

Echoes Around Me

27. Oktober – 29. Oktober 2023

Akusmatik Festival | Young Lion:ess Wettbewerb | Künstler:innen Portraits

Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien | Lehárgasse 8 | Tor 1 | 1060 Wien | Erdgeschoß | Säulenhalle

Winners of Young Lion:ess of Acousmatic Music 2023 Competition

Jury Prize : Dariush Derakhshani | Pulsar Rays | stereo | 10' 24" | 2023

is an acousmatic composition that explores the synthesis of purely artificial sound spaces inspired by natural phenomena. Amongst some of the synthesis techniques used to realize this composition were pulsar synthesis, convolution, and stochastic spatialization—which is the random movement of a sound object within a confined space—to achieve a natural-behaving immersive sonic experience. Additionally, the assistance of a variational auto-encoder model, trained on a diverse range of natural sounds, was utilized to evoke a heightened sense of realism when perceiving these purely synthetic soundscapes.

The title, "Pulsar Rays," alludes to the technique of Sonar (sound navigation and ranging), which employs sound propagation for object detection and a better understanding of underwater environments; a technique used by dolphins and bats for millions of years. Inspired by this technique, Pulsar Rays guides the listener through carefully manufactured spaces by the emission of pulsar trains, allowing the listener to perceive and recreate fictitious and at times deceptively familiar spaces.

Pulsar Rays aims to blur the boundary between the perception of natural and artificial sound through the convergence of technology and artistry, hoping to offer a unique auditory experience.

Audience Award : Francesco Distefano | Vivo Nel Suono | stereo | 9' 51" | 2023

this piece was composed in honor of a very special place to me, Foce del Fiume Irmínio, a natural reserve in Sicily that was destroyed by a fire last year.

The title "Vivo nel Suono" has a double meaning in my language: "Alive in the sound" and "I live in the sound", that are the two concepts behind the piece.

We are perpetually surrounded by a musical environment with a life of its own and the purpose of the piece is to raise awareness about noise pollution and the progressive loss of sound environments caused by human interventions.

The living cycle of that special place is tracked by its sound objects, while the girl's speech is intended to impersonate nature's voice, which suggests to listen and to pay attention to all the audible details around us.

Honorable Mention : Diego Piñera | Guirlgay | stereo | 5' | 2023

Francesco Distefano

a composer and sound designer from Sicily, born in 1999 and based in Bologna.

His musical interests range from live dance performances, acousmatic composition, video programming and creation of installations.

He aims to give to his compositions deep meanings, often related to political and social issues as well as focusing on aesthetic sound research.

Diego Piñera

is a Mexican composer and pianist dedicated to the composition and performance of concert and electronic music.

He studied composition and piano at the Superior School of Music of the National Institute of Fine Arts and Sound Art in the University of Barcelona.

His music has been presented in Mexico, USA, Germany, France, Poland, Czech Republic, Croatia and Spain. In 2021 he received a scholarship from the government of Mexico as part of the Young Creators program in the field of acoustic and electroacoustic music composition.

He is studying for a master's degree in computer music and sound at the University for Music and Performing Arts in Graz.

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Nina Bauer | A.Z.O.O.O. – A Zimmer Of One's Own | Fixed Media | Stereo | 6' 39" | 2021

A Phantastic Journey Into Nanostructures

Komposition/Musik: Nina Bauer

Data Sonification & Mastering: Wolfgang Musil



Das Stück ist ein künstlerischer Beitrag zum Projekt „Wings of Death Mechanical Bactericide by Biomimetics of the Nanopillars on Insect Wings“.

Alexander Bürger, Richard van Nieuwenhoven, Ilse C. Gebeshuber/ TU Wien.

Filmmusik fürs Kopfkino:

Die Beschäftigung mit Abtastmustern und Sonifikation mündete in einen Denk- und Assoziationsprozess über Größenverhältnisse, Messverfahren, den Drang Unbekanntes – sei es verschwindend klein oder weit entfernt – wahrnehmbar und reproduzierbar zu machen. Diesen habe ich in der Materialwahl, Bearbeitung und Montage versucht zu erfassen und akustisch abzubilden.

Nina Bauer

*1973, lebt als freischaffende Künstlerin (Median- und Klangkunst) in Wien.

