

Towards an international career as a self-managed artist

Networking via music fairs

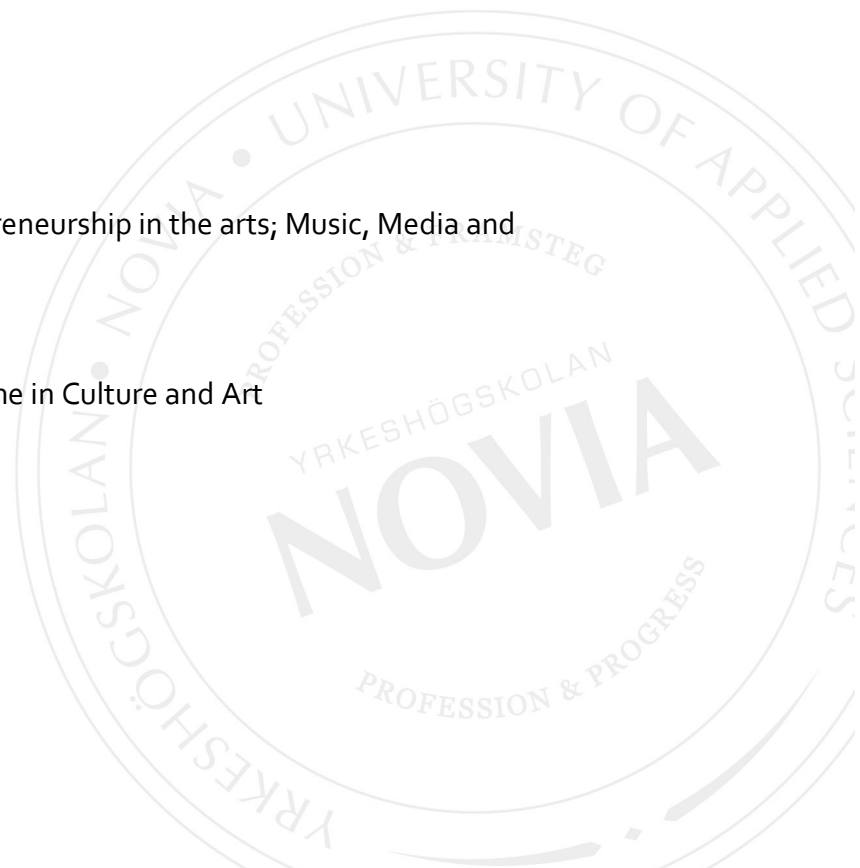
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Appendices

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to study how an independent and self-managed artist can prepare for music fairs and do networking to reach out for an international market without the help of an agency, label or promoter.

The leading questions in my work are: how one can manage to gain important collaborations, networks and credibility via attending fairs as a self-managed artist? Specific question that also will be dealt with are: What does export readiness mean and what does it take for La Riippa group to be export ready? What kind of export plan will we decide upon and what markets are of interest to us?

The conclusion is that the fact that an artist is independent and self-managed is no hindrance for them to attend music fairs and do worthwhile networking. Nevertheless, this takes a lot of time as one needs to be prepared in order to succeed in establishing the important contacts and collaborations needed.

The overall purpose of this thesis is to show the band La Riippa Group's process and what they chose to concentrate on with their promoting and branding with the limited resources they had.

I expect that this study and it's description of the process will give the reader a new mind-set, new tools and inspiration.

The knowledge gained from the thesis process I believe will be useful to many musicians, especially artists in Finland who contemplate how to arrange their own management and have hopes of an international career.

Language: English Key words: Networking, Music fairs, Management, Promotion, International

Table of contents

1	Introduction.....	1
2.	Aims, goals and research questions.....	3
2.1	Methodology.....	4
2.2	The world music band La Riippa Group	5
3	Self-management from the perspective of La Riippa Group.....	8
3.1	Self-management of La Riippa Group	9
3.2	The music industry and role of music fairs	11
3.2.1	Show Case: why and when	12
3.2.2	Export ready	13
3.2.3	Gatekeepers, mentoring and speed meetings.....	15
3.3	Networking Strategy.....	16
3.3.1	Who will do the networking?	16
3.3.2	Branding and promotion	17
3.4	Values that suffer in the pursuit of the international market.....	18
4.	Music fairs	20
4.1	Musik och Talang.....	20
4.2	Musiikki ja media.....	21
4.2.1	Music Finland and the mentoring provided	23
4.3	Nordic folk alliance	25
4.4	Womex.....	27
4.4.1	Promotion and media for Womex.....	27
4.4.2	Music Finland Co-marketing	30
4.4.3	Networking for La Riippa Group at Womex.....	32
4.4.4	Reflections from the band.....	35
4.5	EPOS	36
5.	Conclusion.....	39
5.1	<i>Practical advice before attending a music fair</i>	40
5.2	Personal reflections and future plans	42
	References	45

1 Introduction

As an artist and performer, many perhaps think that doing the craft of a musician, in my case singing, and teaching it to my students is what my work mostly consists of. On the contrary, the actual craft of singing takes nowadays unfortunately very little time as a whole in my work as an artist. Beside the artistic work of composing, writing lyrics, arranging and training with different constellations, the most time consuming and arduous work is that of artist management and promotional work. Usually an artist starts off being self-managed which also was pointed out in Tampere during the managers' panel at the music fair Musiikki ja Media (Music and Media, authors translation) in autumn 2018. If you are self-managed it means that you, as an artist, take care of the bookings, transportation, promotion and marketing in various amount yourself. In Finland you often do the management by yourself in the early stages but having a manager has become more common among new artists. Nevertheless, some DIY (do it yourself) artists have succeeded to break through internationally, especially as social networks as Youtube, Facebook, Instagram and other platforms have become marketing tools musicians use. To be a good manager there are many factors you need to know and consider, and the most essential is to know your market.

In this thesis I am focusing on the self-management I am doing for my band La Riippa Group which is an independent band. This means that we are unsigned and do not have a record deal with a label. In the early days of the band people did not know how to categorise our music as we mix different styles and are inspired by e.g. jazz, roots, nordic folk, tango, samba. The places we performed at were mostly folk music festivals and jazz venues. We later clarified our niche and our marginal music to be within the genres of world music and jazz. Our career development is in a stage where we have an album released (*Dirty work*, 2018) and we are slowly reaching for an international career. In this thesis the process of learning about the national and international business will be presented in more detail. The focus will not be on the artistic work although we will release new music and visual material during this process. The new music will be of great importance for the promotional work of networking and to gain visibility and is therefore also of importance to this thesis. The focus is on branding, marketing, networking and

the process of establishing an introduction to an international career. During this process I will quite simply have to ask the same questions that Guy Morrow states in his book about Artist Management: "*It involves entrepreneurs asking the questions: 'Who am I?', 'What do I know?' and 'Who do I know?'"* (Morrow 2018, p.26). When I find something I have not encountered before I need to find the source in order to go further into our field of practise to find out who the people are that can help us and who are the people we should contact to gain more knowledge. Being an artist manager, and in our case self-managed artist, the focus is on shaping a future for yourself and here one could bring forward the debate of the managers role being a creative role and how it differs from the artist's creativity (Morrow 2018, p 8). As a self-managed artist one needs to bring creativity to both the artistic work but also to the work you do managing your art. It can be quite arduous to do both the artistic work and the management work, not to mention to find creative ways of working in both roles.

I am not only doing a thesis: I am actually working hard to break new ground for myself as a musician and to gain knowledge of the music industry necessary for my career. I hope to gain knowledge that will help me, and others, like the students I have. This is work done with passion, like the passion I have in the art I create.

2. Aims, goals and research questions

There are many ways to reach an international audience. In this thesis the focus will be on music fairs, the networking and promotion done at these events, and also how you can apply for showcases. In other words, how music fairs can be used as tools for reaching international listeners. The fairs and showcases include different genres, also world- and jazz genre which we mostly relate to. The two national fairs are Musik och Talang in Vasa, Finland, and Musiikki ja Media in Tampere, Finland. These two music fairs are not genre specific, but have close connections to popular music industry and its processes. The two international music fairs are more related to folk and world music: Nordic folk alliance in Gothenburg, Sweden and Womex which 2019 was held in Tampere, Finland. A bonus meeting occurred after these music fairs and as it was of networking value, I therefore also include the EPOS (Equality and Plurality on Stage) international networking days held in Stockholm, Sweden 2019.

The aim of this thesis is to study how an independent and self-managed artist can prepare for music fairs and do networking to reach out for an international market without the help of an agency, label or promoter. This process will be done over a time span of approximately two years, taking into account the release of our debut album in April 2018. The main question in this thesis is how one can manage to gain important collaborations, networks and credibility via attending fairs as a self-managed artist? This thesis will show La Riippa Group's process and what we have chosen to concentrate on with our promoting and branding with the limited resources we have. Specific question that also will be dealt with are: What does export readiness mean and what does it take for La Riippa group to be export ready? What kind of export plan will we decide upon and what markets are of interest to us?

This knowledge I gain from the thesis process I believe will be useful to many musicians, especially artists in Finland who contemplate how to arrange their own management and have hopes of an international career. This thesis will show how far we managed to get during this short time span and with the budget and resources we have had at our hand. It will also show where we have failed or where we had too little knowledge and not the right contacts to be able to proceed as planned.

