was planning to talk about. Still, proficiency with follow-up questions need to be trained: When interrupting the interviewee's train of thought, one runs the risk of missing out on something potentially important. Knowing when to steer the conversation and when not to alters the interview. Sometimes, it can also be helpful to let the conversation go off-topic. An open interview is potentially very intense and can therefore be taxing on both parties' stamina. A few short moments off-topic in the middle of an interview can therefore be tactically implemented - to catch one's breath so to speak and give both parties a chance to regroup before continuing.

“The loosely structured interview[open interview] is a difficult genre, that demands training and interpersonal sensitivity from the interviewer's side. The strength of this form of interview is that it can enquire very close to the interview subject's life and world[...]”. (Own translation of: Tanggaard, L., & Brinkmann, 2010 p. 35)

It is important to keep Holstein and Gubrium's comment about the fact that the results of an interview are socially negotiated answers resulting from the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. The conversation, which is the form the open

interview is built around, is a lot harder to define since it contains many more variables.

The interviews in this thesis are open interviews. As discussed above, these interviews are well suited to gather the kind of data I am looking for but runs the risk of going of topic. Tanggaard and Brinkmann (Tanggaard, L., & Brinkmann, 2010) suggests designing an interview guide. This guide contributes to maintaining the structure and progression of the interview. This guide also contains the main questions, and a timetable to assure the interviews pacing. For each interview, it can be helpful to make a unique interview guide. To show how I am doing this, I have included a generic version that I use for my interviews:

Interview guide	
Phase 1: Setting the frame and mood	<p>5 minutes: Loose conversation (off-topic) with aims to setting a good, comfortable and talkative mood.</p> <hr/> <p>5 -10 minutes: Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say a little about the theme of the interview, and what I'm looking for. • Explain what the interview is going to be used for and a little bit about my thesis. • Explain about anonymity and confidentiality. • Inform about the ability to break off the interview at any point or change one's mind regarding participation in the study. • Explain about recording and make sure this is accepted. • Ask and if there is anything unclear about the interview
Phase 2: Experiences	<p>5 – 10 minutes: Opening and transitional questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm up questions about the subjects' experiences, both before and during the pandemic. Gradually encourage the respondent to talk more about themselves. (This is an open interview which means that close listening to the respondents answer and asking relevant and well-formed follow up questions is the most important job of the interviewer).
Phase 3: Focus on the overarching questions.	<p>The main bulk of the interview. Time spent on each of the questions varies here with relation to what the interviewer has to say.</p>
Phase 4: Rounding off	<p>Ca. 10 minutes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow up questions. These are based on the information the participant provided during phase 3. This is for providing added context and nuances to the main questions asked in phase 4. • Ask if there is anything the interview subject wants to add. • Ask about things that could have been unclear. • Talk about people (3rd parties) or certain situations that could demand extra care in how they are portrayed. E.g. other musicians they have worked with and clarify if there is any special precautions that has to be taken when writing about these situations.

Fig. 1.1 – Interview guide

The interview guide is a tool for the interviewer customized to the interview. The interview guide takes effect already before the interview is formally starting. As stated before, a good open interview depends on the subject's state⁷, and the interview guide, through properly setting up the interview, can help influence this. Phase 1 of the interview works towards this, with building a good foundation for the conversation, as well as making sure there are no unclarities regarding the formalities.

I use this phase as a springboard into getting the subject talking. The 5 minutes of off-topic dialogue contributes to making the respondent talkative and ready for the interview.

When working with open interviews, it is important to recognize the importance that the formulated questions have. Brinkmann, Kvale and Tangaard, (Brinkmann, S., & Tangaard, L. 2010) (Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. 2009) talks about different question types, their usage and effects⁸. When conducting open interviews, it is very helpful to have a knowledge about how one can effectively utilize these question types to regulate and negotiate the interview. Timely use of these questions greatly influences the totality of an interview. For example, a probing/specifying question asked at the wrong time, could break of a respondent's train of thought. The very same question could attain the same answer without being intrusive, if, for example asked in a later stage of the interview.

⁷ By state, I mean the subjects ability to speak freely, feel comfortable in sharing, state of mind and general willingness to contribute to the interview.

⁸ The question types they mention are, Introductory Questions, Follow-Up Questions, Probing/Specifying Questions, Direct and Projective Questions, Structural Questions, Expanding/Interpreting Questions. Tangaard, L., & Brinkmann, 2010 and Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009 talks about these types of questions.

The interviewer holds the main responsibility for the quality of the interview. Being well prepared and understanding ones' own role is therefore crucial. Nevertheless, being present in the interview and actively listening is among the most crucial factors for an open interview.

“It is yet again important to emphasize that an interview can never be reduced to a question about questioning-techniques. The most important thing is that the interviewer listens actively, which means attentively and sensitively to what the interview respondent is talking about. It can take several years of training to become proficient at this, but even unprofessional interviewers can prove to be excellent at conducting interviews. It could very well be the case that one has acquired the necessary listening skill in other parts of one's life.” (Own translation of Brinkmann, S., & Tanggaard, L. 2010 p. 42)

2.2 Intimate interview settings

There are some special considerations that must be taken when one is conducting interviews with only one subject. One quickly becomes attentive of the roles of interviewer and interviewee in the twosomeness that tends to surface in this situation. The interviewer's disposition and accessibility could affect how talkative the interviewee ends up being. As a rule of thumb in previous interviews, I have tried to approximate the 80/20 rule⁹. This rule suggests the balance between the two speakers in an interview, and it heavily emphasizes the interviewee. It can prove challenging to meet these standards. From previous experience, I have found that it is possible to

⁹ This is a rule of thumb I learned during interviews conducted during my bachelor, which states that an ideal situation would have the interviewer talk 20% of the time and the interview subject talk 80% of the time.

influence this with a good start on the interview. I emphasize this in phase 1 of the interview (Consult fig.1.1 – Interview guide). These valuable off-topic minutes is one of the interviewer's best tools for building a foundation for the rest of the interview with regards to interpersonal relation, mood and setting. My experience tells me that a conversation rarely starts out with a 80/20 division of speech, but by phrasing my statements and questions and follow-up questions in a way that activates the subject, it is possible to proximate the 80/20 division by the time phase 1 of the interview ends and one progresses into phase 2.

2.3 Infection control during the interviews

The restrictions that NTNU has imposed to employees and students has changed constantly during the pandemic which has made it incredibly difficult to plan and conduct interviews in person. Even though meeting in person has been my personal preference, it has been necessary to change all but one interview to an online platform. Conducting online interviews obviously poses some challenges such as the need for stable internet and a good setup (microphone, hardware etc.) on both sides, but the main challenge is that the quality of the interpersonal communication could be poorer as opposed to a more normal interview setting. I assume that the quality of interviews might suffer under the current restrictions¹⁰ since it makes it more difficult to build interpersonal relationships or to read faces/expressions to read and interpret a statement and provide good follow-up questions. The closeness one can experience in a face-to-face interview is not easily achieved in an online setting.

¹⁰ E.g. conducting the interviews online, via encrypted skype or meeting with facemasks.

Triangulating NTNUs advice with FHI's advice, I have chosen to do face-to-face interviews when it was allowed, and conduct online interviews when restrictions demanded it.

As stated before, I assume it to be somewhat harder to gain the interpersonal relationship with my interview subject with an online meeting, because the forum increases the perceived distance¹¹. Clear and ample communication beforehand is vital, so as to remove as much as possible the possibility for misunderstandings.

¹¹ In the subject "MCT4021/4022/4023 Physical-Virtual Communication and Music" the perceived distance between people in a virtual room was one of our main challenges. We experienced that this challenge is difficult to overcome even if one has state of the art high quality equipment.

Chapter 3: Classifying concert trends

This chapter provides an overview of how the online concerts have changed during the pandemic. When the lockdown started, musicians had to find a new way to reach their audiences. Many took to the internet to be able to reach their audience. This chapter talks about how musicians has interacted with their audience on digital platforms and how the audience has responded.