<http://www.studio-nb.at>

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Beatriz Ferreyra | Echos | stereo | 8' 33" | 1978

Interpreted by Hala Jafar

The composer uses magnetic tape to recreate the voice of a departed loved one.

Can the dead speak? Thomas Edison thought they could; nearly half a century after inventing the phonograph, he was at work on a device dubbed the “spirit phone,” intended to enable the living to communicate with the deceased. Similarly, Thomas Watson, Alexander Graham Bell’s assistant, believed the telephone could aid in communicating with spirits.

“Echos,” a 1978 piece by the Argentine composer, feels like a vindication of these inventors’ paranormal obsessions: In its haunting frequencies, we glimpse the outline of the afterworld.

Ferreyra composed “Echos” entirely with magnetic tape, working with recordings of her niece Mercedes Cornu singing four Latin American folk songs. Little trace of the original material is left; Ferreyra has cut and sliced the recordings to ribbons, doubling and interweaving Cornu’s trembling voice to create a soft, ambient bed of sound, and tracing her lovely, expressive tone into a series of weary, wordless curlicues. Halfway through, the piece breaks down into a silent expanse pockmarked by breaths and coughs; when Cornu’s singing returns, it has been looped and layered into ghostly murmurs and coos, like a flock of enchanted birds coming home to roost. At the very end, Cornu breaks off in mid-song, and it is unclear whether she is laughing or sobbing.

The effect of this otherworldly music would be powerful under any circumstances; knowing that Cornu perished in a car crash only makes “Echos” that much more moving. Her voice seems to carry from a great distance—not just across years, but dimensions. It is as if Ferreyra had made good on Edison’s supernatural pursuits, using the occult power of magnetic tape to bring back the voice of her niece from the beyond.¹

Beatriz Ferreyra

She studied in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, Edgardo Cantón (GRM France - RAI Italy in 1963). She worked with the Groupe de recherches musicales (GRM of the Service de la recherche of the ORTF under the direction of Pierre Schaeffer (1963-70) where she collaborated on the realization of the Solfège de l’objet sonore albums. While there she completed research and ran the interdisciplinary seminars. In 1975, she joined the Composers College of the Institut international de musique électroacoustique de Bourges (IMEB). She created the experimental concerts series Les rendez-vous de la musique concrète (1998-99) at the Centre d’études et de recherche Pierre Schaeffer. She has performed at many international festivals, electroacoustic conferences and music seminars. As an independent composer, she has received commissions from the government and musical associations (GRM, IMEB, ACIC, etc) both in France and abroad, for performance at festivals and concerts. She also composes for public celebrations and events, films and ballets. Beatriz Ferreyra has also worked in the area of music therapy and served on numerous juries for international competitions adjudicating experimental musics.

¹ Review by Philip Sherburne - Pitchfork, <https://pitchfork.com/reviews/tracks/beatriz-ferreyra-echos/>

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Alex Buck | Screaming Trees | acousmatic | stereo | 8' 06" | 2019

1st prize International Electro-acoustic Music Composition Competition

1st prize Musicworks 2019 Electronic Music Composition Contest

[featuring: Luana Baptista]

I read a life-changer called *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*. In such a book, an anthropologist, Bruce Albert, unveils the perspective of one of the most significant indigenous leaders, David Kopenawa, on consumerism-based, urban societies, always in opposition to Yanomami's lifestyle and values. For Yanomami people, Trees are sacred beings. Yanomami people defend trees with their own lives. And after thinking a little deeper on this rather bizarre sonic metaphor of screaming trees, I realized that the development of Western music was, indeed, promoted at the expense of the killing of trees. European classical music tradition depends on the wood. Not only for producing the majority of orchestral instruments but also for preserving and allowing the Western music language further development through score writing on paper, a well-known substance derived from trees. Consequently, a very poetic and renewed view of trees emerges, for they have provided us with two of the most significant elements humans need to survive: oxygen and music.

All sounds contained in the composition are tree-related. I utilized sounds of the closing of books, page turnings, instruments made of wood to represent human culture/history. Natural sounds from different birds, wind, and water represent nature. This strategy of dealing with concrete sounds in a still highly abstract musical discourse provides listeners with clues on the originating metaphor of screaming trees. This piece is a tribute to trees.