2.1 Methodology

During this thesis process I will do research and record our actions and analyse the outcome. Methodologically I have an auto-ethnographic approach, which is a form of research where one uses self-reflection and writing to explore experiences and connect them to a wider political and social understanding. In this case it means I take part of music fairs, write about the process and analyse the results of my work during the process. According to Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Buchner (ICQM BGU 2010) the connection between self and other in autoethnography is vital and that whatever you are observing includes you as the one acting with other people and bringing them into the story. To be a good autoethnographer you need to be in tune with yourself and your thoughts and emotions, but also step outside of that and look back at yourself as an actor interacting with other people. Besides being a researcher you are also taking the part of a storyteller.

The research will be of a very personal nature and reflect my experiences in navigating the field of music industry while self-managing my band and art. I will report on the steps taken and inform what the challenges were in my case studies and what I've learned during the process. I will take photos and if possible, record video material. I will report on how to get ready for music fairs and what steps are recommended to do for a successful networking and promotion at music fairs of different sizes. In the end I will analyse what positive and/or negative results this practical work produced.

Since the music fairs took place during an extended time period and I didn't have the idea for this study before the first ones had already happened, I will report on my practical work at the music fairs as separate case studies. I will include the mentoring by Music Finland and our artistic and promotional work where they best fit in chronological order according to where they took place during the process. As I present the cases I try to paint a picture of the learning process and what kind of ideas and investments occurred during the year that lead up to my last networking events. It is possible to follow the curve of gaining more knowledge as an entrepreneur in the field of folk- and world music and see how the network grows and what contacts and new possibilities appear.

After I've reported on the different cases, the different music fairs, I will reflect on what we have gained and what could be our possible next steps.

2.2 The world music band La Riippa Group

The band that will be in the spotlight in this research is the one I founded in 2014 and where I am the artistic leader and main manager as the band is self-managed. We do not have a record deal and therefore we are an independent band. La Riippa Group is a band that mixes very different styles and takes inspiration from many different music cultures. I studied music and vocals at the Central Ostrobothnia Conservatory's pop/jazz education but as there also was offered courses from the classical- and folk music education I often took part in these and valued this possibility to pick and mix the different music orientations. I have a bachelor's degree in drama from Centria University of Applied Sciences, but also from Novia University of Applied Sciences in Jakobstad (Pietarsaari) where I studied to become a music pedagogue (vocal teacher). I would say the focus during my studies at Novia were on jazz, rhythm and blues as well as musical theatre. The studies at Centria in Karleby (Kokkola) were mostly in a very Finnish environment when again the studies in Jakobstad were mostly "Finnish-Swedish" and with a lot of guest lecturers from Sweden. In my art this background can obviously be heard, and I move rather boldly in different directions inspired by very different genres, cultures and artists. For example, I have tendencies to make quite dramatical compositions and therefore find that tango and latin rythms speak to this disposition and which I then often mix with jazz and blues. Therefore, we label the music of La Riippa Group as world music and jazz.

According to ethnomusicologist Lundberg, Malm and Ronström the term "world music" was first introduced in the 1980's when the market wanted an easy to use label for ethnic music genres. It was a success and the term world music was diffuse enough to cover almost any kind of art music, pop and jazz. (Lundberg, Malm & Ronström, 2000, p. 146) But as ethnomusicologist Johannes Brusila points out in his thesis *Local music, not from here* (Brusila, 2003) the term has a much older history. Brusila illustrates how the term was developed in 1906 by the musicologist George Capellen who had an idea of a new musical style where oriental and western music were mixed. According to Almar Kalias (Kalias 2019) the term world music is outdated and dead and contemplates on a better way to market music from across the globe. In the Sibelius Academy you can study a masters in "global music", so is that the new term we are supposed to be using? I have found categorising music very frustrating, and in a way limiting, but often necessary

when promoting and finding the right platforms and playlists. Whatever may be said about the term world music and its future, this is the one we have decided to promote and categorize our music with.

The band members in La Riippa Group are highly skilled musicians with different backgrounds. I am the artistic leader but also the vocalist in the band and as I mentioned I have studied music and drama and work as a performing artist as well as a pedagogue. Actually, all the musicians in La Riippa Group have a degree in music pedagogy. Julia Hansson who plays the accordion has a classical background but is very versatile and has experience and knowledge in many different genres. She has also taken courses in music therapy, just like me. Johanna Lönngren, who plays the violin, is a folk musician. Valter Söderbacka on drums, and Oskar Sandin on bass, have played mostly jazz, rock and rhythm & blues. Oskar also plays the flute which we took good use of in our latest promotions. All are very versatile, but you could roughly divide the backgrounds in classical, folk and pop/jazz, as music educations in Finland have until recently done. Our different backgrounds serve our sound in a very interesting way and make us unique.

When I started networking via Music Finland I quickly noticed that the majority of the folk- and world music actors in Finland represented were folk- (or jazz) musicians who had received their formal education at the Sibelius Academy in the field of folk and/or global music. I am not an educated folk musician and I have not considered studying at the Sibelius Academy, until perhaps now after this experience. We are also Swedish speaking Finns although we do not advocate it as our primary attribute. Also, we do not play traditional folk music which is more standard within the Finnish-Swedish folk music field. This means that we, as a band, are a bit of an outsider in the Finnish folk music field. To achieve visibility in the folk- and world music scene, branding with your own culture in focus is bringing your cultural identity to the masses. It is a case of "cultural branding" (Lundberg, Malm and Ronström 2001, p. 26).

In our case I have not felt that I want to lift up that we are a Finnish-Swedish band. We happen to be Finnish-Swedish and we happen to mix genres that work in the world music scene and thus may be labelled to represent our minority. This kind of cultural branding may not always benefit the music. Although I gladly declare my roots and my language, my language is not the essence in the music and should not be misinterpreted to be

something it isn't, in our case Finnish-Swedish folk music. This said we do make songs in my dialect and bring forward our Ostrobothnian roots although our sound has a European flavour to it. The branding can be seen in our logo and visual material but of course it is not just branding. The questions of gender equality, environmental thinking and the cultural minority we represent, and the history and conservation of our Finnish-Swedish culture are vital for us

Our debut album *Dirty Work* (La Riippa Group, 201X) took a political stand and our brand is focused on ecological and humanitarian values. We value solidarity and equality and advocate that the music business should be more gender balanced and we lead by example when we market La Riippa Group as a band with strong female leadership. As we are working on new material both in music and visual arts we have continued to raise awareness for these issues. We do that also through polishing our brand, not by changing our core values but by refining them. We want to bring forward these essential topics and this is an aspect that we will continue to work on, but which also brings forward questions and problems. How can our goal of working internationally, by performing gigs and tours abroad, co-exist with our ecological values?

3 Self-management from the perspective of La Riippa Group

Being an independent or unsigned artist means that you do not have a record deal with a label, which traditionally publishes music of artists. An independent artist does the publishing themselves and if they distribute digitally, they need an aggregator that will spread the music to different streaming services where people can listen and download your music. If an artist publishes their music by themselves then the songwriters own everything because the aggregator only distribute for a fixed fee, not for a percentage of the music. If an artist has a publisher there is often a deal made where the ownership of the music is shared between the songwriter and the publisher. The publisher does of course do more work to get the music played, have an existing network of useful contacts in the industry and help in many other ways. In comparison an aggregator only distributes and does not usually include promotion. There are many different aggregators and they have different deals for artists. We have used cdbaby (cdbaby 2020) as our aggregator for the sole reason that I have used it before and already know how to use their service and have been satisfied with the company. They charge a one-time fee for the worldwide distribution of an album or single. They also offer Youtube monetization, which means they will ensure that you get compensated any time your music is played anywhere on Youtube, this of course requires one to be part of copyright societies, in Finland these would be Teosto for composers and Gramex for performing artists. Monetization is the act of converting something into money, in this case the music.

To be self-managed means that the artist does not just handle the artistic work, they also do the business side as well such as developing the brand, promoting and bookings. It all depends on the artist and how much they manage themselves. As an artist without a label, record deal or agency, trying to pursue an international career it is vital to learn how the business works within your genre and which are the right people and companies that relate to your genre. Which agencies, labels, promoters and managements export Finnish folk- and world music and musicians abroad, how do they work and what are their networks? Just by observing how they work one might gain valuable information and possible contacts for the future. When you begin the pursuit of an international career from our premises it is of utmost importance to do the right research and to be smart with the limited resources of time and money. Money is an issue since everything

is self-funded. This is why this thesis will focus on perhaps the most money consuming part of networking via music fairs and attending these to promote and establish collaborations.

3.1 Self-management of La Riippa Group

If you are commencing on an international music career as a self-managed artist, you need to know how a manager and promoter would work in different fields and regions. Nowadays the internet and its huge infrastructure in any genre can be used for the benefit of the independent artist, but you still need to find the networks and the people who can help get the music to the audience. The playlists on different streaming services, the DJs on radio shows and other media are the networks the artist wants to reach so that the music can reach the listener. In our case I had experience with this because I was not satisfied with the visibility of our debut album or how it was received. It did not get the amount of media coverage I would have wished for and after some self-contemplation I have come to the conclusion that this was due to the fact that our business side was not sufficiently developed. We had done a lot of work on our album, but we had not done enough research in beforehand and therefore, not enough promotion before and after the release. We bought radio- and media promotion from the same studio that pressed our cd, but in retrospective I do not think that this was the best decision for us. The Company is not into folk- and world music so personal radio- and media promotion by the band would perhaps have been more effective, or at least we should have done more of it. We were already aiming for the world music scene and now as our album was not getting the attention I wished for, I decided to really work on the business side and at this stage I started to do the serious work of a promoter and manager.

