

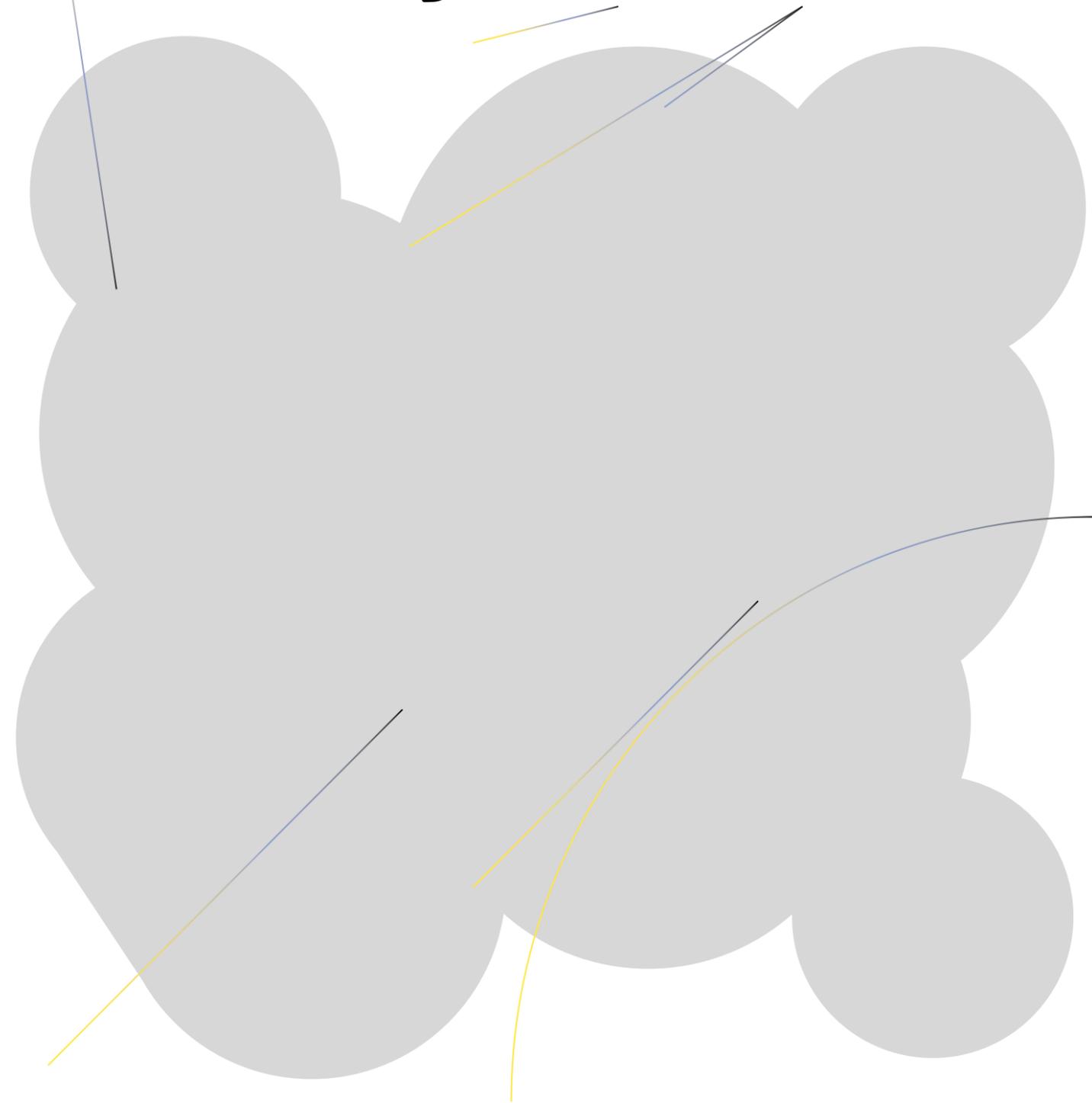
# SOUNDSCAPES AS A JOURNAL

no. 3

2022



# SOUNDSCAPES AS A JOURNAL



# Contents

Editorial  
Damian Lentini  
p.4

A Cloud Has  
a Shadow  
Daina Pupkevičiūtė  
p.8

An Epitaph for  
a Fakir of Lithuanian Music  
Jūratė Katinaitė  
p.14

The World  
is Here for You  
Yates Norton  
p.26

On the Enduring  
(Mythic) Legacy  
of Twentytwentyone  
Damian Lentini  
interviews Arturas  
Bumšteinas  
p.32

The Loop  
Simona Žemaitytė  
p.40

Fallen Light  
Anton Lukoszevieze  
p.52

Lithuanian Soundscapes  
Andrej Vasilenko  
p.68

I Was Thinking About  
What You Said  
Radvilė Buivydienė  
interviews Guy Dubious  
p.78

Post-Soviet  
Gendered Soundscapes:  
Lithuania  
Sandra Kazlauskaitė  
p.88

The Contours of Paranormal  
Music in Lithuania  
Domininkas Kunčinas  
p.98

A Compilation  
of Lithuanian Sound Art  
Curated by  
Eye Gymnastics  
p.108

# Soundscapes as a Journal Editorial

Damian Lentini

6

Damian Lentini is a curator at Haus der Kunst in Munich. He obtained his doctoral degree on contemporary art, curation and museum studies at the University of Melbourne in Australia and lectured extensively on the history and theory of modern and contemporary art. After permanently relocating to Germany, he worked on various exhibition projects in both Berlin and Munich, including being awarded a Goethe Fellowship to contribute to the landmark exhibition project 'Postwar: Art between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945–1965' (Haus der Kunst, 2016). Since then, Lentini has been extensively involved in major exhibitions and publications featuring El Anatsui, Phyllida Barlow, Kapwani Kiwanga, Sarah Sze, Lina Lapelytė, Sung Tieu, Arturas Bumšteinas, Harun Farocki, Jörg Immendorff, Khvay Samnang, Raqs Media Collective, Forensic Architecture and Dumb Type among others.