Alex Buck | A Revolta Dos Xapiri | acousmatic | stereo | 9' 56" | 2020

1st prize Prix Métamorphoses Acousmatic Music Composition Competition

[featuring: David Kopenawa]

After composing *Screaming Trees* (2019), I felt I still had much to explore, both poetically and sonically, with the ideas in David Kopenawa's book. Especially after finding an audio recording of a shamanic ritual conducted by David Kopenawa himself on the internet. The voice sounds in the piece come from such a recording, kindly provided by Brazilian field recording engineer Marcos Wesley. The title of this sequel translated to English is *The Xapiri's Rebellion*. The name adds one more layer of indications to listeners on the subjects and metaphors present in the piece. Like in *Screaming Trees*, I am working with chains of archetypical sounds to represent higher-order subjects. For instance, the recognizable sounds of bikes, cars, and aeroplanes represent urban societies' means of transport. Metaphorically, this sound chain indicates urban societies' necessity to move increasingly faster, in an underlined battle against time. Meanwhile, I used some spectro-morphological "rhymes" between sounds, such as the similarities of the "roar" of felines and sounds of motor devices, that could potentially provoke rich thoughts on listener's minds.

Finally, passages from the book have inspired me to compose sections of the piece, acting as a latent atmosphere driving the composition. One such selection is this:

"... For us, the xapiri are the true owners of "nature," not human beings. The xapiri are continually moving around the entire forest without our knowing [...]. These are words that white people do not understand. They think forests are dead and empty, that nature is out there for no reason, and that it is mute. They don't want to listen to either our or spirit's words. They prefer deafness. [...]"

The forest is alive. It can only die if white people persist in destroying it. If they succeed, the rivers will disappear underground, the soil will crumble, the trees will shrivel up, and the stones will crack in the heat. The dried-up earth will become empty and silent. The Xapiri spirits who come down from the mountains to play on their mirrors in the forest will escape far away. Their shaman fathers will no longer be able to call them and make them dance to protect us. They will be powerless to repel the epidemic fumes which devour us. They will no longer be able to hold back the evil beings who will turn the forest into chaos. We will die one after the other, the white people as well as us. All the shamans will nally perish. Then, if none of them survives to hold it up, the sky will fall."

Alex Buck | Does It Matter | acousmatic | binaural | 9' 35" | 2021

1st prize **Premio Destellos International Electroacoustic Composition Contest**

[featuring: Abigail Whitman]

2020 was when the overall weight of human activities' material output surpassed the weight of all global living biomass.¹ After reading this information, the image of oceanic waters covered by plastic waste immediately came to my mind. Presumably, plastic is the synthetic material that best symbolizes human debris. There are countless products made from plastic; it is on our clothes, our food, in the water... plastic is everywhere. Contemporary urban societies are leaving their traces for centuries to go. On the other hand, plastic material bears a positive side effect. For instance, plastic enabled unprecedented music development during the 20th Century. The emergence of the audio recording-diffusion technology fostered the further development of pre-existing musical genres and enabled the explosion of new ones. Vinyl discs, magnetic/cassette tapes, compact/digital versatile discs, and their respective devices are all variations of plastics. That is the metaphor I wanted to evoke with the piece's first movement. I chose to articulate sounds from "obsolete" recording-diffusion plastic devices and samples from musique concrète's first cycle of works—*Études de Bruits* (Schaeffer, 1948)—, a clear example of a new musical genre that could only arise from sound recording technology. To strengthen the reference of musique concrete, I also employed loops, a technique that alludes to the "locked groove" or "skipping needle," the phenomena that allowed humans to listen over and over the same sound. In the second movement, I resume the female voice I utilized in *Screaming Trees* (2019). However, the voice is surrounded by sounds from different, recognizable plastic objects in this new context. I asked singer Abigail Whitman to improvise, incorporating sounds of suffocation, shortness of breath, and agony to represent mother nature choking out plastics. To complement this texture, I put the natural sounds of thunder—which according to Yanomami people, symbolize nature's anger—, and the artificial sounds of digital sound synthesis together to reinforce the complex atmosphere of natural and artificial coexistence.

Alex Buck | Otherness | acousmatic | stereo & octophonic | 8' 30" | 2023

[featuring: Artificial Intelligence]

"Otherness" is the fourth composition in "The Falling Sky" series, delving into the interplay of human history, nature, and post-humanity. Preceded by "Screaming Trees" (2019), "The Revolt of the Xapiri" (2020), and "Does it Matter?" (2021), each piece explores specific subjects that deeply resonate with and provoke my thoughts through sound.