I started submitting our music to different Internet sites where you could submit your music to bloggers and playlists for consideration and got a few really nice reviews. I also found the Transglobal world music charts (TWMC, 2020) and submitted our album for consideration by their panel members who are experts from all over the globe in the field of world music and who work in different areas as journalists, critics, writers, DJs and other. The transglobal world music charts produce a monthly chart of the best world music albums released, and anyone in the genre can submit their album that is at least 25

minutes long. You cannot submit singles or an EP. EP stand for Extended Play and is a shorter format than the album format and usually includes three to five songs and is no longer than 20 minutes (TWMC, 2020). Our album did not get on the charts, but we did get visibility and recognition by the fact that some of these panel members did take a liking to our music and played it on their shows. We got international airplay, which I at the moment underestimated the importance of. We got radio time for example on the show Spintheglobe world music radio (Spin the globe, 2018) and they even chose our album on the top10 world music albums of that month. Another important show that played our music was Mundofonías (Mundofonias, 2018), which is a world music show that aired on 46 channels in 17 countries. These reviews and airplays worked to our advantage and we used them as part of our promotion when booking gigs.

The most difficult thing for an independent artist is not getting the music published and distributed, it is finding the audience and building up the momentum. One needs to be present and active so one's career moves forward. Releasing interesting media and information about the band is one thing. Releasing singles instead of one album is definitely another, but something that one does not perhaps consider when working on a whole album: How do you continue staying fresh and present?

In folk- and world music, and actually in any marginal music, a release does not age in the same way as popular music. In popular music you hit the radio full blast and then the next trend comes. In world music your album may live a few years before it has reached a state when something fresh is needed. Moving from territory to territory can also keep the music fresh. Nowadays you can follow the analytics on streaming services and see where your fans are, and this is something to react on when attempting to reach beyond the borders of your own country. Through cdbaby our music got distributed on the streaming service Spotify and we got use of their Spotify artist page where we can easily see different analytics: as how many listeners we have and where they reside. When you see a spike in some country you should perhaps react on that and also remember to do that in the promotion you do. If you have a spike in Sweden, which means you have fans there and that means you might get an audience if booked at a venue. A venue might be more likely to book you if you have these analytics that show you have an existing fan base.

As an independent artist it is vital to stand out and you need to motivate people to buy what you are selling. What makes you interesting and worthwhile streaming or buying your record? You need to work on your story and build the brand. You can think of what you stand for and what are the things that make you different. Acknowledge them and cherish them and make them part of your brand, both visual and musically and don't forget to express it in your promotional text.

There are different ways to get your music heard and beside the technical ones listed above, you need to do networking or pay for someone to promote your music for you. If you manage yourself then one way to network is to go to music fairs.

3.2 The music industry and role of music fairs

Music business is still a people business and music fairs are places where you can meet and network with people from the industry that you as an independent artist most likely want to get in contact with.

I will attend four music fairs during a year and network constantly with Music Finland during this process. Music Finland is an organisation that works for the export of Finnish music and provides varied services like consultation, networking and funding (Heino 2019). During these consultations that I attended the importance of a team was always mentioned. They stress that an artist that strives for an international career needs a team of people who work together for them to reach this goal (Music Finland). In our case this team is at the moment the members in our band and our collaborators, but in other cases it might be a manager, label, agent, publisher, pr-person and other experts in the field. According to author and public speaker Porter Gale (2013) your network is actually your net worth. The world and also the music industry have changed to be less about the record deal and power houses and more about building up your network according to your own values and passion.

“The new way to network and build your true net worth is about charting your own course, living your life based on your passions and being the best you can be. In today's world what's important is no longer about power plays but more about what you value and how – and with whom – you want to get there.” (Porter 2013)

Other work for internationalising will also be done but not brought forward in this thesis. These fairs and the collaboration with music Finland is vital for me to build up my management and networking skills but also to bring my artistic work to an international audience.

Through this work and the research done in this thesis I aim to build up my national and international network, increase the opportunities to perform and work, gain valuable information and contacts in the world- and jazz music scene, and build up the bands audience and therefore find new opportunities for collaboration.

3.2.1 Show Case: why and when

At many music fairs artists have the possibility to apply for a showcase, which is a non-profit performance to promote your band. A showcase at a music fair is a chance to perform for people in the industry that you want to have at your concert. These are the venue and festival bookers, managers and agencies, record labels, people from the media, bloggers and real fans of the music genre your music is targeted to.

To some of these fairs we will attempt to get a showcase performance. When and if you decide to apply for a showcase it really is a decision that will require you to invest money, time and do diligent preparations. Since it is a showcase where you do not get paid for your performance and in some music fairs you even have to pay a small fee to be able to apply for a showcase. This is because of the huge volume of artists who want to do a showcase and having a small fee is the first commitment to the cause and shows the organizations that you are ready to invest.

Porter points out how you build up your social network with the focus on your own well-being and passion (Porter 2013) but it is important to remember that as networking is about developing relations, we should not forget that it goes both ways. Researcher Ulf Elg reminds us that there is always at least two actors in a relation and that these actors have expectations on the abilities and behaviour of each other (Elg 2007, p.110).

Therefore, it is important to live up to what you promise and here we come back to the term of being export ready. If you strive for a slot at a festival or to tour internationally, when the chance comes one should be ready to take it and deliver. This is especially

important when it comes to showcases at international music fairs. If one applies for a showcase one must be ready to take it if offered a slot. The chance to do a showcase performance at an international music fair does indicate that one gets more attention internationally and might be booked for festivals abroad. One should keep this in mind when applying for a showcase performance.

Another feature of a showcase is that the audience might leave at any time because they have another showcase or meeting that they need to attend so you shouldn't save the "best for last" but plan a set that is stable and gives a good insight into your music and how you are as performers. It is vital to keep to the timetable and not prolong one's stay on the stage. After the show it is of utmost importance to be present for people to be able to meet you. This is something I think one should always consider when we are performing anywhere, to be present after the show and mingle with the audience. At a showcase this is even more important and preferably you should also have someone from your team present during the gig so that people who are in a hurry can leave their contact information to them for further contact. At bigger music fairs it could be good to have more people in the team than only band members. As the band is performing there could nevertheless be people ready with their information all through the performance for people in a hurry leaving for another artists performance.

The question of when one is ready to apply for a showcase is dependent on how big the music fair is.

3.2.2 Export ready

Prior and during the music fairs the topic about what export readiness is has been raised every time. As an artist you need to think of why you want to aim for an international career and what it would take to achieve it. In business terms you are talking about exporting a product and when heading for new markets it is going to cost. A key question is: what is it one wants to achieve as a band on the international market and what does export readiness mean to ones individual plans?

The most essential in my point of view in order to determine what state of export readiness one is in, is to make a plan about where one wants to be and when. As an artist I think almost every one of us are allured by the possibility to work abroad and have a

more international career. We live in a global world and I have not felt the boundaries of my own country to be of any hindrance to reach out to different markets. In our case our music is quite international and I strongly believe that our market could be more stronger somewhere else. Since I am also Finnish-Swedish and lived abroad as a young adult I have felt that different languages and cultures are something very positive. For me it feels natural to perform in other countries, but that does not mean it is an easy thing to do.

When I first asked the rest of the band about their interest to work more internationally, they were not that enthusiastic. It might be a frightening thought and it also means more time travelling and that you have to commit to one project long term. Commitment is not that common nowadays as music education has pushed trained musicians to become more versatile and move from project to project. A consequence of this is that bands have, in a traditional sense, gotten less of a norm. This is my experience and one that many fellow band musicians share. If you perform in a genre like world music and folk, or any other kind of marginal music, the scene quickly gets small in your own country. The international exposure you might get via different medias might not only be beneficial for the future of your international career but also be a thing that boosts your career in your home country.

So when should you "leave home"? I would say that when you feel like it, but as any person moving from home for the first time you need to understand that the expenses will be greater as travel expenses and marketing in a foreign country needs funding.

What countries and regions should one focus on? You might have your favourite territories where you would like to act in, but the main question should be where your possible audience is and where you already do have a market or where do you want to put your effort into growing your market? It all starts with relationships also in this aspect. Contacts that want to work with you in these different environments and will work for your visibility in the areas you are aiming for. This is something you can nowadays find out by checking where your music is getting streamed and where your fans are starting to appear. This is of course something you can and need to focus on and if you for example are allured by France, it is vital to find out how to grow your market there and get your music to the possible audiences there. After you have an audience you

need to figure out how to approach the suitable venues and festivals. If we continue with France there is the aspect of the language and also that in some countries you as an artist is not the best contact to approach the producers, they might just work with agencies in these countries. Can you then possibly work with an agency in just a single territory? Another aspect might be if you have musicians as your friends in these regions and via this network get a possibility to enter their music scene.

