ultima oslo contemporary music festival on nature 10–19 september 2015
**Tuesday 10 September**

**10:00** — Edvard Munch Secondary

**Interactive installation created by pupils**

**11:00** — Loftet

**Park Sound and light environment in Ekeberg**

From 20:30 — Ekeberg Park

**Installation on online culture and Media theorist Wolfgang Ernst**

Trond Reinholdtsen and Ole-Henrik Ultima Academy

Nils Petter Molvær Lucid Dream

Oslo Philharmonic Turangalîla-Symphonie

Elisabeth Vatn The Color Beneath (WP)

**19:00** — Oslo Concert Hall

**18:30** — Ekeberg Park

**Opera & Ballet**

**17:00** — The Norwegian National

**Plus Minus Ensemble**

**16:00** — Kulturhuset

**Piano studies with Ian Pace, piano**

Turangalîla-Symphonie Concordia Discors, Études (WP)

Ultima Academy

Alexander Schubert

Anders K. Krabberød's Short History

Ultima Academy

Terry Fox The Labyrinth Scored for Elin Mar Øyen Vister Røster III (WP)

**Installation opening and concert**

Henry James of Curlew's and Kork / Ensemble asamisimasa

Henry James of Curlew's and Kork / Ensemble Aksiom

Trio ClariNord

**SATURDAY 13 SEPTEMBER**

**11:00** — Riksscenen

**New opera by Icelandic composer Nanna Dóra Sólow in the company of Kork**

**12:00** — Loftet

**Anders Tveit & Parallax**

ibi Ibrahim (WP)

**21:00** — Kulturkirken Jakob

**20:00** — Riksscenen

**Illustrated talk on the history of Groupe de Recherche de Musique CONTEMPORAINE (GRMC)**

François Bonnet Live Jukebox

Matthijs Schröder / Alexander Schubert / Philip Menu Ensemble

**SATURDAY 13 SEPTEMBER**

**11:00** — Riksscenen

**Chamber works**

**12:00** — Loftet

**Recorderplayer performs Ansgar Beste**

**21:00** — Dansens Hus

**and her own music**

**12:00** — Loftet

**22:00** — Venue will be announced at the door:

**FRIDAY 16 SEPTEMBER**

**21:00** — Dansens Hus

**and hatred of women**

**21:00** — Kulturkirken Jakob

**Guitar duo premiere new works**

**20:00** — Riksscenen

**New opera by Icelandic composer Nanna Dóra Sólow in the company of Kork**

**19:00** — Black Box Teater

**20:00** — Deichmanske bibliotek

**Distant Voices**

**20:00** — Deichmanske bibliotek

**21:00** — Dansens Hus

**Distant Voices**

**22:00** — Venue will be announced at the door:
1. **ATELIER NORD ANX**  
   Olaf Ryes plass 9, 0555 Oslo  
   www.ateliernord.no

2. **BLACK BOX TEATER**  
   Marstrandgata 8, 0566 Oslo  
   www.blackbox.no

3. **BLÅ**  
   Brenneveien 39, 0160 Oslo  
   www.blao.no

4. **DIANCENS HUS**  
   Møllerveien 2, 0182 Oslo  
   www.dansenshus.com

5. **DEICHMANSKE BIBLIOTEK**  
   Arne Garborgs plass 4, 0179 Oslo  
   www.deichman.no

6. **DEICHMANSKE BIBLIOTEK AVD GRÜNERLØKKA**  
   Schous plass 10, 0552 Oslo  
   www.deichman.no/filial/grunerlokka

7. **DEN NORSKE OPERA & BALLETT**  
   Kirsten Flagstads plass 1, 0150 Oslo  
   www.operaen.no

8. **EDVARD MUNCH SECONDARY SCHOOL**  
   Ullevålsveien 5, 0165 Oslo  
   www.edvardmunch.vgs.no

9. **EKEBERG PARK**  
   Kongsveien 23, 0193 Oslo  
   www.ekebergparken.com

10. **HENIE ONSTAD ARTS CENTER**  
   Sonja Henies vei 7, 1311 Høvikodden  
   www.hok.no

11. **KANONHALLEN**  
   Peter Møllers vei 2, 0585 Oslo  
   www.kanonhallen.no

12. **KULTURKIRKEN JAKOB**  
    Kirkeveien 2, 0564 Oslo  
    www.jakobnoer.kirke

13. **KULTURHUSET**  
    Youngstorget 3, 0181 Oslo  
    www.kulturhusetioslo.no

14. **MAJORSTUEN CHURCH, KAPELLET**  
    Kirkeveien 8, 0564 Oslo  
    www.oslo.kirken.no/majorstuen

15. **NASJONAL JAZZSCENE**  
    Karl Johans gate 35, 0160 Oslo  
    www.nasjonaljazzscene.no

16. **NORWEGIAN ACADEMY OF MUSIC (NWM)**  
    Slemdalsveien 11, 0363 Oslo  
    www.nmh.no

17. **NY MUSIKK**  
    Platougt. 18, 0160 Oslo  
    www.nyemusikk.no

18. **OCN: The Office for Contemporary Art Norway**  
    Nedre gate 7, 0555 Oslo  
    www.oca.no

19. **OSLO CATHEDRAL**  
    Karl Johans gate 11, 0154 Oslo  
    www.oslodomkirke.no

20. **OSLO CONCERT HALL**  
    Munkedamsveien 14, 0156 Oslo  
    www.oslokonserthus.no

21. **OSLO CONCERT HALL, BONDEUNGDOMSLAGET I OSLO**  
    Rosenkrantzgt 8, 0159 Oslo  
    www.bul.no

22. **PARKTEATRET**  
    Olaf Ryes plass 11, 0552 Oslo  
    www.parkteatret.no

23. **RIKSSCENEN**  
    Trendhemveien 9, 0560 Oslo  
    www.riksscenen.no

24. **TEATERSALEN, BONDEUNGDOMSLAGET I OSLO**  
    Rosenkrantzgt 8, 0159 Oslo  
    www.bul.no

25. **TEKNIK MUSEUM**  
    Kjelsåsveien 143, 0491 Oslo  
    www.tekniskmuseum.no

26. **UNIVERSITETETS AULA**  
    Karl Johans gate 47, 0160 Oslo  
    www.uio.no/fm/fram/omrader/sentrum/se02/

27. **UNIVERSITETES GAMLE FESTIVAL**  
    Karl Johans gate 47, 0160 Oslo  
    www.uio.no/om/kultur/aulaen/

28. **VULKAN ARENA**  
    Maridalsveien 19 b, 0178 Oslo  
    www.vulkanarena.no

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**Tickets**

Billettservice sells tickets for most concerts which do not have free entry.  
Visit www.billettservice.no. Tel: 815 33 133.

Tickets purchased from Billettservice can be collected from Posten, Post i butikk, Narvesen or 7Eleven. Tickets  
may also be purchased on the door at each individual event.  
Also find links to buy tickets at www.ultima.no.

For ticket prices, see details accompanying each event. Full price is stated  
first, followed by discounts for students OAPs and unemployed.

NB! Sold out!  
Arrive in good time, as events can sell out.  
We advise collecting tickets in advance and turning up early as concerts will  
begins on time.
Music is closely related to the natural sciences, both in the way it’s conceived and perceived. Ever since the Stone Age, physics, psychology, astronomy and biology have inspired humans to create music, just as they do today.

Whether it’s technological inventions that enable us to explore acoustic principles, psycho-acoustic research, the overwhelming grandeur of space, speculations about mankind’s place and function in the cosmos, or simply a majestic elk in the sunset: Man’s encounter with nature is the starting point for reflection and wonderment—and art plays an important part in that.

This year’s Ultima Festival is the twenty-fifth in a row, so we’ve searched the archives and sifted through programmes and other documentation, starting with the very first festival in 1991. This has resulted in an anniversary book, *Ultima 25*, being published to coincide with the opening of the festival.

There have been so many changes in the world over the last twenty-five years, which are naturally reflected in a festival determined to present new musical trends and ideas. While many things are different in comparison with the launch year of 1991, Ultima has been as open-minded and avant-garde as ever.

“Thanks are due to so many people. Seventeen institutions constitute the Ultima organization, and each year they contribute with resources and know-how that provide the means for an opulent international festival. Their contributions are inestimable. But they are not alone. In the midst of Ultima’s history there is a bunch of wonderful people. Hard-working people who know how to think out of the box, talented, sensitive and strong people, knowledgeable, funny and critical, all at once. Be it the performers and composers from all over the world, producers, managers, volunteers, writers, or our enthusiastic audiences. Each of them make up Ultima’s backbone. These people invest hours and hours of work to fulfill their dreams and musical ambitions, in most case without any monetary return or glamour. As I’ve been thumbing through the festival programmes from the last twenty-five years, I have been struck by an insight: More than anything else, Ultima has been a celebration of the individual, of humanity in all its nuances.”

John Persen, the first leader of Ultima, died on 12 December 2014. This is what Halvor Fjermeros writes about him in *Norsk biografisk leksikon*: "When a journalist reminded Persen of an interview from the 1970s where he had characterized the Marxist folk-group Vennmåll Speillmannaslag as one of the most reactionary aspects of Norway, he said: ‘Whatever political strength music has is embedded in its ability to form a new consciousness, open new doors of insight, not in singing songs or painting pictures that only serve to reassure the left. Art cannot change the world. It can only change the people who contribute to change in the world’.”

Ever restless, John Persen left a profound mark in Norway’s art world. He was essential to Ultima as well. Thus we are pleased to present the first Norwegian performance of his work *Mot Kalde Vinder (Against Cold Winds)* as part of the opening of this year’s Ultima festival.

After the success of the first festival in 1991, *Aftenposten* critic Idar Karevold wrote, ‘…to have any effect, an effort within this field has to be constant. In the pursuit of art, there is no such thing as a golden apple, a one-time prize. Only unending perseverance will lead to results. It’s the endurance that counts.’

We look forward to the road ahead.
Free
Outside Oslo Konserthus
synthesizer and a Roland TR-808 drum
recorder, a four voice Korg MonoPoly
‘I had just bought an eight track tape
Kjøtt) says this about his cooperation
at Notam and former guitar player with
electronic music. Jøran Rudi (researcher
6 7
John Persen wanted 1300 lit tealights in the
venue, but the fire department put its foot
Persen wanted 1300 lit tealights in the
venue, but the fire department put its foot

Around 2000, environmental scientists began speculating that
the earth had entered a new geological era, one they called
the Anthropocene. This means that human activity around
the planet is now influencing every aspect of the Earth as
much as the forces of nature have done for billions of years.
Almost all of Earth’s ecosystems now bear the marks of human
presence and alteration.

What does this have to do with music, and specifically a
contemporary music festival in northern Europe?7
Thinking about one distinct age of humanity reminds us,
soberingly, that our tenure on the planet is a historical blip.
There have been many ages of Earth, each lasting millions of
year, and there will be human-free areas in the future. In
the light of this knowledge, how can art represent concepts
that hold true for all the geological ages of Earth, not just
our own? In this context the idea of an art form governed by
natural laws, not only human emotions, begins to make sense.

Music is precisely such an art form. Strip it back to its
elements, beyond the popular tune, the great symphonic
development, the tribal beat hammered on a log, and it’s an
acoustical system with properties governed by the physics of
the universe. When any music – from Bach to Stockhausen
– aspires to the ‘cosmic’, it takes its structure and organising
principles from nature’s arithmetic. It can mirror us even
as profound ways, but it is not the same type of experience
as a work of romantic self-expression.

The music of composers such as Robert Ashley, Herman
Vogt, James Dillon and Mathias Spahlinger, or the choreog-
phy of Jan Martens, often employs systems or sets of laws
which must be followed. It could be as simple as giving two
people a pattern of hand clapping they must follow, or two
electronic pulses that oscillate in and out of synchronisation.
The outcomes of such systems may be either predictable or
unpredictable. Composers don’t ‘write’, with all the predes-
tination that implies, but create conditions in which sonic
results may grow and change. It’s almost more helpful to think
of it as gardening or land cultivation than composing in the
traditional sense.

But systems can become far more complex. Gerard Grisey’s
massive percussion work Le Noir de l’étoile (1990) emulates
the repetitive signals from pulsars, the demes residues of
long-dead supernovas whose pulsations are some of the most
ancient audible patterns in the universe. The six percusion-
ists of Pinquins will surround the audience, placing them
at the gravitational centre of a sonic black hole. Audience
and performers are literally plunged into the black during
Georg Friedrich Haas’s In viam (2009), a deeply searching
examination of hope and futility where, in the words of critic
Alex Ross, ‘a new kind of beauty seems ready to come into
the world, but in the light of day it falters, and we end up back
where we started’.

We often think of science and nature as opposed, even as
mutual enemies. But Renaissance education placed music
alongside mathematics, geometry and astronomy, part of the
‘quadrivium’ of natural sciences. Study of the fundamental
laws of nature lay at the core of civilisation’s knowledge,
and music, with its harmonic ratios and precise mathematical
coincidences between combinations of notes, as well as its
existence in time and (acoustic) space.