The low growl pervaded the space – some sort of bass wind instrument – accompanied by the distinct scratching sound of a record that had been played far too many times. Then silence, followed promptly by an uplifting form of easy listening music; the sort commonly associated with the tropical pool bars so often seen in films from the 1960s and 70s. However, in place of a Bakelite-toned Tropicana, the setting for this rather ragtag mix of piña colada-infused muzak was instead the spaces of Galerija Vartai in Vilnius, on a particularly overcast day in October 2018. The gallery spaces themselves were rather empty, save for a series of rather archaic-looking amplifiers and cubic or canonical-shaped speakers that absorbed and subsequently relayed the sound between rooms. This contrast between the two landscapes, respectively evoked by the sound and the spaces, continued through the gallery: one purely fantastical, scratchy and no doubt filmed in Technicolor; the other grey, austere and yet also evocative of a form of Soviet-era futurist design aesthetic that would have not all that long ago symbolised the utopian potential of modern technologies.

Even though I was unaware of it at the time, this particular exhibition – 'Sraigės kambarys' (Cochlea Lounge) by Arturas Bumšteinas and Gitis Bertulis – would serve as a leitmotif for the rest of my trip to Vilnius, as well as provide the impetus for my interest in the sorts of soundscapes that were being produced by artists hailing from – or living in – Lithuania. For although a completely different purpose had brought me to the gallery on that particular autumn day, sound and its atmospheric perambulations in and through the spaces of the city was at the forefront of my mind from that moment on. When I met with Lina Lapelytė the following day, we discussed her performance *Pirouette*, alongside the recently-published LP *Have a Good Day!* that she had just produced with Vaiva Grainytė and Rugilė Barzdžiukaitė (the three were about to embark upon their award winning installation/opera *Sun & Sea* at the 58<sup>th</sup> Biennale di Venezia). Later that evening, I attended Robertas Narkus' lecture performance *Prospect Revenge* at the Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius and could not help but notice the ways in which the almost frantic timbre of his voice would bounce off the walls of the space, heightening the urgency of his 'presentation'. Then, the following evening, I visited Deimantas Narkevičius' studio, where we listened to his

1

Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Santa Monica and San Francisco, The Lapis Press, 1976, p.15

work *A Tang of Lomo Film* (2011): a large, Soviet-era Lomo Kinap cinema loudspeaker that, after the requisite twenty minutes of warm-up time, produced some of richest and most corporeal sounds I have ever heard.

All of this fed into a long-held bugbear of mine: the tendency of so many museums and institutions dedicated to contemporary art to align themselves so immutably with the concept of visual arts, normally to the exclusion of anything kinetic or audible. Of course, this irritation is hardly new: back in 1976 for example, Brian O'Doherty noted in his famous essays on the 'white cube' that, while the 'eyes and mind' of the viewer are welcome within gallery spaces, 'the presence of that odd piece of furniture, your own body, seems superfluous, an intrusion'.<sup>1</sup> This fealty to the 'eyes and mind' would soon come back to bite museums and galleries, with many institutions completely ill prepared for the moment when the body and all of its extraneous elements clambered noisily into the forefront of arts discourse. Indeed, in one of the most famous examples of such an intrusion occurred in the very same year that O'Doherty's essays were published: COUM Transmissions' infamous Pornography exhibition at the ICA in London, which served as the public debut for the group Throbbing Gristle and was in fact so 'superfluous' in both its physical and sonic form that it was closed to the public after a little over a week.

Of course, many other artists working with sound did try to make their presence as unobtrusive or harmonious as possible. In 1982 for example, Yoshimura Hiroshi bequeathed the demo of his *Music For Nine Post Cards* to the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo, importantly labelling the recording as 'environmental music' (kankyō ongaku [環境音楽]), that was to be specifically played within the building's architecture and perceived by the audience as they moved between the galleries. Important within this context is the use of the word 'environment': locating the sound spatially at the very centre of one's encounter within the artworks, rather than relegating it to the background. By signalling the manner in which they pervade every nook and cranny within an area, Yoshimura also signalled sounds' ability to irrevocably alter both the environment in which they are encountered; including the bodies of the people immersed within them. And it was precisely this sort

of interest in sounds' generative affects that compelled Haus der Kunst to stage 'Atmospherics' in late 2021: an evolving, hybrid exhibition of soundscapes crafted by Lithuanian artists across three evenings.