It would also be wise to think about travels and to have a bigger picture of the routes you are going to take. One stop in different regions far from each other is perhaps not the best in any circumstances as it will be costly and far from environmentally friendly.

It would also be worth thinking about what you can offer when you are trying to find networking possibilities in different countries. Perhaps you can offer different things depending on what they are looking for. If they are not interested in the whole band, perhaps you have a smaller constellation to offer or perhaps you are also working as a soloist and can offer to work with musicians in the region.

3.2.3 Gatekeepers, mentoring and speed meetings

Other forms of possibilities to network at music fairs besides mingling and chance meetings, are mentoring slots that are open to apply for and you often get a slot if you apply quickly. Through personal mentoring you can get hands on information and help from experienced actors in the industry.

Another form of networking is through speed meetings. There you meet in short succession with different people in the business to whom you can present your project. It is good to have figured out a solid pitch, a so-called elevator pitch that is a short marketing text that you deliver. It is of utmost importance to have fresh business cards at these meetings (as with any meeting) at music fairs since the amount of people everyone meets during a few days can be very numerous.

The people you might meet during the music fairs in general or more specific at these speed meetings, closed up network meetings etc. are the so called music industry gatekeepers and they are probably the ones you want to contact before a music fair to book a private meeting with. The gatekeepers are in short the people between you and

the audience, the ones that can enable your music reaching an audience and these gates may be several. Examples of gatekeepers are promoters, label representatives, members of music media like writers and editors as well as radio station music directors and so on. All of these different music industry gatekeepers will most likely be present at the music fairs and these are the ones you as an independent artist should be looking for.

3.3 Networking Strategy

Before one attends a fair it pays off to decide some important aspects to one's networking strategies. First decide what areas you are interested in and where you would like to start your international career and concerts.

Write down what your plan is short term, but also long term so you have an idea of where you would for example want to be in five years and what is important to keep in mind when meeting random people at the fairs. Define your idea of success. If you are a team decide who does what, delegate the areas/festivals/media/agencies/labels etc.

Decide on finance, know how much money you have to spend and how you will use it.

Build a narrative, a story of your band. Make it sound interesting; make it sound like your music. Find the things that make you and your music interesting and exotic to a foreign market. Delegate also the work on social media, maybe one person could be in charge of Instagram, one makes videos or whatever specific skills people have in the team.

Marketing on social media takes time but it cuts the costs. The Finnish freelance folk musician and producer Sirpa Lahti points out that the folk music is a marginal music scene and that the quality of Finnish folk music artists is high but that branding and social media content is a way to gain attention and stand out. (Lahti 2012, p. 35-36).

Other aspects to think about is maintaining the flow of information and try to keep everyone informed on what is happening and who manages the follow ups to which contacts. One also needs to make decisions on what merchandise and promotion is of importance.

3.3.1 Who will do the networking?

As the artistic leader in our band I find it natural that I primarily do the management and contribute with the majority of the funding. As the founder of the band and the one who

has initiated the music it is clear to say I have the most knowledge in managing us at this point of our career. Everyone in the team, the team meaning the band, have essential contacts and knowledge that need to be valued and explored. My duties include delegating and supervising how the rest of the members network and give them inspiration, ideas, and support them learning more about how to work at music fairs. The main music fair we focus on is Womex at which the whole band will be present to learn and understand the genre we are working in and promoting ourselves to. The music fairs that have been chosen are those which are of most value to our band as they are in our genre or/and located close to where we live.

Worth mentioning is that where I live and where our band is working from, one of the oldest and well-known folk music festivals in Scandinavia is our closest neighbour. I am of course talking about Kaustinen Folk Music festival and we have had the honour of performing there many times already, but we have not been a part of their showcase. I have not attended Kaustinen Folk Music festival with the same networking and promotional strategy as I have done at the fairs mentioned earlier and that is why I am not listing Kaustinen as one of the case studies. I nevertheless stress the importance of doing networking and promotion at every festival and performance. Kaustinen should definitely be on the top of your list when networking in the folk- and world music scene in Finland.

3.3.2 Branding and promotion

For a successful career in the music business branding is paramount, regardless if the focus is on the local or global market. According to Guy Morrow, artist management involves a storytelling process where firstly a narrative is created that focuses on fascinating the audience and secondly on how the artists brand is understood by funding agencies, for example how the narrative of the band can be linked to more famous artist and therefore this association making the less known artist more interesting (Morrow 2018, p. 71). We already have a good logo and visual layout with our album and merchandise, but we will develop our brand with a homepage, social media activity and new promotional content that supports our story and the three values we build on. From the music fairs we need to have a promotional package to distribute efficiently to our

future collaborators. This package can be both physical; cd's cards etc. or electronically; codes for streaming and homepage etc.

3.4 Values that suffer in the pursuit of the international market

A core value in our art is environmental issues. A plain problem with networking via international music fairs is that often you need to travel by plane, and if the networking is of success you will get gigs that require more travelling. The problem with touring is the amount of travelling that needs to be done, and usually it needs to be done in the cheapest way. The pursuit of an international career brings forward the question of contradicting urges and a dilemma to the band itself is evident. A cognitive dissonance is created: How we as a band can represent an ecological message and still do an international career? How do we justify the travel that we consider necessary? One aspect that came up at one of the workshops at Music Finland was about slow touring. Producer and tour manager Charles Gil coined the term slow touring (Gil 2019) and it is related to slow travelling, which is a mind-set and in the heart of an ecological lifestyle. When it comes to touring it is about the choices you do on the road and creating a certain quality of life. Concretely slow touring can be reduced flying and taking other modes of transport.

Finland has water surrounding in many directions where we would like to go and the ferry industry is not a whole lot better than flying. You can take the train to Sweden but then you need to plan a tour that starts in Lapland, however the venues tend to be located more southbound. Public transport is much eco-friendlier but how can you as a band work with that and how do you transport your instruments? Can you always wish for a drum set to be part of the backline? When we had our gig at Etno-Espa in Helsinki we travelled there by train, except for the drummer who had to take his own drum kit as it was not part of the backline and he did not have the resources then and there to borrow from someone else. Slow touring takes time and planning, and most definitely we would have found a way around the drum kit in Helsinki if we had taken our time and thought outside the box. The problem in Finland is that the public transportation like trains are way too expensive to be a way of transportation to every gig. If you are a professional musician who needs to have an income from the musicianship, public

transportation is not a possibility if you do not have a good salary and a well-planned tour.

Ecomusicologist Mark Pedelty echoes my thoughts when he wonders how music actually could promote us to be more sustainable when we realise that we are part of the problem. (Pedelty. 2012, p. 5) It comes to having a balance between a clear conscious when you work with your brand as an artist promoting ecological values. You need to think this through in your musicianship.

Perhaps you are considering the following aspect: can the message in your music be a validation for you to spread it around the world and are you contributing and changing minds into ecological thinking via your music and thus validating your travelling?

For example, Coldplay took the choice to not tour until concerts can be done sustainably (BBC, 2019). They intend their tour to be both carbon neutral and plastic free. It is important to remember that Coldplay is a famous band and can afford to do this choice. How can we as an unknown world music band from Finland strive for an international career and perform abroad in a sustainable way or will that be the end of our career? Some might find that not touring abroad is the way and that might be fine, but you need to make the choice. For us the way to tackle this is to really think about where we want to perform and choose the festivals that shares our values of sustainability.

4. Music fairs

The music business is still a business where human relations and meeting in person is very important. A mail from an unknown band in another country is much less likely to be answered than if it is from a person you sat next to and had a nice conversation about the sauna culture. This possibility to meet the gatekeepers in real life is one of the aspects that make music fairs an excellent place for networking. In this chapter I will bring forward how we acted at the different music fairs we attended. I will explain why we chose these specific fairs, how we prepared for them and what took place when we finally were present at the fairs.

We focus nationally on our Finnish Swedish music fair Music & Talang and the Finnish equivalent Musiikki ja Media. At the first one we will do a showcase as it is a local event and a good way to promote our debut album. Musiikki ja Media is arranged by Music Finland and have a lot of interesting panels discussing internationalisation and export. The third music fair is the international Nordic folk alliance in Gothenburg, Sweden. The Nordic folk alliance is a much younger and smaller cousin to the Folk Alliance arranged every year in North America. Here we will practise our pitch, network, promote and establish vital international contacts. This is the right place to meet Nordic festival bookers and labels. The last music fair is the biggest. Womex (world music export) is globally the main music fair in world music and this year it is arranged in Finland for the first time and is therefore a must-attend for anyone working in this genre in Finland. The whole band will attend Womex to promote and network. We applied for showcase performances at Womex and at Folkelarm, a folk music fair in Oslo, Norway. We were not chosen to either fair and we did not attend Folkelarm this year.

An extra networking opportunity arrived after my attendance at Nordic folk alliance, which was the international networking meeting arranged by EPOS at Stallet in Stockholm, Sweden.