In 2015, as we float in the backwash from a century of
atonal revolutions in contemporary music and attempt to see
where things are heading next, there are plenty of musicians
and composers concerned with similar curiosity about music
and its relationship with natural laws. On top of that, there are
developments in neuroscience, with increasing understanding
of how music affects the brain. Composers such as Mathias
Shlomowitz, Mathias Spahlinger, Alexander Schubert, Robin
Fox and others play with extreme audio-visual stimulation,
synaesthesia, or devise ways for neural electricity to affect
the outcome of music. And as the full implications of the
Anthropocene become clearer, there is the environmental
and ecological aspect of nature to consider. The scenario in
UR, a new opera by Anna Thorvaldsdottir, features the last
survivors of the human race clustering together at the melting
Greenland ice cap. Conservation extends into the realm of
musical languages and tools, also: the extraordinary percus-
sive music of American Harry Partch was made for a unique
set of instruments to his own design. Without expensive and
complex conservation programmes such as that one carried
out by Ensemble Musikfabrik, who have built an entirely new
set of these endangered instruments, Partch’s music would
eventually become as extinct as the dodo.

Composers can still celebrate the marvels of being in nature
itself. In Lucid Dream, Nils Petter Molvær will send wanderers
into the sculpture park at Ekeberg through a wondrous forest
landscape transfigured by light, colour and sound. Nature
permutes Oyvind Torvund’s music in numerous ways – he has
previously copied the song of birds and used antique nature
engravings as a visual accompaniment. His new commission
Idyllic Scenes / Nightlife imagines ‘the origins of music’, with
primal organic sounds rising from the depths of nature, grad-
ually cultivated as they are shaped into phrases and melodies.’

Jon Ólafsdóttir, who has two pieces performed this year, often
titles his works with the strange names of remote forests and lakes around Oslo such as Gimilen where he likes to hike. These are echoes of the way nature — in the limited sense of the picturesque or frightening landscape — has always been a major inspiration for music right back to the classical era of Haydn’s Seasons and Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony.

The biologist Roger Payne, whose album of underwater recordings, The Song of the Humpback Whale, was a surprise new age hit when it was released in 1970, believed whales had evolved a musical syntax as intricate as the most advanced human music. The microphone and the recorder have extended the human ear into the domain of nature as never before. American electronic duo Matmos, who perform Robert Ashley’s TV opera Perfect Lives (1978–83) in Oslo, included the sounds of ‘crayfish neural tissue’ in their earliest recordings. Pierre Schaeffer, pioneer of musique concrète in the late 1940s, was the first to perceive how the sounds of objects, natural sounds and speech could be used as a new musical syntax and alphabet. Once this sound barrier had been broken, the floodgates were open to a mass of music making in composition, sound art and various forms of popular music, utilising found sounds. The direct continuation of Schaeffer’s research, including Bernard Parmegiani’s De Natura Sonorum (1973) and Luc Ferrari’s Presque Rien ou Le levé du jour au bord de la mer (1967–1970, a piece comprising the noises of a seaside village at sunrise), are celebrated in an Ultima evening of masterworks by and inspired by the GRM (Groupe de Recherche Musicales). Projects like Koka Nikoladze’s Sound Stencil, or Jan Martens’s The Dog Days Are Over, focus on the noise potential of the human body itself. When British music writer and composer David Toop, who presents two pieces at Ultima 2015 — titled his 1999 book Ocean of Sound, the watery reference was highly appropriate. The musical landscape we now inhabit is a vast, interconnected, organic ecosystem.

Toop’s vocal work, Of Leonardo da Vinci, is inspired by the inner life of the individual for whom the term ‘Renaissance man’ was intended. Leonardo’s frame of reference included the visual arts, music, and the physical and natural sciences, and in his consuming quest for total knowledge, he drew no distinction between the two. Today Leonardo has given his name to America’s leading journal of computer music, but he remains a key example of how the artistic spirit could fuse with the rational scientific mind.

The shared ground between artists, listeners, scientists, religious people is, as the American poet, thinker and medical researcher Lewis Thomas (a twentieth-century Renaissance man if ever there was one) pointed out, bewilderment. We don’t know all the answers, but we continually approach them, hammering at the door of ignorance either by pushing at the limits of artistic expression, or devising new scientific methods and tools to examine the universe. Looking back at the multiple earthquakes that shook the contemporary music world during the entire 20th century. French composer Olivier Messiaen stands rock solid among the rubble, as one of modernism’s most individual voices and towering presences. He could load a single piece of music with cosmic wonder, birdsong, sexual ecstasy and a restless harmonic and rhythmic energy. His music, and particularly the gigantic Turangalîla-Symphonie (1949), which opens Ultima 2015, truly connects the earth’s deepest canyons with the most distant stars, the earthbound and the divine. Bird calls were, for the composer who lived to transcribe them, songs handed down from unimaginable antiquity, a manifestation of the original divine creation. Like the Wunderkammer collectors of the baroque, Messiaen held the marvels of nature to be the creator’s gifts to humanity — visible proofs of a higher power — and celebrated them in a musical language that remains unmatched.

We all recognise the use of feedback in music and noise production: capturing the instant where a signal is fed back into its amplified output with effects that are difficult, but not impossible, to control. Nature itself, and the complex systems that make the planet function, are also dependent on multiple feedback loops. When these loops are upset — when there is too much noise in the system — we see the changes to the climate that are currently throwing Gaia’s rhythms out of sync. As we have seen, music can be an audible filter of nature’s structures and patterns. But nature’s own orchestra is increasingly conducted by mankind.
The Turangalîla-Symphonie is a love song. It is also a hymn to joy. Not the respectable, calmly euphoric joy of some good man of the 17th century, but joy as it may be conceived by someone who has glimpsed it only in the midst of sadness, that is to say, a joy that is superhuman, overflowing, blinding, unlimited.

Late in life, French composer Olivier Messiaen (1908–92) recalled the late 1940s as the period when his creative powers were invincible: When love and death, nature-worship, erotic ecstasy and religious devotion found equal weight in his rapidly developing oeuvre. In Messiaen, described as the ‘atomic bomb of contemporary music’ by Virgil Thomson, there is the sense of fervent Catholic faith meeting the age of the radio telescope and the atomic microscope head on, and an incredible, bewildering sound world emerging from the clash.

The Turangalîla-Symphonie, a masterwork of twentieth century music, was commissioned by Serge Koussevitzky for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, with the loose instructions: ‘Choose as many instruments as you desire, write a work as long as you wish, and in the style you want.’ He seized the opportunity to make a colossal work, one that would contain all his transcendent religious visions, his obsession with birdsong, his interest in non-Western scales and timbres, and his fascination with time and rhythm. Above all it would be an ecstatic wordless song of joy.

The symphony took two and half years to write and was premiered in December 1949 in Boston, under the baton of Leonard Bernstein. The final version last around 75 minutes across ten movements, all of which move through an extraordinary range of fast, slow, agitated and calm motion. Within its giant architecture, interlocking themes and motifs connect and diverge, especially ‘the Statue’ (seven massive brass chords), ‘the Flower’ (a gentler theme in), and ‘Love’, which appears in many guises throughout the piece.

Each movement has a distinct character, from percussion assaults intended to terrify, to the rapturous cosmic lovers’ dance of the fifth, Joie du sang des étoiles (Joy in the blood of stars). Trilling birdsong on piano – suggesting the ‘oiseaux exotiques’ of another Messiaen title – glide about in the languid, pastoral interlude Le jardin du sommeil d’amour. Three ‘Turangalîla’ movements are interspersed among the others, mostly slow or medium paced, with highly complex rhythmic patterns showcasing the orchestra’s impressive arsenal of percussion. As if that wasn’t enough, the work also features the futuristic sounds of the early electronic instrument, the ondes Martenot, swooping and soaring in and around the composition’s vast peaks and troughs.

So Turangalîla is a work standing at the crossing of tradition and modernity, connecting the natural world with superhuman, dazzling and abandoned emotions, using a mix of primitive and sophisticated musical technology. These reflected the contradictions in Messiaen’s own nature, a man who loved the logic of numbers and rigorous harmonic theory while romantically inclined towards love, death, God and the irrational. When those competing factors, were at war with himself, he said, ‘In melancholy moments, when my uselessness is brutally revealed to me, […] what else is there to do except search for the true face of Nature, forgotten somewhere in the forest, in the fields, in the mountains, on the seashore, among the birds?’

As Ultima’s opening concert, the Turangalîla-Symphonie evokes many facets of the complex totality we call Nature – in this case, an unconstrained Nature created and overseen by a god that demands nothing less than passionate, all-consuming devotion.

Photo: Edouard Boubat (1961)
Dreams in the forest
Nils Petter Molvær

Lucid Dream

Nils Petter Molvær: Lucid Dream
Ekeberg Park
8:30pm–00:30
Free admission NB: Limited tickets available at Billettservice.no
From 10–13 September 2015.

Lucid dreaming is a phenomenon where you are aware of the fact that you are dreaming, a kind of hyperreal state which many liken to a spiritual experience. This year Ultima invites the audience to take part in a physical dream experiment in Ekeberg Park, in which sound and light will create outer and inner images – set to the music of Nils Petter Molvær.

For the past 25 years, trumpet player, composer and producer Molvær has been a prominent and innovative figure in Norwegian and international jazz and related genres. He grew up in the beautiful countryside of Sula in Sunnmøre, and through his art he has always been very close to nature and concerned with environmental protection. With Lucid Dream, he leaves the stage and studio behind and takes dense atmospheric sounds into nature.

Molvær has long been fascinated by the crystal-clear mental conditions that arise in states of uncertainty. Through their nocturnal wandering, the audience will experience how sound, light and images merge in an installation unlike any other. With the help of a complex sound system, the audience is led along a pathway through the forest while videos, visual effects and lighting bring forth ghosts in the trees, on the ground and in the clearings in the forest. Lucid Dream is an artwork where the atmosphere shifts between pure and true beauty and the dangerous, destructive side of that same beauty. The audience’s perceptions of time and space are expanded, and their senses sharpened. The darkness inhibits our ability to comprehend, leaving us to rely on our emotions, our sense of hearing and smell, and the expectations we all harbour. The forest plays a part in giving each member of the audience different and individual understandings of the music and the art. Our imagination creates inner images, or, if you like, lucid dreams.

With Lucid Dream, Molvær wants to raise the audience’s awareness about environmental issues and to perhaps persuade them to take better care of nature in their local communities.

Wolfgang Ernst

On Nature and the Un-natural: Revisiting the Wunderkammer

Kulturhuset
4pm

Bringing together a unique combination of artworks, technological inventions and natural artefacts, the Baroque Wunderkammer was a diverse cabinet of curiosities that aimed to showcase the world's mysteries and marvels. In that sense, it predicted the chaos and data pile-up of the internet and social media. This lecture by media theorist Wolfgang Ernst discusses the way online culture recalls the haphazard organisation of the Wunderkammer, and then looks at new digital manifestations of the curiosity cabinet, which can include sonic items as well.

Wolfgang Ernst is Full Professor for Media Theories at Humboldt University in Berlin and author of Digital Memory and the Archive (2013). His research covers media archaeology as method, theory of technical storage, technologies of cultural transmission, media aesthetics, critique of history as master discourse of cultural and technological time, and sound analysis.

Elisabeth Vatn

The Color Beneath
Ekeberg Park / James Turrell’s installation Ganzfeld
6:30pm
kr. 300,–

Each concert has a maximum capacity of 15 people

Exclusive sunrise and sunset concerts with Elisabeth Vatn in James Turrell’s light installations in Ekeberg sculpture park.

The Color Beneath by musician and composer Elisabeth Vatn was conceived in James Turrell’s light installations in the old water reservoir on Ekeberg. Between 10–13 September, Vatn (harmonium, Meråker clarinet, bagpipes) performs with Anders Røine (langeleik, mouth harp, violin).

Contemporary artist James Turrell works with perception, colour, light and space. The two location-specific works Ganzfeld: Double Vision and Skyspace: The Color Beneath were both created for the old water reservoir in 2013. While Ganzfeld explores the way colours affect our senses, Skyspace makes use of the chromatic interaction between the concert space and the sky at dawn and dusk.

In The Color Beneath the composer and performer turn their encounter with the installation into music, partly following the composition and partly through improvisation. Consequently, none of the concerts performed in this unique setting will be identical.

The Color Beneath album was recorded during autumn 2014 and is released during Ultima 2015.

Matthew Shlomowitz

Lecture About Bad Music [WP]

Alexander Schubert

Sensate Focus

The Norwegian National Opera & Ballet / Prøvesalen
5pm
kr. 200 / 100,–

Can music really be bad in itself or is ‘bad’ really nothing other than a subjective opinion?