Underpinning the project was the research of the anthropologist Kathleen C. Stewart into the ability of live events to drastically alter the space in which they are enacted. As she notes in one particularly memorable paragraph:

An atmosphere is not an inert context but a force field in which people find themselves. It is not an effect of other forces but a lived affect. A capacity to affect and be affected that pushes a present into a composition, an expressivity, the sense of potentiality and event. It is an attunement of the senses.<sup>2</sup>

As Stewart observes, the atmosphere created by an artistic event or intervention into the everyday space highlights the former's ability to enact a mutually acknowledged 'capacity to affect'; a performative encounter that profoundly changes both the performer/object on display as well as the audience. Although predominantly centred around on theatrical spaces, Stewart's focus on the production and circulation of lived affects could just as easily be extended to include all spaces in which sound is both produced and heard, including the everyday spaces of the city. Indeed, Stewart herself acknowledges the aesthetic dimension of such an approach, noting that each event 'constitutes a compositional present, pushing circulating forces into form, texture, and density so that they can be felt, imagined, brought to bear, or just born'.<sup>3</sup>

This idea of sounds materialising the concept of atmosphere in the sense of things 'taking form, assuming a texture and density',<sup>4</sup> is also something that is present within all of the contributions that make up *Soundscapes as a Journal*; which I view as both an extension of – but also independent to – the sorts of sonic atmospheres generated by my encounters in Vilnius, and the living exhibition in Munich. For although they do indeed pervade spaces, one of the key characteristics of a soundscape is its ability to also elude and elide the geographic and temporal boundaries that constitute our encounter with them: although located within a specific place, a soundscape nonetheless always also harbours

the potentiality to seep into other spaces, including within the pages of a journal, long after the event itself has passed us by.

Furthermore, this ability of a soundscape to coalesce and intermingle at certain spatial and temporal junctures that are extraneous to the moment of their creation – on a page, or accessed via a QR code – allows us to conceive of each of these contributions in terms of resonances. That is, individual moments of enunciation that include, within this journal, a famed concert that very few people attended; an exhibition planned for a date in the future; or a perceived sound that unintentionally interrupts a visual tableau. This ability of sound to spill out from the space of its specific enactment – what Stewart refers to as the 'charged atmospheres of everyday life'<sup>5</sup> – allows for each of these contributions to disentangle themselves from the immediacy of the everyday and instead engage with the porous domain of myth and memory; both of which have an equally determining role with respect to the legacy and renown of a particular soundscape.

While some of contributions deal with these sorts of temporal reverberations, others choose to probe the limits of the journal format by presenting practices that are, by their very nature, utterly antithetical to the printed page. Drawing upon the caesura between the past and future that is so characteristic of the printed page, these contributions attempt to carve out a space for contemplation and critical (re)evaluation that is normally not possible 'in the moment'. Ranging from an examination of the intersection of sound and gender within the context of post-Soviet Lithuania, to the role of clouds, mists and light in determining how we anchor ourselves to a moment in time, these texts propel the materiality of atmospheric and ideological elements to the very forefront of a work's form. In so doing, they underpin the determining nature of these elements with respect to how a soundscape is made and how it is engaged by viewers, who themselves also actively contribute to its form).

Taken as a whole, each contribution to *Soundscapes as a Journal* – texts, images, sounds and spoken words – seek to uncover hitherto-concealed elements of soundscapes: be it via their inhabitation of spaces and gaps; by focusing on their use of layers and repetition in order to articulate visible and

invisible structures; or through an exploration of the technologies that function as a mediating component within their realisation or reception. In other words – and considering the manner in which the previous two years of relative isolation have compelled us to radically rethink notions of sound and space – each text can be seen as a critical interrogation of the transmission, re-articulation and even archivalisation of a soundscape as it traverses political, social, and cultural geographies that are both cartographic and digital. For while this is very much a project that has been conceived in a very real space and time – with a focus on Lithuanian artists and at a moment when a global health emergency has grotesquely morphed into a barbaric political and humanitarian crisis within Europe – it is simultaneously also an exercise into the elasticity and porosity of geographies and temporalities that are highlighted by the immateriality of soundscapes. It speaks of fleeting moments, of half-forgotten memories, and of our ability to genuinely connect with one another through a medium whose form is, by its very nature, perpetually elusive and deferred. Moreover, it speaks to how an unplanned visit to a gallery in Vilnius almost four years ago would engender a fleeting exhibition over three days in Munich, which would then begat a journal of soundscapes that in turn harbour the potentiality for future chance encounters and lived affects.

My heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all of the people whose contributions and support made such encounters possible.

2

Kathleen Stewart, 'Atmospheric Attunements', *Rubric*, 2010, p.14

3

Kathleen Stewart, 2010, p.2

4

This is covered in Peter Eckersall, Helena Grehan and Edward Scheer, *New Media Dramaturgy. Performance, Media and New Materialism*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp.82; 86-86-92

5

Kathleen Stewart, 2010, p.1



© 2021 Haus der Kunst, München.  
Photos by Constanza Meléndez

# A Cloud Has a Shadow

Daina Pupkevičiūtė

Daina Pupkevičiūtė works at the intersection of sound – as an artist, curator, educator – and anthropology. Since 2009, under the moniker of Daina Dieva, she has released nine albums, two of which are collaborations. She has contributed to numerous compilations, lent her singing voice to friends' works, and sonorised installations and visual performances. She is interested in collaborative processes as a way of revealing spacetimes, and in recent years has created and performed live music for contemporary dance.