3.1 Five stages of concert streaming during the pandemic

This chapter is heavily informed by an extensive interview with Ivar Rømo. Rømo is a music enthusiast and writer for the online music magazine Disharmoni.no¹². He has been following the Norwegian streaming events since the start of the pandemic and estimates that he has seen about 50-60 streamed concerts since the start of the pandemic. In an attempt to classify and summarize the working life of musicians during the pandemic, he has outlined five stages within live music performance during the pandemic.

Classifying concerts in this way is difficult. These stages need to be understood as observable trends, and not absolute categories, and it is important to note that they overlap with each other. During the last year, innumerable artists and arrangers have taken to the online stage and done vastly different things at different or similar points in time. Therefore, it is helpful to note that when classifying online concerts, one is

¹² Disharmoni.no is a Norwegian online music magazine based in Oslo. They have writers all over Norway and focuses on album, concert and song reviews as well as interviews with people in the music business.

counting ‘apples and oranges’ so to speak. Nevertheless, observing trends can help us understand how streaming live music has evolved during the pandemic.

Stage 1: Lockdown

I will not be putting dates on these different stages. Many people were doing things differently and at different times, so it is not a helpful measure. Instead, I will use concrete examples to exemplify trends within the different stages.

Keywords:

Balcony concerts, Internet, Livingroom concerts, Low production quality, plug and play, Latest Fad

The lockdowns following the Covid-19 pandemic were some of the strictest that has been implemented in peacetime. Country by country everything from bars, hotels, transportation, schools, universities, stores and workplaces (the list goes on) were given strict instructions to shut down activities. It seemed like nobody fully understood how what the implications would be and how long it would last. The general zeitgeist was that we must stay home and wait this out and it will be over soon enough.

The culture sector was hit hard. So much cultural activity demands that people meet and interact, and now people were deterred from doing so. It was not long before people were trying out different ways of interacting with each other with music and culture. A prime example of this “Stage 1” type activity were all the viral videos (from

Italy especially) of people playing concerts and singing together from their balconies¹³
¹⁴. By this time, the seed was sown, so to speak. Musicians realized that they had the opportunity to play for an audience despite the lockdown, and it did not take long before musicians logged on the internet and streamed live events from their living rooms. In Norway, Facebook quickly became the preferred medium for both streaming and advertise concerts, possibly because Facebook had such a prominent place in Norway for advertising events before the pandemic. The ones that got ahead in these times were usually very mobile musicians, who could perform with only voice and an accompanying instrument. These musicians were quick to enter the digital stage because so little adjustment had to be made from their ordinary repertoire.

A typical concert during this time was a singer/songwriter with a guitar/piano accompanying themselves – and the audience loved it. Sondre Lerche was one such artist, who streamed live from his couch with just his guitar and managed to get approximately 70.000 live streamers(!). Odd Nordstoga also played a charity concert with somewhat similar results as Sondre Lerche. Other artists who excelled within this format was for example Ida Jenshus, Malin Pettersen and Stine Andreassen.

Several artists started using the payment service Vipps during these times, and for the first few weeks, the audience was very willing to pay. The above-mentioned concert

¹³ A typical example of this can be found in this Youtube clip:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKP0dALFO6A&ab_channel=WION

This is one of many such happenings that were common in the early days of the lockdown.

¹⁴ On a side note, this type of concerts is not new and similar activities has been done for as long as there has been balconies. Rømo informed me about an interesting piece of local history: there was a tradition in Trondheim, Lademoen in the 1930s and early 1940s, where musicians would go to apartment blocks and play, so that people would listen from their balconies and eventually throw down a few coins.

by Sondre Lerche brought in approximately 134.000 Norwegian Kroner,¹⁵(Pettrém, M. T. 19.03.2020) and Inge Bremnes m/Band brought in approximately 86.500 Norwegian Kroner. (Pettrém, M. T. 16.03.2020)

Streaming concerts were incredibly popular during these first week and a lot of artists had good success within the format. The audience seemed to be very happy to move onto the digital live scene, which spurred the musicians on to improving their product.

Stage 2: A New Venue

Keywords:

Professional equipment, Streaming from venues, Small ensembles + Skeleton Crews, Vipps Payment, Event tickets

Musicians were not the only group that was harmed by the lockdown – Event arrangers, bars and venues and sound/light technicians were in the same boat. Stage 2 started relatively early, as the above-mentioned personnel were looking to get involved in the streaming trend. Working musicians typically have an audio interface at home which is one of the main reasons they were able to start streaming so early, but the demand for higher quality streams came quickly as the charm and novelty of artists playing guitar in their sofas wore off. Professional venues were able to provide a more concert-like setting and a collaboration was soon in order.

¹⁵ The concert in question was an event held from Sondre Lerches livingroom the 18th of March, 2020. This was in collaboration with Brakkesyke – a facebook group that provided streaming concerts early in the pandemic.

Infection controls were incredibly strict at this point. A typical concert therefore consisted of a small ensemble (Often a Duo/Trio) and a skeleton crew provided by the venue. These personnel had to be in accordance to the infection control rules, which changed rapidly. Whereas the early troubadours/solo acts of the first stage were more comfortable and used to playing alone, the stage 2 format produced new challenges for the musicians to overcome. Most musicians are not used to playing in front of nothing but a camera when playing in an ensemble. Practice sessions are conducted without an audience, but an ensemble typically addresses each other in this case, and therefore feed of each other's energy. The empty concert venue and the enigmatic and machine-like camera¹⁶ was a challenge for many, and many viewers (including myself) have noticed how detached some of the musicians seemed to be. Rømo even commented on one concert where he wondered if the artist would be able to go through, or even faint because of nervousness caused by the unfamiliar situation.

Many streaming platforms allow the participants to write to the stream-host. This is a common practice among steaming platforms such as Twitch, Youtube and Facebook, who also were among the industry leaders of streamed live music. Whereas a normal live concert would see the musicians largely ignoring random shouts from the audience, some musicians got very preoccupied with what the audience wrote and proceeded to read aloud some messages in between the songs. Whereas this was a charming audience/musician interaction at first, the novelty quickly wore off. As a listener, it became hard to ignore the loss of progression in the concert that arose from a band member suddenly deciding to chat with the audience on his computer rather

¹⁶ Stanley Kubrick's 1968 "2001: A Space Odyssey" has a computer character called HAL 9000. The interaction the characters in this movie has with this machine is always uncomfortable and inhumane. Albeit an overemphasized example, it can be a useful analogy to understand how impersonal and alienating it can feel for some musicians to play in front of an online audience while seeing only a camera lens.

than starting the next song. Both as a musician and a part of the audience, I always feel most connected with the music and the experience of a concert when the time between songs is kept to a minimum.

An interesting side note worth mentioning is on the role that applause has within a concert setting. The typical 10-15 seconds of applause fills a crucial moment in the live concert: the moment where the musicians reset and get ready to start the next song. It's also a vital moment for the audience, as it lets the listener catch a break, exchange a few words with the person on the side, and small things like that. This whole moment, filled with noise from hundreds of hands clapping, can be likened to the whole of the concert venue 'catching a breath'. In Streamed music, especially at this stage in the pandemic, this 'breath' largely escaped us, and when it was filled with distractions like for example that of band members looking at an online chat wall, one can quickly lose the feeling of attending a concert.

Technical issues are always a potential danger in any concert setting, and online concerts are no different. A typical semi-professional concert today is already a fairly complicated setup, running hundreds of components like cables, microphones, speakers, amps, etc. Combining these with video and streaming it online is not a small task, but on the whole, this was executed very well in Norway from early on. Yet, some difficulties were had. I have seen blackouts, and Rømo tells of one concert that was delayed about an hour because of a computer system upgrade. There was also a concert that was cancelled because of connection errors. This artist also has a big following in Germany and Switzerland, making the lost opportunity to have an international concert an even bigger failure.

Stage 3: The band comes together

Keywords:

Bigger bands, Rock concerts, Concept concerts, Pre-recorded streams

Stage three and stage two are quite interconnected, and one could say that they coexisted. One could also argue that stage three could be seen as a ‘stage 2.5’. Still there are some major trends that one can observe.