That is the question Matthew Shlomowitz asks in Lecture About Bad Music, which was specially composed for the Anglo-Belgian octet, Plus Minus Ensemble. The work, which was written for lecturer, clarinet, electric guitar, synthesizer and violin, has been commissioned by Ultima and will receive its debut performance here. Australian-born Shlomowitz draws on elements from many fields and genres, employing musical demonstrations and recreations of psychological experiments to examine differences between musical experience and musical material.

Alexander Schubert’s Sensate Focus combines light and image, allowing lighting effects take on the role of fifth performer to a quartet of musicians. In the work, Schubert, who has studied bioinformatics, experiments with the interfaces between gesticular movements and musical sounds, where the performers’ physical movements and position in the room are essential elements of the composition.

Plus Minus Ensemble specialises in new music and modern key works. It is particularly known for its interest in avant garde, experimental and conceptual music, such as Stockhausen’s seminal work from 1963 from which the ensemble takes its name.
Nature in person
Henrik Hellstenius

At 7:30pm the Ørets teater (Theatre of the Ear) is a through-composed performance that lies somewhere between a concert and a musical drama. Using light, text and video, Henrik Hellstenius sheds light on nature’s role in art as a source of inspiration, a theme, and as a physical prerequisite. Through the distinctive vocalists Njål Sparboe, Silje Aker Johnsen and Stine Janvin Motland, plus Oslo Sinfonietta and Dans les arbres, Hellstenius blends composition, improvisation, light, image and motion into a transcendent multimedia experience.

Produced by The Norwegian National Opera & Ballet

Laser fantasia
Atom™ & Robin Fox
Amnesia Scanner

Double Vision is a spectacular feast of sound, music, colour and light. It’s a collaboration between Atom™ (aka Uwe Schmidt) and the Australian video artist Robin Fox, merging Fox’s synaesthetic laser show with Schmidt’s deconstructed take on pop music, to create a unique audiovisual work that is both playful and insightful.

Atom™’s background was in the Frankfurt Techno scene of the early 90s (where he was known as Atom Heart), but he relocated to Santiago, Chile later in the decade where he has pumped out hundreds of releases under many aliases, including the electro-Latin vibes of Señor Coconut and warped pop songs of Lassigue Bendthaus; and has collaborated with Bill Laswell, Florian Schneider (Kraftwerk), Haruomi Hosono, Burnt Friedman and many more. His recent Atom™ album Winterreise, on the Raster-Noton label, was accompanied by his own photographs of icy landscapes.

Robin Fox has spent many years investigating the relationship between sound and image, with particular attention towards vibration, electrical voltage and light. He has created energy devices for scientific use at the Bionic Ear Institute in Melbourne; released a handful of experimental electronic records both solo and partnered with Anthony Pateras; designed dance visuals and has amazed audiences with his immersive laser shows.

Also featured is a rare Norwegian performance by the mysterious electronica collective Amnesia Scanner, whose futuristic visions hint at the dystopian sci-fi of Philip K. Dick and soundtrack a world permanently corrupted by the excesses of genetic science, pollution and bio-hacking.
La commedia feminina
Cecilie Ore

Composer Cecilie Ore and librettist Bibbi Moslet have written a burlesque, political and socially critical opera about fundamentalist religion and misogyny.

... in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you. – Genesis 3:16

Quotations such as these formed the basis for Ore’s and Moslet’s feminist and artistic exploration of how religions view women. By drawing on extracts from the Bible, the Koran, Jewish texts and elements from the Declaration of Human Rights and Dante’s Divine Comedy, they use the operatic format to ask the question: Is it possible to explain suppression and violence against one half of the world’s population for such a long time? And why is it so hard to get rid of it?

The form of the performance is based on The Divine Comedy. Soprano Tora Augustad plays the heroine Virgilia, who wanders through Hell via Purgatory on her way to Paradise. As master of cere-

Conductor Cathrine Winnes


Music: 12 separate movements which break with established art forms. His starting point was the transformation of materials, often using his own body, to explore extreme psychological and physical experiences. Between 1972–78 Fox explored the metaphorical symbolism in the labyrinth on the floor of Chartres Cathedral: Eleven concentric circles, 34 turns and 552 steps. The numerical and geometric structure in the stone mosaic was the source of inspiration for The Labyrinth Scored for 11 Different Cats.

Produced by Atelier Nord

Every movement we see in nature can be perceived as a visual concert, like a storm of birds moving together making astonishing patterns, or snow falling from the sky and touching the ground. Quintetto is based on the study of casual movement of objects or living creatures used as input for the production of sounds. The basic concept is to reveal what the ‘invisible concerts’ of everyday life are. In this installation the scene is five aquariums with a goldfish in each. The movement of the five fishes is captured by a video camera that translates their movements in digital sound signals/music in real time.

Composer / Libretto – Cecilie Ore
Lighting – Signe Becker
Video – Anders T. Andersen
Conductor Cathrine Winnes


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Produced by Atelier Nord
Røster

Production A Short History of Biology.

With evolution theory and the genetic understanding of the living world, biological knowledge has evolved. During the Renaissance, anatomy and physics were developed, and the study of life was born. From an evolutionary perspective, humans are shaped by evolution, but to what extent can mental and cultural attributes be explained by evolution, nature, or more specifically genes? What cultural traits and preferences are unique to humans, really, from an evolutionary perspective? This presentation by biologist Dag Hessen will discuss recent insights in evolution and genetics, and link this to various aspects of human culture.

Dag Hessen is professor in biology at the University of Oslo. His interests range from evolutionary biology to ecology, genome size regulation, molecular evolution, and nature at large. He is a member of the Norwegian Academy of Science and the author of numerous books on popular science such as Genes, God & Gaia, Darwin: The World Has Never Been the Same! and a book on evolution for children, Where Am I From? 

Photo Alexander Rishaug (m)

Battle of the Analysis Giants #3: Turangalîla

The Analysis Giants to battle it out for a third time. Composers Trond Reinholdtsen and Ole Henrik Moe dissect and explain Olivier Messiaen’s Turangalîla-Symphony. Welcome to a morning of music theory, philosophy, and psychoanalysis with a twist.

Anders K. Krabberød A Short History of Biology

This lecture by Anders Kristian Krabberød presents a selection of the main events in the history of biology, and traces how historical events, technological innovations and advances in other scientific disciplines have shaped the evolution of the study of life. The history of biology stretches back to ancient Egyptian medicine and to the works of Greek philosophy, to the work of Anaximander and Theaetetus of Miletus. These early attempts at understanding nature were driven by the belief that knowledge about plants and animals could increase chances of survival. During the Renaissance, biology became a scientific discipline.

Anders K. Krabberød is a PhD student in biology at the University of Oslo. He is working on the evolution and genetics of radioaustals, or single-celled marine organisms with an intricate and beautiful skeleton. He also has a degree in philosophy and a special interest in the history of science. He has been teaching the history of biology as part of an introductory course for MA students at the University of Oslo since 2010. He also plays bass in the avant-progressive rock band Panzerpappa.

Ali Parandian

Untitled (A Poem for Norway)

Majesticum Church, The Chapel

8-10pm

Free admission (Oslo Cultural Night)

Open from 19 September between 10pm and midnight

Multi-channel sound installation based on audio and visual recordings made in Oslo between 2010 and 2015. Using documentation of man-made environments as its starting point, and with the addition of abstractions, this work endeavours to create a state whereby the viewer can focus on what lies beyond his or her own circumstances. The subdued style of the work endeavours to integrate the acoustic and architectural possibilities that lie in the church building. Ali Parandian moved from Tehran to Norway in 1989. He received his training in sound design at the Norwegian Film School in Liljehammer. The exhibition is free and open to everyone throughout Ultima.

Ali Parandian is a sound work for eight channels and spatialized in collaboration with Trond Lossius and BEK in Bergen. At Deichmanske hovedbibliotek, Røster III will be experienced in the old music room, which has a hexagonal space and was originally acoustically treated for the purpose of listening to the music library. The installation is created around a setup of eight speakers arranged in a vertical and horizontal landscape, between the books in the bookshelves, and for most of the time the room will not be lit.

Maja S. K. Ratke will be joining the ensemble WeDoMagic as guest performer at the opening of the installation.

Røster III takes the listener on an aural journey through a series of sound tableaux carefully sculptured and arranged by the artist’s archive of field recordings from the Røst Archipelago in Lofoten, northern Norway between 2010-15. The work places the listening body in a time-space continuum where nature and culture coexist and are given equal importance, giving ear to the eternal variances of voices and spaces; the geophony of Røst.

ultima academy

Friday 11 September

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Saturday 12 September

Humans are shaped by evolution, but to what extent can mental and cultural attributes be explained by evolution, nature, or more specifically genes? Can cultural traits and preferences be explained by genes or memes? And is culture a unique property of humans? How outstanding are humans, really, from an evolutionary perspective? This presentation by biologist Dag Hessen will discuss recent insights in evolution and genetics, and link this to various aspects of human culture. Dag Hessen is professor in biology at the University of Oslo. His interests range from evolutionary biology to ecology, genome size regulation, molecular evolution, and nature at large. He is a member of the Norwegian Academy of Science and the author of numerous books on popular science such as Genes, God & Gaia, Darwin: The World Has Never Been the Same! and a book on evolution for children, Where Am I From?

Friday 11 September

Luc Ferrari

Journal Intime (film, 60 min., 2015)

Kulturhuset

6:30pm

After studying with Olivier Messiaen, French composer and filmmaker Luc Ferrari established the genre of musique anecdotique, in which he looked for the poetry in field recordings of nature and human interaction. Filmed alongside the world premiere recording of Ferrari’s brilliant, forgotten music theatre piece Journal Intime, this exclusive portrait by Testklang’s Aron Kitzig is made up of diary excerpts, interviews with his widow Bruland and the original collaborators on Journal Intime — as well as unpublished archive material that brings Ferrari’s own voice back to life.

Dag Hessen Nature and Nurture: Evolution and Culture

Kulturhuset

4pm

Humans are shaped by evolution, but to what extent can mental and cultural attributes be explained by evolution, nature or more specifically genes? Can cultural traits and preferences be explained by genes or memes? And is culture a unique property of humans? How outstanding are humans, really, from an evolutionary perspective? This presentation by biologist Dag Hessen will discuss recent insights in evolution and genetics, and link this to various aspects of human culture.

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Ultima Academy

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Kim Hiorthøy joins forces with the vocal ensemble Små Grå. Hiorthøy, who has made his mark as a musician, writer, artist, illustrator and, more recently, as a choreographer, works on ideas that cannot be limited to one particular art form or artistic expression. For many years now, Små Grå have been producing performances combining music and movement without being confined by classic definitions of genre.

In *Kjemi* (Chemistry), a performance of musical movement, both visual and audio impressions are broken down to their minutest components and meet each other in new constellations. It is a dramatic deconstruction, but carefully executed, with a sensation of wonder and a pervading sense of beauty. It is improvisation, speech and written music, movement and dance, sometimes in groups, sometimes individually, and otherwise mixed. *Kjemi* is a performance, or a concert, that uses the most concrete materials we have – the physical elements in and around us – as building blocks for some of the least concrete material we have: artistic meaning. It’s not fiction; it’s just a slightly strange performance about reality.

Scottish composer James Dillon is one of the UK’s most significant composers, with commissioned works from and performances by many of the UK’s biggest orchestras and influential international ensembles. *Oslo/Triptych* was commissioned for Cikada in 2011 as part of a three-part project Dillon conducted with ensembles from Leuven, Oslo and New York. Dillon is known for his large-scale projects, such as *Nine Rivers*, the symphonic cycle of monumental proportions, but his smaller works are also impressive, often composed with specific musicians in mind. *Oslo/Triptych* includes Indian harmonium, an instrument often used by Cikada in recent years.

The concert also marks the launch of Cikada’s new album which consists of music by Jon Øivind Ness and Liza Lim. Ness’s piece *Gimilen* (2014) takes its name from two lakes in the woodlands north-east of Hakadal, Norway. He often draws on nature for his inspiration, and several of his works are named after lakes in the Oslo region. *Gimilen* had its première at the KLANGSPUREN Festival in September last year.

Headed by pianist and artistic director Kenneth Karlsson, Oslo-based Cikada is one of Norway’s most distinctive contemporary music ensembles. The ensemble collaborates closely with composers on creating new works.

Photo: Tom Sachs (Små Grå / m)
Forever changes
Heine Avdal & Yukiko Shinozaki

In the past few years, the Norwegian-Japanese duo Heine Avdal and Yukiko Shinozaki, who have bases in Oslo and Brussels, have made their mark on the international scene in the interface between dance, visual art, video, music and technology. Their art projects have a strong performative element, and they often perform in traditional theatre stage and take the visual art, video, music and technology.

Also 13 September

In the Pitch 43 – Tuning the Cosmos project, the ensemble works closely with a number of composers, exchanging ideas and knowledge about instruments and notation to be used for new compositions and in new ways.

As these new impulses encounter the rich world of Partch’s musical legacy, they open up new perspectives on the musical landscape of the previous and current centuries. Throughout the project, they bring Partch’s ideas into the future.