4.1 Musik och Talang

Musik och talang is a small national music fair I have attended before and where I performed my own music when I released my debut album in 2013, but not as a showcase. The fair is by and for the Swedish speaking minority in Finland and is held in

Vasa every autumn. Several of us in the band have previously attended the fair. I attended with the intention of networking, attending mentoring sessions, interesting seminars and inspiration. Although it is a small fair it has had interesting guests and workshops, and this is what I would say has been the most valuable outcome for me personally. As my music as a solo artist and in the band La Riippa Group is not in the mainstream I do not feel that the contacts are the most appropriate for us. Nevertheless, it is always important to be seen and heard and we therefore applied for a showcase which was granted.

We got a showcase slot at the local Irish pub in Vasa and as a showcase artist the organisers will promote you. For this showcase performance we did not prepare in any other way than how we usually would for a normal gig, except that we had CDs, and new merchandise such as t-shirts with us. I had my old business cards and attended some seminars before our gig but did not really get anything productive done as the contacts were in a different genre and I mostly was there to mingle and see what is happening. I attended a personal mentoring and we discussed the importance of playlists, which I later tried to apply to our old and new music and which definitely is of importance in whatever genre you work in.

As our showcase spot was not at the main area but at a smaller venue I feel that we were not prioritised in the marketing. A lot of people from the music fair were not present and the map even had the pub misplaced. Previous years the fair has taken place at the same hotel where the pub was and therefore many stayed there. The situation was probably the same this year but now the main event was at another place and there were also different accommodations for the guests. Nevertheless we had a nice crowd, but the majority was there for other reasons than the music.

We did not invest a lot on this showcase and we did not gain that much either. We did get visibility and probably played for people who had not heard us before.

4.2 Musiikki ja media

An important thing I worked hard on before our next music fair was to get reviews and media attention as mentioned earlier. I did a lot of work on the computer sending links and mails to different bloggers and media channels I knew of and I submitted our CD to

the Transglobal music chart. These reviews and the playtime on Mundofonias were of great importance when contacting agencies, festivals and other organisations in the world music scene. This showed that there is international potential in our music. This was fresh news when I attended the next music fair.

I attended the other national music conference Musiikki ja media in autumn 2018. For this I was a bit better prepared for example by the promotional work done to get reviews, but I was still attending with the intention of learning how music fairs work but of course to also network and establish new contacts. I had beforehand decided on which seminars I wanted to attend and the panoply was much greater than at Musik och talang. I brought a lot of CDs and my old business cards.

The main interest I had was a few export workshops and meetings where the focus was on North America and Japan. This is not something we are actively focusing on, but I thought it would be interesting to hear what is expected of artists venturing into these areas and what it means to be export-ready. I found the workshop "creating your very own export strategy" held by Rev. Moose very informative.

Rev. Moose is the managing partner and co-founder of Marauder based in New York. He brought forward case studies of artist they have been involved with in their endeavours to break new ground in the USA. Marauder offers core services for Artist and Organisations who strive for the American markets. Moose highlighted during the workshop that every artist has their own strategy when striving for an international market. To this strategy the following aspects should be taken into consideration: timeline, budget, what tools one has available, and what the "KPI's" are, as in "the Key Performance Indicators".

A timeline should consist of both short term and long-term engagements. What performances is one doing during the first album cycle, what can ones expectation be for the next? The tools an artist has can be anything from a flyer to a tour. A tool for an artist can be every single element that can be utilised. An important aspect is what the budget is to compete in a global perspective. One should not be restricted but realistic by first doing a business plan and then see if the funds are enough to realise the plan. The key performance indicators are the results you expect to see to justify the tools, so more or less how much you are willing to work and how much money you are willing to spend to

achieve your goals? These goals can be anything from a tour in the United States or that the next album is not being self-funded. This workshop gave a lot of answers to how you can decide at what level of export readiness you are. These aspects are quite hands on and can easily be used in any scale of planning.

Other interesting seminars which I found useful for us were; a managers panel where I got more insight into how managers work and what issues are relevant for them at the moment and I also attended a panel of Finnish media where the discussion was vibrant about how Finnish music is not getting enough radio play in our national radio channels and how a monopoly has risen in the field by gatekeepers who keep the music more generic.

At Musiikki ja Media I met Piranha arts which is the organisation behind Womex and Tapio Korjus from Rockadillo, the main organisation behind getting Womex to Finland. I was at the Finest Sounds networking session to meet the Japanese delegation and to connect with different music companies and brands. As everyone were promoting themselves a representative for Piranha arts overheard my pitch and approached me to discuss us applying for a showcase at Womex in Finland. This is something we later did but we were not chosen for a showcase slot for Womex 2019.

I got a few other contacts in the world music scene that could be beneficial to us, if not as collaborations presently, then as companies we can follow and learn from. I introduced myself and our band to them and asked some tips and ideas for a band that is taking its first steps toward an international career.

I found the fair to be of great value and felt like I had received a lot more insight into the national music industry but also several contacts internationally as the international guests and panels were quite a few. I however did not register to any speed meetings and that is something I would do differently next time. I really recommend anyone in Finland studying and working in the music industry to attend Musiikki ja Media.

4.2.1 Music Finland and the mentoring provided

After attending Musiikki ja Media I had got a better understanding of what Music Finland offers the Finnish music industry and artists, as they are one of the collaborators and the

ones who bring international speakers and guests to the fair. I decided to learn more about what Music Finland could offer us by contacting them and requesting mentoring with Henna Salo who is in charge of exporting folk, world and jazz music.

Music Finland offer the mentoring course "*Kansainvälistymisen ABC*" (The abc of internationalisation, authors translation) for artists who are considering or are taking their first steps to pursue an international career. They also offer personal mentoring for artists who already have started the work and who need personal guidance. The dates for the group mentoring were very tricky to get to work for me as it would require a trip to Helsinki and all the mentoring for newcomers were on the days I already was booked for something else. I negotiated until I got offered a private mentoring. I also subscribed to their newsletter to be updated with every new project, showcase, fairs etc. coming up. Henna Salo agreed to mentor and we found a date that worked for us both. From the mentoring I got broader knowledge of what music Finland offers and also other ideas that would be beneficial for our band to pursue. We discussed what steps we are contemplating and how music Finland can support us in these endeavours. We discussed already existing contacts and which other contacts could be beneficial in the same area. I told her about our plan to attend Womex and the Nordic folk alliance. She gave her advise on strategies and people to contact or keep in mind for Gothenburg if we would participate as showcase artists. We also discussed the coming Womex music fair in Finland and what services Music Finland would offer Finnish artists interested in being delegates at the fair, which I there and then proclaimed is our aim to be part of. After this I was invited to the Facebook group "*musiikinviäjät*" (music exporters, authors translation) which is a closed group for Finnish artists who strive to export their music. In this group Music Finland actively post info about showcases, mentoring sessions and similar events. After the mentoring our music was added for some time to Music Finland's Spotify playlist *New world and folk music from Finland* (Spotify 2019) and thanks to that we got more visibility.

We later took part of their co-marketing at Womex and I will describe what this included and about how this collaboration worked in the case study about Womex in the chapter called Co-marketing with Music Finland at Womex.

All of the mentoring, workshops and seminars that Music Finland offer at their office in Helsinki are free of charge and you get access to expertise and important information to help you in your career. There is also a lot of information on their website. The only cost you have to calculate is for your own travel and accommodation if needed.

For the co-marketing you had to pay a fee for the participating band members who got to for example use a special business area and attend a dinner with important gatekeepers. As we bought the co-marketing with Music Finland we got a discount on the Womex delegate pass. The whole band participated in Womex and everyone paid for themselves, but I wanted three of us to be part of the Music Finland co-marketing delegate team and to participate in the workshops prior to Womex and in what else would be offered.

4.3 Nordic folk alliance

Via Music Finland I got the knowledge of the Nordic folk alliance and at the mentoring I decided that this would be a good place to be, and to prepare for the much bigger music fair Womex. I applied for a travel grant from Svenska kulturfonden and did get a portion of the travels funded. We did not apply for a showcase with the band but I did apply with a folk duo I am part of, mostly to see how the registration works, as I knew that we did not have enough music and information online to be considered as "Export-ready".

When I had dinner with all the delegates that came early to the fair, I found myself between the head of music export in Norway and a booking agent/manager from Ireland. In front of me sat one of the arrangers of the Nordic folk alliance. We had nice discussions and there was no aggressive promotion done, just nice overall conversation and in between talks about who we are and what we do. That is what is special with music fairs; you are not anonymous people behind e-mails desperately trying to get in touch with these gatekeepers. At music fairs you can be sitting next to a person who you have sent these same e-mails to but now you are dining together and may continue to keep in touch. If a festival booker has to choose between two good artists, it is probable that the choice falls on the one they have met in real life. It is this social aspect that is precious and the true value with music fairs.

There were different seminars, panels and meetings arranged during the fair and a "Mentor's café" was one of the events you could participate in. We were divided into different groups with about three persons per table. A mentor sat at the table for a few minutes to discuss and answer questions from us. The mentors were representatives from the Folk alliance, from Canadian mundial, and from a Swedish agency. We had the opportunity to ask any questions we wanted from the mentors who changed table after a while. We could get answers to things that we were thinking about but also get insight into how the other were thinking. Here you could get insight through the other questions, which were perhaps something I had not thought about but which were still interesting and gave everyone else in the group as well a lot of information.

