

COMPOSING A PIECE: THE BIRTHING OF “SELF-ACTUALIZE”

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Past research on how composers work has concentrated on finished pieces. In order to understand a composition process, it has to be examined directly. Unfortunately, first-hand information from composers is scarce. As a composer and musicologist, the author examined the composition process of his metal music piece "Self-Actualize" to better understand his methods.</p> <p>A chronological narrative was built around documentation of the process, featuring diary entries and audio files. The narrative was interpreted qualitatively. It was followed by a summary and reflection on the process. Intention and goal setting were found to be central in the composition process. They were also featured in writings of other composers. These composers favored sheet music, whereas the process examined made extensive use of computer software.</p> <p>The thesis produced a unique look into a composition process, demonstrating there are universal qualities to music composition. The author encourages composers to study their methods and share their findings with each other.</p>	
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Aika – Month and year 05/2013	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 38
Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Valmiit teokset ovat olleet pitkään säveltämisen tutkimuksen keskiössä. Sävellysprosessia ei voi ymmärtää sitä epäsuorasti tutkimalla. Ensi käden tieto säveltäjiltä on vähäistä. Tutkielman tekijän tarkoituksena oli tarkastella säveltämänsä "Self-Actualize" -metallimusiikkiteoksen sävellysprosessia ymmärtääkseen tapaansa työskennellä. Laadittu kronologinen narratiivi perustuu dokumentaatiolle prosessista, johon sisältyy päiväkirjamerkintöjä ja äänitiedostoja. Narratiivia tulkittiin laadullisesti. Narratiivia seurasi sävellysprosessin yhteenveto ja sen pohdiskelu. Selvä intentio ja tavoitteiden asetus olivat prosessin keskeisiä tekijöitä. Niiden merkittävyys tuli esille myös muiden säveltäjien kirjoituksissa. Näille säveltäjille kynä ja paperi olivat tärkeitä säveltämisen työkaluja, kun taas tutkittu prosessi perustui pitkälti tietokoneohjelmistojen käytölle.</p> <p>Tutkielma loi omalaatuisen katsauksen sävellysprosessiin, osoittaen, että säveltämiseen liittyy yleismaailmallisia piirteitä. Tekijä kannustaa säveltäjiä tutkimaan sävellysmenetelmiään ja jakamaan löytönsä toistensa kanssa.</p>	
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CONTENTS

- 1 INTRODUCTION..... 1**

- 2 BACKGROUND AND GOALS 3**
 - 2.1 Composer3
 - 2.2 Composition 4
 - 2.3 Composition Process 5
 - 2.4 Goals of the thesis..... 7

- 3 ON “SELF-ACTUALIZE” AND RESEARCH METHODS..... 8**
 - 3.1 Influences, Tools and Methods in Composing “Self-Actualize” 8
 - 3.1.1 Influences8
 - 3.1.2 Tools9
 - 3.1.3 Methods10
 - 3.2 Documentation of the Process..... 11
 - 3.3 Research Methods 12

- 4 COMPOSITION PROCESS OF “SELF-ACTUALIZE” 13**
 - 4.1 Chronological narrative 13
 - 4.1.1 Phase 1: Intention and the first version13
 - 4.1.2 Phase 2: Intensive work period.....16
 - 4.1.3 Phase 3: Arrangement and finalization.....24
 - 4.2 Summary and Reflection 25
 - 4.2.1 Intention and planning.....25
 - 4.2.2 Inspiration and hard work27
 - 4.2.3 Composition process and its methods28

- 5 CONCLUSION..... 30**

- REFERENCES..... 32**

- APPENDIX 34**
 - Planning document 34
 - Diary entries 35

1 INTRODUCTION

Art is largely a game of emotion. Composers, painters and writers alike depend on their ability to arouse great emotions and insights in the public. Because the essence of art is so connected to emotions, we tend to interpret phenomena related to it through emotional terms. Views such as “*Artists depend on inspiration to function.*” and “*Creation of art is not real work, since artists are guided by their emotions.*” are common and arise from lack of knowledge. True enough, there exist artists, who attempt to base their careers on inspiration. But inspiration alone does not cut it: An artist needs to work like anybody else.

We know a great deal about lives of famous composers such as Mozart, Bach and Beethoven: Their struggles, triumphs, relationships and other relatable human qualities have been documented in detail. The way each of them composed is a topic considerably less explored, partly because it is something the average listener might struggle to relate to.

Unlike a scientist with a new theory or an invention, a composer has no obligation to show how he came to create something new. And so we know relatively little about how music is created. There exists a great deal of information on lives of most composers, but when it comes to their craft and their methods, information is scarce. Such knowledge can help us understand different ways of composing music and dispel misled views.

The work of composers can be studied in many ways. They can be interviewed, and their sketches can be examined during on-going composition. Even their ways of thinking can be scrutinized using a multitude of methods. However, problem in approaches such as these is that they can alter how a composer works. Knowledge of partaking in a study can affect the subject’s behavior. The safest way, in order to not alter the process and its end result, is to examine material related to a composition process after its completion. However, it is not possible to peer inside Beethoven’s or even a living composer’s mind; to attain information accessible only through introspection. Questions such as “*What did the composer feel or think in*

making this choice?” and “*What were his motives?*” can only be answered by the composer himself.

In the end of 2012, I composed a piece called “Self-Actualize” (SA from now on). During the composition process I produced a number of documents to aid it. In this thesis, I create a narrative based on these documents and reflect on it. My goal is to explore and explain the way I composed SA and relate my findings to writings of other composers.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. This introduction is the first one. Second chapter deals with terminology, previous research and goals of the thesis. In the third, I introduce SA in detail and describe the primary methods and tools used in its composition. I will also describe the research methods used in the following chapter. Fourth chapter contains a chronological narrative of the composition process, which is based on attached documentation relating to SA. I sum up different facets of the process, relating them to writings of other composers. Fifth chapter entails the conclusion to the thesis, considering its results, and how they relate to the past and future.

2 BACKGROUND AND GOALS

This chapter examines concepts such as composer, composition and composition process in the light of literature and past research, concluding with goals of the thesis.

Scientific studies favor objectively verifiable methods, so that discoveries and theories can be put to test. However, unverifiable, or subjective methods are necessary as well. Interview is an example of an information retrieval method that can produce information of highly subjective nature, yet it is interviews with interesting people that never fail to intrigue us. Such information is not sterile and dulled down by repeated editing, but rather close to flow of thoughts inside a human mind; the kind of information phenomenology examines. Perhaps, at some level, we recognize that opinions are rooted in reality: If one cannot base an opinion on facts at the moment, it does not mean it is without fundament. Opinion is a belief so rooted in an individual that it does not warrant questioning or doubt.

Each information source must be paired with a fitting method of inquiry, and any information obtained needs to be interpreted with consideration to the source. Whether the information source is an artist writing about his work or an interview conducted with the said artist, the data produced can offer valuable insights into how the person sees his work and manages to do it.

2.1 Composer

The word *composer* originates from Latin and translates to *one who puts together*. The meaning questions the notion of composers pulling something out of thin air. A composer is someone who takes a number of things and arranges them into a novel configuration. Thus an act of composition is synthesization; of combining two or more into one. When a composer be-

gins to work on a new piece, he either consciously or subconsciously reaches to his mind and surroundings, looking for things that either inspire him or fit a predetermined plan of action.

Composers live in the same world as you and I, sleeping, eating and breathing as everybody else. He has grown under the influence of different cultures, other people, artists and so forth since the day he was born. This is a fact very apparent to anyone who has read some of numerous biographies of composers from different times and stylistic backgrounds. Practically all great composers have been hard workers, devotees to their art, working day and night to deliver the best music possible. Johann Sebastian Bach was known to be a composer of strong work ethic, devoting his work to God¹. Similarly, Beethoven used to develop his music through grueling sketching (Drabkin 1978, 2).