Daina Dieva  
*Never Empty*

[Link to Soundcloud](#)

On the first day of the year 2022 I was watching the hill of antennas from the crest of the mountain opposite. A white-red torso of an antenna was sticking out – an alien object on the emerald green hill that had freshly emerged from the cloud ocean. Voluptuous waves were lazily licking the slopes while engulfing the valley in front of my eyes. The light, I thought, such light! Such an alien, I thought, looking at the antenna.

The day I decide to visit the hill of antennas in order to make out its form from above, I ask a friend to accompany me. I like to hear people telling me things about places. The air is still. No sun would manage to penetrate that thick grey cover of cloud. It is cutting my mountain horizon in two: the world below the cloud and the world within it. In its stillness, the cloud seems to have sucked in the oxygen along with the sharp edges of all things visible, stopped the time, silenced all the hiss and hum of the living.

Several hundred metres to the top, the hail starts. Snatching at my uncovered skin, tiny chunks of ice flail the scarce grass of the mountain, swishing while amassing in the furrows of the

dirt-road, sneaking in through the meek coverage of pine needles, finding refuge in the crevices of the rock.

First stop at a clearing. Several antennas at the edge of it, a wooden cross facing the village down below and a ramshackle reminder of a barrack. Plenty of those structures remain in the mountains surrounding the valley, each as an echo of wars that have taken place here. They trace the shifting borderscape.

The history is here, it is always here, somewhat unsynchronised, running in parallel veins across the landscape. Just as the stories of belonging I am entrusted with: those stories, running in parallel veins, etch into time and landscape, extend along the riverbed. Each of them is knitting numerous pasts and various presents together. They direct my gaze, give the rhythm to my gait and train the ear.

The hail stops. As soon as it does, clouds start running wild over in the south east, soon hiding away two villages below, placed on opposing crests. There used to be a prison in the castle of one of those villages. Upon release, the prisoners would go and live in the village on the opposite mountain, I am told. Choosing to lead a life facing a constant reminder of suffering seems incomprehensible. It must be humbling, I think.

It is a January afternoon, meaning short hours of light in the Northern hemisphere, meaning we have to continue the trail encircling the mountain if we want to get back before nightfall. The antenna I want to reach is not that far, it is not a high summit after all, no more than 1000 metres above sea level. They don't mean anything really though, the 1 and 0s.

The trail takes us out of the pines and onto the edge --

-- I glance down --

[inhales][exhales sharply]

the height

-----

|  
|  
|

-- my fear becomes an electric impulse, I feel shudders running down my spine, needles in my fingers and a sharp hiss in my ear.

As we approach the top and that fenced off antenna, the cloud I was just watching starts to grow beneath, then around. It is suddenly everywhere. Rolling over a steep slope that had just made me tremble, it crashes on us as a wave, if I were to put it poetically. But I feel it looks more like a smoke bomb, this bulging and pulsing thing. Mountains, valleys, villages, my hiking fellow, the dirt road, the trail – all is swallowed. In that one motion, the mass of water drops suspended, moving inwards from the Mediterranean, levels everything into a thick grey, impossible to see through.

I am shortsighted. I must put in some effort to see things afar, to make out the shapes. As the cloud ocean lifts up to engulf the world as I thought I knew it, sight does not matter so much. In this shapeless world it has no such importance. I relax the eye and imagine the distance between the molecules of hydrogen and oxygen instead. Rarefaction and the dispersion of particles makes this damp wave-like immaterial matter move through, with, and over bodies of flesh, water and stone. I imagine the distance between the particles changing, a swarm of elements in constant motion.

A folk tale goes that if you guess the name of the cloud, the cloud comes down, becomes a lake and swallows the one that named it. I am thus breathing the cloud in and refusing the urge to name that which is happening.

Daina's sound practice has been guided by her interest and participation in the scenes of metal, industrial and experimental music. Since 2018 she has curated 'Matters. A Platform for Industrial Culture', part of Kaunas European City of Culture 2022, aimed at supporting creators of experimental and industrial sounds and shaping a more inclusive scene.

Her earlier artistic practice in the field of performance art focused on body, body/place entanglements, traumas, (hi)stories – sung, recorded, as well as ghostly. In recent years this field of research shifted to the field of anthropology. In her fieldwork, she seeks to understand relationships between humans, nonhumans and landscapes in the context of the climate crisis. Alongside the more habitual ethnographic methods she deploys listening, photography and walking to read entanglements that span beyond time.





With every breath I am taking within that cloud, there is the railroad, sheep, humans, shepherds' dogs, the river licking barren rock, the noise of an unhasty mountain road, the silence of steep slopes, dogs and wolves, many things visible, even more things not.

I take a piece of rock, press it hard into my palm: it dissipates becoming thin flat plates. They call it *pierre du soleil*, my friend that has led me here says. Sunstone. It is the sun that makes it frail. This rock is sometimes dissolving beneath my feet when I walk the trails.

The history, too, often proves to be a type of matter that dissipates when one presses it hard between the index finger and thumb. If I indulge practices of forgetting, it becomes sand on the dirt road.