The biggest character feature of stage three is the size of the productions that were held. By this time in the pandemic, bands and organizers were getting more used to the online livestream format and the productions grew. Rock music were the genre that drew the longest straw in this stage, and light rigs, smoke machines and a huge backline was in place – in one sentence, the feeling of live music were back.

Many of the ‘bad habits’ of the early streaming period were gone (such as live chatting instead of starting the next song and talking among band members instead of to/with the audience), and to streamline the concert experience, more and more of the concerts were pre-recorded. A great example of this is Dream Police’s concert of 25. April 2020, where the songs were pre-recorded on a big live venue stage¹⁷. The Vipps number was visible in the corner as usual, and the segments between the songs were neatly cut. As a substitute for audience interaction, Dream Police had a few video snippets in between some of the songs where they talked to the audience from a couch – somewhat reminiscent of the segments commonly seen in Eurovision Song Contest, where the groups are interviewed in couches throughout the evening. This format

¹⁷ A video of the concert can be found at this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jstYV-hpBI8&ab_channel=DreamPolice

helped with providing a more complete concert experience for the viewer. The obvious critique was still difficult to avoid: If a live streamed concert is pre-recorded, is it a live streamed concert?

In many ways, this period saw the most interesting and spectacular concerts we have seen in Norway during the pandemic. Backstreet Girls, for instance, saw streaming numbers reaching 140.000 – a massive attendance by any measure.

Oslo Ess and The Dogs had one of the most visually striking live streams of this era: The 18th of April, 2020 they held a collaborative concert from the roof of a building in Oslo¹⁸. The production was professionally done, with drone cameras, and several close-up angles, and the stage-work was well done. They also had pyrotechnics at the show. To do away with the awkward silence between the songs, they came up with an ingenious solution – they simply played each second song. As soon as one band was done, the other band immediately took over. This format provided a varied and entertaining concert, and about 160.000 people watched the stream.

These numbers were not beat until Åge Aleksandersen played live from Clarion Hotel the 23th of May, 2020. As with others mentioned above, this concert was pre-recorded and included other video clips, notably a short documentary snippet talking about people who have made a positive contribution to others during the pandemic. The production was flawless, both in terms of stage work, sound and lighting. Between 235.000 and 270.000 watched the concert, depending on what sources one credits. One can argue that this concert marked the pivot of streaming concerts in Norway.

¹⁸ A video of the concert can be found at this link:

(Please be aware that this leads to a Facebook page, and may require an active account. The concert was not available elsewhere.)

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=403550614227900>

Productions from this period were closer to a ‘Live in studio’/‘Live at’ DVD. It is apparent that these concerts were intended to be streamed on the living room TV with the surround sound system, and not on PCs and portable devices. These were intended as full feature concerts, and not drop-in streaming concerts.

As the summer moved in, several festivals jumped on the streaming bandwagon. A notable example is Steinkjerfestivalen Stream – a digital variant of Steinkjerfestivalen. This festival let their audience participate in three different ways:

1. Live at the venue:
With a very limited number of tickets, people could attend the show, with social distance rules implemented at the venue.
2. Stream from home:
Steinkjerfestivalen Stream encouraged their audience to gather together and watch from home. At this time, you were allowed to have visitors, and Steinkjerfestivalen Stream suggested that groups of friends gathered to watch the festival together at home.
3. Livestream from “Vårt Hjem”:
With 200 seats per evening, Steinkjerfestivalen provided a streamed Cinema experience. They rigged a big screen and a sound system and gathered people for a cinema/festival crossover.

Steinkjerfestivalen Stream was a success with the audience, but not necessarily economic. The stream was made public for free with an option to donate from Vipps, and although it is hard to get concrete numbers from the festival, it is common knowledge that the on-site sale of refreshments and drinks constitutes a massive portion of a festival’s economic turnover.

Stage 4: The audience gets their say

Keywords:

Lighter restrictions, outdoor concerts, physical attendance

Steinkjerfestivalen Stream is a great segue into the fourth stage of streaming during the pandemic. As the infection control restrictions and the weather both eased up during the summer, it became feasible to hold some more concerts with an audience physically present. Events held outdoors allow for more people than events held indoors and as a result we saw people going back physically attending concerts.

As is true for the rest of the pandemic, the infection control restrictions changed a lot, varying from place to place as well as in time. Commonly, the attendance number varied from around 50-200 people, depending on factors like indoor/outdoor, assigned seats/free seating and the latest infection statistics.

The audience in these concerts were a mix of people being present at the venue and people watching from home. These concerts are not necessarily new, as we have seen big music groups streaming live concerts for some time now. Other institutions well established institutions such as for example The Berlin Philharmoniker¹⁹ have also offered a streaming service for some time.

What is notable about this period during the Covid-19 pandemic is how eager the audience was to getting back to experience concerts live in person. At one stage, it seemed near impossible not to sell the 50 to 200 tickets available. Whereas an

¹⁹ The Berlin Philharmonic streaming service is called Digital Concert Hall and was launched as early as 2008. This service has helped the orchestra manifest a foothold especially in Asia.

The site can be visited here: <https://www.digitalconcerthall.com/en/home>

attendance on the rooftop during the Oslo Ess/The Dogs concert would be impossible as the format did not allow it, it seemed that given the choice, a large number of concert goers would much prefer to attend in person rather than stream from home. This part of the pandemic started to suggest that streamed concerts were not the 'messiah' it had seemed to be.

Vipps donations were still heavily leaned on by the musicians, but around this time, the will to donate seemed to dwindle²⁰. The sky-high donations seen earlier in the pandemic were no longer seen at this time. As time progressed, it was again argued from the performers and arrangers' point of view that it was difficult to make a living.

²⁰ As discussed elsewhere, getting exact donation numbers are very rare. A large number of musicians does not want to disclose their earnings, and without a complete record (which seems near impossible to make) these numbers are hard utilize in a meaningful way.

Stage 5: “Lack of money is the root of all evil” – George Bernard Shaw

Keywords:

Receding Vipps donations, heavy subsidies to few recipients, dissatisfaction within the community

As the year went on and Vipps donations seemed to recede, musicians were again expressing their difficulties with making a living. The Norwegian government implemented several arrangements to stimulate the economy in this time. A notable measure that was taken to aid musicians was that of Kulturrådet (Kulturrådet, 2020). There were set aside 500 million NOK to stimulate the culture sector in this time period.

The concerts that characterize this period were heavily subsidized concerts and tours, primarily executed by a small group of artists and musicians. Among these were the much-discussed concerts that the media dubbed “Julekonsertene”.

Typically, these concerts were large in scope, often set at the ‘best’ venue in town, like Oslo Spektrum, Grieghallen, Forum Scene, Olavshallen or Kilden and featured a big production crew and some of the most-selling artists in Norway.

Not all of these concerts were streamed, but I chose to include them because they marked such an important step in the music during the pandemic, both because of the monetary aspect and the fact that the physically present audience that arrived in stage four, was the main focus of these concerts - which in a way - brings us full circle.

The first wave of payments was announced in October to a massive response from the culture sector. Unfortunately, the response was in anger and frustration, not in joy. The first rounds of donations were for 42 million NOK and was divided between 21 applicants. One applicant cashed in 13.3 million for a tour of 26 Julekonserter – roughly half a million NOK per concert, all in a time where one could not have more

than 200 people in attendance. The recipients were almost exclusively brand names – musicians who were already considered to be well off and well established and had the opportunity to generate income through streaming services, radio/tv and to some small, degree record sales. The ones left behind were the “don’t quit your day job” musicians. The ones who played music as a side job and relied on it as a portion of their income.

In a time where most musicians had next to no income, it was a hard pill to swallow to see well established artists reeking in millions in subsidies when the big sums were untouchable for the common musician. The consensus in the music milieu²¹, picked up from numerous debates in newspapers, media and social media seemed to be that most of the musicians felt left behind, and that too much money was given to a few prestige projects instead of reaching to as many musicians and projects as possible.²²

Where are we going?