Another thing I participated in was a sort of speed meeting where I sat at a table with all my promo stuff and waited for people to come by and talk to me. I met people who were of huge interest to me and I got a bit star struck when meeting a former musician from the Icelandic band Sugarcubes that my idol Björk used to be part of. Present at the speed meetings were interesting contacts in every possible way and perhaps future bookers and collaborators. During these speed meetings and the mentor's café you could really practise your pitch and try different angles on presenting your music and artistic endeavours and you got instant feedback.

There were different seminars and panels and one which I attended was the one for equality and plurality on stage. In the panel were members from the key change project which is a European project that strives for a 50/50 gender balance on the stage in the music industry. The last member in the panel was a female folk musician. EPOS works especially for the equality and plurality on stage in the folk- and world music field in Sweden. As a female artist and as a mother these issues are important to me, and especially the discussion about families and touring is ever present in my mind and something I eagerly discuss. I stayed and talked with one of the panelists who work for the organisation EPOS and gave her my contact details for future collaboration as I work in an organisation in Finland who works for music education for girls and non-binary.

4.4 Womex

In October 2019 it was finally time for the much-awaited World Music Export which was for the first time ever held in Tampere, Finland. Prior to our attendance we had besides all of the artistic and promotional work, had meetings and discussed a plan for Womex. When you are a delegate at Womex you also get to take advantage of VirtualWomex, which is more or less Womex all year round. It is an Internet site where you can list yourself, your band and your music. Everyone who has attended Womex is listed and before attending the fair you can see here who are coming to the fair. Afterwards it is of great value to find the contact details of people you've met. There was also a handy app for Womex where the schedules and contact were easily found.

We appointed different countries and areas for different members of the band, me consciously taking the biggest part of them. We went with an open mind and openness for chance meetings. I had a clear idea of which bookers I especially wanted to meet and did in advance contact some media and organisations that for example distribute music in China and some festivals from areas I found interesting. Some answered and some meetings were booked. I was unfortunately too late in applying for private mentoring and I would do this differently next time.

4.4.1 Promotion and media for Womex

We did our biggest artistic and promotional work effort before Womex. We had decided that we would record three singles and make music videos for the singles and that they would be released during autumn adjacent to the music fair. We also stepped up on our social media and worked on getting more fans, likes and subscribers.

We had a year earlier applied for a grant to record new material for promotional purpose for Womex, and when we were granted some funding we decided that we would divide the money into recording three songs and accompanying music videos to these. The first idea was to release a single vinyl but we came to the conclusion that the money would be better spent on the visual side and then we could later record more songs for a whole second album. The compositions and lyrics on the three new songs were similar to our earlier material made by me. The three songs continued, as we had done in the past, mixing genres and styles and highlighting our values, being environmental issues, gender

equality in music and our cultural roots. The first release was nevertheless the most mainstream I have written and was an intentional choice as the topic was about hope during our environmental crisis. I wanted it to be the easiest listening of the releases.

We recorded all the songs at Perfect music in Bennäs, a local home studio. We spend the winter/spring of 2019 to record and mix the songs. During summer we made the two music videos with Ulla and during autumn we mastered the songs with Sound of wool in Sweden.

For me the visual side of music is very important, and ever more so as we live in the age of social media and quick scrolling. I consider it important to work with other professional artist who are not in the music business as their primary art form. We contacted Ulla Nikula to take our promotional shoots and record two of our three upcoming videos. Ulla Nikula is a professional visual artist from Kokkola and she has worked with many of the great world music artist from Finland at the moment. We hired her because she is a local artist, a great artist and one who I personally have worked with before and whose taste I appreciate very much. I consider her easy to work with even if you are not used to standing in front of the camera and she will make you look good regardless.

The other artist I wanted to work with is also a personal contact and someone who I have worked with before. The dancer Wilma Mustonen is a newly graduated modern dancer from Nedervetil and a person whose presence I was sure would be magical to our visual output. She had also asked me at an earlier stage to create music to one of her choreographies but I didn't have any possibilities to make anything as fast as she would have wished. As we worked on our new music that we had recorded it just happened that one of our songs synchronized just perfectly to her choreographed piece and I asked her if this could be a possible collaboration although it would mean that the video would be published much later than what she had planned in the first place. She and Andrea Ahlskog who recorded and edited the video approved and this became our last release of the three.

The three songs that we chose to record were ones that we had introduced to our set in the late of 2018. The first *Answers* (La Riippa Group, 2019a) would be an homage to the youth who strive for a better world and the song and video would be released on a "Friday for future", when people go on climate strike initiated by Greta Thunberg the

previous year. This video was the one that we used in the co-marketing done by Music Finland at Womex and this video would be aired with all the other Finnish delegates videos at Music Finland's stand at Tampere-Talo.

The second release *Kom int hij* (La Riippa Group. 2019b) would be in my dialect from the village of Nedervetil on the west coast of Finland. The music starts with a folkish tune in the beginning that soon transforms to a polyrhythmic progressive song where our bass player Oskar Sandin also plays his main instrument, which is the flute. We released this song just a few days before Womex and we got very many views in a short time in comparison to what we have received before. This song and the video is what we have been sending to all the contacts we got at Womex. It was filmed at a traditional tarburningpit, which is an old traditional craft in our region. We bought some of the tar to use as an intriguing icebreaker upon meeting new contacts at Womex. This was a great idea but not at all that suitable if you don't have your own stand at the fair.

The last release *Breaking into pieces* (La Riippa Group. 2019c) would happen after Womex and it would be a song mixing jazz and roots and where the focus again would be on mental health, a theme that we have taken up earlier on our debut album. We decided that we would release it on the 25th of November, which is the international day for the elimination of violence against women. As the song is called *Breaking into pieces* we wanted to release it on a day that highlights how the physical, psychological and sexual abuse of women is a huge problem in the world, especially our own home country. In the video a piece of modern dance choreography and performance was done by Wilma Mustonen and later our music was added. Our music and her performance were created completely separate from each other.

In coordination with our releases we focused our social media and made Julia Hansson in charge of our social media tactics. She quickly managed to increase our followers. We focused on being active especially around the releases and during Womex. With our second release we had a goal to reach over a thousand views until Womex would be finished and we succeeded in our goal. To reach a thousand views during the first week of the release was a nice thing to achieve since we work in a genre that is marginal. If we wanted to get income from our Youtube channel the views would have to be a lot more. We are working on a Youtube strategy aswell, but realize that currently this is not the

ideal place to focus our time and resources. We bought marketing campaigns from Instagram and Facebook. We also targeted the traditional media such as newspapers and radio with our press release for our upcoming releases and sent the songs to different independent radio channels and bloggers. We did the same with the music videos. We did radio interviews and posted all of these events on our social media, as it is important to show that there are things happening all the time. This is work that is very much ongoing since our latest release is just a few days old.

This time I have used the help of the transglobal music chart. We didn't have an album to submit but I want to note the fact that the transglobal world music charts can be used in other ways than just submitting your album for review. All the panel members are listed on their site and you can contact them personally with other issues like for example music video releases and other releases that is not the required album for the charts. Because they work as critics, DJs, journalist etc. they are likely to be interested in hearing about any new releases.

Another note to take in consideration is that one can also submit one's music to the European world music charts and that is something that will be done with our next album. I didn't realise this in time for our debut album.

4.4.2 Music Finland Co-marketing

As we took part of the co-marketing offered by Music Finland we could join in on different mentoring and info workshops at their office in Helsinki prior to Womex. There were altogether two events in Helsinki for the delegates who did not have a showcase at Womex. I participated in both of them and Oskar participated in one. During spring there was also a "*prior to womex*" information event that Music Finland organised and I participated there as well.

The themes were different during the occasions and the topics were:

1. The program "Luova Eurooppa" (creative europe) funding and information on collaborations in Europe.
2. The second one was a mentoring, round table session with Tom Bestford from English Folk Expo.

The sessions were not very hands on if you were not one of the artists chosen to showcase at Womex but even if it felt that one of the sessions was not relevant for our band we nevertheless met people who work in the same business and thus a relationship slowly builds and the next time you meet you already have a common history. As Womex came closer Music Finland made a Facebook group for the Finnish delegates where we could be in contact with each other.

During Womex, Music Finland had their stand at the Nordic lounge area on the third floor at Tampere-talo. Close by you would find stands for Export Norway, Sweden Music, Denmark, Estonia and the other Baltic countries. Adjacent to the lounge for co-marketing delegates was an area where you could have meetings in private. Since we had the co-marketing via Music Finland we could bring our merchandise to their stand and have it presented with all the other delegates. We had our CDs, business cards and promo cards with QR-codes at the stand. A QR-code is a code you can scan with your smartphone and our code would take you to our Spotify channel where all of our music can be found and streamed. Because we were in Finland there were a lot of Finnish delegates this year in comparison to the other countries' delegates, although all of our neighbouring countries had many who participated. Since our focus was on Scandinavia and Estonia this area was a great place to network at for most of the time.