2.2 Composition

Composition is a finished piece of work by a composer. It can exist in many formats. Traditionally, composers write or print their compositions on paper. Computers have made it possible to not only store and edit scores digitally, but also play them during or after a composition process. I input and store music using a computer, inputting notes using the piano roll editor of *Cubase* sequencer software. The piano roll editor displays notes as blocks that are located in a two-dimensional grid, where the horizontal axis represents time and the vertical pitch. To move a note by semitones or different note values, you grab a block and move it along the two axes. When necessary, the software can produce a traditional sheet music score of the inputted musical data, ready to be printed on-demand.

One of the most common ways of studying the work of composers is analyzing finished pieces. Analysts have the tendency of finding hidden meanings in the notes and rests they examine; to understand, what the composer meant with each musical phrase. This kind of analyses may be further reinforced with references to other sources, such as diary entries, but even then their validity remains questionable. (Cook 2006.) If we intend to understand how a composer works, studying a finished piece alone serves little purpose. How can you learn of the chain of causality leading to a finished piece without somehow examining the chain itself?

¹ “Like all music, the figured bass should have no other end and aim than the glory of God and the recreation of the soul; where this is not kept in mind there is no true music, but only an infernal clamour and ranting.” (Schweitzer 1966, 167)

2.3 Composition Process

The verb *to compose* has the same origin as *composer*. It is the process of *putting things together*; the act of music creation. Notes and rests are arranged for one or more instruments that play simultaneously or sequentially.

The act of composition takes place on two levels, as is the case with all human behavior: Subconscious and conscious. Some decisions are intuitive, natural and flowing, while some are meditative, rational and deliberate. A composer is not fully aware of what an intuitive decision is based on, while a rational one can be traced back to its origins.

Ulla Pohjannoro uses dual processing theory to describe these two ways a human being processes information (Pohjannoro 2013, 24). Intuitive processing is fast, automatic and subconscious, while rational is slow, purposeful and conscious. I believe both can serve a composer well. It is important to choose the right way of thinking for each phase of a process or for each challenge. For example, it is a sensible choice to work intuitively in the beginning of a composition process; to sketch in order to have something to work with. However, it may also be necessary to apply rational thought parallel to intuitive thinking. If a composer does not have any plan of action when beginning the composition a new piece, the element of chance originating from intuition will likely dictate the rest of the process and ultimately the nature of the finished piece.

Hannu Pohjannoro thinks the act of composition is largely about making choices, which must be made with reliance to intuition as much as to rational deduction. Still, he stresses that even the intuitive choices are intended. (Pohjannoro 2009, 11.) When a composer is immersed in his work, even his intuitive choices can be dictated by the requirements of each phase and the existing material.

Composition process encompasses the steps necessary to complete a composition. While there are different models, the general idea revolves around the duality of intuition and rational thought. While creation of a model based on different composers' methods can provide valuable insights, it is important to remember that such models are always simplifications (Pemberton 1993, 41).

Yrjö Heinonen presents a general model of composition process, which combines two dominant views of creative action. According to the first, the act of composition is a cycle of invention through inspiration and evaluation through criticism. The other view is that composition is predetermined action. By combining these two we end up with a process of produc-

tive and evaluative action that is guided by predetermination. (Heinonen 1995, 15.) I will examine the model in more detail at the end of the fourth chapter.

There are two ways of learning of how composers work: A composer can describe his methods or someone else can do so by examining his work. Both approaches can extract information from a composition and documents produced during its production. However, it is only the composer himself who can, through introspection, extract information from his own mind; information that is often not transferred to media like paper or digital bits. This is why introspection is an irreplaceable tool in studying composition. At times, introspection has been shunned in academic circles, but can serve as a valid method of collecting information (Jack & Roepstorff. 2002, 333).

Unfortunately, this kind of information originating straight from composers is scarce, which can be explained by the following two reasons. First, a composer serves his audience best by composing new music and having it performed. Writing about intricacies of his craft may benefit other composers and academics, and arouse curiosity of a select few fans, but generate no monetary profit. Second, act of creation can be a very intimate and closely guarded part of a composer's life. In such instances, revealing even parts of the creative process may be out of the question.

A book edited by Erkki Salmenhaara sheds light on ways composers can see and share their work. It contains accounts from 12 Finnish composers. Each of them reveals what he sees fit. For instance, Kalevi Aho does not discuss his methods, instead describing the process of composing his fourth symphony (Salmenhaara 1976, 11-23). Erik Bergman, on the other hand, contemplates his background and its influence on his career in an introspective manner (Salmenhaara 1976, 27-37). Each account does not tell only of the composer's background and work, but a great deal about his personality.

There exists a large body of literature written by researchers of numerous disciplines on how composers compose (e.g. Perle 1984; Holtz 2009; Pohjannoro 2013). They utilize everything from sketches to diary entries in an effort to understand, how works of art came to be. For instance, the study of Beethoven's sketchbooks has kept scholars busy for a long time (e.g. Schachter 1982; Kinderman 2009). However, when studying late composers from centuries back, there is little choice of methods. Study is restricted to whatever documents have been preserved, which have often been relayed and potentially altered by numerous hands. Studying living composers enables use of a wider selection of methods.

Ulla Pohjannoro presents us her approach in examining methods of a professional composer. She examined sketches and other documents produced by the composer and interviewed him while the composition process was still on-going. Pohjannoro describes composition process as a complex and multifaceted, the study of which should not rely on the end result alone. (Pohjannoro 2013.) I share her view, as study of end result alone is fundamentally restricted and may require leaps of faith; educated guesses as to why a composer chose as he did. However, there exists a potential shortcoming in Ulla Pohjannoro's approach. No matter how careful she was in her approach, she was involved in the composition process to some degree. The interviews alone must have affected the composer's psyche, which may have altered the piece itself.

In order to not alter a composition process, it is necessary to study it after its conclusion. Additionally, I have argued introspection is an essential tool in studying composition that can result in information unobtainable through other means. What might a composer learn by examining the composition process of one of his finished pieces?

2.4 Goals of the thesis

As a musicologist and a composer, I have the opportunity to examine a composition process in detail from a unique, subjective perspective. In this thesis, my first goal is to construct a chronological narrative of the composition process of SA. The narrative is built around pieces of surviving documentation. The second goal is to summarize the process and reflect upon its different phases and facets. In this reflection, I draw comparisons to what other composers have written on their methods and views.

I expect to find both similarities and differences between the composition process of SA and what others have written on the subject. My way of composing is far from ordinary, which may end up explaining some of the differences. However, it is my view that there are universal qualities to the act of creating music, such as duality of inspiration and hard work.

3 ON “SELF-ACTUALIZE” AND RESEARCH METHODS

Before delving into the chronological narrative of the composition process of SA, it is necessary to understand its context and background. First, the style and instrumentation of SA are outlined. Second, I describe the tools and methods utilized during the composition process. Last, I introduce pieces of documentation of the composition process and the methods used in their study.

3.1 Influences, Tools and Methods in Composing “Self-Actualize”

SA is the fourth track of my upcoming album. *Biographical* is simply an autobiography of my life, written in musical notes and lyrics. SA, as each of the seven tracks of *Biographical*, deals with a specific time in my life. Each of my three albums (“*Antediluvian Hunger*” by *Viral*, “*United Earth*” by *Omniavatar* and “*Biographical*”) is based on a story or an idea that is presented by a number of pieces in a premeditated order.