A year has passed since the restrictions were implemented, and in many ways, we have come full circle and ended up just about where we started. With the uprising of the English and South African mutations, we have gone back to an even stricter closedown than what we had before.

²¹ The writer is a part of this milieu, and actively follows the debate on several closed forum-groups for musicians and arrangers in Norway.

²² Here is a list of further reading on the matter:

<https://www.vg.no/rampelys/musikk/i/JJrv4/myndighetene-stoetter-kurt-nilsens-juleturne-med-over-13-millioner>

<https://www.vg.no/rampelys/musikk/i/LnnWeV/raser-mot-stoettemillioner-til-kurt-nilsen-moralsk-bankerott>

<https://www.aftenbladet.no/meninger/debatt/i/OQQ9kl/hva-er-forskjellen-mellom-kurt-nilsen-og-meg>

<https://www.vg.no/rampelys/musikk/i/JJolb6/festivalveteran-refser-kulturradet>

If we try to imagine a stage 6 or 7, we see a lot of similarities with stage 1 and 2. Streams held by big artists such as what we saw in stage 3 has become rarer and rarer. When visiting stream concert forums on facebook, its more and more common to see small relatively unknown musicians streaming for quite low numbers. Rock and pop bands are more seldom seen than country and dansband performances.

The productions are relatively good, and sponsors are commonly featured on the streams. It seems that some venues have streamlined their productions and made their setup more plug-and-play, yet it seems that fewer and fewer artists want to play, and fewer and fewer people want to stream from home. In many ways, we are back to where we were one year ago, but unfortunately lacking the optimism.

3.2 Difficulties with being a live-stream artist

“I was afraid that there would be spread a misconception that music-Norway could survive with donations from streaming concerts, and that this extreme number would give negative repercussions in the process of establishing necessary relief packages for the music industry.”

-Åge Aleksandersen, commenting on why he chose to not reveal the donation sum from his record-breaking concert (own translation from Hoel, O.J. 2020, Adressa)

Åge Aleksandersen probably understood immediately that his record-breaking 1.8 million NOK donation for his live streamed concert was a one-off. He was criticized for not disclosing the amount sooner, but this statement suggests why he might have chosen not to do so. He is far from alone with withholding income numbers. Whereas playing live concerts involves a lot of risk, musicians seem to have understood quite early that streamed concerts would not generate steady and predictable income. If a band plays a concert in one town the first day, they can hit the next town the day after and expect a somewhat similar outcome. However, if one streams a concert, everyone

with an internet connection is your potential customer, and the chance of them wanting to see the same concert the next day, is vanishingly small.

The live-stream format is therefore very unforgiving. A band commonly plays one setlist per tour, with only minor adjustments. This cannot be done with live streamed music. The solution has been to immediately take down concert streams shortly after the concert is held. Keeping the stream up leaves the artist with the Vipps number on screen and a potential for more income, but also with a substantial drawback: With the concert being always visible, the artists next move must be a new one. One cannot simply do the same stream again and hope that the audience will tune in.

A lot of records was beaten during this period, and Åge Aleksandersens concert was responsible for at least two of them, mainly income and audience numbers. Audience numbers, however, is very difficult to determine when it comes to online streaming.

3.3 Who is watching these streams

Getting an accurate demographic of who is streaming has proved to be incredibly difficult. To get a useful answer on this point one would have to spend most of this thesis pursuing this question. Based on my own, and Rømo's observations of comment sections on live streams, attendance rosters and stream-related Facebook groups, it is however possible to isolate some trends.

In the first stages of the pandemic, it seemed that 'everyone' was watching live streamed concerts. These concerts had a news-of-the-day appeal and attracted a large and diverse audience at first. The first group to fall off seemed to be teens and young adults. The appeal to see streamed concerts live was probably not high enough after the initial hype wore off as this group possibly migrated to consuming other streamed media. A more persistent group were middle aged rock enthusiasts. These people tend to view concerts in a different way than teens and young adults and would commonly

stream on the living room TV rather than a mobile or computer device. Pictures of the living room setups was commonly shared on social media and in the comment section on various streams accompanied by a “Cheers”.

With streaming in later times retracting to mostly small/unknown acts with local followings, it seems like a significant portion of the audience comes from the musicians’ own followings. In the case of less known artists, the network the artist themselves have, seems to be a very important factor in whether the stream is successful or not.

3.4 Contacting streaming services

To diversify my data pool, I attempted to get in touch with some streaming services to ask them about trends in their streaming services with special regard to audience participation. I asked for information about concert attendance from before the pandemic, during the first half year, and second half year of the pandemic, expecting to see a trend similar to what I observe as a virtual concert goer, namely a spike in attendance around march/April, that slowly declined during the summer.

None of the streaming services I emailed were willing to give any data or statistics about concert attendance. Bandsintown and Songkick both said no and Show4Me did not answer. StageIT also declined to give me data but were kind enough to send me a blogpost highlighting some results from a study they did (they declined to offer me any more data than what published in this blogpost).

Most streaming services and event planners seem to be very hesitant about providing data about their concert attendances.

Chapter 4: What is a stream?

A Case Study of the Åge Aleksandersen Live Stream

4.1 Difficulties with live streaming statistics

What does it mean to have 1 view on your stream? One would think that it is very easy to count a stream, but different streaming services require different parameters to be met before they count a song. Facebook and Instagram require you to watch for three seconds before it is counted as a view, whereas Spotify requires the listener to stay put for a full 30 seconds before they count it as a “listen”. Were it not for the applause included at the end, the live recording of “I like short songs” by The Dead Kennedys would be too short to make any money on Spotify.

During the spring of 2020, newspaper articles commonly featured the streaming numbers in their titles as an eye-catcher, but it needs to be stated that these numbers are not necessarily concert attendance as we know it.

Using the before-mentioned Åge Aleksandersen concert²³ as an example there are several numbers that has been used throughout the talks in media. VG reported 250.000 people, while Adresseavisen said 270.000, and Rømo noted the number 235.000 – and that was roughly 15 minutes before the concert was taken off air.

²³ It is important to keep in mind that online events, such as concerts differ wildly from each other in numerous factors depending on the content, arrangers, performers and streaming platforms, as well as the tools used in the creation process. Because of all these differing factors, the examples given, such as the Åge Aleksandersen concert, should be viewed in isolation, and not in direct comparison to other online events. The examples, however, are best understood as case studies, and can help to explain trends observed during the pandemic.

So what is going on here? Quite often, a streaming concert is streamed through various sites. For example, you can send the same feed on Twitch, Youtube and Facebook at the same time, and these sites could potentially count views in very different ways. Commonly one counts two numbers: *Total attendance* and *peak number*. In a normal concert, people tend to stay for the majority of the concert, whereas this is not true for a online concert. Here you can stay for a minute or two, or even drop out immediately, and still be counted among the headline number.

While Rømo's number most likely were the unique viewers in the moment, VG and Adresseavisen operates with very different attendance numbers in their articles reporting on the concert. VG states 250.000 views, citing an early Adresseavisa-article (Solheim, P. Østbø, S. 2020, VG) and Adressa states 270.000, adjusted from the before mentioned 250.000 (Hoel, O.J. 2020, Adressa). This suggests that Rømo attended a concert, and got the impression that 235.000 was in attendance, while Adressa claim that 270.000 were in attendance. Who is right?

4.2 Why are streaming numbers important?

As concert goes, we are influenced by how the media portrays concerts. The media contextualizes a concert by making it comparable to other concerts through things like ratings (In Norway, these are commonly represented as the cast of a die from 1 to 6) and concert attendances. One could therefore argue that a concert with 60.000 in the audience and a score of 5 would be a better experience than a concert with 40.000 rated 3. Obviously, this is a severe oversimplification of how the concerts actually was, but it gives us an impression of what the concert might have been like. Concerts are also an exclusive event. It is a shared experience by those who were in attendance and its common to feel a group affiliation during or after a concert. With online concerts, the audience is not necessarily sharing the concert experience in the same

way that a physically present audience is, and this group affiliation is therefore not as easy to get.

