

Anybardinthegrass wakes up from a dream with no memory. The dream is still reverberating as eyes are opened, revealing a heatherfield, ears filled with a voice on a loop: “.. remember to sing to *beep* to ..”. A longing arises, an urge to fill the memory gap, to be transported, to communicate. From a platform on the field, Anybard takes off to a village called Stem, while recording a message - a memo - to the unknown recipient Deleted. The idea of writing a musical comes up; vague glimpses of people, feelings and songs start to connect. With the memo and the musical as recording devices, Anybard undergoes a transformation in which both the sense of identity and time itself seem to become erratic (and undone). Later (earlier?), the possibility of a true connection arises, as the character Companion shows up, confronting Anybard with what is forgotten in re-remembering.

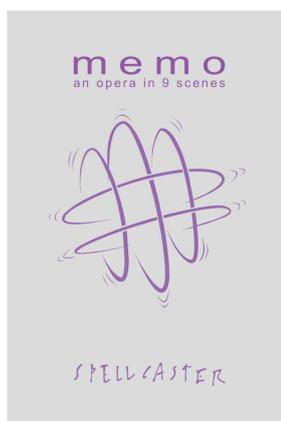
The 18th of March 2022 marks the release of the multi-platform and multi-format release *memo* by **Spellcaster**, an opera in 9 scenes. Presented by **Anyines** and **Forlaget Virkelig**, it is released as a digital album and a book containing the opera's libretto, a download link for the album and illustrations by musician and visual artist Oliver Laumann.

The twelve songs of the album offer a hybrid of curious digital orchestra music, electronic manipulations and wide synths, silences and cuts, emotional pianos, wavy soundscapes and game-like sound effects, all held together by the delicate pop sensibility of the sung narrative. It is as though the sonics insists on being both straightforward pop/rock, field recording and arbitrary music drama all at once - defying easy categorization. The idea of *signals* is also investigated, weaving sonics inspired by functional sounds such as alarms, mechanical beeps and contemporary sound design into the fabric, using them as motifs for the central theme of communication.

In *memo*, it is by way of intimately recorded, yet sonically abundant *voice memos* that the story of Anybardinthegrass is told. The premise of the initial memory loss (as well as the title) reveals quickly and effectively the conceptual engine of the piece: memory, its volatile nature, and the ambiguity of forgetting and remembering. Anybards' singing becomes intertwined with the intricate strings of time, those that make up the fabric of introspection and the fleeting sense of selfhood. It is heartfelt yet humorous, riveting yet tender, as Anybard undergoes this instance of 'not getting the memo'. The fine-gridded character of this wide emotional spectrum translates both into the opera's aural and narratological dimensions, as well as those pertaining to vibe, altogether forging the spiritual tactility of *memo*.



Digital album cover



Book-cover

The entire narrative of *memo* exists within the frame of a message being recorded. The message is paradoxically both received, sent and recorded within the narrative - within *itself*. In a sense, Anybard *becomes* the message, also being transported between two points in spacetime, and is created or recreated (recorded) in the process. This narrative structure points to another central theme of the piece, that of temporality. Time manipulations/mutations disintegrates linear time, suggesting instead fluidity, multiplicity, parallelity. Evidently, both the story and how it is conveyed, borrows central ideas from the field of quantum physics; those of *entanglement*, *many worlds interpretation* and the *observer effect*:

“i try to focus on the gap / but when i get near / my vision is blocked / something in the way” (from the song Deleted, memo scene 1)

memo is a sequel to *Inventory* (Visage, 2019), Spellcaster's critically praised debut-album, where Anybard is first introduced. Both works are parts of a larger context, the musical drama series *mem.mel.#9* : an ongoing format for coherent dramatic works, aiming for an exploratory, accessible and timely/timeless music, concerned with questions and interconnections of narrative, temporality, music and communality. Where *Inventory* was the song collection of Anybard, the character-sheet almost, *memo* is the real time gameplay of the character. The songs of *Inventory* end up being critical to the narrative of *memo*, as they function as a "past" (both in and outside of the narrative), helping to piece together the fleeting memory of Anybard: *"the dream made me remember my songs! / the inventory, distorting time in the bundle / from where i sent a message / oh wow.. this is that message, right?"* (from the song *arrival in Stem*, *memo* scene 6)



Recall, single-cover and double-spread, marking the intermission of the opera (*memo* p. 16-17)

Thus, as a function of the larger context of *mem.mel.#9*, former strands of the opus are alluded to throughout *memo*, such as when Anybard describes: *"i think of myself as a character i have created / to sing within a scenery, to invent my memory"* (from the song *transport theme*, scene 3). Here the idea of a narratological machine or agent is presented, be it a character or a plot developer, acting upon the environment of its own existence, assuming and questioning its own making and properties of belonging, by externalizing a similar fabrication: a character inventing a character in order to realize their own characterization. There are reasons to read the works of Spellcaster, of hartvig, of Anybard, of Deleted and so on, as interconnected and subsumed within each other, a playful fact that Spellcaster comments on, names even, on *Inventory*: *"Quantum drama is the thing"* (from the song *Driftwood*). The intentional meta-connections allow for the merge of reality and fiction, offering a way to interpret the promise of *memo*'s ending: *"create roleplay musical (...) the memory melody 9 (...) mycelium structure chosen"*

As the collapse of the subject emerges and demarcations between the levels of storytelling are shattered, the realization, in *memo*, of those paradoxically coexisting worlds becomes a matter of communality, of experience being shared, recorded and recollected. This understanding is catalyzed by an external view upon the subject, provided by Companion, played by performing artist Lydia Ö. Diakité, the only feature on the album. Companion confronts the narcissism of Anybards' way of understanding the situation, allowing for the arrival at the essential question: What is memory if not shared? A question that equally applies to creation, stories, music (space, power, wealth etc.). To remember, to sing is fulfilled in listening (*beep*); in sharing:



Announcement of the musical 'melo' in Stem (*memo* p. 8)

"Music should be able to move other dimensions than sound."
Companion, on the song *flicker*, *memo* scene 8

Spellcaster is a music project by composer holger hartvig. As part of both the pioneering and critically acclaimed groups **Synd og Skam** and **LOL Beslutning**, as well as in the ensembles **Brynje** and **boli group**, hartvig has long been practicing a daring and unconventional approach to composing and producing. Through numerous involvements in music and collaborations in the fields of art, performing arts and soundtrack, hartvig has since the early 2010s been known as an intriguing voice on the frontier of the Copenhagen underground scene.



The release of *memo* is split between two actors operating at the vanguard of new literature and music respectively. With the album, Spellcaster joins Anyines' diverse roster of artists and idiosyncratic releases in formats ranging from sheet music to scents. The book is released by Forlaget Virkelig, as a part of Bestiarium, a book series dedicated to experimental literature and worldbuilding. The album and the book co-exist in partnership as a *listen-and-read-along* experience, or may be explored as disengaged autonomous artifacts. This complex of entangled simultaneity reflects, also on a format-level, the multiple-world theme at play in the opera, orbiting as discrete entities, split yet bound.



ALBUM:

https://soundcloud.com/memmel9/sets/memo/s-ZgJuTBEXfCx?utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing

Private link for press only

BOOK EXCERPT:

https://www.mediafire.com/file/rw9erqb7nf9v3u0/memo_-_scene_6.pdf/file

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