SA tells my development from a shy teenager into a young, more courageous adult. In a wider context, SA is about self-actualization; taking control over your life and making the most out of yourself. It was composed to express joyful freedom of choice, burden of responsibility and torment of indecision. This variety in content is reflected in SA’s stylistic influences.

3.1.1 Influences

Metal is a relatively young music genre that has started to receive academic attention only in the last few decades (e.g. Walser 1992; Weinstein 2010; Brown 2011). Unlike classical music, metal music is not supported and studied by well-established institutions. As detailed

studies of composition processes are hard to come by even in relation to classical music, they are practically nonexistent in the metal genre.

Most metal musicians compose in the tradition of rock music, relying little on written music. A lot of metal bands prefer to work on their music while practicing together, using inspiration and improvisation to create new material and work on it. If one or more of the members compose alone, they often record the ideas as audio using a piece of software or hardware.

By music genre, SA can mainly be classified as metal, but its influences do not end there: It encompasses orchestrations and a variety of synthesized sounds, among other elements uncharacteristic to traditional metal music. Its progressive structure, use of different time signatures and extensive virtuoso type playing are influences of *progressive metal*. On the other hand, its high tempo and use of fast bass drum patterns are reminiscent of a number of genres, *speed metal* being the oldest. Second half of SA features extensive syncopation, erratic rhythms and synchronization of distortion guitar and bass drum, reminiscent of *industrial metal*. SA also features sounds produced using software synthesizers. This can be seen as an influence of *electronic music*.

SA also utilizes string instruments common to classical music, which are violin, viola, cello and double bass. It has choir parts, which utilize both male and female registers. The use of strings and choir sections is common to modern metal, but they are most often used only to support the metal band itself instead of taking a more prominent role. This is the case with SA as well. Lyrics were written for SA and it will be released with sung parts. However, they are not featured or examined in this thesis as they are still under production.

3.1.2 Tools

SA was not composed on paper. Instead, each of its thousands of notes was inputted using to a computer a keyboard and mouse. Most of the composition work took place in Cubase sequencer that not only allows storage of music data in MIDI format, but enables the user to play it back using a large variety of virtual instruments and synthesizers. The output of these can then be, through equalization, compression and other methods, modified to produce an audio file ready for listening. Cubase allows for recording and many other functions as well, but they were not central in composing SA.

During the composition, I used a host of virtual instruments and synthesizers that enabled me to have an instant feedback loop. In using such a system, you can write a drum pat-

tern and have a virtual instrument play it with a realistic sound. It is then possible to follow up with a guitar accompaniment and listen to both instruments playing together.

Most of the virtual instruments used were samplers. To create a sampler, each sound of a particular instrument needs to be recorded in a studio. The note is played by the sampler in exchange for the corresponding MIDI message, resulting in a digital, virtual instrument that can be copied and distributed with ease. The following virtual instruments were not used only in composing SA; they are also featured in the attached audio files *Audio 1* and *Audio 2*. They are responsible for every instrument in the aforementioned files.

For drums, I used Toontrack's *Superior Drummer 2* virtual instrument and its extension *The Metal Foundry SDX*. Metal Foundry features a large library of drum instruments recorded with metal music in mind. The sampler of Superior Drummer 2 allows for a large array of adjustments, including humanization², equalization, compression and so forth.

Electric guitar sound was produced using Prominy's *V-Metal* virtual instrument. It is a sampler recorded using an *ESP Alexi Blacky* electric guitar, which has a sound well suited for metal music. V-Metal is very versatile, containing a wide variety of articulations characteristic to distorted electric guitar sound. V-Metal produces only a dry sound that needs to be processed. In composing SA, I sent it to IK Multimedia's *Amplitube Metal* plugin, which is can model a large variety of guitar related hardware. These include amplifiers, cabinets and effects, which form a chain the input signal passes through. The electric bass guitar used was Prominy's *SR5 Rock Bass* virtual instrument. Its working principle is the same as that of V-Metal.

All string instruments and choir sections were produced using IK Multimedia's *Miroslav Philharmonik* orchestral workstation. It contains samples, or virtual instruments, of all common orchestral instruments. Even though it is somewhat dated, it is a good solution if customized sufficiently. Synthesizer sounds, prominent in the second part of SA, were produced using *Halion Sonic SE* and *Prologue*, both plugins of Cubase.

3.1.3 Methods

The use of tools described enabled me to compose and listen simultaneously, enabling me to compose very accurately. There was no necessity to guess what something would end up sounding like, resulting in less need for arrangement. The piece has required little adjusting

² Humanization refers to different procedures that result in a human-like performance, such as alteration of samples and velocity.

after the composition process, and its final version will feature most if not all of the virtual instruments.

There were some potential shortcomings to this way of composition. As the sound produced is pleasant enough to appreciate, I often caught myself listening to the music instead of working on it. Another distraction was an urge to make adjustments to the sound while composing. This was at times time-consuming and frustrating. The use of virtual instruments can be very demanding, as you need to adjust every detail of their output. Whereas a human player can produce very subtle details in timing, dynamics and articulation, a virtual instrument, without necessary adjustments, produces a bland, expressionless chain of notes.

3.2 Documentation of the Process

During the composition process of SA, I produced a number of documents, diary entries and other relevant files. Writing things down, *thinking on paper*, was my way of clarifying the process to myself. My intention was not to document the process for study by me or anyone else, which is why they can be hard to interpret. The other six pieces of the album are not as featured in the notes and documents I produced, which is why I chose to examine SA.

Written documentation comprises 18 diary entries (*Diary entries*) and a text file for planning (*Planning document*), produced before, during and after the composition process. The prevalent language used in the originals is Finnish; everything in this thesis has been translated to English by the author. I believe the translations to be accurate representations of the originals.

The chronological narrative will feature the three surviving versions of SA. Information on the piece's structure was extracted from Cubase session files, dating to different phases of the process. The thesis is accompanied by two audio files: The first one represents the first version of the piece (Audio 1), the second the third and final version (Audio 2). Unfortunately, there exists no auditory representation of the second version. However, it is almost identical to the final version accompanying the thesis. The audio files were produced using Cubase and the aforementioned virtual instruments and represent the kind of sound I could hear while composing.

3.3 Research Methods

Due to nature of the documentation, I studied it qualitatively. My objective was to interpret meanings behind the ideas and actions found in the documentation, which is what qualitative research is about (Maykut 1994, 121). In her book on basics of qualitative research, Pamela Maykut presents three approaches to qualitative data analysis that vary in degree of interpretation: First one is to present data, second to interpret it to some degree, and third to interpret it in great detail with the intention of developing a theory based on it. (Maykut 1994, 122; Strauss & Corbin 1990, 22-23). My approach is closest to the second one described; one reason being, developing a theory of any kind is beyond the scope of this thesis. I present the data so that it is open for scrutiny, but do my best to make sense of it as well.

It is important to be self-aware when conducting research of any kind, let alone using qualitative methods that require a great deal of interpretation. In doing so, it is necessary to set your own viewpoint aside and be aware of your prejudices and assumptions regarding the phenomenon under study (Maykut 1994, 123). Since I began writing this thesis approximately six months after completion of SA, I believe to have been able to study and interpret the documentation with an open mind. For example, I see the diary entries as if written by someone else and do not relate to them much, which has helped me in the analysis.

The documentation was arranged and examined chronologically. My intention was to reconstruct the composition process, using the existing documentation, my memories and expertise, so that each piece of documentation has a justifiable place in the narrative of events. In addition to interpreting textual documents, I created a structural diagram of each version of SA to support the narrative.