It is important to understand how the media talks about streaming attendance numbers because it is a commemoration of the event. Partaking in an event with 20 or 200 people, even though either could be the ‘better’ option, are two very different things.

When attending an online event, one can be fooled by the streaming numbers that appear in the media, since the stream can be broadcasted on different sites simultaneously. It is also very probable that a large portion of the people in the stream is not staying throughout the concert, which means that the actual attendance could be something different than what we are led to believe. Cultural events are important memories that stay with us for years. Therefore, it is important that they are accurately reported on, so as to be as true to the event as possible. When researching online concerts, I got the impression that there is a lot of ambiguity when these events are reported upon, and I almost felt cheated. Some of the concerts reported IP addresses, while some reported ticket sales – and some concerts were streamed on several sites. Therefore, I find it very important to understand how these numbers are achieved and reported on.

4.3 Talking Numbers: An Interview with Børge Sved

To get a better understanding of how streaming numbers on digital events are attained, and how the media operates with them, I interviewed Børge Sved, head of culture at Adresseavisen. He has written about several streamed events the last year, among them, the Åge Aleksandersen live streamed concert. The newspaper he is affiliated with, Adresseavisen, has also been hosting multiple free streamed events on their website the last year as a part of what Sved refers to as “*Adresseavisens koronadugnad*” – a bid to both provide the culture sector with a platform and to “*Fill Adresseavisen with awesome content*”.

As mentioned in chapter 4.1, there are numerous difficulties in how streaming numbers are reported. I asked Sved how Adresseavisen calculates numbers like this when they are reporting on online events. *“There is not really ‘one’ answer to this question, but in the case of the Åge concert, we have used the numbers that Åge’s management has provided to us coupled with numbers from our own site. When we are streaming concerts through our own websites, we have our own numbers, both from our site ‘Livestudioet’²⁴ and the article that contains the stream. These are numbers on how many unique users have seen the clip as well as how long they have seen it. Very often, a stream is sent on multiple platforms, and if that is the case, then they have their own numbers. Reporting number from our own site is fairly straightforward, but it is much more difficult in the cases where we do not have it ‘in-house’. These are cases where we are streaming from our site, but the stream is provided through an ‘embed code’²⁵. The numbers provided in the article about Åge’s concert is therefore a sum consisting of our in-house numbers, combined with the numbers attained from Åge’s management.”*

Sved also informed me that Åge had been working with a sponsor, and suggested that this sponsor possibly got their own internal link code. The numbers for the concert were therefore probably the sum of Adresseavisens numbers, Facebook’s streams through Åge’s site, and the sponsors numbers. Working with three datasets is one of the reasons why it’s difficult to get an accurate streaming number. Newspapers are

²⁴ Livestudioet is Adresseavisens hub for streaming services that they host on their own web page. A lot of this content is offered up for free as a part of their ‘Koronadugnad’

²⁵ An embed code/embedded video is a video that appears on one site (for example a newspaper article), but is streamed from another platform (for example Vimeo or YouTube). The site references the video, but the external source is the owner of said video. The streaming statistics and data therefore is owned by the platform, and not the owner of the site.

always working to deliver news closest to the event, so a common practice is to announce the number one has, and then re-adjust it as necessary. In the case of the Åge concert, which was streamed three different places, it took some time for all the data to be in.

Working with external partners is difficult Sved says. *“When there is an external partner that does the live stream, we have to trust the numbers they report to us.”* As in the case with the Åge concert, Adressa did not get the raw data, but just the number. Sved goes on to explain that in the case where the data is external, they use their own data for article views. This dataset is much more reliable since it is in-house, but it presents the problem that if the same stream was embedded on another site, that data does not necessarily always get counted. In the busiest streaming period of 2020, Adresseavis commonly used video links provided by Facebook. After such an event, Sved said that they did not receive any dataset from the event, but only a streaming number, and that such complete datasets were difficult to obtain. This reflects the findings in chapter 3.4.

“When we are operating with views, or attendance numbers, we want to be as accurate as possible. So, in that way, not having the data first-hand is a problem. But you could also say that when it is like that (referring to the fact that Vimeo, Facebook, Youtube and other large sites are the ones controlling the data pools) we are at least progressing towards a standard that is comparable over time. Therefore, we are able to count our page views, and couple them with Vimeo and Facebook’s numbers, and therefore reach the number the same way for each concert. The advantage arises when we are counting in the same way, because then it becomes comparable. Even though this is not the same way as you would count a live concert(non-online), it allows us to compare one concert to another concert... ...the weakness with this counting method is that we cannot know exactly how many have seen the stream, we cannot know how many have seen the entire concert or just stayed for a couple of songs.”

Sved explains that they have this data from their site, but not from Facebook. What their systems count is unique IP addresses. Page counts will always appear higher than unique users, since there will always be those who enter the page several times. What Adresseavisa therefore reports on is unique users gathered from IP addresses.

Another way of counting these numbers is to count *sold tickets*. Throughout the pandemic, some events have sold tickets to a stream, and therefore report the ticket sales, which further muddles the pool. For instance, Steinkjerfestivalen urged their ticket holders to gather with friends and family and watch the festival from the living room, which presents the question “How many are watching per ticket?”. Sved also mentioned that other enterprises have insisted to add a calculation on top of the ticket sales numbers, similar to the way that TV viewings are calculated²⁶²⁷. This introduces the problem with comparable streaming numbers that Sved was mentioning. If someone is counting Unique IP addresses while someone else is calculating ticket sales with an assumption that multiple people are watching per sold tickets, then the numbers are not comparable. A point Sved made is that viewer numbers are ‘digital valuta’. To attract sponsors, it is very important to have good streaming numbers, because it indicates the exposure that sponsors are paying for. He further explains that in some cases Adresseavisa has abstained from using certain audience numbers in headlines because the counting differentiates from the counting practice more commonly used. This mostly occurs when the counting is done by sources that

²⁶ With NRK as an example, the calculations are made by TNS Gallup TV-panel. About 1000 TV trackers are installed in Norway as of 2011, and they estimate that there are ca. 2400 people who are users of these TVs.

An article about this can be found on this link: <https://www.nrk.no/vestfoldogtelemark/slik-maler-vi-seertallene-1.7682457>

²⁷ Det Nye Teateret was mentioned in the interview, but they did not respond to my question about specifying how they calculate their viewing numbers.

Adresseavisa does not have directly access to, so that they could not assure the accuracy. Nevertheless, they do sometimes report the number that they have been given further down in the article.

When talking about the potential problem that a lot of streamers possibly sees the stream for a very short amount of time, Sved commented on the difference between a streamed and physically present format:

“With streaming, you are lowering the threshold for experiencing the event enormously. If you compare it to buying a ticket to Rammstein, you pay 1000 kroner, talk with your friend group, find a babysitter for the children and plan for the event half a year in advance – then you will see the entire concert. That’s something different than getting the stream sent, often for free, straight into your living room. And then you can just check it out on a whim, and you can decide that this was not for you and immediately leave... ..with streaming, you are always only one click away from something else.”

He continues: *“In most cases I believe that streaming has worked very well and that many people have had great experiences with streaming, and I believe I have been exposed to a lot more because of streaming because it is so easy to attend a streaming concert. But at the same time, if I am short on time, I just enter the stream for a short amount of time to see how it was and get the gist of it, and then leave after 5-10 minutes. I think that with cases like the Åge concert, people will sit for longer. What we in Adresseavisa experienced with the Åge concert was a bigger mobilizing before the concert. We encouraged people to send photos from their living room and ask questions before the concert. When we experience this kind of excitement before the concert, we get the impression that more people plan to watch the entire concert, in contrast to the streams where we don’t really hear anything from the public in advance.”*

Counting streaming numbers is a very difficult task, especially when different arrangers and hosts count in different ways. Sved, however offered a helpful anecdote about how unreliable counting, especially from free concerts have been. *“Look at free concerts such as VG-Lista. Where do you get concert attendance numbers when nobody bought a ticket? Who is able to count every person at the concert? One talks with the arranger and the police, and they rapport an estimate. But it’s impossible to know when there are multiple entrances and exits and no ticket sales and no registrations. Counting free concerts has never been an easy task. With free online concerts we have a better chance that with free physical concerts. The data we get from online concerts are at least reliable – the question is therefore what we count.”*

As a host of these concerts, Adresseavisa also has to manage the streams after the event. There are numerous reasons why a stream is taken off air, one of the main reasons being copyrights. Typically, the agreement is for the live stream – a live performance on a set date. This does not necessarily include any rights for keeping the stream up after the event is concluded. TONO, the main music licensing company in Norway is one of the groups that is involved. There are strict rules about payment for any livestream concert that is kept up after the event, and for a regional newspaper, in the case of the Åge concert, it is not financially viable to keep the concert up for long. Sved mentions NRK in contrast. Most often, NRK keeps concerts available in their streaming service NRK Nett-TV, but they have a much larger infrastructure and better deals for handling such content than a regional newspaper commonly has.