Writing new music for Harry Partch’s instruments had been an unattainable dream until it’s suddenly become real, says Helge Sten. ‘I was introduced to Partch’s music in the early eighties, when he was singled out as one of the sources of inspiration for The Residents. His life and work as a composer, musician, DIY record executive, instrument maker, philosopher, hobo and outsider has chiseled out a new space for composers to move in. You have to think anew when you get to work with such a wide array of microtonal acoustic instruments.

Partch’s microtonal collection is made up of more than fifty different instruments, based on everything from strings and percussion, handheld bells, billows and keyboards. Their innovative names – Mazda Marimba, Chromelodeon, Blobby, Crychord, and Cloud Chamber Bowls – reflect their musical exoticism. When Partch’s instruments were reconstructed for the Ensemble Musikfabrik in 2012, it created the necessary framework to perform his unique music. Being one of the world’s leading contemporary music ensembles, the role as the foremost caretaker for Partch’s musical legacy came naturally to Ensemble Musikfabrik.

As a member of the improv group Sapesilent and the rock band Motorpsycho, Helge Sten has been a leading sound artist, producer and musician for several decades. Using the moniker Deathprod, he has inhabited his own patch of the musical landscape of the previous and current centuries. Throughout his life, he has been an inspiration for The Residents. His life and work as a composer, musician, DIY record executive, instrument maker, philosopher, hobo and outsider has chiseled out a new space for composers to move in. You have to think anew when you get to work with such a wide array of microtonal acoustic instruments.

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Also 13 September

Hopping mad

Jan Martens

When you ask a person to jump, his attention is mostly directed toward the act of jumping and the mask falls so that the real person appears. This quotation by photographer Philippe Halsman serves as the starting point for The Dog Days Are Over, a minimal and political work for eight jumping performers.

The award-winning Belgian choreographer Jan Martens has explored jumping for eight jumping performers. In this choreography work attempts to reveal the person behind the mask. Is it possible that the person appears? This quotation by Philippe Halsman serves as the starting point for his work. Martens’s personal and inventive approach to sampling culture and modern music from almost all genres have made the duo worldwide stars. Their collaboration as part of Icelandic vocalist Björk’s touring group has also been a contributing factor.

Both of them are currently teaching in their adopted home town of Baltimore, but they met at a strip joint in San Francisco where Daniel worked while studying philosophy. Their first release came in 1997, and more than 13 albums have followed since. They have worked with several prominent artists such as Antony, Terry Riley, The Kronos Quartet, Antony, Zeena Parkins, So Percussion and the Princeton Laptop Orchestra. Their latest album, The Marriage of True Minds, was released in 2013 and is based on a parapsychological experiment. Using telepathy, the duo tried to convey their own intentions for the album to several characters, mainly two musicans: the singer E and his friend Buddy. ‘The World’s Greatest Piano Player’. Together they arrive in a small town in the Midwest to entertain at the Perfect Lives Lounge. They fall in love with two of the locals and decide to commit the perfect crime: to rob a bank for a sizeable sum of money for just one day and let the whole world know that the money was missing.

The Marriage of True Minds

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in New York at The Stone and, astonishingly, Robert Ashley himself attended. It meant a great deal to us, as you can imagine, to be able to play this music for the composer, and to know that, even given the substantial differences between his performances and our realisation, we had his support and encouragement.

Years later in Baltimore, our friend Britton Powell came up with a string arrangement for *The Park*, and Britton asked M.C. Schmidt to deliver the text in a live concert setting, with Jen Kirby and Carolyn Luciano as the additional speakers/singers. For a concert in New York City at Issue Project Room, Matmos played both *The Backyard* and a newly expanded and Matmos-ified version of *The Park*, expanding and altering the line-up, but keeping the string arrangement and the vocal trio intact. Lars Petter Hagen was at that concert, and he approached us about the possibility of coming to Ultima. We were very honoured and excited at the chance to transform and extend these arrangements. It’s always a test to take such quintessentially American music outside of its home context and to see what happens.

Can you give us an idea what audiences will actually see/hear/experience, and how much interpretative licence you are giving yourselves? To what extent does Ashley’s work give room for fresh interpretation?

When we decided to do *The Backyard*, it forced us to think about how we work and cannot do without our limited skillset, and what a ‘cover’ of Robert Ashley would involve. Stripped down to its core, for us *The Backyard* is: a voice delivering the text with a certain distinctive cadence and inflection, a drone that holds a tonal centre, and a rhythm that shifts emphasis, but holds the tempo. Overall, the piece has to have the right qualities of fullness and openness or it won’t work, and striving for that is one of the most rewarding aspects of our work.

When pairing *The Park* and *The Backyard*, the goal is to create a relationship between two different sections of a larger work that make sense in sequence, that have the right mixture of propulsive forward movement and hallucinatory stasis. Thanks to Britton’s arrangement, *The Park* reflects the notation of Ashley’s original, albeit in a refracted/stretched/reconfigured manner. Ideally the two arrangements complement each other, respectful of the originals and yet free-standing and different.

To realise *Perfect Lives* on stage, M.C. Schmidt collaborated with the Baltimore video artist Max Eilbacher to come up with a new video work which would act as a non-distracting but genuinely musical component of the ensemble. The result is a series of animations and elements which Max cross-fades and dissolves on the fly as M.C. Schmidt progresses through the libretto. Because the timing of how and when M.C. Schmidt shifts from section to section alters each night, the video is not simply rolling as a readymade backdrop, but becomes responsive in a direct, albeit subtle way. This unfurls slowly, keeping with the tempo of the piece, but the creeping shifts in content that result from live rendition of the video are an important dimension of what is happening. Ideally, it sparks up on your consciousness in the same way that certain phrases in the libretto revise and alter previous information as your mind struggles to assemble Ashley’s implied narrative.

What are the main challenges with this piece?

*Perfect Lives* grants a great deal of freedom to the musicians, but places some very intense demands upon the singers/speakers: They must sound relaxed and casual while executing something that is very precise, and that mixture of loose delivery and tight focus is both a challenge to realise and a pleasure to experience. *On The Park* in particular, the text is very precise about its pauses, gaps and cues, and this means that the interaction between M.C. Schmidt, Jen and Caroline has a real delicacy. The challenge is that the music has a highly soothing and entrancing effect, but it requires constant awareness and vigilance if you’re going to avoid over-playing and clutter. In this sense it is both ‘minimalist’ and ‘maximalist’; there is a constantly changing surface and a deep, underlying form, and you have to be aware of both.

Do you have any thoughts on the connections between nature and music?

John Cage’s resonant phrase about making art that would ‘imitate nature in its manner of operation’ has always winked at me across a distance. Cage is calling for artwork to be less concerned with the emotional expressivity of the self and more attuned to the diversity, complexity and chaotic dimensions of a non-human world. Sounds good to me! That has always been a productive attitude for our work: A receptor of sound from various sources that has as much to do with the way we make music, and their resistance gives you some friction from which to push off. In making music out of them, you are converting them into unforeseen (unnatural?) shapes. Cage uses the word ‘imitate’ and that kind of gives the game away: In making art, a human is involved at some level, and the process they make out of this broad field called ‘nature’ are going to reveal their agenda, their location. So the ‘imitation’ fails, but that’s interesting too.

What’s your next project?

Our new album is perhaps the most fanatical record we’ve ever made. It is called *Ultimate Care II* and it is based entirely upon the sound of our washing machine.

What interests Matmos about Robert Ashley’s work?

Matmos were not aware that M.C. Schmidt and I made was a song, never released, called ‘Massage The Brain’ which simply looped and manipulated an excerpt of *Perfect Lives*: ‘Short phrases repeated massage the brain’. Like so much of Ashley’s work, this phrase is both instantly intelligible and yet full of sly humour. Is it a critique of minimalism? Is it a mockery of the very thing it also exemplifies? Ashley’s music is calming and alarming at the same time; it massages but then it cracks you up and estranges you, too. When you try to describe his work to people, you feel foolish because many of the adjectives that come to mind – hallucinatory, psychedelic, poetic, meditative, alarming at the same time; it massages but then it cracks you up and estranges you, too. When you try to describe his work to people, you feel foolish because many of the adjectives that come to mind – hallucinatory, psychedelic, poetic, meditative, alarming at the same time; it massages but then it cracks you up and estranges you, too. When you try to describe his work to people, you feel foolish because many of the adjectives that come to mind – hallucinatory, psychedelic, poetic, meditative, alarming at the same time; it massages but then it cracks you up and estranges you, too. When you try to describe his work to people, you feel foolish because many of the adjectives that come to mind – hallucinatory, psychedelic, poetic, meditative, alarming at the same time; it massages but then it cracks you up and estranges you, too. When you try to describe his work to people, you feel foolish because many of the adjectives that come to mind – hallucinatory, psychedelic, poetic, meditative, alarming at the same time; it massages but then it cracks you up and estranges you, too. When you try to describe his work to people, you feel foolish because many of the adjectives that come to mind – hallucinatory, psychedelic, poetic, meditative, alarming at the same time; it massages but then it cracks you up and estranges you, too. When you try to describe his work to people, you feel foolish because many of the adjectives that come to mind – hallucinatory, psychedelic, poetic, meditative, alarming at the same time; it massages but then it cracks you up and estranges you, too. When you try to describe his work to people, you feel foolish because many of the adjectives that come to mind – hallucinatory, psychedelic, poetic, meditative, alarming at the same time; it massages but then it cracks you up and estranges you, too. When you try to describe his work to people, you feel foolish because many of the adjectives that come to mind – hallucinatory, psychedelic, poetic, meditative, alarming at the same time; it masses

What is the background to this particular commission/ performance?

It began in admiration for Robert Ashley’s work: Fandom, basic. We kept listening to the recordings we loved them, and one day M.C. Schmidt proposed that we come up with a ‘cover version’ of *The Backyard*. We based our version on the Lovely Music LP version rather than later variants, and in some ways we took Ashley’s willingness to adjust and transform arrangements, while keeping the text consistent, as permission to do the same thing. We performed *The Backyard*
Koka Nikoladze is a Georgian violinist, composer and sound artist based in Norway. As a performance artist, Nikoladze has performed as a solo violinist, chamber musician, and orchestral musician on various stages in Europe and the United States. Working more recently as a composer, he has composed acoustic and electroacoustic works, where the position of the sound and sound objects in a room are predetermined, Parallax and Tveit undertake a more improvised exploration of the listening room itself. The physical room, loudspeakers, the acoustic instruments and the electronic sounds blend into one ‘instrument’. The audience and the performers are positioned in a circle surrounded by loudspeakers. 

Koka Nikoladze Sound Stencil 

Starts at Dansens Hus 
12 noon 
Free

Sound Stencil is a concept that can be realised with mechanical robots or human performers, and turns objects in any given environment into integrated musical instruments. The first implementation, Sound Stencil 0.1, will be premiered at Oslo Ultima Contemporary Music Festival 2015, and is made of human percussionists who use smartphones for synchronisation. All the players listen to a synchronised audio stream, which dictates various rhythmic patterns and gives them directions. Percussionists move around the city, keep at an audible distance from one another and hit various objects on their way. They move or freeze, speed up and slow down, spread out or bunch together. The audience is free to follow them as long as they want.

In a live installation, improvisation trio Parallax and Anders Tveit explore the area between composed and improvised music and the contrasts between acoustic and electronic sounds. In contrast to traditional multi-channel electroacoustic works, where the position of the sound and sound objects in a room are predetermined, Parallax and Tveit undertake a more improvised exploration of the listening room itself. The physical room, loudspeakers, the acoustic instruments and the electronic sounds blend into one ‘instrument’. The audience and the performers are positioned in a circle surrounded by loudspeakers. 

Although music is often heard as a continuous stream of sound, it is also possible to pick out more distinct sonic events, sometimes known as sonic objects. Examining these sonic objects may involve other senses such as vision, motion and touch, in addition to hearing. Drawing on the works of the French pioneer of musique concrète in the second half of the 20th century, Pierre Schaeffer, music researcher Rolf Ingø Godøy discusses auditory perception and the relationship between sound and bodily movement in the experience of music. 

Rolf Ingø Godøy is professor of music theory at the Department of Musicology, University of Oslo. His main interest is in phenomenological approaches to music theory, in other words, taking subjective experiences of music as a point of departure for music theory. This work has been expanded to include research on music-related body motion in performance and listening.

The Neurobiology of Aesthetics

Bruno Laeng Synaesthesia, at the Illusions of Perception
Kulturhuset
14pm

Synaesthesia is the ability to experience one sense through another, such as hearing the sound of a trumpet as yellow, or ‘smelling’ poetry like perfume. As well as being a neurological phenomenon, artists such as Wassily Kandinsky and Oliver Messiaen claimed to have had synaesthetic perception and the idea is frequently referred to in works of art, especially music. This talk by Bruno Laeng surveys the phenomenon of synaesthesia and gives some examples of its relationships with the arts and music. Bruno Laeng is professor in cognitive neuropsychology specialising in topics such as attention, perception and memory in vision and music. He received his BA in experimental psychology from Università La Sapienza (Rome, Italy) and a PhD in biological psychology from the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, USA). He has previously held positions at the University of Bergen, University of Tromsø, University of Guelph and Harvard University and has been a Clinical Research Fellow at the Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston.