I am standing on a crest, looking into an opaque shroud that's covering my entire field of vision. I listen. All sound is muffled. The shroud allows only for the small sounds to seep in. A shy chirp, a far away swish, an inquisitive crackle, a flat clack of a stone falling. I am usually offered such silence-scapes by my night walks, always in the company of the river racing to leave me behind.

Both mist and night are impermeable and porous at the same time. They both unfold over this terrain of sharp edges to allow the seeping in of that and those which are unexpected, unexplained and unwanted. In their act of smoothing out the shapes – those of bodies crossing the mountains, those of echoing footsteps undulating in the blackness of a railway tunnel – both the night and the mist question human acts of drawing borders, dividing the space into territorial units, embracing some while doing away with numerous others. Such aliens, they say.

On this fragile terrain of sunstone, if one aims to seep in, one must either be from here, or one must be more like mist, and just float over. Bodies of flesh and bone are taught to become ephemeral. One can't sail the veins that are etched into this horizon unless one is more like mist and less like a body of flesh and bone. One is allowed to be a cloud, and as such to remain nameless, unnamed because of the fear.

Primordial fear running through these veins has a way of outliving the flesh. Choosing a life of constant fear must be enraging, I think.

Fear and rage are the currency of the regime of visibility. It all holds on to fear. Fear suffices to prescribe which cloud has the right to its shadow and which cloud has the right to its name. But this hard sun makes all things fragile. It casts light while it shapes the shade.

The cloud is there, rising from the waters of the world's oceans, undulating over the crests, defying the distance between all bodies. It entangles all matter. It softens sharp edges of this rough rock horizon.

I focus so that I can hear footsteps over the rocks, murmurs at the edge of a tunnel, molecules bumping into each other, I breathe, I am part of the cloud.

On the seventh day she went to the mountain.

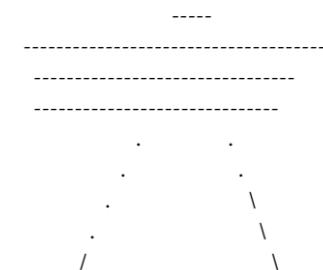


Image credits:  
All photos by Daina Pupkevičiūtė

And every cloud had a name.

# An Epitaph for a Fakir of Lithuanian Music

Jūratė Katinaitė

Musicologist Jūratė Katinaitė graduated from the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (LAMT) in 1998 (Master of Arts). In 2018, she began her PhD at the LAMT. Between 1994 and 2020 she worked as a radio producer and presenter at LRT, where she still collaborates as a freelance opera producer and host. She regularly writes reviews and essays on the topics of opera, contemporary music, and cultural policy, and publishes interviews with musicians for the national cultural media. Katinaitė's book *Karalių Kuria Aplinka: Operos Solistas Vaclovas Daunoras* (The King is Created by the Environment: Opera Soloist Vaclovas Daunoras, 2018) was awarded the Ona Narbutienė Prize. She is a member of the Lithuanian Council for Culture, the Art College of the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre, and the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language. Between 2010 and 2017 she was Chair of the Musicological Section of the Lithuanian Composers' Union. Katinaitė was awarded the Prize of the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture for the most relevant cultural criticism in 2006 and the Government's Culture and Art Prize of the Republic of Lithuania in 2021.

1

The Church of the Holy Cross was confiscated from believers in the Soviet period and turned into a concert hall.

2

Works by Soviet era composers would be regularly evaluated before any public performance at so-called 'hearings' organised by the leadership of the Composers' Union and censors authorised by the Communist Party.

3

Vytautas Landsbergis, 'Žiogas ir ąžuolas saulės ratė', *Literatūra ir menas*, 30 December 1978, p.11.

4

Giedrė Kaukaitė, 'Mano kelrodės dainos' (III), <https://www.7md.lt/muzika/2021-01-29/Mano-kelrodes-dainos-III>, accessed 14 July 2022.

In late 1999, the editors of the cultural and arts magazine *Kultūros barai* organised a survey of musicologists to identify the most significant and influential work of Lithuanian music of the twentieth century. The clear leader in all top five lists compiled by musicologists of different generations and tastes was Bronius Kutavičius' (1932–2021) oratorio *Paskutinės pagonių apeigos* (Last Pagan Rites), which premiered in 1978, during the dreariest years of Soviet stagnation. I didn't get the chance to witness the first performance of the oratorio firsthand, since I was still in primary school at the time, but after several decades working for Lithuanian Radio and TV and conducting numerous interviews with performers, composers, and artists in other fields, I've listened to many accounts of that evening, which has been described invariably as an artistic, but also cultural, almost existential shock so profound that it became an indelible part of the memory of those who were there at the time. In my own imagination, the threads of different accounts have intertwined into such a fantastical experience, that I almost feel I was there myself. Whenever I listen to that first recording of the oratorio, those images wash over me, as if they were my own.