Sved also mentions the exclusivity factor that many artists work towards. If the concert is freely available online, why would the audience then pay for another concert? Taking down concerts is therefore one of the ways the artist can control their own exclusivity.

The format of live streamed events is not sustainable as it is now. People are not as willing to pay for online events as they are for physical events, and it is hard for the artist to constantly renew themselves. We have not seen a bigger stream concert than

the Åge concert, and the rest of the list is far away below him, Sved explains. When streaming was ‘new’ everyone was interested in it, but as the summer of 2020 went by, the interest dwindled. At the top of the streaming period, Adresseavisa hosted around 5-10 concerts a week.

“The reduced interest in streamed concerts was a natural consequence. At the peak, everyone in the music business was searching for something to do, so everyone jumped on the opportunity to stream to keep workers and venues active. We (Adresseavisa) were very happy about this, but at the same time, we talked to the people in the industry and said that this (streaming) is not the solution – it’s not the future. Streaming concerts in this way is not how the music business survives economically. And we saw this during the summer of 2020, when it opened up a bit. Musicians and arrangers immediately went back to physical concerts, which was very natural. ‘Everyone’ wants to play in front of a live audience.”

“I don’t really imagine that we will return to the time we had (referring to the peak of the streaming period), at least not without a complete lockdown like the one we saw in March 2020. Even though this was a golden age of online concerts, it has a very dark backdrop. It is important to remind ourselves’ that this was not wanted by anyone, and as soon as the situation was improved, things started going back to normal.”

These days Adresseavisa hosts online concerts only now and then. Sved still says that they view it as a good service for their readers during this time with social distancing.

Chapter 5: Looking back – An interview with Sondre Lerche

Sondre Lerche is a Norwegian artist, now based both in Los Angeles and Norway, whose career spans 20 years. He has released numerous studio records and toured extensively throughout his career. This chapter is based on an interview the author had with the artist, where the topic was a streaming concert Lerche did in March 2020, and everything that has happened since.

“At the time, I was living in Los Angeles. The 13th of March, after Erna Solbergs speech, I decided to come back to Norway. The next day, I packed and got ready to leave – I was not planning to stay long, maybe a couple of weeks or a month.” The artist laughed. *“I saw on Facebook that someone had started this project called Brakkesyke, where they hosted a wide range of different online concerts. I watched a concert with Håkon Kornstad. I experienced this as a very unifying happening – I was far away, and the US government was not speaking as openly as the Norwegian government about the covid situation, but through following the Norwegian media and government advice, I felt that it was right to go home to Norway. The concert made me realize that Norway was actually closing down for real. But it also let me see the community that was gathering online and the potential for creating a new meeting ground – ‘okay, we cannot be in the same room, but we can be in the same comment section on Facebook and therefore share the same social and cultural experience’.”*

“I was thinking that as soon as I get home, I will contact Brakkesyke and ask them about joining for a concert. I like simple formats, and I was thinking that streaming concerts at this time is something where the simplest is the best – I never considered anything other than doing it from my livingroom with just my voice and guitar, because it was apparent to me that this simplicity is the attraction – its real, and simple and has the effect of ‘gathering’ people.” Lerche explains that he traveled from Los Angeles the 15th of March, contacted Brakkesyke the 16th of March and set the date for the concert to the 18th of March. He had the feeling that this was something that could not wait. These vital days were the ones where it was really

needed. This was the time when everyone's plans and activities were canceled, and nobody had any idea what was going to happen in a couple of weeks. It also had the benefit of being the news of the day, and in a few weeks it could be over. As we see in chapter 3.1, Lerche was pretty much spot on with his timing. Already a few weeks after his concert, things were beginning to change towards more organized, less spontaneous events.

“Those days, a lot of my plans got canceled, and there was a lot of uncertainty. The streaming concert was something that I at least could do, so I jumped on the opportunity pretty much instantly. But I had no idea that there would be so many people who tuned in to see the concert.”

The conversation turned to technical difficulties. When one is doing a “live from home” stream, like the one Lerche did, one is very much on ones' own: There is nobody that can help you get things up and running again, so you have to be the musician and technical chief at the same thing – which can be a bit daunting. *“I was scared that the stream would start lagging or dropping out. I wanted the stream to look and feel natural, like a proper ‘from home’ concert, but I also wanted it to sound good. Technical issues on a type of concert like this can be charming, but only for a second. After that it is annoying, and people start to drop out”*. Lerche explains that the day before, he had a crash course in streaming from a collaborator of Brakkesyke, and through a roughly one-hour video chat, he taught Lerche the ropes of streaming. *“I thought about how bad it actually could have gone, with 80.000 people sitting and watching the stream. I was not aware of the streaming number during the concert, and I am happy that I was not. I just thought ‘I am just going to play like I was sitting here alone... ..Playing alone in front of a camera requires another kind of imaginary capability. I prepared myself beforehand and decided not to ‘notice’ the absence of the response from the audience. I have a lot of enjoyment from playing alone, so it was easy to find solace in that mode. The response from the room [in a live concert situation] is not there – there is nothing that you can read, which is one of the things I*

enjoy the most with playing music: constantly taking the temperature of the room – sometimes you miscalculate, but sometimes you read the room perfectly, and you manage to lift a moment that is already very good. These elements are not there with a streamed concert and I practiced beforehand to manage without these elements. What is left then is just ‘the song’ and you have to trust that the performance sustains and reaches out.” Lerche explains that this situation is a very familiar one for him. Most of his teenage years were spent practicing and writing music on his own, a pastime that eventually led into a professional career.

Playing from home poses some difficulties. Midway through the concert, Lerche’s downstairs neighbor knocked in the ceiling halfway through the concert. *“This is almost the best thing that can happen. It immediately turns into a memorable moment, and it reminds us about the setting. If this happens when I am alone, I would just turn it down or call it a day, but in this moment I had the responsibility for a concert and thousands of viewers. I have said A, and now I have to say B, which is finishing the concert. It all turned into an absurd dilemma between finishing the concert and being a good neighbor. I remember thinking ‘Damn... I hope I have locked the door!’ I was envisioning a thousand different scenarios. Nevertheless, these are the things that makes it live – the things that make you feel like ‘Wow. This is really happening right now’”.* The neighbor was not aware that there was a concert, and the next day, Lerche talked to his neighbor, who had read about the concert in the newspapers, and they had a little laugh about it all.

When asked about intimacy in streaming concerts, and the fact that streaming artists invites their audience into their homes, Lerche draws a parallel to Instagram. Artists have been doing this for some time, he says, stating that Instagram posts very commonly are from your everyday life and invites the audience very close to ‘home’.