Further, it outlines the results of experiments on how the brain responds to ‘beauty’ in different forms – visual, musical and mathematical.

Semir Zeki was Professor of Neurobiology at University College London until 2009 and is currently Professor of Neuroesthetics. His most recent research is into the neurobiology underlying subjective mental and aesthetic experiences. He has written four books, A Vision of the Brain (Blackwell Scientific, 1993), Inner Vision: An Exploration of Art and the Brain (OUP, 1999) and Splendors and Miseries of the Brain (Wiley-Blackwell 2008). He has also co-authored La Qute de l’ex-sentiel with the late French painter Balthus (Archimandrite 1995) and La Bella e la bestia with Ludovica Lumer (Laterza 2011).

While studying how neural systems allow us to experience beauty, regardless of culture, learning and upbringing, neuroesthetics has been deeply inspired by the humanities. This talk by Semir Zeki investigates the relationship between brain activity and aesthetic appreciation and artistic creativity. Further, it outlines the results of experiments on how the brain responds to ‘beauty’ in different forms – visual, musical and mathematical.

Sensate Focus

His piece, for instance, in which musicians are momentarily lit up every time they make a sound, has its roots in a 1973 scientific experiment in which kittens were reared in an environment where the only source of light was a strobe pulsing every two seconds. The animals grew up unable to understand movement and, when their brains were dissection, their visual cortexes had significant differences from the norm. Alexander Schubert will be in conversation with Oslo based music writer Rob Young, former editor of The Wire, current editor of Jazzjazz and contributor to frieze, Morgenbladet, Arftorum and more.

Rolf Ingø Godøy A Multidimensional Perception of Sound
Kulturhuset
2:30pm

Although music is often heard as a continuous stream of sound, it is also possible to pick out more distinct sonic events, sometimes known as sonic objects. Examining these sonic objects may involve other senses such as vision, motion and touch, in addition to hearing. Drawing on the works of the French pioneer of musique concrète in the second half of the 20th century, Pierre Schaeffer, music researcher Rolf Ingø Godøy discusses auditory perception and the relationship between sound and bodily movement in the experience of music. 

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Sensate Focus – Alexander Schubert and Rob Young in conversation
Kulturhuset
2:30pm

Before turning to composition, German composer Alexander Schubert received intensive training in neurobiology and computer sciences. This has influenced his musical work, which focuses heavily on the links between light, gesture and sound. 

His piece Sensate Focus, for instance, in which musicians are momentarily lit up every time they make a sound, has its roots in a 1973 scientific experiment in which kittens were reared in an environment where the only source of light was a strobe pulsing every two seconds. The animals grew up unable to understand movement and, when their brains were dissected, their visual cortexes had significant differences from the norm.
Penguin eggs, tree rings and boomerangs

CHILDREN’S DAY AT ULTIMA

The success continues! Ultima is delighted to invite children of all ages to a whole day at Riksscenen for a jam-packed programme and activities designed especially with children in mind. Children’s Day at Ultima offers the whole family the opportunity to see and experience what contemporary music can be. The programme offers concerts, installations and workshops with a wide range of artists.

In cooperation with John Vinge, a dedicated group of children will act as hosts and will be working on a sound installation, marketing activities, interview points and lots more.

Good food and drink will also be on sale. Here are some of the programme highlights:

- MAIJA – THE GIRL FROM SPACE

Many will recall Maija – The Girl From Space, the popular 1970s children’s TV series. Some of Norway’s leading stage performers, headed by Julia Skar, have developed an installation specially for Children’s Day inspired by the series and by outer space. The installation invites the public to wander through this exciting universe.

- UT AV SKOGEN

Ut av Skogen (Out of the Forest) is a work inspired by the life of composer Harald Sæverud and by the forest and nature surrounding his farm. Sjølyst. Gisle Martins Meyer has created a performance that mixes orchestral and electronic music with sounds from nature and the forest, narrated from a sofa group in the forest that gradually transforms into a sonic battleground between various characters/men that live in the forest.

- ARRINGER (TREE RINGS)

Trees make sounds! Come and join in making Ultima’s biggest instrument: a gigantic stokkofone composed of tree stumps and branches from the forest that are made to produce sounds. Everyone can join in and see new tunes for the giant orchestra. And of course we have to make a concert! A lot of research, cooperation and decisions will be needed before the music is ready for the concert to begin. And there will be a few surprises along the way. The work will be led by three seasoned musicians from Drivhuset music workshop: Iak Andersen, Per Oddvar Johansen and Jon Halvor Bjørnstad.

- BOOMERANGEN 2.0

Boomerangen 2.0 is a workshop that you can enter by first passing through a kind of labyrinth. Boomerangen borrows sounds from you and sets them to music. You can give Boomerangen as many sounds as you like, or you can simply be in the room and listen. Boomerangen continues to make new music all the time, so your sounds are mixed with the sounds of others. Inside the room you will find a workhshop, a concert space and a digital soundscape where you can perform in your group. Boomerangen 2.0 does not just work as you want it to do; it also has a will of its own.

- NYMUSIK KIDS

What is music, what is a sound? When does a sound become music? What did Arne Nordheim mean when he said ‘everything can sing?’ nyMusik Kids is a workshop where children aged between six and twelve can experiment with electronic in an iPad that you can change the music by the way you behave. Boomerangen 2.0 does not just work as you want it to do; it also has a will of its own.

- PETER BADEN

Composer, drummer and producer Peter Baden works with electronic improvised music, jazz, pop, film scores, stage music and many other musical styles. He has also made many different kinds of collaborations. In collaboration with the Children’s Day pilot group, he will be creating a new installation.

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Their first self-titled CD was released on the Hubro label in 2014, and Brunvoll has picked up two nominations for Norway’s Spelemannspris.

About their approach to interpreting the daadist’s ideas, Brunvoll says: ‘We are opened up to his work, but definitely in his spirit, we will try to stay where we are ourselves, creating something from our own point of view. It seems like Schwitters was an artist who worked in a very intuitive way, and that he was in contact with something real inside of him.’

She adds: ‘We are fascinated by his way of turning a home into a piece of art. How was his daily life? How was his approach to creating and expressing himself in this world? How was it to leave his loved ones to stay for long periods of time alone to create art? Even if they can’t sit down for a chat with the man in person, this promises to be an intriguing and revelatory musical dialogue with the legacy of an artistic maverick.’

Collapsing new buildings

Kurt Schwitters Day

Henie Onstad Arts Centre
14:00 (Auditorium) Karin Hellandsjø and Øda Wildhagen Quesing discuss the art of Kurt Schwitters
15:00 (Studio) Building Instrument – SCHWITTERS (WP)
15:30 (Mini Prisma) Agnes Hvizdalek performs parts of Kurt Schwitters’ sound poem Urania

Music that has collage qualities, samples and so on is something we work quite a lot with,’ says Mari Kven Brunvoll of Building Instrument, about her group’s new commission inspired by the Merz works and philosophy of German dadaist Kurt Schwitters, who spent the last years of his life in Norway. On the occasion of the opening of a new space at Henie Onstad Art Centre, the Norwegian experimental improvisers unveil a new piece of music composed as a response to the life and legacy of one of 20th century art’s most important figures. Schwitters’ Merzbau collages were a kind of absurdistic response to the cubism of Picasso and Braque, but he developed these into full scale architectural plans and proposed entire houses constructed as haphazard landscapes full of jagged edges and strange angles. He wrote poetry, plays and ‘sound poems’ such as Ursonate (1922–32), whose alien language and strident tones have become one of the defining works of sound poetry. ‘We definitely find his way of using his own voice and wonderful made-up language to perform his poems,’ comments Brunvoll. ‘They are very organic, and some of the dynamics and expression in this work are directly inspiring when it comes to composing melodic material. His approach to creating art out of anything – old tickets, garbage – inspires us to find new inspiration in small bits and pieces of sound and ideas and to imagine that it can later be a part of something bigger. Building Instrument began playing their mix of acoustic pop and improvised contemporary music in 2008, and have rapidly settled in the Norwegian musical landscape. The group’s members are Mari Kven Brunvoll (vocals, electronics, musical instruments), Øyvind Hegg Lunde (drums, percussion) and Åsmund Weltzien (synths, electronics).
Raptures of the deep
Camille Norment & David Toop

As part of that project she held an improvised performance within the Nordic Pavilion in Venice with the composer, author and music critic David Toop, in May this year. Using an array of improvised instruments and machines including a glass armonica, wineglasses, amplified flute, bowed objects, electric motors and jars of liquid, as well as spoken word, the performance explores the legends, stories and mysteries of the depth of the oceans. This project has been performed several times and is in a state of continuous development.

Camille Norment’s practice includes performance, installation, drawing and sound. She explores how the body is interconnected with its environment through sound, and contemplates on the power of dissonance to create spaces for new ways of thinking. David Toop is a British composer, writer and professor of Audio Culture and Improvisation at the London College of Communication. His influential books include Ocean of Sound (1993), Exotica (1999) and Haunted Weather (2004). His solo albums include Screen Ceremonies (2006), Spirit World (1997), Hot Pants Idol (1999) and Sound Body (2007), and he has collaborated on other projects with Brian Eno, Max Eastley, sci-fi writer Jeff Noon and others.

Henrik H. Svensen
Anthropocene, or the Age of Man
Kulturhuset
7:30pm

The Anthropocene is the Age of Man: the geological designation for the era in which we live today. Humans and our activities dominate the planet and circumvent nature, irreparably altering many aspects of the Earth’s biophysical systems: its biosphere, atmosphere, oceans and land masses.

Award-winning geologist Henrik H. Svensen, research professor at the University of Oslo and author of numerous articles on climate change for Morgenbladet, GEO and others, will talk about the cultural and scientific issues at stake in the Age of Man.

Richard Taruskin
Scientifica and Mirabilia
Kulturhuset
8:30pm

In his massive Turangalîla-Symphony, which opens this year’s Ultima festival, Olivier Messiaen speaks of life, death, God and nature. With the composer’s love for birds and birdsong as a starting point, eminent musicologist Richard Taruskin discusses the symbolic use of birds in the language of music: prophecies of life, love and death by a composer whose work opens this year’s Ultima festival, Turangalîla-Symphony.

Richard Taruskin is an American musicologist who has written and lectured on topics ranging across the whole of music – history and analysis as well as its cultural, social and political contexts. He has also been a performer and a choral conductor. Born in New York in 1945, he received his Ph.D. from Columbia University, where he was on the faculty until 1986. At the end of 2014, he retired from his position as the author of the six-volume Oxford History of Western Music, currently holding the professor and chair of audio culture and improvisation at the London College of Communication. His books include Ocean of Sound, Haunted Weather and Sinister Resonance and he has written articles for The Wire, The Face, The Times and many others. He has released around 15 albums of his own music, solo or in collaboration with Paul Burwell, Max Eastley and Jeff Noon. His opera Star-shaped Biscuit was premiered at the Aldeburgh Festival in 2012.

Heloisa Amaral in conversation
Kulturhuset
9:30pm

A new music-text-film work for Ultima by David Toop, performed by Elaine Mitchener, is based around the scientific and artistic thought patterns of the quintessential ‘Renaissance Man’, Leonardo da Vinci. In conversation with Ultima Academy curator Heloisa Amaral, David Toop discusses the origins, inspirations and meanings behind this multilayered piece.

David Toop is a British writer, music critic, composer, improviser and currently holds the professor and chair of audio culture and improvisation at the London College of Communication. His books include Ocean of Sound, Haunted Weather and Sinister Resonance and he has written articles for The Wire, The Face, The Times and many others. He has released around 15 albums of his own music, solo or in collaboration with Paul Burwell, Max Eastley and Jeff Noon. His opera Star-shaped Biscuit was premiered at the Aldeburgh Festival in 2012.
Comfort Music is a performance and concert installation by Knut Olaf Sunde, conceived to force the audience to experience the connection between the music and the actual place where it is being performed. The listeners meet up at Vulkan, situated in a small dip between St. Hanshaugen, Grünerløkka and the city centre which has sustained several centuries of water-mill industry along the Aker river and has only recently become a trendy, gentrified part of town. Comfort Music is an Oslo-based ensemble dedicated to performing contemporary music. It grew out of the Norwegian Academy of Music alumni, and is focused on new music and improvisation.

Motivated by a steady focus on the new, on development, and with an unwavering faith in music and in the expressive potential of musicians, Mathias Spahlinger’s music is constantly evolving. Spahlinger uses elements from a broad spectrum of genres and techniques, and this seventy-year-old modernist has managed to leave his mark on the German and European music scenes as composer, thinker, and teacher. Ensemble asamisimasa has collaborated with Spahlinger on several occasions, and is currently planning a Spahlinger festival in Oslo in October.