Musicologist Vytautas Landsbergis (later the first leader of the restored independent Lithuanian state in 1990), who was once active as a music critic, observed: 'On the last evening in November, the Small Baroque Hall<sup>1</sup> was full of listeners, although none of them had been drawn to attend by any posters or press notices. An extraordinary bit of news had circulated among musicians about a regular "hearing" held by the Composers' Union,<sup>2</sup> and it was then picked up by music lovers, some of whom sensed that the new work by Bronius Kutavičius was turning into a cultural event that could not be missed.'<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Kutavičius had already become popular as an artist in possession of a unique and inspiring imagination. Much like a soothsayer, with *Last Pagan Rites* he relied more on intuition and the intonations of the oldest Lithuanian folk songs than anthropological sources to recreate pagan rituals of nature worship. This impression was reinforced by a children's choir that walked in a circle around the audience, creating a mobile, shimmering, spatial sound effect. In the finale, the minimalist, hypnotic flow of music is harshly pierced and eventually overwhelmed by the tunes of organs – a symbol of Christianity. The audience became

completely still as they listened to the ever more powerful chords of the organs. Giedrė Kaukaitė, a soloist in the 'Incantation of the Serpent' scene of the premiere performance, recently wrote about her impressions: 'The score, resembling a graphic drawing, showed the "Incantation" piece in the middle of the drawing, but during rehearsals we debated at length where the soloist's place should be during the performance. Facing the audience, as per tradition? No. Behind the organ? In the quire? No and no. Perhaps among the choristers? No, I'll stand among the audience, out of costume, as one of them, and rising up from among them I will sing five segments of the "Incantation", turning with each one to a different part of the world: east, west, south, and north, and then again to the east. I picked a seat in the middle of the hall, with half the audience in front and half behind me. Interestingly, not a single person sitting in front of me turned back to look when they heard a solo being sung behind them... I remember the experience of that first performance like a miracle. The faces of the audience in a surviving photograph by Algimantas Kunčius reflect a state of "speechlessness". The idea of the opus has been described as a clash between the pagan faith and Christianity. But the concept is actually much broader, summing up the entirety of any enslaving, brutal force and power. We understood the organ chant as a metaphor – an enormous, heavy claw of a predatory beast, strangling us alive without mercy. On the day of the premiere, sitting off to the right in the Baroque Hall was a long-time friend, the sculptor and poet Vytautas Mačiuika, who had been sentenced for underground activities, spent ten years in a prison camp, escaped twice but was recaptured, attacked by dogs, and only released after Stalin's death. Mačiuika kept his head shaved for the rest of his life, in protest, to remind himself of his life as a prisoner. At the start of the oratorio, not even halfway through the "Grasshopper" section, Vytautas leaned forward, rested his elbows on his knees, and hung his head, never lifting it again until the end. As the oratorio came to a close, he slowly rose again, as if he'd been whipped.'<sup>4</sup>

Kutavičius' powerful, communicative work overcame the barrier of distrust and audience aloofness to contemporary music, bringing together not only the music community, but also poets, artists, theatre professionals, and intellectuals, inspiring new reflection and the search for more powerful

and sensitive forms of writing about music, and analysing the cultural context of musical works. But to the communist regime and the overseers of art,

Kutavičius was an outsider and hadn't been spoiled by the privileges enjoyed by other artists who occasionally fulfilled government commissions, glorifying communism and the Soviet system with their work. Moreover, censors 'advised' music critics not to write too often about Kutavičius or other prominent composers of that generation such as Feliksas Bajoras (b. 1934) and Osvaldas Balakauskas (b. 1937).

Paradoxically, the most prominent composers – Kutavičius and Balakauskas – were rejected by the Soviet Lithuanian State Conservatory (today the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre) as unpromising and lacking talent. Balakauskas then left to study at the Kyiv Conservatory and Kutavičius was drafted into the Soviet army, after which he was accepted into the Vilnius High School of Music. Only in 1959, at the age of 27, was he finally admitted to the Vilnius Conservatory. His early works, like those of most composers of his generation, were heavily influenced by the avant-garde, since, with the easing of the political climate in the 1960s, it became possible to attend the Warszawska Jesień (Warsaw Autumn) festival, the most important forum for new music in Eastern Europe. After Stalin's repression and brutal censorship, the experience of Warsaw, freer and more open to Western culture, became more important than official studies for young composers.

Most of the Lithuanian composers of the middle and younger generations at that time experienced the 'Warsaw shock'. Their creative work, until then impeded by the doctrine of Socialist Realism with the ideals of the Dmitri Shostakovich style, suddenly exploded with avant-garde techniques and aesthetics. Western compositional scores were smuggled in from Warsaw, and then secretly studied and sometimes plagiarised. Eventually, composers had their fill of the 'forbidden fruit' and Kutavičius became 'burnt out' by the avant-garde fairly quickly. His name is associated with a true and profound renewal of Lithuanian music after the 1970s, when the ideas of cultural resistance, national identity, and creative freedom began to strengthen. Indeed, the 1970s was a time of searching for identity in the music of the Baltic countries.

On the one hand, composers of that generation were searching for a unique, individual musical expression. On the other hand, the need for ideas and values capable of unifying artistic communities also grew. Official Soviet doctrine proclaimed the arrival of a period of 'mature Socialism', but in art the ever-stronger voice of the individual and the herald of the nation gradually gnawed at the system's foundations, awakening in society a longing for sincerity, communion, national traditions, spirituality, religiosity, and freedom.