Most of the diary entries were written in November of 2012. It was then I worked on the piece intensively, revising and composing new material. The entries refer to different sections and melodies without identifying them clearly. By cross-referencing audio and session files with the entries, it was possible to identify the likely things referenced.

The narrative will produce a glimpse into how a piece came into being. To see how it relates to existing literature, I will compare it to what has been written on other composers and different models of composition processes. I will reference aforementioned authors, such as Yrjö Heinonen and Hannu Pohjannoro, but also other authors to gain and present insight on how music can come to be.

4 COMPOSITION PROCESS OF “SELF-ACTUALIZE”

The process of composing SA began in fall of 2012 and ended in December 2012, spanning three to four months. Besides SA, I worked on several other pieces of the *Biographical* album. SA was called *Rebirth* until January of 2013 when I decided to change the name to *Self-Actualize*, which better represents the piece’s purpose. This is why the piece is referred to as *Rebirth* in most of the diary entries examined.

4.1 Chronological narrative

This chapter contains a reconstruction of the process that lead to the finalized version of SA. It is divided into three time periods. Each had an important purpose in the process of composition. However, November 2012 was in many ways the most important of the three. During this month, I worked on the piece with great intensity and concentration, which led to it being a crucial point in the song-writing process.

4.1.1 Phase 1: Intention and the first version

In June of 2011, I set out to compose *Biographical*, starting with the first two tracks. It was only in fall of 2012 I began work on SA. No plans or diary entries have survived from that time. The only remaining piece of documentation is an audio file of the first version of SA (*Audio 1*) produced with Cubase, dated 20th of September 2012. This version begins a theme that sounds like careful movements of a mouse. It is meant to represent nature of a timid boy. The introduction then transforms into a stronger, more courageous form akin to roar of a lion, which signals of the timid boy. This is the only appearance of section *Intro 1* during the composition process.

What follows are *Verse 1A* and *Chorus 1A* that continue in an energetic, powerful and positive manner. The following *Solo* introduces characteristics of maturity, such as responsibility and worry, but features an atmosphere of youthful omnipotence as well. These three sections represent a connection to the later versions, all the way to the final version of SA. They will make reappearance in the same order and largely unmodified. They form the core of the piece.

The first version ends with *Outro 1* that is arguably out of place. It has a folkish flair to it that does not quite fit in with the preceding sections. As I remember it, this section was an attempt to end the piece using spontaneous composition, which in this case resulted in something unfitting. It does not reappear in the later versions.

Diagram 1 is the structure of the first version of SA.

0:00	0:53	1:22	2:00	2:33	3:10
Intro 1	Verse1A	Chorus 1A	Solo	Chorus 1A	Outro 1

DIAGRAM 1. Structure of the first version of SA, dated 20th of September 2012. The number after each section name is a version number (e.g. Intro 2 and 3); each version is composed of unique material. A letter after a version number refers to a variation of the version (e.g. Verse 1A and 1B). The number above each section name is when the section begins in the attached audio file. The width of each section is relative to its duration in quarter notes. Gray highlights sections that are common between all examined versions of SA. This version is listenable as attachment Audio 1.

A text file created sometime in the fall of 2012 contains entries that explain what follows (attachment *Planning document*). All of its entries cannot be dated with accuracy, as the document contains only one time stamp. However, it is probable that its earliest entries were written sometime after composition of the first version of SA, as they mention some characteristics of the later versions. Additionally, there is no way of telling which of the entries are discrete from each other, except for the time stamped one. The first entry is as follows:

Main theme
 - pulsating, energetic
 - positive
 - virile

EXCERPT FROM PLANNING DOCUMENT. A description of a potential main theme to SA.

The heart of the piece was to be about strong, positive emotions; about a young adult realizing the great potential within him and sensing all possibilities that lay before him. This theme is

present in each of the three versions. The next section of the document details two main parts of the piece, which are as follows:

<p><i>1. A new beginning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>life force</i> - <i>great potential</i> - <i>creation</i> 	<p><i>2. Aggression, defiance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>strong contrast to the positivity of the first part</i> <li style="padding-left: 2em;">- <i>also energetic, but in a rageful way</i> - <i>a link to Militarist</i> <li style="padding-left: 2em;">- <i>problematic because the song is still very unfinished</i> <li style="padding-left: 2em;">- <i>I could create something that is repeated in Militarist</i> <li style="padding-left: 2em;">- <i>take new ideas from the ending of The Others and have them slowly transform into something new that you will then use in Militarist</i>
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EXCERPT FROM PLANNING DOCUMENT. An idea of dividing SA into two main parts.

Early on, my intention was to have two distinctive parts to SA. The latter was intended to be a connection to the following piece of Biographical that deals with military service and warfare. It used to be called *Militarist*, but now the name is *Destroy*. However, as is noted in the entry, *Militarist* was unfinished. One way to connect two pieces is to have them share material, which was what I intended to do. The referenced *The Others* (now *Avert*) is the piece preceding SA, which ends with fast and aggressive music. The planned solution would have resulted in three consecutive pieces sharing material, which might have resulted in a strong coherence. However, this was not to be.

The next section of the document details a potential structure for SA:

<p><i>PARTS</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Intro</i> <i>2. Verse</i> <i>3. Chorus</i> <i>4. Solo</i> <i>5. Chorus</i> <i>6. Verse 2</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>7. Bridge</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>quieter, arpeggios (Queen - I want it All)</i> <i>8. Verse (same theme continues, but varied, modulated, as more aggressive, stronger)</i> <i>9. Verse 2</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>based on the first chorus, but</i> <li style="padding-left: 2em;">- <i>a different key</i> <li style="padding-left: 2em;">- <i>contains fast machine-like rhythms</i> <li style="padding-left: 2em;">- <i>not as symmetrical</i>
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EXCERPT FROM PLANNING DOCUMENT. A sketch of SA's structure. The reference to Queen's "I Want It All" is related to its bridge, which features arpeggios. I was practicing the

section on guitar at the time of writing this entry to the document, which explains the song's mention.

What is interesting here is that the structure is not far from that of the third and final version: It differs in its lack of a chorus at the end of the piece. Also, descriptions of the *Bridge* and last two verses contain ideas that were not to last. The idea here was to gradually develop the piece into something akin to the aforementioned *Destroy*, creating rising tension using modulations, variations and asymmetry.

It is uncertain when exactly I made these entries as they are not dated. However, it is probable they are newer than the first version of SA as they describe a piece that turns aggressive and defiant in its latter half.

4.1.2 Phase 2: Intensive work period

I'm really trying to write a melody worthy of Rebirth, but for now without results. It feels like I'm trying to climb a tree ass first. I need to try new ways.

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 3rd of November 2012. The first diary entry related to the composition of SA. "Rebirth" was the first name of SA.

This diary entry marks the beginning of November 2012, an intense period of composition that resulted in the final version of SA. The entry does well in representing the frustration I experienced in trying to work SA to completion. I was not satisfied with *Intro 1* and *Outro 1* and wanted SA to be a stronger and more coherent piece. Thus I opted to work on it until I had something I could be content with.

As the diary entries were not written with this thesis in mind, they are cryptic at times. I may write about a melody, continuation or a new section. To identify the probable subject of each reference, we need to understand and keep in mind the resulting piece and its structure. This is why I begin from the end by describing the structure of SA's second version (*Diagram 2*). This version exists only as a Cubase session file and cannot be listened to. However, it is almost identical to the final version in its material and structure; the only real difference is its *Outro 2*, which is missing from the final version.

The piece begins with *Intro 2* that presents a 16th note based idea, developing into *Verse 1B* that, among other characteristics, follows the same chord progression as *Verse 1A* in the first version. Same is true for *Chorus 1B* and *Solo*. However, the first appearance of Cho-

rus 1B is not repeated, unlike in the first version, which results in a more streamlined structure.