At this concert, the ensemble will give a first performance of Spahlinger’s new work, no 10, nachtstück mit sonne. This concert also marks the launch of Øyvind Torvund’s first portrait CD, Neon Forest Space. Torvund has closely collaborated with asamisimasa in connection with first performances and concerts of his other works. Plastic Waves (2013) for piano and quartet is a different kind of work in that it mixes sounds from snare drums, piano melodies, harmonica and bass clarinet with broken glass and references to circus sounds.

Ensemble asamisimasa is an established Norwegian ensemble dedicated to new music, and is known for combining classic avant-garde repertoire with new works specially written for them, often with elements of electronics, video and other media. The members are: Kristine Tjøgersen (clarinet), Håkon Stene (percussion), Anders Førisdal (guitar), Ellen Ugelvik (piano) and Tanja Orning (cello).

Improvisor and vocalist Stine Janvin Motland and pianist Sanae Yoshida team up with cellist Øystein Sonstad (Oslo String Quartet) to perform a selection of small scale yet powerful and intriguing works by Norwegian composer Øyvind Marland. AD UNDAS – Sci-fi Lieder fra Nordsjøen! (2010) is a thirty minute song cycle that takes off from Øyvind Rimbereid’s poem Solaris Korrigert (Solaris Corrected, 2004). Marland has produced several collaborations with Rimbereid in the past and KOMMEN du vid meg? (2012) is a miniature performance piece without song or lyrics. The principal characters are a couple, The Operator and Shiri, who are struggling to communicate with each other.

Produced by Notam
Bridging past and present
Eivind Buene / The Norwegian Chamber Orchestra

The Norwegian Chamber Orchestra and composer Eivind Buene build bridges from our own time to the past. Buene’s Stilleben for 15 solo strings serves as an atmospheric prelude when played together with the second movement of Mozart’s Piano Concerto no. 17. Using the opening tones of Wagner’s Tristan and Isolde, Buene treats Wagner’s building blocks in a slow, translucent meditation. Garland is a comment on Baroque composer Matthew Locke’s string suites.

Combining the works like this shows how recognition and repetition are two different things. Buene assumes that we experience, the works bridge the classical dichotomy between body and mind. Eivind Buene (born 1977) is a Norwegian composer and writer whose music has been performed by the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, Ensemble Intercontemporain and Cikada, among others. The Norwegian Chamber Orchestra is one of Norway’s leading chamber orchestras, and places emphasis on a solid classical repertoire, new works, and creative outreach. The concert also marks the opening of the orchestra’s season opening.

Dreams of genius
Elaine Mitchener & David Toop

Of Leonardo da Vinci is a result of a collaboration between improv legend, sound artist and author David Toop (score and libretto based on Leonardo da Vinci’s accounts of his dreams), acclaimed vocalist Elaine Mitchener, as she considers the nature of life and its history as it moves ever closer to the end where inspiration comes from, how meaning is divined from the marks we make, and the elusive presence of the soul. Like an oracle, witch, or shaman, she voices the spirit of Leonardo da Vinci, is caught up within his memories, prophecies and visions. In her trance she speaks with animals, moves inside and outside herself. She encounters angels, a black giant, hides within her own mouth and belly, expels herself, observes herself as a scholar or diarist might (reading her own life from a book). She is consumed by the giant whose fiery inner liquids spill out a deluge in which the voice becomes all voices.

‘Nothingness has no centre, and its boundaries are nothingness...’
– Leonardo da Vinci

Produced by The Norwegian Chamber Orchestra
Le Noir de l’Etoile has its origins in an encounter with the astronomer Joe Silk at Berkeley in 1985. It’s based on radio signals from rotating neutron stars called pulsars. The Vela Pulsar, which Silk had discovered, is the debris of a star that has long since died, but whose emissions can still be discerned using a radio receiver. Thus, the sounds emanate from outer space and are reproduced by means of four loudspeakers which in their turn interact with the sound of six percussionists on platforms in different places at the concert venue. Surprisingly, the sounds blend in very smoothly, since the signal from the Vela Pulsar is so orderly and percussive that it originally led to some speculation about a possible attempt by space beings to communicate.

Grisey himself described the Vela Pulsar sound as ‘a meeting with the eternal timekeepers’, and this work is a celebration of these remote and strange sounds. Nevertheless, the interaction with the percussionists lends a feeling of contact to the audience, which is somehow lifted out of the concert setting. Grisey wanted to challenge both the listeners and performers in their perception of time and the way sound affects it. Le Noir de l’Etoile is a musical examination of sound, space and time.

The work is performed by two Norwegian percussion ensembles, Pinquins and SISU. Despite their young age, the members of Pinquins, Sigrun Rogstad Gomnæs, Johanne Byhring and Ane Marthe Sætlien Holen, have already met with international acclaim. Veterans of 22 year, SISU consists of the trio Tomas Nilsson, Bjørn Skansen og Marius Søbye. During this time, it has become one of Scandinavia’s leading contemporary music ensembles. They both share an open and inquisitive attitude towards all musical challenges. This outlook serves well for Le Noir de l’Etoile, a work as fabled as it is demanding.
It is a showcase for his extraordinary percussion section that is occasionally a massive, often brutal percussion section. From the classical and romantic period downplayed the other important aspect: the rhythms of the cosmos. Flow, development, structure dictated by feeling, intuition or programmatic portrait must include the idea of cyclical rhythm. The Earth was the first clock. As soon as civilisation’s most ancient astronomers – or stargazers – realised that the heavens moved in regular patterns, and connected the movements of the sun and moon with the regulated shift of years, seasons, months, days, hours, minutes, the human calendar was locked in to the gigantic mechanism of the universe. ‘Circadian rhythm’ is the name for measures based on the cycles of planetary motions, the rhythm patterns soundtracking nature’s inescapable beat. ‘The relationship between musical process and nature must include the idea of cyclical rhythm’.

The rhythms of the human body – or more accurately, a kind of universe, or galaxy in itself, placing the players in orbit around the audience. In Grisey’s epic work, drums ring out and solid bodies scrape against the blackness of silence, and we are forced to contemplate the existence of infinite rhythmic cycles too large or complex for human perception to apprehend.

German composer Matthias Spahlinger has also written many works featuring percussion, including Éphémère (1977), notorious for its lengthy passage where nothing else happens other than slowly repeated strikes on a snare drum, and aus-nahmlos auffahmen (2014), for solo drum kit. His new works premiered at Ultima as asamisimasa – to – Nachtwicht mit sonne and another as yet untitled new work – continue his preoccupation with breaking down ordered systems, channelled via discrete moments of chaos and structured pulse. Language – the one phenomenon that sets humans apart from the rest of the natural world – was turned upside down in the dada poetry of Kurt Schwitters. His Ursonate (1923–32) atomised speech into a sequence of abstract sounds without reference to recognisable language – a pre-linguistic barrage of sounds made with the mouth. Schwitters is celebrated by the group Building Instrument at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter during Ultima, but similar connections between the body, sound and rhythm patterning are further explored in other projects throughout the festival. Kola Nikoladze’s Sound Stencil creates a kind of human drum machine from percussionists who use smartphones for synchronisation. The phones deliver a synchronised audio score, which dictates various rhythmical patterns and gives them directions. The percussionists move around the streets, striking various objects and landmarks as they go, encouraging members of the public to interrupt their routine and follow the noise. These impromptu actions create a strange disruption in the familiar rhythms of the city.

The rhythms of the human body – or more accurately, using rhythm to persuade the human body to achieve its limits – is a key factor in The Dog Days Are Over, a dance piece by Belgian choreographer Jan Martens. By restricting the dancers to doing nothing except jump up and down in complex, repetitive patterns, he pushes the human body to its limits in terms of both physical exhaustion and mental concentration. Holding the proscribed rhythm requires not its limits in terms of both physical exhaustion and mental concentration. Holding the proscribed rhythm requires not switching off but engaging all faculties to maintain the highest concentration. 'The relationship between musical process and nature must include the idea of cyclical rhythm'.
Since its establishment in Paris in 1958, the GRM (Groupe de Recherches Musicales) has driven developments in musique concrète and electroacoustic music, expanding outwards from the radical vinyl and tape manipulations of its founder Pierre Schaeffer. The GRM has become an international magnet for composers seeking new expressiveness in electronic music and transformed sound. In tribute to GRM’s achievements, Ultima presents an evening mixing French musique concrète classics with new work by a younger generation of sonic explorers.

Pierre Schaeffer (1910–92) began his experiments recording and manipulating noises and found sounds in Paris in 1948. The *Cinq Études de Bruits* were the first official ‘opus’ of musique concrète, first performed for a radio broadcast. It consists of five short ‘noise studies’ created from the sounds of percussion, an old piano, organ pipes rescued from a bombed cathedral, and most famously, the *Étude aux Chemins de Fer*, assembled from the sounds of steam engines.

Bernard Parmegiani (1927–2013) was one of Schaeffer’s youngest students and *De Natura Sonorum* (1970) is his electronic masterpiece, marking a new phase in his work where he tried to combine and contrast sounds to observe their nature. It exists in a state of continuous metamorphosis, generating the artificial from the natural. ‘Does listening to this constant transition from one state to another tell us anything about the nature of sound?’ asked the composer. The piece is divided into twelve sections. Number three: ‘A Geologique Sonority’, resembles flying over a landscape, as electronic and instrumental sounds become confused, as if viewed from a great height. Number five is an elastic study, featuring the vibrations of skins and strings. The second half is more elastic in character, featuring the vibrations of natural objects from a great height. Number five is an ‘elastic study, featuring the vibrations of natural objects from a great height’.

Luc Ferrari (1929–2005) changed all that with his *Presque Rien* (Almost Nothing) series for magnetic tape, beginning in 1970 with *Presque Rien no 1: Le lever du jour au bord de la mer* – a polyphonic composition arising out of the everyday noises of nature and country life. No 2: *Ainsi continue la nuit dans ma tête multiple* (Thus the night continues in my multiple head, 1977) includes Ferrari himself and his wife in the sonic picture as they rove around a nocturnal landscape, commenting on the process of recording as they pick up sounds of crickets, night birds, a church bell, a barking dog and a symphony of insects. Eventually a storm gathers and the recordist begins moving inside to his own psyche.

Régis Renouard Larivière and Kassel Jaeger come from a young generation of French artists currently working with GRM to extend the electroacoustic music tradition, and at Ultima they each perform one representative work from their repertoire. In addition, Espen Sommer Eide, the Berlin based British blower Robin Hayward, and Norway’s Martin Taxt have recent-ly been joined by Peder Simonsen, a Norwegian also based in Berlin. In this daytime concert they will perform selections from their recent acclaimed album Star System (SOFA Records 2014), which was described by one English writer as sounding ‘like the doors of the underworld slamming’. If you thought you knew what a tuba could do, think again: this is a sound of flux, layers, drones and subliminal frequencies.

**François Bonnet Live Jukebox**

Since 1958, the GRM has driven developments in musique concrète and electroacoustic music, and has become an international magnet for composers seeking new expressiveness in electronic music and transformed sound.
SOFA so good
15 year anniversary/album release

The musician-run record label SOFA celebrates its 15th anniversary with a double album release during Ultima. Since 2000, Martin Taxt, Kim Myhr, Ingar Zach and Ivar Grydeland have clocked up around 50 releases in a broad range of experimental music, and they show no signs of slowing down. At Ultima, albums will be launched by British improvisers Keith Rowe & John Tilbury, and improv group Mural. Both ensembles collaborate with painter Kjell Bjørgeengen for their visual style. Keith Rowe (guitar, electronics) and John Tilbury (piano) are legendary figures in improvised music, and are particularly known for their work in Cornelius Cardew’s Scratch Orchestra, free music group AMM, and the electroacoustic outfit MIMEO. Tilbury is also one of the world’s foremost interpreters of the piano music of American composer Morton Feldman. Tilbury has also written for the piano, and his works have been performed by such renowned musicians as Fred Frith and Zeena Parkins. Rowe is often described as the godfather of EAI (electroacoustic improvisation). enough still not know is a four-CD set of improvised music, though it bears the mark of long-time collaboration between these two musicians.

Mural consists of SOFA’s own Ingar Zach and Kim Myhr, in a trio with Australian wind player Jim Denley. The band has been going since 2007, and their triple CD Tempo is a recording of a four-hour concert given in the Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas.