Several Finnish artists, organisations and festivals had their own stand where they had produced their own visual image in a booth of about two times three metres. This was a lot more expensive, but everyone could manage for themselves what they wanted to offer at their stand and how they wanted to attract people. As a first timer at Womex I did not think a booth would have been a good choice for us although I was tempted in the beginning to have my own company booth where my different projects could be on display but since some of the projects died out during the year it did not seem as an economically reasonable thing to do. Some colleagues had done wisely in collaborating under a common name like for instance Seaside Sounds who are four Finnish-Swedish female musicians who had their own stand and promoted themselves and their Finnish-Swedish folk music. I spent a lot of time around them because they are colleagues and I know them via the business as friends. One of them I actually got to know better at the Nordic Folk Alliance in Gothenburg, so the music fair is a terrific way to network even

with the people who live close but who you just don't meet in your own surroundings because of the hectic life that musicians live.

At the Nordic lounge at Womex there is a tradition to organise an event called "*Nordic at noon*" which Music Finland organise together with the other Nordic export organisations. This was a great place to be and by then you had already established some contacts that you could continue to discuss with or alternatively this event was great to invite possible collaborators to. Two of our band members arrived on this day and the first thing they participated in was the event "Nordic at noon" brunch and I think it might have been quite a thing to tackle and get yourself immediately mingling and networking.

The event "*Dinner in the sky*" that Music Finland hosted at Näsineula restaurant was also a part of the co-marketing package. Prior to the dinner we could wish for who we wanted Music Finland to invite to the dinner. This would be a sit-down dinner where you could discuss more personally with the table companions. We had no real wishes but wanted to join and see whom we would meet.

4.4.3 Networking for La Riippa Group at Womex

The first thing I attended was the Womex orientation for new delegates and I also recommended this to the band members who had arrived on the first day. The orientation was held by Piranha Arts and they went through the points on how to make the best of one's event attendance. They raised awareness to the fact that one should not make up a goal out of nowhere, but if one is for example planning a tour then you already have a plan to work on at the fair.

The things that they highlighted were that we are humans and it comes down to relationships. They stressed that it is vital to plan the attendance but also to just talk with people, because one will learn the language of the music industry and Womex. As one learns about people's roles and interest one learns to pitch oneself and one should not forget that meaningful relationships can become business relationships. As there is such a huge amount of people present at Womex one should keep track of who one met and why. To be more precise with one's goals means that one can evaluate the success more easily.

I found it as a good foundation for people who attend a music fair for the first time and

many of the points had been discussed during my earlier attendances at other music fairs but it is always good to recollect them.

Otherwise the first day for me consisted of checking out the Tampere-talo and the different areas for different countries and delegates. I left our promotional merchandise at Music Finland's stand and walked about at the Nordic and Baltic stands saying hello to people I knew. I had my first meeting with the Finnish company that work as aggregators and do promotion in China. We discussed La Riippa Groups coming releases and whether there would be any interest in promoting to China. We already have our music distributed digitally in China, but promotion is essential but lacking in our case. I also attended the opening concert where Finnish folk- and world music was represented. During the evening I discussed and mingled but did not stay too long as the week would be long and I assumed I would get the most important work done during daytime.

On Thursday I managed to meet two of the most important bookers I had planned to meet. I got to promote our band and have an interesting discussion with both. I met one of the bookers before a seminar I wanted to attend and prior to that seminar there had been a meeting for festival organisers so I was a bit lucky here. I met her again during the "Women of the world networking event" that I had decided would be of utmost importance for me to attend. Julia from our band was there and like me found it very interesting and important. During this event I think many warm and genuine meetings were made and hopefully future collaborations as well. Another important contact I met again was one I met at Musiikki ja Media in Tampere the year before. Now I got to reintroduce myself and we had a very good discussion about how we possibly could work together in the future and help each other with different goals.

Thursday was a day of success and I felt I accomplished many things I had planned. When I came back to the hotel I wrote a goal for myself for the next day to see concretely which contacts I still needed to find and what chance meetings I hoped for and what other events would be important to attend.

For Friday I wanted to meet the rest of the festival bookers and during Nordic Noon, the event organised by the Nordic export organisations, there was a lot of people up at the Nordic stands. As we are looking mostly for bookers in Scandinavia, this was the perfect place to be. I did meet a few but the commotion was a bit too much to really have a

proper discussion because everyone was looking out for their own interests and the place was packed. The atmosphere was nevertheless wonderful and it was great to attend. I continued to go to seminars about media and private radio, about do it yourself artists and attended a record label meeting. I also talked with some record labels I had contacted earlier and had nice discussions. In the evening it was time for the networking dinner arranged by Music Finland. I had my best chat with the person sitting next to me in the buss as she was from an event in Europe that our band would be interested in and we ticked all her boxes. Otherwise I did not find the dinner to really suit my expectations and found myself mostly surrounded by delegates from North America, which is not a region that is of interest to us at the moment. Nevertheless a few nice discussions occurred and perhaps a few of them could become fruitful contacts.

Friday was a good day but now I started to feel tired of all the networking. I didn't mention earlier that I am pregnant in the third trimester so not only the networking was tiring to body and soul. On Friday my family arrived in Tampere and as I felt I had accomplished a lot during the prior three days I took some time off to be with my family and we visited the Moomin museum. After lunch when my two year old son took a nap I continued the networking and attended a seminar I had been looking forward to. I managed to tick off my last important contact, which made that day a good ending for my endeavours at the fair. I more or less felt that I had achieved what I came for. Since the rest of the band was now present, the last ones arriving on Friday morning, I felt that my part was done and they could now take over. The most difficult thing to organise before I left was to get a band photo, but luckily Julia who is in charge of social media is good at photo alteration and made us look great together although we never actually got that group photo.

When the fair is over one should find the time to do the follow-ups in reasonable time. After a few weeks just drop a line to your contacts and thank them for the meeting. Say hello and continue the relationship you established. Do not despair if you do not get an answer, as you are probably not the only one trying to contact them. A few weeks later you can send another reminder, but do not spam. Be brief, be polite and be personal. A generic mail isn't the best idea so try to put some personality into the mails, at least to the contacts you think are important. And if you are ignored or rejected, remember this

aspect that many put forward at these different fairs: a no now can become a yes in the future.

4.4.4 Reflections from the band

After Womex I asked the rest in the band some questions about our networking and how they evaluated their own work and how we had prepared for the music fair. We use a messaging app called Whatsapp with the band and I posted the questions there and everyone send their own answers to me. The questions I asked were:

1. How do you perceive we worked prior to Womex?
2. How did you network at Womex?
3. What were your personal goals/Did you achieve them?
4. What did you /the band gain from Womex?
5. Have you followed up on your new contacts? If no, then why not?
6. What do you feel we should do next to prolong our contacts and network we established at this years Womex?
7. Did we achieve our preliminary goals, was our work structured and planned as to make us prepared for the fair?
8. How did you prepare yourself for Womex?

As Womex was the first music fair for almost everyone in the band the overall thoughts of Womex was that it was a learning experience. Although some have been at Musik och talang, they have never worked at the fair with business in mind and with a promotional and networking plan with existing goals and contacts that we wish to establish. We did go through a plan in advance and a lot of information could be found online and links were offered, but it was not something that was easy to comprehend before. Everyone is busy in their private lives and careers and they had not had enough time to prepare properly in order to get the most out of a music fair of this proportion. They had not fully realized how big the fair would be. Everyone did nevertheless attend with an open mind

and a will to learn for the future. Everyone pointed out that they relied on the knowledge and networking done by me to achieve the results we beforehand had planned.

The conclusion from the band was that they had gained a deeper insight into the business, into world music and into networking and that they had a lot more knowledge for the future. They all also took part of many seminars and showcases and enjoyed their time spent at Womex.

4.5 EPOS

In fall 2019 I travelled to Stockholm to participate in the International networking days organised by EPOS on the 20th and 21st of October. This was an networking "bonus" which was not done for promotional advantages for the band, but which nevertheless was an important networking event in the field of folk- and world music and where new contacts were established. When I was at the Nordic Folk Alliance in Gothenburg during spring the same year, I listened to a panel discussion about gender balance, equality and plurality on stage, which was hosted by EPOS.

They talked in the panel about networking with the Nordic and European countries and they were searching for people and organisations to collaborate with. After the panel I talked with EPOS board leader Moa Danielson Grimstad. I told her about the organisation Rockdonna in Finland which I have been part of. Rockdonna works for the empowerment of girls, women and non-binary through music education. Moa contacted me later on and invited Rockdonna to the international networking days to be held in Stockholm during the last days of October. Because I was pregnant and had work during the dates for the event, I informed the rest of the members in Rockdonna about this possibility to participate. Unfortunately nobody could go so I decided to organise my work so that I could travel and participate at this event, which I felt would be important for Rockdonna but also for myself. This was a good decision, and as I have a world music band, this suited very well if there would rise an opportunity to also do some networking for us.

The venue Stallet folk and world music is the number one venue in folk- and world music in Stockholm and it would most definitely be a perfect place to perform for many of my projects.

At the networking days a lot of organizations and people were present, for example: EPOS, Keychange, Impira, Balansekonst, Kulturen i Bewegung, WILM (women in live music), Poetic Pilgrimage, and Marie Selander.

There were also many more artists present who are members of EPOS and also organisations who were attending but not presenting. These presentations were fascinating and inspiring and it was a joy to meet all these people working for a common goal, that goal being equality and plurality not only on stage, but also behind the stage and in the music industry in general.