Verse 2 is a new section that begins in a way similar to *Verse 1B*. It morphs through a series of stages connected through modulations; the section explores different atmospheres, arriving at the end of the first part of SA.

The second part contains no material from the first version of SA, beginning with *Intro 3*. It halts the piece for a breather after intensive four minutes. *Verse 3* and *Chorus 2* take turns, creating a contrasting pair of confusion and clarity: The former is created by syncopated rhythms, while *Chorus 2* straightens the music with its long chords and bright atmosphere enforced by a synthesizer-played melody.

Outro 2 was meant to function as a bridge between SA and the following piece. As it is not featured in the attached audio files, I will describe it in some detail. The instrumentation is distortion guitars, bass guitar and drums. It is aggressive and jerky, featuring rhythms that are hard to anticipate that result in an erratic and aggressive atmosphere. Instead of providing an even beat, a bass drum hit coincide with each note the guitars play. This idea is present in *Verse 3* as well.

0:00	0:39	1:09	1:27	2:01	2:38
Intro 2	Verse1B	Ch.1B	Solo	Chorus 1B	Verse 2
4:06	4:54	5:26	5:42	6:14	
Intro 3	Verse 3	Ch.2	Verse3	Chorus2	Ot.2

*DIAGRAM 2. Structure of the second version of SA, dated 18th of November 2012. The structure is divided into two parts to make it more presentable. The number after each section name is a version number (e.g. Intro 2 and 3); each version is composed of unique material. A letter after a version number refers to a variation of the version (e.g. Verse 1A and 1B). The number above each section name is when the section begins in the attached audio file. The width of each section is relative to its duration in quarter notes. Gray highlights sections that are common between all examined versions of SA. This version is listenable as attachment Audio 2, except for the section *Outro 2*.*

The next diary entry, dated 6th day of November, represents an attempt to imagine a fitting segment of music. It was written in the morning with intention of setting a goal for the day.

- composition: *Rebirth*

- beautiful, delicate, frail guitar melody, to which a counter voice appears after a few repetitions, that harmonizes partly, partly plays its own thing; becomes little by little into

more courageous, developing into a strong, faster riff, which has the original melody in major and/or in some other way altered; this then develops into the existing chorus

- task: melody/riff, its different development phases, riffs, all the way until the chorus

- take care that the new beginning fits the chorus

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 6th of November 2012. A potential beginning to SA.

The second paragraph “- beautiful ..” is a description of a beginning to SA. It is possible I imagined the described music in my mind before committing it to writing. For me, imagining music is easy, but writing it down is a challenge; this is what I seem to have failed to do. The last paragraph “- task ..” is a further clarification of what I wanted to accomplish. The chorus mentioned is a probable reference to Chorus 1.

Later, on the same day, I made the following entry at 11.46:

I composed a decent melody, but, but. I am stuck. I want to begin the song with a simple melody, which is challenging. In addition, at times I'm trying to think of the main melody of Wintersun's Sons of Winter and Stars, which makes it even harder for me. Realize that there is no limit to alternatives!

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 6th of November 2012 11.46. Frustration in trying to compose a fitting beginning to SA.

During the morning of 6th of November 2012 I managed to compose something, but it seemed to have failed to meet my standards. Additional frustration was caused by comparisons I was making between myself and music of *Wintersun*, a Finnish metal band. This pitfall of comparing oneself to others resulted in me having to deal with a lot of stress. At the end of the entry, I am try to remind myself of how the alternatives are limitless; of how there is no need to mimic others to find the right solutions.

One hour later I wrote the following:

Today, when starting to compose Rebirth's beginning, I made a mistake of which I must learn. It was not the song's main melody, its dominating theme! I must bring it to this world, because all else has to be based on it.

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 6th of November 2012 12.45. Frustration in trying to figure out what to compose first.

This somewhat senseless entry depicts my trouble in deciding how to compose a beginning to SA. I thought I should compose the “dominating theme” of the piece first because “all else has to be based on it”. Composing a central element of music and then creating everything

else in relation it is a way of ensuring coherence. I may have begun composing something vague, slow or subtle; unfit to take a central role in the energetic piece.

The last entry for the day was made at 23.11:

Now the day is over. The composition still did not go well. I wasted the morning because I tried to compose the song's beginning; something held back, timid. I should have focused on the main theme.

I also had problems because I'm having trouble directing myself to specific emotional states "artificially". Perhaps I could try using "chordal carpets", arpeggios and other atmosphere generating elements? They could create the right kind of vibes that lead to the right kind of music.

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 6th of November 2012 23.11. Events of the day and proposed solutions to remedy the situation.

It is obvious I was not satisfied with the day. It recounts the last entry: I wrote something unfit for the role of the piece's "main theme". I speculate directing my emotions when composing could help in achieving the right kind of results, proposing this can be achieved through the use of easy to manipulate musical elements, such as (repetitive) arpeggios or "chordal carpets" (long chords; as if carpets spread out). There is a common quote with no definite author that goes "Music is what feelings sound like". If this is the case, a composer's emotional state can greatly affect the quality and nature of his output. I believe this to be true.

The next day began on a better note:

This morning I had the first clear success in composition in some time. In the morning I began with the idea that I will compose whatever comes to me without critical thinking. I created a nice idea that I crafted into a fitting beginning for Rebirth.

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 7th of November 2012. Description of a success in composition.

This is not the first time I have concluded that uninhibited creation is the root of successful composition. I still remember how I began clicking on the piano roll, drawing notes and then playing them back. The result was a 16th note based pattern in which all notes, except for the highest ones, were played muted, staccato. This accented flow of 16th notes followed a simple chord progression. Further refinement resulted in *Intro 2*, present in the final version of SA.

The following entry was made on the next day:

- composition

- first 25 minutes of planning the structure and the contents of the song
 - work on Rebirth's beginning (fuse the rhythm guitars into the lead)
 - fuse the beginning's theme into the vocabulary of the song; create a possible continuation for all
 - **MOVE QUICKLY**

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 8th of November 2012. A list of composition related tasks for the day.

On the 8th, I set out to plan the piece to better understand what still needed to be done. This planning session may have resulted in the structure present in *Planning document*. I intended to do further work on Intro 2 from the day before. The proposition in parenthesis may be a suggestion to fuse the new 16th note idea together with the 16th note based guitar riff of Verse 1. My intention was to use the new beginning's ideas in other sections of the piece, which is what I ended up doing. Lastly, I stress the importance of gaining and keeping momentum; for me, it is easy to succumb to perfectionism and spend hours of my time on minute details. Sometimes it is best to move quickly and work on details at a later time.

At the end of the day I wrote the following:

Now Rebirth functions quite nicely, that is, its first half. Tomorrow I will start hammering away at its latter half.
 - recommendation: when you create something new tomorrow, plan first; make sure that you order what you need

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 8th of November 2012 23.36. A report of the day's events and a suggestion for the next day.

It seems I managed to complete a great deal. This is a likely reference the trio of Intro 2, Verse 1B and Chorus 1B. I stress the importance of planning, which stands in contrast to the celebration of spontaneous composition of the day before. I was probably wary of composing something unfitting, which could have resulted in more time wasted.

The sole entry of the following day reads:

I composed a new part to Rebirth. A good day.

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 9th of November 2012.

The entry does not specify in any way what this new section is. However, it is referenced to as "a new part". I composed Verse 2 after Intro 2, but before SA's second part. Hence Verse 2 is a likely subject of this reference.