Kutavičius' point of departure as a Lithuanian cultural guru was his 1970 *Panteistinė oratorija* (Pantheistic Oratorio), a distinctive instrumental theatre in the form of a wild and primordial ritual, inspired (like his later *Last Pagan Rites* and many of his other vocal works) by the verse of Sigitas Geda (1943–2008), a moderniser of Lithuanian poetry. The unconventional oratorio genre would later become Kutavičius' signature style, but at the time he still had to overcome government resistance. Kutavičius' legitimacy was considerably bolstered by the previously referenced reviews by Vytautas Landsbergis, who had already secured his place as an authority on the painting and music of Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911). The ranks of Kutavičius' admirers, performers, and defenders were actively joined by the alto player Donatas Katkus, the founder of the Vilnius Quartet and the St. Christopher Orchestra, who had become a prolific music critic thanks to the power of Kutavičius' music. Katkus recently reflected back on that time: 'We did all of that not for the good of society or Lithuanian music but wanting to defend those composers since we saw that fantastic things were being born. I'll never forget when in 1970 Kutavičius' *Pantheistic Oratorio* was performed in the Philharmonic Society's Chamber Hall. The older composers and party activists simply tore into it. After the performance, in the corridor, I went up to Bronius, who no longer looked like a human being, and said: "A work of genius! Don't listen to them! They don't understand anything." I saw Bronius' face light up! People like him needed support so they wouldn't give in, so they would believe in their talent. They only needed a few people whose opinion mattered to them.<sup>25</sup>

Kutavičius began to produce significant works, one after another: *Dzūkijos variacijos* (Dzūkija Variations) for a folk

5  
Jūratė Katinaitytė, 'In Music You Should Always Ask the Question: And What Does That Mean?' An Interview with Donatas Katkus, *Lithuanian Music Link*, No. 20 | January–December 2017, <https://www.mic.lt/en/discourses/lithuanian-music-link/no-20-january-december-2017/jurate-katinaite-interview-with-donatas-katkus/>, accessed 14 July 2022.

Oj! tu gy-va-tė - la

*p* Oj! tu gy-va-tė - la  
Nekirsk mano brolio, nekirsk mano sesers,  
nekirsk mano motinos, nekirsk mano tėvo,  
tu gyvate gyvatėla, tu gyvate gyvatėla,  
nekirsk mano namų, nekirsk mano saulės,  
nekirsk mano javo, nekirsk mano dievo,  
tu gyvate gyvatėla, tu gyvate gyvatėla. ||

*pp*  
SUSURRARE

*f*  
SOLO  
Ne- kirsk ma- no bro- lio, ne- kirsk ma- no  
se- sers, ne- kirsk ma- no mo- ti- nos, ne- kirsk ma- no tė- vo,  
tu gy- va- te gy- va- tė- la, tu gy- va- tė gy- va- tė- la, oj!  
Ne- kirsk ma- no na- mų, ne- kirsk ma- no  
sau- lės, ne- kirsk ma- no ja- vo, ne- kirsk ma- no die- vo,  
tu gy- va- te gy- va- tė- la, tu gy- va- tė gy- va- tė- la, oj!