In *Otherness*, I wanted to delve into a post-humanistic atmosphere, rooted in a comprehensive understanding of history, particularly the evolution of machines. Drawing from the theory of Brazilian semiotician Lucia Santaella, which categorizes machines into three phases—muscle-amplifying machines, sensory-amplifying machines, and brain-amplifying machines—the composition weaves sounds from these phases. Additionally, the sounds of fire and electricity play a crucial role in the piece. Fire, essential for human survival, and electricity, vital for the sustenance of artificial life.

Central to this composition is the role of voice, which plays a pivotal role throughout the tetralogy. In "Screaming Trees" and "Does it Matter?," the female voice symbolizes Mother Nature. In "A Revolta dos Xapiri," the male voice of Yanomami shaman David Kopenawa himself represents the Xapiri, the protectors and true owners of nature. "Otherness," the latest addition, introduces an intriguing novelty. The featured voice emerges from artificial intelligence tools, incorporating content generated by Chat GPT and a voice synthesized by software emulating human speech. I turned to Chat GPT to generate thought-provoking texts on the subject. Engaging in a dialogue with AI, I sought to comprehend the limits of artificial creation. Subsequently, using voice synthesis software, I gave voice to these texts, creating a unique sonic entity representing the 'other' with a persistent allusion to the enigmatic feminine figure.

¹ Menezes, M. (2021) <https://positiveventures.medium.com/covid-was-not-the-heaviest-burden-on-the-world-in-2020-6a3277267bc6>

Alex Buck

a prominent Brazilian composer-performer, is celebrated for his groundbreaking work as both an improvisational drummer and composer of acousmatic music. In the realm of Brazilian instrumental music, he has released three solo albums and collaborated extensively with renowned artists, including notable figures in both national and international music scenes.

Buck played a pivotal role in two groundbreaking groups— the Bamboo quintet and the Trio Ciclos— where he introduced innovative techniques, combining pulsated improvisation with elements and sonic qualities derived from electroacoustic music. His forward-thinking approach to music composition has earned him international acclaim, highlighted by four prestigious first-place awards. These accolades include top honors at the International Electroacoustic Composition Contest Destellos (2022), Prix Métamorphoses (2021), MusicWorks Magazine Electronic Music Composition Contest (2019), and Musica Nova (2019). In addition to these achievements, Buck has been recognized as a finalist and received honorable mentions in various other esteemed competitions, including Prix Russolo, MA/IN, Exhibitronic Festival, and MusiLab International Festival.

Beyond his illustrious musical career, Buck is a dedicated educator. He has shared his expertise at esteemed institutions, including EMESP Tom Jobim and Colégio Oswald de Andrade in Brazil, as well as the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in the United States, where he earned his Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) degree. Buck holds bachelor's and master's degrees in electroacoustic composition from UNESP, where he studied under the tutelage of composer Flo Menezes in the Studio PANaroma.

Currently, he imparts his wisdom through courses in electroacoustic composition and acoustics within Faculdade Santa Marcelina's Music program, while also serving as the Pedagogical Coordinator at the Escola de Música do Estado de São Paulo, EMESP Tom Jobim.

KOAN Nº 3

In 2009, I began studying the Zen Buddhism. Eventually, I came across with the Koan method. A koan is a paradoxical or enigmatic question, statement, or story often used in Zen Buddhism as a means of meditation and contemplation. Koans are designed to challenge conventional thinking and logic, pushing individuals to transcend rational understanding and reach a deeper level of insight or enlightenment. They are typically presented in the form of a brief anecdote or dialogue between a Zen master and a student. The purpose of a koan is not to find a rational solution or answer but to provoke profound introspection and a shift in consciousness. Practitioners of Zen Buddhism may engage with koans during meditation or as a form of spiritual inquiry to help break down conventional thought patterns and foster a more direct, intuitive understanding of reality. I found the idea so intriguing, I began to compose a series of miniatures with that idea behind. For Koan nº3, I am working with sounds from a very unusual duet formation: a trumpet, played by performer-composer Sam Wells, and a two-stringed corean instrument named Heageum, played by performer-composer Jeonghyeon Joo.