The next entry is dated Sunday 11th:

Next week's tasks

- *Compose Rebirth's missing parts as quickly as possible; no fine tuning! Then move on to work on Militarist.*

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 11th of November 2012. A direction for the coming week.

Saturday is left without a mention as I do not work then. On Sunday I planned the week before me. My intention was to finish SA as soon as possible and then move on to work on the next track of the album. I wanted to finish the album as quickly as possible.

The next week began with the following entry:

- Rebirth's bridge (and verse)

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 12th of November 2012. The task for the day.

I set out to compose a bridge and verse to the piece. The sections were to continue the piece and come after Verse 2 I finished in the previous week. At the end of the day I wrote:

Today I composed a continuation to Rebirth. A new melody, a new part, a good package of new material. It is tomorrow's challenge to grow it, to create variations, continuation, structure. Direction. The melody is good and strong, and it should be sowed to other songs as well.

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 12th of November 2012 22.15. A report of the day's events and suggestions for the next day.

It is necessary to make an educated guess as to what I am referring to. It is something new I am happy with, so it probably stuck to the piece. As the next section to be composed was the beginning of the second part of SA, this is likely a reference to its verse riff; Verse 3. However, it is also possible I am referring to a section no longer present in SA.

At times, I compose a section that does not fit the intended piece. This is the case with the last section of "Create", the sixth piece of the album, which I originally composed for SA. The section starts with a riff that goes through a series of permutations based on change in time signature: First 4/4, then 5/4 and finally 6/4. It also employs layering, starting without orchestrations or lead instruments that are added to the mix one by one. It is possible to listen to Create and the section described once Biographical is released.

The next day's entry reads:

I composed a new part, continuing from yesterday's idea. Now I have material, but now it

needs to be given a direction.

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 13th of November 2012. A report of the day's events.

Because of the inconclusive nature of the previous entry, we are once again faced with the two alternatives: The entry refers to Chorus 2 or to the section no longer present in SA. Regardless, the second sentence makes it seem I was not yet satisfied with what I had composed or the way it connected to SA's first part.

On the next day I wrote:

1. Update of Rebirth's structure

2. Fix the ending by composing

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 14th of November 2012. A list of tasks for the day.

This entry makes it seem I was unsatisfied with SA's structure. It is a possible reference to stylistic differences between the two parts of SA. It is worth keeping in mind the vision I detailed in *Planning document*. It seems likely I was still planning to finish the piece with a fast and aggressive bridge to the next track. This would explain the suggestion to "*Fix the ending by composing*".

At the end of the day I was seemingly frustrated with whatever progress I had made:

I need to act sensibly. The way I compose music - I must again conclude - is ineffective. First I need to create building blocks, of which I then compose an entire piece. Before that I must define what I will need.

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 14th of November 2012 21.48. An entry with conclusions of the day.

Here, my dissatisfaction with the material is evident. Perhaps the section composed was indeed the ending of Create, which I now seemed to abandon as unfit conclusion to SA. I had not defined my needs and ended up wasting two days on "*a building block*", pleasing, but ultimately useless in completing SA.

The next day began with the following entry:

- Bring together Rebirth's material

- make an inventory; what exists, what is needed

- compose

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 15th of November 2012. A list of tasks for the day.

After the failure perceived on the previous day, I start the morning by drawing this list of tasks. The first item is an attempt to make sense of the situation, the second to act upon the gathered information. I asked myself, “*What is still missing from the piece for it to serve its purpose?*” There may have been numerous “spare parts” lying around; leftovers from other pieces. It was my intention to be done with SA as quickly as possible to move on to the next track.

The next entry reports what came of the two tasks, written at the end of the day:

Progress in the composition front. The song (Rebirth) is now in two functioning parts. But how to connect them to each other? Or are they both parts of Rebirth?

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 15th of November 2012 22.29. A report of the day's events.

The entry mentions progress, but fails to describe its nature. Where did the second part come from? Was all of it composed on the same day? I seem to have been inconclusive as to how to proceed. Still, the second version of SA is dated 18th of November 2012, mere three days after this diary entry. The next Cubase session file is dated 26th of November 2012, a little over a week later. It contains the third and final version of SA (*Audio 2*).

In *Diagram 3*, I present a comparison of the second and third version of SA. As they share the first part, already presented in *Diagram 2*, the comparison features only the second part of the piece.

4:06	4:54	5:26	5:42	6:14	
Intro 3	Verse 3	Ch.2	Verse 3	Chorus2	Ot.2
4:06	4:54	5:26	5:42	6:14	
Intro 3	Verse 3	Ch.2	Verse 3	Chorus2	

DIAGRAM 3. Comparison of the two versions of SA's second part. The top one is from the second version dated 18th of November 2012, the bottom one from the third dated 26th of November 2012. The number after each section name is a version number (e.g. Intro 2 and 3); each version is composed of unique material. A letter after a version number refers to a variation of the version (e.g. Verse 1A and 1B). The number above each section name is when the section begins in the attached audio file. The width of each section is relative to its duration in quarter notes. Gray highlights sections that are common between all examined versions of SA. This version is listenable as attachment Audio 2.

4.1.3 Phase 3: Arrangement and finalization

After November 2012, I moved on to work on the next track of Biographical. It seems I was satisfied with SA, as there are no further entries related to its composition and the piece has remained unaltered to this day. However, there exists one final diary entry on the piece, written in January 2013.

4. *Self-Actualize*

EXCERPT FROM DIARY ENTRIES. Dated 9th of January 2013. An excerpt from a track list.

This is the first mention of SA with its final name, taken from a track list drawn that day. The change is due to a characteristic common among the track names of Biographical. Each is a verb that represents an action common to human existence: *Self-Actualize*, *Destroy* and *Create* have all been mentioned previously.

Later in 2013, having finished composing the album, I began to arrange and perfect the tracks one by one. This led to changes in structure of some pieces, but not in the case with SA. SA has segments with string and choir accompaniments. As they are not in a dominating role, they are mainly composed of long chords. I spent a lot of time optimizing the voice leading of these accompaniments, making sure they flowed fluently, with no drastic interval leaps. At the same time, I had to consider how to mix the final piece. For example, there were sections where distortion guitars used the same register as the choir, resulting in lack of definition. The solution was to change the register of one or both, which resulted in more clarity.

Another matter requiring optimization was that of the solos and lead segments of SA. Originally, the lead guitar segments of Verse 2 and Verse 3 were written to fit chord progressions laid out using other instruments. This was easy to do using the piano roll editor of Cubase. First, you display a chord's notes in the piano roll. You can use an existing choir section, for example. Second, you write the lead segment, being careful with "the wrong notes", placing blocks present in each chord on strong beats. Using a piano roll editor transforms a task such as this into an effortless, visual process.

Due to nature of the tools and methods used, composing and mixing SA were intertwined. The way I used virtual instruments gave me the ability to listen to the end result while still composing. On the other hand, setting up the session file with its virtual instruments and numerous adjustments necessary to make them work together, added a great deal to my workload.

The piece will be released with most of the virtual instruments in place, which is why I have avoided a lot of recording and mixing necessary in ordinary production processes of metal music. For example, had I recorded the distortion guitars segments myself, I would have had to go through a time consuming process of instrument practice, recording and mixing. Even then I might not have been able to match the standard of quality of the virtual guitar instruments utilized in SA.

4.2 Summary and Reflection

I have summarized the composition process of SA in three themes: *Intention and planning*, *Inspiration and hard work* and *Composition process and its methods*. Here I attempt to make sense of a complicated process, represented by the small body of documentation that is at times cryptic even for me.