The struggle continues
Georg Friedrich Haas / Ensemble Ernst

Georg Friedrich Haas’s In Vain (2009) is one of the most renowned and ambitious works in our time. A performance involves 24 musicians and a concert hall that is periodically plunged into darkness. It shifts between translucent shimmering and merciless power on the verge of noise, yet it always retains a sense of incomprehensible beauty. The composer makes the tempered tones slowly yield to microtonality and overtone techniques based on spectral music. The emotional triggers strewn throughout the 70-minute work never let the dramatic curve slacken. The title alludes to the musical development in the work, but also the growth of the far right movement Haas observed during the 1999 elections in Austria. From this perspective, the work as well as the title allude to despair caused by the possibility that Europe may once again be moving towards a form of fascism thought to belong to the past, in a cycle of inevitability. The great idea about the sublimely beautiful may turn out to be just another futile utopia. Ensemble Ernst is at the forefront of Nordic contemporary music ensembles. The ensemble actively promotes new music and modern classics.
James Hoff, Afrikan Sciences / PAN
Hilde Holsen

Ultima presents a triple bill hosted by the Berlin-based PAN label. Run by US musician Bill Kouligas (Hiss Golden Messenger), PAN has become one of the most challenging and critically acclaimed labels within electronic and experimental music. African Sciences from Brooklyn and James Hoff are responsible for some of the imprint's best known records. African Sciences (Eric Douglas Porter) has a broad musical background and is best known for his polyphonic and complex melodies in a crossover between afro-futurism, science fiction, hip hop, jazz and house. His most recent album Circuitous (2014) once again proves that he is an artist house. His most recent album Circuitous (2014) once again proves that he is an artist

Gobi Drab

Gobi Drab is a recorder performer who connects free improvisation with the rhetoric of early music and the intricate structures of contemporary music in her music. She is a co-founder of ‘snim – spontaneous network for improvised music’ and member of PLENUM, a Paetzold recorder ensemble. In her composition glass eye I–II–III, written in 2015, she explores the acoustic textures, possibilities and impossibilities of her instruments. She will also perform Swedish composer Ansgar Beste’s Dialogues Sauvages (2013–14) for (hyper-)prepared Paetzold square bass recorder, a virtuoso solo work that produces ‘sounds you’ve never heard on a wind instrument’.

Thursday 17 September

James Hoff / Afrikan Sciences / Hilde Holsen
Blå
10 pm
kr. 500 / 100,–

Lunchtime concert

Fiddles in your face
Sigurd Johan Heide

Sauvages, Dialogues Sauvages, Annie Dorsen

Friday 18 September

Evolutionary musical
Annie Dorsen

Based on evolutionary processes such as mutation and natural selection, the algorithms determine the most appropriate route from the first song to the next, or from what has passed to what is to come. As a result, the performance stands as an expression of the unpredictable nature of the present, as a contrast to a familiar past and the notion of a happy future. The music is performed by three singers who continually receive information about which rhythm, pitch and lyrics to sing. The result is an intelligent, humanly yet disturbing encounter between man and machine.

Annie Dorsen has previously worked in film, dance and theatre, and in recent years has been particularly interested in artificial intelligence and digital performance. The Yesterday Tomorrow project was developed in cooperation with Pierre Godard and Greg Bellar from IRCAM.

Annie Dorsen
Yesterday Tomorrow
Black Box Teater
7 pm
kr. 240 / 100,–

Also 19 September, 6 pm

Annie Dorsen’s Yesterday Tomorrow is a musical that breaks most of the rules for this genre. Unlike traditional musicals, the music for this show is created during the course of the performance with the help of computer-generated algorithms, which means that the final result is different every time. The only points of reference are two well-known popular songs: ‘Yesterday’ by The Beatles and ‘Tomorrow’ from the musical Annie.

Photo Celeste Sloman (m)

Photo Thomas Klausner (m)

Photo Roland Rauschmeier (m)
Ancestral voices
Anna Thorvaldsdottir

In a world about to meet its end, the last humans live in uncertainty without any will to take risks, fed up with life. All they’re looking for is the next level of comfort and safety. Just then a primal scream, a prehistoric sound emerges from the blue-green glaciers on Greenland – man’s most profound origin is calling out to the decadent core of humanity.

Iceland’s Anna Thorvaldsdottir has become something of a star within contemporary music. Her collaboration with director Thorleifur Örn Arnarsson and artist Anna Tryggvadottir has resulted in a performance where the human place in the world and time are set in perspective.

While the slow meltdown of the glaciers highlights urgent global challenges, Thorvaldsdottir’s colorful musical language transforms into something more abstract: ‘Touching and movement are essential. The musical touch relates the way a central force is being transferred from one performer to the next,’ she says about the music.

UR_ is a work for three voices, an actor, a grand piano and an ensemble of twelve performers. Thorvaldsdottir also uses her music to shine a light on current political issues. Most people agree that climate change is man-made, but there is change going the other way as well – the climate and natural evolution exerts an influence on human beings. The interaction is complex, but Thorvaldsdottir’s ambitious music illustrates the relationship between very general, global challenges and quite specific human emotions.

The title UR_ has several connotations, as it may mean ‘original’ as in a first cause, a force of nature that was present before everything became what it is now. But in the old Norse languages, ur also meant rock, and was a common suffix as well. It’s still in use in Icelandic.

Thorvaldsdottir has made her mark as an important voice in contemporary music, and as she often works with sizeable orchestral music, long intonations and a diverse set of instruments, she is able to conjure up a dynamic landscape with ample room for interpretation. The young Icelandic composer was the 2012 recipient of the prestigious Music Award from the Nordic Council, and her most recent album Aerial (Deutsche Grammophon) was met with rave reviews (it featured among the New Yorker’s ‘Best Music of 2014’). She often works with sonic structures on a grand scale that stirs associations with landscape and nature.

UR_ is a result of the artistic network Far North, and was developed in a two year timespan during gatherings on Greenland, Iceland, in Norway and Germany.

UR_ is also the title of a book, in which Mette Karlsvik expands on the libretto she wrote together with Thorvaldsdottir. Karlsvik is an award-winning author, and her poem UR_ is a story about origins.

In collaboration with The Norwegian Opera & Ballet

Photo: Far North (m)

Frevo Gitarduo

‘How do you get two guitar players to play in perfect unison? A: ‘Shoot one!’

Frevo Gitarduo consists of the two Norwegian guitarists Pål Granum and Andreas Karlsen, who began playing together in 1995. During their time as a duo, they have accumulated a broad repertoire of works for two guitars. They have also premiered several works by Nordic composers. Armed only with various guitars and electronics, Frevo will deliver a high-tech guitar duel performance when they take the stage at Ultima. They will be performing new works by Peter Jakober, Evan Gardner, Herman Vogt and Therese Birkeland Ulve.

Supported by the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation
The microtonal guitar
Zwerm

Anders Førisdal
Norges musikkhøgskole / Levinsalen
6pm
kr. 100,–

Zwerm / Anders Førisdal

Anders Førisdal joins forces with Dutch-Belgian guitar quartet Zwerm. At Ultima, their programme will consist of early Norwegian experimental music by Bjørn Fongaard (1919–80). Sinfonia Microtonalis and Aforismer are key works in Fongaard’s extensive catalogue, in which his microtonal guitar plays a vital role.

Since 2007, Zwerm has been attracting increasing attention for its projects, such as performing as a street parade band or playing brutal noise rock. With a generous dose of central European humour, the group has a long list of releases to its credit, among them The World’s Longest Melody.

They will also perform The Major Sevenths Medley, a greatest-hits ode to Matthew Shlomowitz’s imaginary band. Jongens is the title of one of Zwerm’s early albums, and 25 years on, band or playing brutal noise rock. With a generous dose of central European humour, the group has a long list of releases to its credit, among them The World’s Longest Melody.

A film premiere with a difference. At his current hideout in Värmland, Sweden, where for the past two years he has been developing an alternative Norwegian Opéra House, Trond Reinholdtsen has made a series of ‘opéra films’ entitled Ø, four of which will be premiered at a special screening event at Ultima.

Trond Reinholdtsen founded his own opera house, the Norwegian Opéra, in 2009, with the motto ‘the birth of opera amid the crisis of contemporary music’. It was a small-scale Bayreuth scaled down to the size of Reinholdtsen’s living room. In fact, it was his living room: A dingy apartment in a run-down quarter of Oslo. The Norwegian Opéra was a means of seizing the means of production, in which its founder was also the dictatorial opera director, the composer of all works, as well as the librettist, director, Heldentenor, scenographer, propaganda minister, web designer, ticket master, cleaning assistant, conceptual consultant, head of the Worker’s Union, restaurant chef, etc.

Reinholdtsen’s operas have returned to grand narratives and ur-mythologies (Orpheus, The Apocalypse, Utopias, Narcissus) as a response to a perceived genrification and fashiness in contemporary music. The participation of non-professionals ensure a constant sensation of terrifying on the brink of disaster and chaos.

This film premiere will be an opportunity to sample what he and his guerrilla group have been cooking up in their Swedish hideaway. A mixture of dystopian science fiction, verismo, communist propaganda, outdated existentialism and juicy autobiograpy. ‘In other words,’ teases Reinholdtsen, ‘a little like Der Ring des Nibelungen.

Norwegian opera
Trond Reinholdtsen

Norge musikkhøgskole / Levinsalen
6pm
kr. 200 / 100,–

Trond Reinholdtsen Ø (WP)

Venue will be announced at ultima.no
open
kr. 100,–

Fongaard’s siren, ‘a little like Der Ring des Nibelungen.

Darwin’s lamentation
The Norwegian Soloists’ Choir

On Saturday, 19th September, the Norwegian Soloists’ Choir will perform three world premieres. The Norwegian Opera House’s production of Darwin’s Lamentation will feature choreography by Edvin Østergaard, conducted by Grete Pedersen, and performed by the Norwegian Soloists’ Choir. The work is based on Rainer Maria Rilke’s Sonnets to Orpheus from 1922, and will receive its first performance at Ultima.

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Edvin Østergaard
Darwin’s Lamentation (WP)

The Norwegian Soloists’ Choir will perform Darwin’s Lamentation, the work is inspired by Rainer Maria Rilke’s Sonnets to Orpheus from 1922, and will receive its first performance at Ultima.

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Edvin Østergaard
The Norwegian Soloists’ Choir

Universitetets gamle festsal
7pm
kr. 100,–

Sonette for Choir by Jan Erik Mikalsen was completed earlier this year and will now have its first performance at Ultima. The work is inspired by Rainer Maria Rilke’s Sonnets to Orpheus from 1922, based on Swedish poet Gunnar Eklöf’s text of the same title, language’s limits and components are explored. Linderoth is studying composition at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo. Following its premiere at the Academy in March 2015, the work has also been performed in Groningen by the Norwegian Soloists’ Choir.

All three works will be performed by the Norwegian Soloists’ Choir under the direction of conductor Grete Pedersen, and will be introduced by scientist and industrial entrepreneur Alf Bjørsen. The Norwegian Soloists’ Choir is the title of one of Zwerm’s early albums, and 25 years on, and the挪挪威交响乐团将演出三首世界首演作品。挪威歌剧院的《达尔文的哀歌》演出将由埃德温·奥斯特高德编舞，由格蕾特·佩德森指挥，由挪威独唱者合唱团演出。该作品是根据1922年里尔克的《奥菲欧的十四行诗》创作的，将首次在Ultima上演。

该作品是根据1922年里尔克的《奥菲欧的十四行诗》创作的，将首次在Ultima上演。
Idyll speculations
Øyvind Torvund interview by Rob Young

Thinking about this year’s Ultima theme, ‘On Nature’, what does the idea of Nature mean to you?

If I’m asked to consider nature as such, I think of something primal, something we both fear and admire. We may fear nature in the sense that the natural forces within ourselves can be frightening. The very opposite of civilized existence... So for me, the concept of nature encompasses the idea of something that cannot be controlled, something wild, as well.

Your new commission, Idyllic Scenes, comments on the rhapsodic image of nature as portrayed in late Romantic orchestral music...

I’ve been somewhat preoccupied with the way the picturesque has been presented in earlier symphonic tone poems and impressionist works, so for this piece I’ve assembled a number of ‘archetypal’ scenes or tableaux, and I’ve arranged them in line one after the other. This concept of the idyll, and how to evoke it, interests me.

The picturesque idea is essential to our culture, the yearning for a heavenly existence, salvation, the absence of pain... The diverse ways composers like Mahler, Debussy, Ravel and Richard Strauss have depicted the idyllic have become musical clichés, not the least through film scores. I wanted to grasp all of this and use it as an overflowing collection of idylls, but with an explosive, unpolished layer.

Your previous works include Neon Forest Space and Forest Construction – why is this a recurring motif in your work?

The concept of music that emanates from the forest is definitely a recurring motif. This kind of proto-folk music has been an idea that has struck me several times. There’s also an element of a proto-modernism that’s hidden in the woods
somewhere... Just as the concept of archaic melodies is on my mind. I'm interested in the idea that there may be something like an 'archaic modernism', a tradition in abstract expression. In any case, I find the thought of an archaic version of what we call modernism fascinating.

I try to discover abstract structures in folk art and music, and maybe that's a somewhat contrived or quaint approach. But the notion that the abstract may be a symbol for the divine, an unfathomable or intangible aspect of life, has been present for a long time. So has the wishful thinking that our culture nurtures a certain respect for what we don't understand...