THE FALLING SKY TETRALOGY

The forthcoming concert presents four compositions, each intricately woven with references from a multitude of sources, including scientific literature, artificial intelligence software, and more, resulting in a rich tapestry of sound and meaning. Inspired by the transformative book "the falling sky: words of a yanomami shaman" by anthropologist bruce albert, these pieces delve into diverse subjects that echo the contemporary human experience.

The exercise I undertake in this composition cycle involves the careful selection of referential sounds and each composition embarks on a unique exploration. In "Screaming Trees," for instance, I employ the evocative metaphor of the title to explore the inherent relationship between music production and the impact on trees, felled for the sake of wood. In the subsequent piece, I delve into the connection between indigenous peoples and the concept of progress, highly cherished in capitalist societies.

"Does it Matter?" utilizes sounds of plastic objects to address this specific material, which, while contributing to pollution, also enabled the democratization of music consumption and the emergence of new musical genres, such as concrete music. In this fourth composition, the focus shifts towards the subject of alterity through the lens of the emergence of generative artificial intelligence and the imminent transition into a post-human era.

In crafting these compositions, I was significantly influenced by semiotics and writings by acousmatic composers who have traversed the realm of sound referentiality. Three distinct methods were developed:

- Cubist sonic objects: this technique disrupts the chronological order of a sound, creating sonic representations of arche typical objects.
- Concrete variations: similar to musical variations, it allows listeners to perceive the relationships between a palette of concrete sounds interconnected through contiguous chains of meaning.
- Sonic heritage: this strategy expands a piece's sonic material by drawing from the "sound memories" of sounding objects.

These compositions transcend conventional narrative structures and are highly abstract in nature. However, they intentionally incorporate recognizable sounds that serve as signifiers, inviting attentive listeners to embark on a sonic journey beyond the music's syntax. These sounds function as clues, unveiling hidden subjects, concepts, and references that have driven my creative process. "Explorations in sound and meaning" challenges us to embark on an auditory expedition where music becomes a gateway to diverse dimensions of understanding.

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Thomas Gorbach | Modulated Resonances | hybrid version in .mmm format | 8' 12" | 2021/22

Modulating Resonances is dedicated to a specific idea:

"The influences on our lives may be beyond our control, but we can influence the way they affect us."

Sound archetypes are mental orientation patterns that navigate us through the sounding world. Recognising them, describing them and transforming them using the techniques of acousmatic composition opens up profound insights into the structure of hearing. In 'Modulated Resonances' I process the archetype of the attack and the reverberation. These symbols represent action and reaction, or beginning, duration and end. But after the initiation of a sound, it is not only the modulation of resonance that remains. It also stimulates other archetypal patterns and a complex amalgam of different sounds and sound qualities emerges.

Thomas Gorbach

... grew up in a mountain village in West Austria with the shimmering sounds from his brother's accordion, the natural sounds of the surroundings, the four bells of the local Catholic church and the changeable sounds of a synthesizer. Classical music studies in Switzerland and studies of electroacoustic music at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. In 2007 he founded the first concert series for acousmatic music in Austria and established the first Austrian acousmonium with the concert association THE ACOUSMATIC PROJECT. Various teaching activities, sound installations, PEEK research project, international concert activities and state scholarship for composition 2020.

<https://theacousmaticproject.at/thomas-gorbach/>

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Jakob Schauer | Live for Acousmonium

A Mix of Live Electronics & Tape Music.

Jakob Schauer

is a musician and performer based in Vienna. His visually and emotionally evocative sceneries are created by analog and synthetic sources in an attempt to build hyper-realistic atmospheres. Interested in sounds as objects and in sonic gestures, his approach to sound is visual and spatial, interdisciplinary and often collaborative, featuring fixed media as well as audio-visual formats, and pure electronics, both improvised and composed. (Text Shilla Strelka)

Releases:

“Antlitz“, November 2018, MOOZAK.

“Gaia’s Birth“, December 2019 SMALLFORMS.

“In Death I Am Caressing You“, September 2021, For/Wind

“Phantom Glade“, August 24th 2022, Collaboration on BeachBuddiesRecords

“Chimera“, December 6th 2022, with André Kellerberg, BluSpiralRecords

Further he is the curator of the concert row „Wow! Signal“ and the annual “Wow Signal Festival” for audiovisual arts in collaboration with Hand Mit Auge in Vienna.

<https://jakobschauer.com/>