As my thesis contemplates networking at music fair, it is relevant to point out what kind of networking that was discussed and what happened at this event. They were:

- networking between educational organizations like IMPRA and Rockdonna
- networking between venues and artists
- networking between artist and artists
- networking between artists and festivals
- networking between organisations who work for gender equality in their work in the music business

It was very interesting to take part of these organisations and their work and try to figure out how we could help each other for the common goal of making the music scene and industry more gender balanced. I had some personal goals before the networking days and they were to:

- represent Rockdonna and get new interesting contacts for the organisation and to spread information about the work that Rockdonna does.
- get new contacts that could benefit our band La Riippa Group and myself as an artist
- establish interesting contacts for future collaborations

I also got some extra networking ideas during the event and they were to:

- get new contacts that could benefit Finnish-Swedish folk- and world musicians
- do networking to benefit the female perspective in the music business in music schools where I work and have studied.

All of these are valid and beneficial for both parties and very likely to happen in the future. I feel this bonus-networking trip was a good thing to attend and I believe a lot of positive will come from it. My goals were achieved and the ones that I thought of at the event will be interesting to try out in the future.

5. Conclusion

Going into this project I was willing to learn and during the process the questions that steered the project changed many times. The more fairs and meetings I attended the more I understood what to look for and how to prepare. The more I got to know people in the business the more people I could base my research upon and see how they have done and are doing.

My aim in this thesis was to gain information on how an independent self-managed artist prepares for music fairs to gain important collaborations, networks and credibility with the intention to reach out to an international audience. How does one do the most beneficial networking to reach an international market and what steps should the band La Riippa Group take to reach export readiness?

At this point when all the planned music fairs have been attended it is time to evaluate the work done, but it is difficult to estimate if it has been a success or not. To get results from music fairs can take many years although instant bookings may also be possible but are not that likely if one is an unknown band.

My conclusion is that the fact that an artist is independent and self-managed is no hindrance for them to attend music fairs and do worthwhile networking. Nevertheless, this takes a lot of time as one needs to be prepared in order to succeed in establishing the important contacts and collaborations needed. These contacts will not be established without proper research and building relations takes time. Therefore, I very much recommend that one should take part of music fairs for many subsequent years.

If the question is if one as a self-managed artist can achieve an international career via attending music fairs, I cannot give an answer yet. But if it is possible for one to do networking to progress towards that aim via music fairs then my answer is a definite yes. An artist or band does not have to have an agency or label to do the networking they wish at music fairs and I for example did meet all the contacts I had hoped to meet at the music fairs, some even many times. Nevertheless, if one has a professional team working, the efforts are delegated and therefore there are more people working towards the same goal in order to attract an international audience. Managers, labels and other professionals often already have established the important contacts in the industry and

thus naturally does not need to start from the beginning as musicians that are newcomers to networking in the field has to. In this case it was mostly up to me as the artistic leader and the effort I put into it, but also how I decide to delegate work to the rest of the band.

Here one needs to consider how much can be expected from the rest of the team, here being the band, since it is mostly unpaid work as an independent artist. It takes hours to do the necessary research, to write e-mails to publishers, media and bookers, to have an active social media and not forgetting about the actual artistic work that is the most important part. One needs to enjoy it, and I argue that that will increasingly be the case as one's knowledge grows and network expands. With all the research done once, the next time it will go a bit easier. The more your name and brand gets out there the more fans will subscribe and follow and share the art, thus making it easier to reach out with new material. It is this momentum that needs to be taken advantage of when we are fresh with new promotions, fresh in thought from networking and interesting as we have stated a promise of new music to come.

5.1 Practical advice before attending a music fair

In addition to the points already stated there are some more things one could reflect over before attending a music fair with the intention to do beneficial networking. It is good to get to know the music industry through music fairs in any case but if one wants to invest; some things should be prepared. As mentioned, one needs to know one's field and who one wants to meet and where. If it is a booker at a festival, maybe they can be found at a meeting point for festivals or at their countries export stand. Take contact beforehand to book a meeting and be prepared for the meeting. Have the pitch ready: who are you? What do you do and what do you want? It is always good to think of how one can be beneficial to others, and to reflect on one's strengths and what contacts already exist that might help someone else.

Also, work on visibility in any way that feels comfortable, social media being an important thing but knowing it is a stress factor as well. Have business cards, have the music easily approachable and if there are CDs of the music, bring some. After a day at a music fair, it is good to write down what was done and who one encountered, or to do it

as soon as possible as to not forget all the people one met and talked to during the day. Work together with your own countries music export office as they can give valid information and a cheaper promotion opportunity for visibility at the music fair. Take advantage of their mentoring and workshops because it is a place to learn more and to start building one's network.

The most important thing is to not doubt yourself. Don't think this is not the right place for you. Don't think that there is no point in trying because of limited knowledge and contacts. These are learning experiences and work contacts are established through meetings and relations and time. Who is better to promote the music than the artist themselves if they have the social skills, passion and drive to do it? Without the right amount of passion the task to promote one's music might be too strenuous, but then one perhaps just needs more time to feel comfortable with the business side of it all.

If an artist or band is contemplating to start networking at music fairs, here are some aspects to take into consideration summarised:

- *Plan the overall actions*

What should be the focus when attending these music fairs? What do you want to achieve and whom do you want to contact? Make a plan and target the beneficial people for you. Do your research - Know your field!

- *Differences and similarities of the fairs*

If you plan to attend music fairs of different genres, contemplate what you can gain from the different fairs and where you can find the contacts you need in the specific network? What will you register to in advance; perhaps a mentoring even though it is not in your main genre? What will you need to buy for promotion and so on? Should you do international music fairs or only in your own country?

- *Go with a plan but be open for surprises*

What will happen at the fairs? What needs to go as planned, and what if nothing goes as planned. Be ready for chance meetings and for the surprises that may occur. See how others do and learn from them.

- *Aftermath*

Follow up on all the networking. What have you gained and what plans must be made for the future? How much money was spent and what kind of budget is needed for the future?

5.2 Personal reflections and future plans

During the years working on this project I have learned a great deal about the ways to promote our music in the field of world music and about myself as a manager. I have met a lot of gatekeepers and I have learned a great deal about the music industry.

Without participating in these fairs, I would not have had the same amount of information as I do have now, because I probably would not have done my research in the same way as I have when preparing to attend the international fairs. In a short period of time I would claim that I have reached a lot of these Nordic gatekeepers and important people in the business of world music with our music. By learning who "the competition" are and how the team you would like to play with works, I have received important insight into how to work to get forward with my projects.

Even though we are self-managed we have the same opportunities to take part in these fairs, but I think that it is not as easy to get a showcase if you are not teamed up with an agency and/or label. A solution could be to start your own, because sometimes it is just the look of the thing that matters. This would obviously mean more bureaucracy. We will continue to apply for showcases in the next years and see if the conclusion is valid or not and if we continue to be self-managed and independent. If the opportunity to work with a professional team arises we will most likely choose to do so.

This was one way to prepare for these music fairs and for the next time I will probably do a lot in the same way but also do some different. Because if anything you learn that after attending one music fair you most definitely should attend another. With the information I have now about music fairs I am more ready to do other kind of preparations that demand more than I would have been comfortable with as a first-time attendee.

They say that time is money, and if I would count the number of hours I have put for free into the management and promotion of our band I would be ruined. If one is not passionate about the music one is doing and ready to work hard for the promotion of that music it will be very hard to work as an independent artist. Even if one is passionate about one's art, it is very hard work and disheartening when nothing seems to happen. Although I have my band, I have felt very anxious so many times and completely exhausted. I have been working a lot alone as it is still mostly a case of being my art that we promote, as all of our music so far released is composed and written by me. Nevertheless, all these factors push me forward to try new things. One never learns more if unwilling to throw oneself out there and really give it your all. You cannot fake passion and you cannot properly sell something you do not love. The outcome is still a question mark and I have no idea if the investment will pay itself back. Luckily, we have had some funding for some of this process and have also been granted funding for continuing work at music fairs. I hope to continue our work at reaching an international career and also to share my experience of networking through music fairs.

Now as I am analysing the work done for my thesis the situation has completely changed in the world as we are in the middle of a pandemic. The coronavirus has shut down our country's borders and the same situation can be found almost everywhere around the globe. In Finland we are not allowed to have meetings over ten people and all live performances and tours for us musicians have been cancelled during spring and recently it was decided that all gatherings expanding 500 people must be cancelled. This is probably the situation until August 2020. This means all the summer festivals are cancelled and the music fairs we were supposed to attend during spring and summer also are cancelled and the situation during autumn is very unsure. We had applied for a grant to attend music fairs in 2020 and this was granted but now we need to postpone it with at least a year.

The situation is strenuous for all society but especially musicians have been hit hard and new ways to solve the situation is constantly arising. We have rapidly moved on to the Internet and seminars have become webinars. From an environmental angle I see great potential in the digital solutions that have happened during this time and some are things we should keep hold of. The global world is in our reach even without travelling to the other side of the planet.

At the moment much of the music industry is at a standstill and we do not know how the future will be but one has to plan for the future and hope that soon enough we once again can see our friends and colleagues. Until then there is a lot of time to work on your elevator pitch.

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