Lerche also talks about the importance of understanding streamed concerts as something unique. He says that musicians often look at different types of musical work, such as recording, making a music video, or streaming as second tier to playing

a concert, but Lerche disagrees. He says that these things are not better or inferior to the others, but merely something completely different. He states that we have to understand streaming concerts in the same way – like something else than what we have seen and done before, something that therefore needs to be understood on its own terms. In a period of time where we have been kept from being in the same room, streaming concerts have been a substitute. *“There was an empty space in the first days following the shutdown, and now the focus is there, and in this empty space, this all happens [the first wave of streaming concerts – what is classified as stage 1 in chapter 3.1] and we have no idea how long this will remain interesting. We realized quite quickly that this moment would not last very long, and soon the streaming concerts became much bigger and better planned events.* Lerche mentions another streaming concert he did, named Patience Extravaganza. This was held in Drammen theater in December 2020 and was something completely different. This concert was a scenic production utilizing all of Drammen theater, following Lerche from room to room while he was performing his music. Patience Extravaganza shows how quickly the format of live streamed music evolved if you contrast Lerche’s concert from home in March and this full-scale production in December.

2020 saw a lot of evolution. Towards the summer, the restrictions opened up [What chapter 3.1 talks about as stage 4] Lerche adapted. He performed seven concerts in Emanuel Vigelands Mausoleum with only 20 people in the audience. *“People were saying that I have to stream this and get it out so that everyone can see it, but at this time, the entire point was that the concert was not supposed to be streamed. ‘If you are not there, then you are not there!’ After being away from concerts for so long, that became the attraction. In March we focused on the fact that we could still have a sense of togetherness even though we could not meet, but during the summer, the focus shifted to actually meeting and getting away from the streams. The streaming concerts in March was in many ways a type of ‘first aid’ that was most important in the very first part of the pandemic. I had much more fun with the big scale production we had before Christmas [Patience Extravaganza].”*

“I like it the most when its live – when there is something on the line. You can get that in a both a live concert and a live stream, but that feeling, the feeling of there being a risk, or a nerve, that feeling is important.”

In closing, we talked about Lerches plans for the summer. Last year he had been traveling with a rented car, an acoustic guitar, a jack cable and a box of vinyls for sale. A very stripped down version of touring. *“I have been dreaming about being able to travel and play festivals with my band, which is what we originally planned to do in 2020. That year I had to travel alone, and I have some reservations about doing that this year as well, because I don’t want to give the audience a certain deja vu feeling – and I think about this a lot: I don’t want to invite the audience to the same experience as last year, and give the audience the feeling that a year has passed and nothing has changed – we are still in the same place as last year. That is not a feeling I want to convey to my audience. They probably don’t think about it before they are in the moment, but then they can think that ‘oh... this is exactly like last year...’ That would serve as a reminder of how much this pandemic has cost and serve as a reminder about how short we have come. I am very glad that we did not know anything about this [referring to the current restrictions] last summer, because at that time, we had hope. It’s important to me to think about what framework around a concert I create for the audience, and to remind them of this is not something I wish to do.”*

Chapter 6: There is No Place Like *Away* from Home – An interview with Håkon Fyhn

To better understand why people seem to turn away from streamed concerts, I contacted a social anthropologist. Håkon Fyhn is an associate professor in social anthropology at NTNU and has been, among other things, conducting research on presence, what it means to be present, and what it means to be present over a distance.

As suggested in several places in Chapter 3, the popularity of online concerts have dwindled since the early parts of the pandemic. This chapter concerns an interview I had with Fyhn where we talked about why people seem to divert from online concerts in favour of attending physically as soon as the opportunity presents itself.

“We can easily talk about this forever. It’s one of the biggest questions, isn’t it?” – Fyhn answered when I asked him about what it means to be present together. *“What I constantly seem to return to, both with regards to meeting people, going to the city, going to concerts and so on, is that when we are present, we are creating something together”*. He exemplified this ‘creation’ with a very helpful analogy: When we are talking together over teams, messenger and zoom, or sharing in a digital space, we are commonly (just) exchanging information. One is the sender, and one is the receiver, and then the roles can reverse. Whereas when we meet in person, there occurs something that is the result of what we created together. When we meet, we align, adjust to each other rhythms, and share in the same space and sensorial perceptions and in a way, create our common reality. Online meetings versus physical meetings can therefore be likened to *exchanging* information and *experiencing* information.

Fyhn underlines the fact that you can have both these types of interactions in both mediums (physical and digital) but that it is much easier to create this connection when meeting in person. He also used an analogy to interviews:

“You may have noticed that if you have an interview that consists simply of a list of questions, you revert to a sender/receiver situations, whereas if you divert from ‘the list’ and talk about a subject, the conversation can become more genuine and in a way, created by both participants”²⁸.

When we meet physically, Fyhn said, we get a lot more ‘to work with’. He refers here to body language, setting, behaviors, timing etc. We were conducting this interview via Zoom, and he used an example. *“Now that I am talking to you, I only see a minor part of the room you are in. And I have little to no options to explore that space. But if we were in the same room, we would have the same sensory experience – we are no longer excluded from one another’s space.”* This also happens in a concert environment, where the audience is sharing in the same experiences – being in the same big crowd, which is quite a special place to be.

The crowd of a big concert is quite a sublime place to be, and although it seems nonsensical to remind ourselves of it, it has been a year since we had this experience. *“You wouldn’t notice that you are hungry if you hadn’t eaten for a year”* (Supervisor Brandtsegg in a meeting with the author, Feb. 2021). The concert crowd has all the sound, smells, heat, and pressure from the crowd that on their own, might be quite uncomfortable, but together make a sublime experience. In online concert you are also excluded from experiencing other peoples’ spheres.

But why is that a problem? Why do we wish to experience the same things as our peers? Fyhn says that it is not necessarily a problem, but when we sense a difference between ours and other peoples’ experiences, the experience lessens, and the distance between us can feel greater.

²⁸ Coincidentally, this is spoken about in chapter 2.1, but open vs. closed interviews are the terms used.

In an article Fyhn participated in for Adressa (Ness and Svardal, 2020), he said *“We are meant to be together. This social dynamic is what it means to be human. Look at how fast we outgrew ‘beer and wine on teams’²⁹. I tried it and just got frustrated. We are beings that exist in the physical world, and we cannot fully compensate for that through digital mediums.”* Elsewhere in the interview, Fyhn underlined that this is subjective, and people can have very different experiences when meeting online. But for most of us, meetings like “lønningspils” and parties on teams simply served as a reminder of where we were not allowed to be, and who we were not allowed to meet.

Fyhn drew on another helpful analogy to understand what we are experiencing when we are together digitally, namely computer games. When we play computer games together online, we seldom experience this distance we so often feel when we are video chatting. One explanation of this can be the world we participate in. Drawing back to earlier in the interview, where he stated that he only could see a small part of my space but was left without the possibility to navigate my physical space. A video game lets you experience everything your friends experience and everyone is on an equal footing – we are taking part in a shared world that is intentionally digital.

“Minecraft could be a much better place to meet than Teams, because in Minecraft you are equally participating in a world that is genuinely digital.” Fyhn said.

Culture is in many senses a sum of activity shared by a group of humans. This action-oriented way of looking at culture also helps us contextualize the differences between going to a concert online and going to a concert together. The feeling of participating in something is stronger if you physically go there and stay in the environment as compared to streaming it from your sofa.

²⁹ Here, Fyhn is referring to having a party over video chat, a trend that was very common in the early days of the pandemic.

In the interview we also talked about where we are going. Fyhn expressed a belief that things are not going to simply go back to how it was before. The pandemic has fundamentally changed how people interact, and this will form how we communicate for quite some time. *“In my line of work it will be much fewer business trips for instance. I think that for example going to Oslo for a meeting will be a thing of the past. Online meetings are simply so much more effective since you don’t have to factor in the time spent getting to the meeting.”*

Things will also change in relation to how we are social. We might see a problem when the restrictions lift that some people will have grown used to less social interaction and therefore might have a higher threshold for meeting than before the pandemic. Fyhn explained that some of the students he has worked with this past year hardly every went outside. On the other side, we could also see an explosion with social and cultural activity as soon as the pandemic lifts, just like we saw in the *roaring 20’s* post-war boom. There will however be a difference between how people come out of the hibernation that has been the covid pandemic: Some might have a difficult time readjusting to the social life and some be more social than ever.

