

“An electric feeling”

I've been a participant in 2016 and 2017 and a volunteer in 2018, 2019, and it was my first Ethno in 2016. I saw a band, Varlden's band at Rich Mix, and they were a mixture of people from all around. And they told me - we met on Ethno camps. So I looked up Ethno and I found Ethno England. It was really from the start an amazing experience. I was on a cloud for a week after that. That was probably one of my best weeks of my life, that first Ethno England was amazing.

Since my first Ethno I made a lot of new friends and I joined this European folk network, and I went to lots of other Ethnos, and the course of my life changed a bit. I suppose maybe it became my life a bit in a way, not entirely. Now the plan is always: right, which

Ethnos am I going to do this summer? Now I'm in Tübingen because I met people on Ethno and I've ended up here, I have all these different connections around the place. I've worked with all these musicians in my own music project. Now I have an international band with a lineup in Ghent, lineup in Tübingen and now connections in Slovenia, because Ethno England opened all these doors and possibilities. The main things about my experience at Ethno that made

changes in my life were meeting all the people that I wanted to play music with and stay in touch with. That's what it's about. The best thing is finding a community that I felt really accepted and really a part of. I feel like I found my crew, you know, my people.

Since joining this, I've really found people I feel at home with.

That's my other main reason probably to go on Ethnos, to learn the songs. I'm always growing the repertoire every Ethno with new songs. I have a few Ethno songbooks with the lyrics and the chords. And now I can read in different languages, you know, how to read their letters, their way of pronunciation. And the method of

learning by ear and teaching by ear, this is the method that I would use to teach songs to my bandmates and to learn songs off other people. It was probably my natural method to do things anyway, Ethno maybe solidified it.



I remember teaching Dacw 'Nghariad iY, the Welsh folk song and everyone singing, listening and repeating, and I don't think I'd ever taught a song before, or taught workshop, that was really nice. That concert was such a good feeling - the acoustic concert in Tandem Festival - it was a really good feeling, a really... electric feeling. So I took all that with me, I think. Forever.

I wanted to share my own culture, so I went off and tried to learn more Welsh folk songs and also some songs from my grandmother, as well as some of the Yiddish, and Hebrew and Russian songs from my grandmother. I now know some more Welsh folk songs, which I didn't know before 2016. I probably only knew the really famous ones like Sosban Fach and Ar Lan y Môr maybe and I don't know Ar Lan Y Môr more probably. I learned Dacw 'Nghariad from a book in order to teach it on the Ethno. It was nice to teach the Welsh song and explain what the words mean and then everyone's, you know, listening and singing along in Welsh. You realize you're quite lucky with having that [ability to speak Welsh]. It makes me more appreciative of Welsh folk and Welsh language, Welsh songs. And I did do some sessions with my grandmother before she died, learning some songs off of her. I just recorded her singing it and she told me the translation.

It's really nice to perform those songs. And it's nice to go back to her after Ethno, because we always did this anyway, but then after Ethno to realise what it is that I have with her that I took for granted and then it's pretty cool to teach one of her songs in Ethno. When she died, my brother and I were on Ethno Portugal and we got a phone call that she'd died while we were there, and so we sang a song that she taught us with the group. (The song was Kol ha'o lam kolor, which we later sang at her funeral).

I like when I get in a flow, a creative flow and at Ethno, it happens, you get in the creative flow, and you get disinhibited and you can just go for it. You learn to be really in the moment and you feel good about life and you stop worrying about things so much and then it also puts things in perspective.

I remember in the first Ethno England, we arranged the songs

together because it was a small group, we all had a lot of input in the arrangement. And that was how I thought it was. And then in the second one - and then a third one more so - the leaders didn't really like if I would chip in too much with ideas, mainly because it's a bigger group and not everyone can arrange the whole thing. Sometimes it's harder for me to be in the



background. It's about learning to take a back seat and not having to be in control too much, and I learned that. They sometimes can happen these feelings of tension with leaders. (Or I could say: sometimes I experienced feelings of tension with the leaders, but that's no criticism of them, it's that I sometimes am unsure whether it's appropriate to push a

creative idea or not, or I find it hard to drop an idea. And I don't just mean my ideas; I could also be trying to support someone else's idea)

Being on Ethno actually made me realise that I should actually get another job as well as music. You meet all these great musicians and they have other jobs. And it

makes me think, wow, that's a really cool job - what do I want to do? I've realised that what I really like about doing music is the Ethno thing and playing. I don't want to do the music industry because I've been to talks about music industry and I really don't like it. It's just a big turnoff. It's good to have other things to feed the music for me.

Well, I remember another participant telling me his story, how he came from Eritrea to UK. It really is crazy what some people have to go through. It made me think that his story should be told somehow. It just makes you think, and it makes me think that what we're doing on Ethno, I think it's really positive for the world. We do the music because it's fun and sometimes I thought, am I being selfish? But with Ethno, I think, actually, no, we have a really positive message that we're sharing, it's not all totally frivolous. That made me feel better about doing what I'm doing and made me really happy with that. Now I realise now I don't really care about that [getting on the radio/ being successful] because I have a community of friends who love to sing these songs [that I wrote] and know them and so I don't need to be rich and successful with it. You just do this, it's good for the sake of it.

As told to: Lauren

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