To gain perspective on the narrative, I relate the themes to what other composers have written on their craft. My main references are Finnish composers *Joonas Kokkonen* and *Hannu Pohjannoro*, who have written on the subject matter in depth.

4.2.1 Intention and planning

The process of composing a piece can be so complex, steering it without a clear intention is hard and likely to end in disappointment. The conception, development and realization of an intention can be a long process. Hannu Pohjannoro writes about “*identity-idea*”, an intuitive conception of what belongs to a piece (Pohjannoro 2009, 15). He defines it as a group of mental images that define a piece’s identity. Pohjannoro reasons that an identity-idea can be born quickly, but the composition process following it can take months. (2009, 15.) Indeed, I never suffer of a shortage of ideas; their proper implementation is what takes most of the time.

In the case of SA, my intention was clear and concrete: I chose to compose a piece representing the growth of a timid young boy into an independent adult. This definition did not restrict me much, enabling me to work with sufficient freedom. In November 2012, I decided to rewrite the beginning of SA; a choice that did not conflict with my original intention. I merely redefined the musical representation.

Hannu Pohjannoro argues that an idea for a new piece is so flexible, it can be worked into many different pieces. He states intentions of a composer manifest as cultural meanings

in his pieces; that a piece of music is a cultural sentence. (Pohjannoro 2009, 11.) Truly, each piece is a product of its time, featuring a multitude of stigmatic characteristics.

Intention can lead to unexpected solutions. The end result is usually different from what a composer anticipated in the first place. If a solution serves the original intention, it is important to accept it as it is. Hannu Pohjannoro writes that when he is disappointed in his work, he does one of two things: He either goes back a few steps or just states that the piece is what it is (Pohjannoro 2009, 17). This is something I recognize in my work. For example, some of the diary entries examined have me guessing as to what purpose, if anything, a composed section can serve.

Planning is an extension of intention. It is a tool for ensuring the original intention survives and is present in every element of a piece. Without proper planning and its implementation, music, as a ship without a rudder, will not end up where intended. There are also times in my work when I plan too extensively or follow my plans too strictly. Music is a complex art form, which is why there is only so much planning can accomplish. It is as important to use intuition as rational thinking.

However, for some extremely detailed planning is the right method. For example, Roger Reynolds is educated in both engineering and music and plans all of his compositions in a diagrammatic fashion (Reynolds 2004, 174). Similarly, composers utilizing algorithmic composition methods (e.g. Cope 2001; Papadopoulos & Wiggins 1999) and those representing serialism represent extreme predetermination in music composition.

The attached *Planning document* displays some of my attempts to make sense of my intention, and how to manifest it as music. Detailed definition of the goal is an imperative part of any process. In the document, I describe a part called “2. *Aggression, defiance*”, which has a subsection termed “*a link to Militarist*”. This represents planning at a high level; that of the whole album. My intention was not just to compose one piece, but have it connect to other tracks of the album.

Goal setting was the most concrete method I used to manifest my original intention in music. Hannu Pohjannoro also confesses to set goals and write a diary as tools of helping him in his work (Pohjannoro 2009, 28). In four diary entries (8th, 12th, 14th and 15th of November 2012 in attachment *Diary entries*), I set one or more goals for the day. I did this in an effort to produce the right kind of material as efficiently as possible. Similarly, I wrote recommendations for the future in four diary entries (6th, 8th, 11th and 12th of November 2012). These recommendations were often based on success or failure experienced.

SA is reminiscent of program music, where an intention has a distinct extramusical source. Richard Wagner is one of the most prolific composers of program music. In his operas, he associated each character, event, or an idea with a theme. At first glance, this approach of intention-before-music can seem strange. However, I see it as no different from being inspired by everyday experiences: In both cases, music does not come first. As Joonas Kokkonen puts it, in its strictest sense, absolute music³ cannot exist because music originates from experiences (Kokkonen 1992, 168). It can even be argued that music always has some intention behind it; even if the intention is to play random notes on a piano. The key is difference between the two is that when composing program music, a composer is very aware of what he is writing about. It is the difference between the conscious and the subconscious.

4.2.2 Inspiration and hard work

In deciding to dedicate myself to composing, I work virtually every waking hour, regardless of whether I am at my desk or not. When I am engaged in an activity that has nothing to do with the composition work, my mind is still working with music: Considering different alternatives, producing new ideas and so forth. This is something that takes place without any conscious intervention. Where planning is an extension of intention, conscious effort is an extension of the subconscious. It is the subconscious that gives rise to inspiration; a marvelous idea or solution appears as if from nowhere, originating from deep within.

Joonas Kokkonen argues that only work brings inspiration (Kokkonen 1992, 165). While I find this statement somewhat extreme, as sometimes inspiration can come with little effort, there is a lot of truth to it. Beginning of November 2012 marked a time of great struggle for me. I had trouble producing music fitting my intention. After each difficult day, I did my best to offer myself guidance for the next day in an effort to keep moving forward.

Eventually the perseverance paid off on 7th of November 2012. Once I had something I recognized as viable, I worked hard on it and managed to move on with the process. The solution seemed to have been to work less systematically and let ideas flow. However, I am sure the effort of going through several unfit solutions had much to do with the success. The way I see it, hard work primes the subconscious to work on challenges: Inspiration strikes when the right solution is found.

³ Music that is not explicitly about anything.

It is imperative to have the means to take full advantage of inspiration. If a composer has not put in the years of effort necessary to learn his craft, no amount of inspiration will help him: You cannot write music if you do not know how. Joonas Kokkonen reflects that experiences of insight and inspiration are great moments of life (Kokkonen 1992, 166). When such a moment comes, it is best to be prepared for it.

Inspiration and hard work are parts of a whole. Hard work can lead to years of wasted effort if it is not guided by occasional moments of insight and inspiration. Work is like a fuel that gives no light or warmth without a spark. Inspiration is the spark which, without the fuel, is short-lived and futile. In the same vein, Joonas Kokkonen proposes that inspiration, technique, insight and skill should fuse into one (Kokkonen 1992, 168).

4.2.3 Composition process and its methods

Joonas Kokkonen states that the first prerequisite of the work of a composer is inner hearing (Kokkonen 1981, 51; 1992, 154). He is referring to the ability of hearing music in your head in fine detail, without any external sound source. For Kokkonen, this ability is the primary method of composing music. I consider this ability important to any composer, for there are no limits to a well-trained human imagination. With enough experience and practice, it is possible to imagine a whole rock band or an orchestra playing with great precision.

Premature commitment of an idea to a piece of paper or a computer program can limit its potential. When something is strictly defined, imagination tends to stop flowing. This is a mistake I made several times during the composition of SA. In my experience, most rock and metal musicians compose using their instruments, which can be limiting as well. If you work on musical ideas by playing an instrument, you are restricted by its features and limitations. However, the same characteristics can result in inspiration and new discoveries as well.

The way I composed SA had its advantages and disadvantages. By using such a system built of virtual instruments, I had a realistic and accurate representation of the music while composing. Once music was committed to my computer in MIDI format, it was very easy to manipulate using the Cubase sequencer. On the other hand, the system took a lot of time to implement and at times worked as a distraction.

Writing notes on paper bears little relevance to my way of composing. To Hannu Pohjannoro, however, working on paper is a necessity. He confesses to be a composer, who writes notes (Pohjannoro 2009, 19). In the end, I think the medium chosen for storing and manipulating musical information does not matter if it permits sufficient detail. Each MIDI

note I entered in Cubase during the composition of SA had its own timing, pitch, velocity (dynamic level) and a host of other qualities. Each composer has to figure out, what methods and media suit him and his music best. It is also wise to acknowledge, what your composition process is like and experiment with it.