We will not value social meetings in the same way we used to, Fyhn explained, using an analogy: Just like the resurgence of the Vinyl record, physical meetings will be more special, and more appreciated. We will more often stop up and appreciate what we have in our hands, or right in front of us, as opposed to what exists in the digital world.

Fyhn ended the interview with a small anecdote from one of the classes he taught. In a time where the restrictions lifted somewhat, he gave his students the choice of holding a presentation during the daytime online, or in the evening at a café with the appropriate restrictions. 100% of the students chose the café option and when they were done presenting, they stayed – the students, some of whom had not been to a café for ages, simply did not want to go home.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

The pandemic totally altered how we consume media and culture. The shutdown of March, 2020 forced the world into a situation where we had to shift ourselves towards a more digital presence, both at work and in private life. Streaming became an almost overnight sensation and as musicians and the audience took to the online stage. The first wave of online concerts was so popular that it redefined concert performance for some time: in March, April and May of 2020 concerts were almost uniformly understood as online.

As outlined in chapter 3, one can isolate certain trends in online streaming during the last year. Summarized, we saw a rapid exchange from physical concerts to digital, followed by a return to physical concerts as soon as that was allowed.

Another way that streaming has changed these few months with regards to the arrangers. There is a new wealth of knowledge in the Norwegian music industry with regards to camerawork, streaming and online presence because of the restrictions the pandemic brought with it. I think this undoubtably is something that the music industry will benefit from in the times to come after covid-19. We can expect to see a bigger online presence from arrangers such as festivals and big concerts in the times to come.

Even though streaming has brought some major benefits to the culture sector, the format as of now remains flawed. The willingness to pay for streamed concerts through Vipps and donations appear to have declined since May, 2020 and has not regained its traction to date. Even though some measures have been taken to secure a more predictable income for streamed concerts, such as ticket sales, it seems apparent that the audience is far more willing to pay for physical concerts rather than streamed concerts. Another challenge that streaming concerts impose on the artist is the difficulty of staying relevant. A live band can stay relevant by performing in different cities, whereas a live stream is 'everywhere' at once, and therefore deters the audience

from attending the same concert the next weekend. Even though the streaming numbers seems to have been in steady decline since the summer of 2020, I think we can expect to see streaming in the times to come. Whereas bands cannot easily renew themselves with streaming concerts, other events such as festivals can use streaming in a radically new way to promote themselves: By streaming one or two headliners a day, a festival can produce great PR value while at the same time maintaining the value of a ticket. As an example, a festival such as Trønafestivalen is in a remote island, with unique scenery and setting. Due to the geographical limitations, as well as the islands infrastructure, there cannot be sold more tickets. Streaming a few headliners from this festival would provide an excellent commercial for the festival while still preserving the exclusivity of the ticket. The time for streaming single concerts seems to be largely passed, but there seems to be a future for streaming special events, such as unique productions and conceptualized concerts, such as festival headliners.

Determining online viewership on streamed events has proven to be very difficult during the pandemic. There is a lot of ambiguity in the counting system, and with numerous ways to count viewership, it proved hard to determine a branch standard. Chapter 3.4 talks about the difficulties with getting one's hand on data material for live streams from streaming companies. It remains inconclusive to say why this unwillingness persists, but I suspect that for some of these companies, sharing numbers of the falling trends that we observe in concert streaming would constitute the admittance of a devaluation of their company – and they are naturally reluctant to do so.

Adresseavisa was very forthcoming with explaining their strategies, as seen in chapter 4.2. In a national stock they remain a relatively small player, but the insight provided from Sved can provide us with some helpful understanding as to how the media communicates viewership on online concerts, and Adressa as a case, seems to have a standardized approach as to how they calculate viewership. Utilizing unique IP addresses seems to be a useful technique for determining concert attendance, but this

is far from standardized as of now. I still think there is a lot to be desired as to how the media communicates *what* the numbers actually refer to and who is counted among them. Say, you are attending a unique concept concert, such as the yearly concert in Kirkehelleren during the Træna festival. There is a special feeling likened to “*Wow... We are the only ones that has this experience now!*”, But right after the concert you learn that only a few hundred meters on, there is an exactly identical concert with the same music and same setting. Albeit put a bit bluntly, this is the feeling I got when I first learned how embedded video codes for live streams were shared between different sites, largely without the audience being aware of it. In my opinion, there is a great need to standardize how we talk about streamed events, how the arrangers create openness about how the stream is shared, and what platforms has access to it, as well as how we count streaming attendance.

Musicians seems to have had variable success during the pandemic. Some, like Åge Aleksandersen has had record breaking events, while some has not been able to capitalize on the new situation. Very few, only the very adaptable, creative and lucky has had some kind of recurring success during the streaming period, and they have had to reinvent themselves. An example of this is the extreme difference between Sondre Lerche’s concert from his livingroom in March, and the big scale production in December 2020. Very few have been able to have more than one very successful streaming concert during this period. Lerche seems to be an example of an artist who is very conscious about this (during the pandemic he has also released a range of wines and written a book for children). In the interview he mentioned not wanting to provide the audience with the same concert experience, and he appears conscious about the fact that the online format could be betraying in this regard. I think that one of the reasons why many artists have shied away from streaming concerts in the later part of the pandemic is the exact problem with re-inventing oneself. Stage Dolls would have a hard time to get the same attendance if they played another live stream, and Oslo Ess and The Dogs has an even bigger problem: If you are already on the roof, where do you go from there?

In the wake of the national shutdowns, there appeared a gaping hole in the culture and music community. Looking back with one year of retrospective we can now say that the streaming concerts have provided much needed first aid in a time where we could not be together. But it was not for the concerts – I was only because we were not allowed to be together. This became apparent in the summer of 2020, where we gathered and saw live concerts as soon as it was allowed. It was even a point of Sondre Lerches concerts during the summer that these events were not streamed. We want to be together, and we want to experience the shared common space when we consume culture. Håkon Fyhn reminded us that the streamed online spaces can function as a reminder of what we were *not* able to take part in – each other’s physical presence. Lerche, with not streaming his summer concerts (and his reflections in chapter 5) says the exact same thing as Fyhn: The streamed concerts remind us, and shows us that we are not yet allowed to partake in each other’s company, and it gives the streamed concert a bitter aftertaste. This is in my opinion one of the main reasons that online concerts have declined so much. Streamed concerts, especially in March/April of 2020 gave some immediate symptom relief, but it did not cure the underlying sickness (or pandemic, if you will). We want to be together, and we want to create memories in a shared setting, and this is, if we believe Fyhn, a fundamental fact about the way that humans interact with each other.

Lerche has understood this with his comment about not wanting to provide the audience with an experience that reminds them of the lockdown of last summer, and therefore, reminds us about how short we have come.

Fyhn and Lerche in many ways tells the same story, albeit from different vantage points. They tell the story about how humans have cultural experiences, and how vital it is that this experience is shared. Nobody wanted the situation that arose in March, 2020, and it is obvious to see that as soon as we are able to attend concerts together, streaming will be second tier. The sense of togetherness is what we always sought after when the shutdown took place – that is why we took to the online arena. The

pandemic therefore has shown us in practice some crucial truths about ourselves – that we urge to share each other’s company and that the consumption of culture is best when we can experience ‘togetherness’.

I started looking at streamed music while it was still trending. I wanted to learn more about what it was, and what role it had in our cultural sphere. The more I researched it, the more I lost faith in it, and if one asks ten people in the street when last they watched a live stream concert (a whole one, mind you) I would not be surprised if most, if not all of them would answer March or April, 2020.

Thanks to:

Ivar Rømo

Thank you for your thorough analysis and observations and thank you for all the continuous updates after our interview.

Håkon Fyhn

Thank you for the contextualization and valuable insight, and all the useful metaphors.

Børge Sved

Thank you for the comprehensive insight into the methods and strategies that Adresseavisa uses.

Sondre Lerche

Thank you for generously sharing your experiences of being a musician during this pandemic and thank you for the laughs.

Øyvind Brandtsegg

Thank you for all your expert knowledge and advice. Thank you for all the feedback and help and thank you for your perseverance through this extended thesis period.

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