This thought experiment about an ur-modernism of the woods is something I've made use of in a number of works, where an ensemble on stage imitates abstract phrases from field recordings made in a forest. This is the same idea that becomes apparent in *Idyllic Scenes*. What you'll hear is abstract ensemble music in a forest, and the orchestra makes a live imitation. It may well be that the work approaches questions such as 'where does the language we use come from?'. When you find yourself rooted in a modernist composition heritage, the feeling of estrangement comes easily. You long for roots that stretch further back in time...

The usual definition of what place contemporary music is at right now, tends to draw a line from Palestrina to Beethoven... so the need to explore the modernism of the woods arises...

When nature and music is discussed, landscape is often the first thing people think of. But natural processes involve cycles, rhythms, adaptations and catastrophes. As a composer, are you interested in making a music that would reflect that?

Absolutely. Nature shows no pity, and it is too grand for these concepts to be presented on stage without a visible form of reduction. I believe there are many artists who envy the forces of nature. Nature is awe-inspiring, and in some sense incomprehensible. In such a perspective the grandiosity in nature is something you would like to experience in art, or even achieve in your own art. On the other hand, you're happy to spend your evening snugly in your own house instead of drowning in glowing lava!

From an artistic point of view, is nature most interesting as a thing in itself, or as a cultural construction?

Both are interesting. If you think of nature as a landscape untouched by human hands, it may affect you in a way where you lose yourself, where the magnificence of nature takes over. I'm interested in the way we confront concepts like 'the wilderness' and 'the unpoised'. They're elements many of us look for in nature, yet they can be hard to face if they're found within ourselves, or within our society. What is 'the wild'?

It's hard to grasp, but it's certainly an attraction towards these properties in literature and art, but usually they're found in controlled forms, as if seen from a distance.

Well, the foremost motivation is probably that animal vocalizations are the oldest music or sounds that we know of, together with the sounds of nature, such as wind, rain, thunder and so on. But I can get interested in the idea of an imperfect imitation as well. Human beings are proficient when it comes to seeing and understanding things within their personal cultural context. When a musician imitates something, what you hear is something else as well, his or her language and culture-bound understanding. The interpretation gives it away. And regarding Olivier Messiaen: his bird notation pieces the first and foremost sound like Messiaen. While the bird signatures obviously are discernible, the composer Messiaen and his musical expression takes centre stage, as if nature were a mirror in which to perceive his language of music.
Finale
André Bratten / Ole-Henrik Moe
Arvo Pärt

Arvo Part: Te Deum
André Bratten / Ole-Henrik Moe
New work (WP)

Oslo Domkor & Ensemble Allegria

Oslo Cathedral
8pm
kr. 350 / 250,–

Into three ‘movements’ and is ‘based on processed sound landscapes, the slowly instruments, field recordings and heavily synths and drum machines for classical closing concert. Abandoning his usual inspiration. Now, in collaboration with com- Giacinto Scelsi as his prime source of in- passion for contemporary music, and cites and melodic synth lines. Bratten has a acclaim for its pure, well-rounded sounds debut album from 2013 received critical between space disco and micro house. His for his elegant music, which lies somewhere able attention both in Norway and abroad large scale work by Norwegian electronic dancer musician André Bratten in col- laboration with composer and violinist Ole-Henrik Moe.

André Bratten has attracted consider- able attention both in Norway and abroad for his elegant music, which lies somewhere between space disco and micro house. His debut album from 2013 received critical acclaim for its pure, well-rounded sounds and melodic synth lines. Bratten has a passion for contemporary music, and cites Giacinto Scelsi as his prime source of ins-piration. Now, in collaboration with com- poser Ole-Henrik Moe, he has taken on the task of writing the music for Ultima’s closing concert. Abandoning his usual synths and drum machines for classical instruments, field recordings and heavily processed sound landscapes, the slowly evolving, microtonal piece is divided into three ‘movements’ and is ‘based on a quiet feeling of absence’, according to Bratten. The sustained, simple and med-itative qualities of Arvo Part’s Te Deum (1984) mark Part’s distinctiveness as a composer. The work is written for choir, strings, piano and wind harp, which will be positioned surrounding the seated audience. Te Deum, also known as the Ambrosian Hymn, is one of Christianity’s oldest and best-known hymns, and Part’s setting recalls the simplicity of Gregorian chant, with an effect of intense meditation.

As a soundscape ecologist, I rarely use the word ‘nature’ in my work. The term itself separates us as humans from the living world we’re trying to express. Most indigenous lan- guage groups with a living connection to the natural world have no word for what we in the West refer to as ‘nature’. I grew up in a world that usually assumed everything from a visual perspective: Forests measured tree by tree and bird by bird. But I’ve learned that a much fuller understanding can be gained from what we hear, and by taking into account the dialect of entire ecosystems: biophoenies, the signature voices of the natural world.

‘Like much else in the human repertoire,’ wrote Paul Shepard in The Others: How Animals Made Us Human (1996), ‘music may have been already there when we arrived and its performance was everywhere audible and visible.’ Shepard, a fine naturalist and professor of ecology, was not a musician. But he instinctively knew that creature vocalizations in wild habitats not only validate the presence of life, but their acoustic output was an ingredient essential to evolving human cultures.

In the late 1990s, an academic acquaintance visited Wild Sanctuary, our home in northern California’s Valley of the Moon. During his visit he suggested that Olivier Messiaen’s Chronochromie – a composition featuring transformations of the birdsong of several species he and his wife, Yvonne, had notated while hiking the forests of France – was a fine example of the human connection between music and ‘nature’. Shepard’s argument had already motivated me to recon- sider the associations between natural soundscapes and music and to dig a bit deeper – beyond what the well-established Western, academically-trained (mostly) male scholars and composers had been proposing as the origins of music for the past few centuries. So when our visitor suggested that Messiaen’s work somehow related to ‘nature’, I blurted out, ‘But surely you must know that Messiaen’s work, however extraordinary, has nothing to do with the natural world!’

Momentarily taken aback, the visitor responded, ‘Well, if you think that’s true, why don’t you write about it?’ The challenge was so intriguing that I have spent the better part of the past two decades doing just that.

In my work, I record and study the sounds of organisms from microscopic to megafauna within their habitats. I evaluate the acoustic expressions of life emanating from those biomes and our human effects on them. From the beginning, I suspected that the messages inherent within natural soundscapes were profoundly important – not only informing us about our musical origins, but many other disciplines as well. In a world otherwise illuminated by what we see, soundscapes began to expose even more surprises. For me, the link between wild soundscapes and music has, so far, yielded the most significant returns.

To city folk such as my own parents, the wild was at best a vague, incomprehensible abstraction; at worst, dangerous. Then, quite by accident, at the age of thirty I found myself recording soundscapes in a park north of San Francisco, for a collaboration with the Moog synthesizer pioneer Paul Beaver. In A Wild Sanctuary (Warner Brothers, 1970) was the first album of its kind to feature an ecological theme and included entire natural soundscapes as components of orchestration. The stereo sound of the redwood forest habitat transmitted through my headphones not only brought details of the biome more sharply into focus, but was greatly consoling at the same time. The combination of acoustic space interleaved with the burble of a nearby stream, the calls and pulsed wing-beats of a pair of ravens as they soared over the canopy above me, and the hushed ambience of ocean breezes wafting through the upper layers of treetops left me with the sense that I had finally unearthed a tranquil corner in an otherwise tumultuous world.

As with most professional musicians, I had been taught to hear, but not to really listen to the more subtle audio textures that lay beyond our limited urban and cultural worlds. To learn about that piece of the acoustic puzzle I had to venture far afield, deep into the heart of the natural world, many miles from human habitation and distractions. The wild, as Bill McKibben reminds us, is a place where one can walk for a week in any direction without encountering a road or a fence, where there is no signage, where there are no rangers eager to impart their knowledge of the life cycles of a bear or raptor, and, best of all, where there is nothing to buy. It was while encamped in those habitats that I began to understand that the collective sounds produced by non-human vocal organisms were formi- dable chronicles transmitting great quantities of useful data. In order to properly identify the general sources of sound and because there are so few words in our language to describe
the nuances, about a dozen years ago I embraced R. Murray Schafer’s idea of the soundscape and fleshed it out, adding the terms geophony, biophony and anthropophony. Geophony is comprised of the non-biological signals that occur naturally, like the effect of wind in the trees, water in a stream, waves at the ocean shore, and movements of the earth (the first acoustic signals ever generated on Earth). Biophony is comprised of the collective signatures produced by all organisms in a given habitat at a particular time of day or night. And finally, anthropophony is made up of all the sounds we humans make. Some of them are controlled, like music, theatre or language, while a large proportion are made up of chaotic or incoherent signals generated by our electro-mechanical world – often referred to as noise.

But what is the connection between biophony and music? Biophonies not only clearly express melody, harmony, rhythm and timbre, but also well-partitioned structures – precise arrangements that any academic music department would recognize as compositions. As I recorded more frequently in rainforests close to the equator, where the density and diversity of vocal species are highest, I found that when the biophonies were transformed into graphic illustrations, called spectrograms, they closely resembled contemporary musical scores, where the highest-sounding organisms were represented at the top of the page and the lowest-sounding creatures at the bottom. In each biome, insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds and mammals partition their voices, establishing distinctive acoustic niches – based on time or frequency – in which to vocalize. While the organizational models differ from place to place, the paradigm generally holds, even in temperate, sub-arctic and arctic regions of the planet. For signal-producing organisms, the evolution of acoustic and temporal niches is a solution that helps prevent one creature’s voice from being masked by others. Because the arrangement into frequency and temporal niches closely resembles the manner in which instruments in an orchestra are scored, subsequent deduction revealed that it is precisely from these phenomena that we humans learned to structure sound; we created music by mimicking what we heard in the African forests and plains. As we are only now beginning to understand, if we want to express aspects of the wild, we, as composers, will have to express them in a manner of operation. Moreover, even though their compositions may have been created with great skill and empathy, and may be celebrated as great music, their subtexts convey a profound disconnection from natural world phenomena.

From the 18th century, when Linnaeus began to deconstruct the natural world into its component parts, his methodology was so encompassing that it seeped into many layers of scientific and cultural expression. Museums began to collect and separate creatures completely out of context, studying and displaying them individually because it was easy and practical. Huge, well-known archives of individual bird, mammal, and frog recordings were established in both the US and the UK where natural world marvels were viewed piecemeal and expressed through an illusion of control, distortion, and schism. This reductionist and fragmented vision was adopted by composers working within the same occidental paradigms. Their manifestations of ‘nature’ were generally symbolized by the inclusion of the few signature bird, whale and/or wolf vocalizations, which continue to be expressed in the repertoire of many composers.

When I asked my Messiaen acquaintance why the composer dismissed the majority of birds that lived in those French forests, or why he never utilized the sound of a hippo or the trumpet of an elephant in his compositions, he had no real answer. But I have come to believe that the kinds of abstraction most Western composers have exercised in the name of ‘nature’, only serve to underscore our detachment from a fundamentally distorted concept to begin with. To me, the single animal or species model is a bit like trying to understand the magnificence of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony by abstracting the voice of a single violin player out of the context of the orchestra and listening only to that one part. Indeed, of the approximately ten thousand identified bird species, only one hundred or so have ever been included in musical compositions of the West – less than .01 per cent (and most of those were used by Messiaen).

The idea of the wild is not well-served by the paradigms of fragmentation and abstraction we humans have imposed on the living world, either in science or through the prism of the sound arts. Biophonies are much more coherent and complex, even though we may not yet be able to recognize the intricate patterns that connect everything. So when the question arises as to what Messiaen’s music has to do with ‘nature’, or more succinctly, the living world in which we are but one organism, the answer is, ‘not much’. Nor, by the way, does the work of Mozart, or Beethoven, Sibelius, George Crumb, Alan Hovhaness, Paul Winter, Grofé, Rautavaara, Vivaldi, Ralph Vaughan Williams or Debussy – unless, of course, it is made to fit the same narrow, abstract, obsolete concept branded as ‘nature’. Like many others in our field, they failed to grasp the idea, later expressed by John Cage, that in order to understand the living world we have to experience it in its own manner of operation. Moreover, even though their compositions may have been created with great skill and empathy, and may be celebrated as great music, their subtexts convey a profound disconnection from natural world phenomena.

Apart from the indigenous music of the Ba’Aka, Kaluli, the Jivaros, the Yoiq singers, and the Pitjanjatjara, there are a few Western composers who are striving to address these issues in what is becoming a worldwide movement. Among them is David Monacchi, a composer and naturalist whose postmodern ecoacoustic compositions speak directly to this kind of inclusive thinking. Murray Schafer, who pioneered the compositional idea 30 years ago with his *Patricia Series*, is another. John Luther Adams, the American composer from Alaska, who has written *Become Ocean* and *Imuksuit*, has incorporated impressions of entire soundscapes of the far north into his music.

As we are only now beginning to understand, if we want to express aspects of the wild, we, as composers, will have to understand and reflect more profoundly on our roles and place within a much more comprehensive ecosystem.