In his doctorate, Yrjö Heinonen presents a seven phase model of composition process. Internalization of models (1) is a process a composer has to go through to have the knowledge and skill required by the composition process. Preparation (2) encompasses the setting of a specific goal, its study and the search for information required to complete the goal. Maturing (3) is subconscious processing of the goal. Insight (4) marks the unexpected appearance of an idea or solution. Inspiration (5) is a state of being where ideas rise effortlessly to the consciousness. Verification (6) takes place when a composer evaluates products of the former phases consciously and logically. The final phase is communication (7), where the composition is in some way made auditory, so that others can listen to it. (Heinonen 1995, 15-25.)

To my experience and knowledge, these phases overlap extensively. In composing SA, I learned a great deal during the process, which is why learning was present all along the process. Same was true for goal setting and subconscious processing. Insight, inspiration and verification were necessary in every phase of the work. Even communication took place in every stage of the process, due to virtual instruments enabling me to play composed material to myself and others. However, considerably more communication took place at the end of the process than at its beginning, when preparation was central. Similar trends may be present in other facets as well. It is also possible to see this model as representing each single phase of SA's composition process: Each phase was a process of its own with requirements for learning, goal setting and the other activities.

5 CONCLUSION

The goal of this thesis was to construct a chronological narrative of the composition process of “Self-Actualize” and reflect upon it. I based the narrative on documentation of the process, featuring diary entries and audio files, which I supplemented with my memories where necessary. Then I summarized the process and reflected upon it. In doing so, I related my findings to writings by composers of classical music tradition.

Examination of the documentation proved that I set goals for the composition process that were congruent with a well-defined intention; a clear idea of what the end result should be like. It is apparent from the examined diary entries that I did a lot of planning to keep the piece in line with the original intention. Similarly, the diary entries demonstrate how I made an effort to learn from failures and keep moving forward. Eventually, the failures led to successes.

In comparing the composition process to writings by composers of classical music tradition, I discovered similarities and differences. The importance of a well-defined intention was promoted by one composer. Another composer stated that inspiration can originate only from hard work, which is supported by the examined process. On the other hand, the composers seemed to favor inner hearing and sheet music as their main tools in composition, whereas I composed using computer software. Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses: Traditional methods do not require sophisticated technology, but a great deal of imagination from a composer; on the other hand, the preparation of my tools took a lot of time, but proved itself a reliable method of intertwining listening and composing.

I compared the process to a composition process model of Yrjö Heinonen. It was not difficult to locate each phase of the model in the process. However, the phases intertwined and each appeared in multiple parts of the process. Composition process of SA was so complex that it cannot be described by one model alone.

These findings were not surprising to me. After all, classical composers function largely under the same conditions as I, limited by capabilities of the human mind. In the end, one of the most important elements in successful composition seems to be the will to persevere. It resulted in a breakthrough in composing SA and has been proven essential by numerous hard-working composers, such as Bach and Beethoven.

The thesis concentrated on what on one composer and on the process of composing one piece. It was qualitative in nature and the documentation examined was limited. Thus the results cannot be generalized and can only be examined as they truly are: A glimpse into how a piece came to be. However, this glimpse demonstrates how the act of composition has universal qualities to it.

I recommend that in the future more composers examine their work using different methods. Reflection is an opportunity for learning and growth, and if its fruit is shared, then it can benefit many. At very least, this sharing can show composers, who tend to work alone, how universal music and its creation ultimately are.

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APPENDIX

Planning document

The entries were translated from Finnish by the author. The last entry is preceded by a timestamp using the format of YYMMDD.

4 - Rebirth

Main theme

- pulsating, energetic
- positive
- virile

1. A new beginning

- life force
- great potential
- creation

2. Aggression, defiance

- strong contrast to the positivity of the first part
 - also energetic, but in a rageful way
- a link to Militarist
 - problematic because the song is still very unfinished
 - I could create something that is repeated in Militarist
 - take new ideas from the ending of The Others and have them slowly transform into something new that you will then use in Militarist

PARTS

1. Intro
2. Verse
3. Chorus

4. Solo

5. Chorus

6. Verse 2

7. Bridge

- quieter, arpeggios (Queen - I want it All)

8. Verse (same theme continues, but varied, modulated, as more aggressive, stronger)

9. Verse 2

- based on the first chorus, but

- a different key

- contains fast machine-like rhythms

- not as symmetrical

121114

- the current overall atmosphere of the second part is too placid

- could start in a placid way, but then change more stark, aggressive

- the introduction of a beautiful melody earlier in the song

Diary entries

The entries were translated from Finnish by the author. Each entry is preceded by a timestamp using the format of YYMMDD.

121103

I'm really trying to write a melody worthy of Rebirth, but for now without results. It feels like I'm trying to climb a tree ass first. I need to try new ways.

121106

- composition: Rebirth

- beautiful, delicate, frail guitar melody, to which a counter voice appears after a few repetitions, that harmonizes partly, partly plays its own thing; becomes little by little into more courageous, developing into a strong, faster riff, which has the original melody in major and/or in some other way altered; this then develops into the existing chorus

- task: melody/riff, its different development phases, riffs, all the way until the chorus

- take care that the new beginning fits the chorus

1146

I composed a decent melody, but, but. I am stuck. I want to begin the song with a simple melody, which is challenging. In addition, at times I'm trying to think of the main melody of Wintersun's Sons of Winter and Stars, which makes it even harder for me. Realize that there is no limit to alternatives!

1245

Today, when starting to compose Rebirth's beginning, I made a mistake of which I must learn. It was not the song's main melody, its dominating theme! I must bring it to this world, because all else has to be based on it.

2311

Now the day is over. The composition still did not go well. I wasted the morning because I tried to compose the song's beginning; something held back, timid. I should have focused on the main theme.

I also had problems because I'm having trouble directing myself to specific emotional states "artificially". Perhaps I could try using "chordal carpets", arpeggios and other atmosphere generating elements? They could create the right kind of vibes that lead to the right kind of music.

121107

This morning I had the first clear success in composition in some time. In the morning I began with the idea that I will compose whatever comes to me without critical thinking. I created a nice idea that I crafted into a fitting beginning for Rebirth.

121108

- composition

- first 25 minutes of planning the structure and the contents of the song
- work on Rebirth's beginning (fuse the rhythm guitars into the lead)
- fuse the beginning's theme into the vocabulary of the song; create a possible continuation for all

- MOVE QUICKLY

2336

Now Rebirth functions quite nicely, that is, its first half. Tomorrow I will start hammering away at its latter half.

- recommendation: when you create something new tomorrow, plan first; make sure that you order what you need

121109

I composed a new part to Rebirth. A good day.

121111

Next week's tasks

- Compose Rebirth's missing parts as quickly as possible; no fine tuning! Then move on to work on Militarist.

121112

- Rebirth's bridge (and verse)

2215

Today I composed a continuation to Rebirth. A new melody, a new part, a good package of new material. It is tomorrow's challenge to grow it, to create variations, continuation, structure. Direction. The melody is good and strong, and it should be sowed to other songs as well.

121113

I composed a new part, continuing from yesterday's idea. Now I have material, but now it needs to be given a direction.

121114

1. Update of Rebirth's structure
2. Fix the ending by composing

2148

I need to act sensibly. The way I compose music - I must again conclude - is ineffective. First I need to create building blocks, of which I then compose an entire piece. Before that I must define what I will need.

121115

- Bring together Rebirth's material
 - make an inventory; what exists, what is needed
- compose

2229

Progress in the composition front. The song (Rebirth) is now in two functioning parts. But how to connect them to each other? Or are they both parts of Rebirth?

130109

4. Self-Actualize