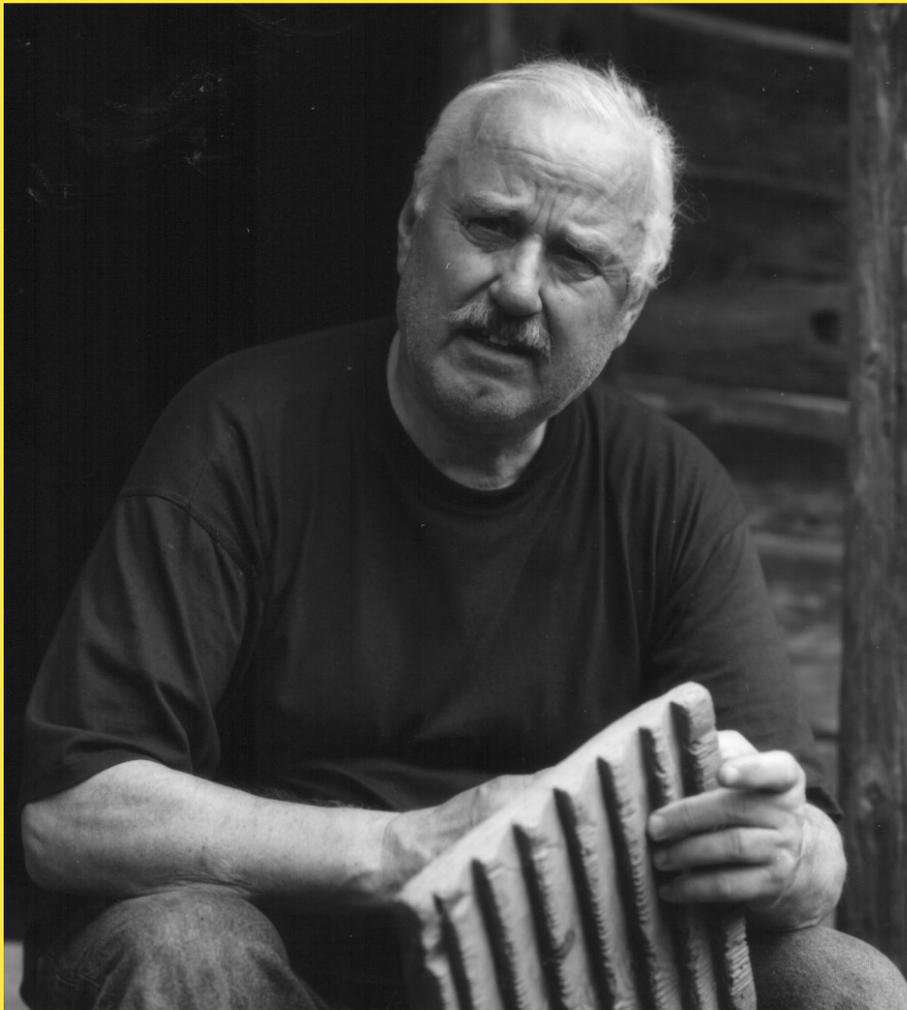
*pp*  
SUSURRARE

*p* Oj! tu gy-va-tė - la  
Nekirsk mano brolio, nekirsk mano sesers,  
nekirsk mano motinos, nekirsk mano tėvo,  
tu gyvate gyvatėla, tu gyvate gyvatėla,  
nekirsk mano namų, nekirsk mano saulės,  
nekirsk mano javo, nekirsk mano dievo,  
tu gyvate gyvatėla, tu gyvate gyvatėla. ||

ORG. *p*

A score of the Incantation of the Serpent (Gyvatės užkeikimas) in *Last Pagan Rites*. Courtesy Lithuanian Music Information Centre





Bronius Kutavičius. Photo by Arūnas Baltėnas. Courtesy Lithuanian Music Information Centre

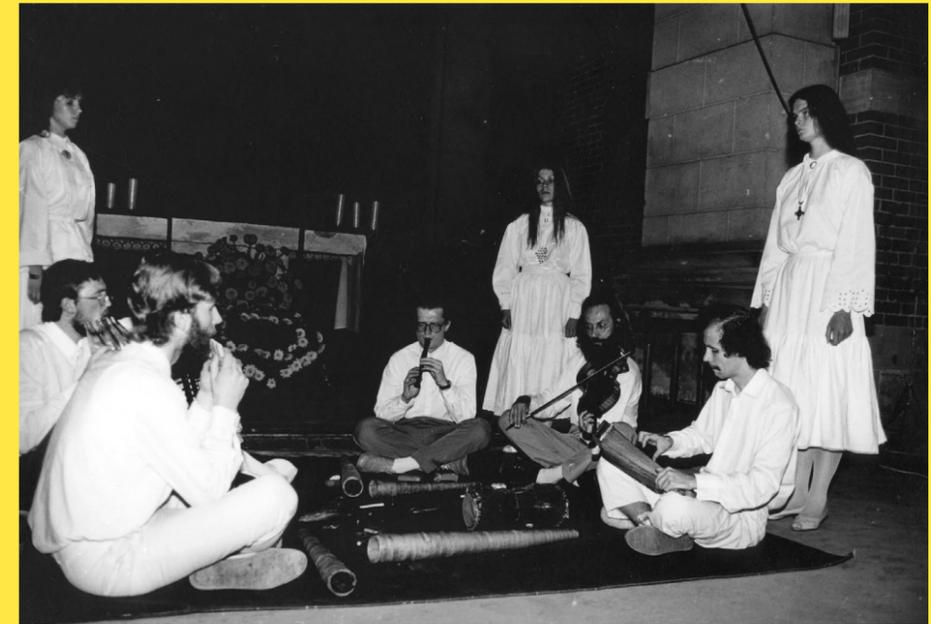
his *Dzūkija Variations* were unexpectedly incorporated into the repertoire of the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra led by Saulius Sondeckis, the most prominent Lithuanian ensemble of its day, enjoying exclusive opportunities to tour in the West (under KGB supervision, of course). On that occasion, the prestigious orchestra had prepared one of its best-known programmes: *Tabula Rasa*, by Estonian Arvo Pärt, the target of Soviet government persecution, and *Concerto Grosso No. 1* by the so-called 'Moscow underground' composer Alfred Schnittke. The programme only lacked a short work to fill out the full concert format. The lovely *Dzūkija Variations* soon came to mind. Such was the programme that the orchestra presented in 1978 in the three Baltic capitals and at the Warsaw Autumn festival, and the following year during a tour of numerous cultural centres in the West, including the United States.

For Kutavičius personally, the ice was broken in the late 1970s in Poland, after

Landsbergis established ties with Polish musicologists and struck up a close friendship with his younger colleague Krzysztof Droba (1946–2017). On his first visit to Vilnius, Droba listened to a considerable amount of Lithuanian music and made friends among composers, inviting them to the informal festivals he curated in Poland. Katkus recalls that, after Droba first heard a recording of *Last Pagan Rites*, he stood up suddenly and asked where the bathroom was. It turns out he needed a place to cry, away from others – so profoundly had the music impacted him. Droba was a young, non-conformist who ignored the official Soviet musical export offerings and organised intimate, close-knit festivals in small Polish towns.

Kutavičius was the first to receive a commission from Droba, which led to the creation of one of his most frequently performed opuses, *String Quartet No. 2, Anno cum tettigonia* (A Year with the Grasshopper), composed in 1980. The grasshopper was

Performing *From the Yotvingian Stone* an oratorio by the Vilnius New Music Ensemble at the festival Collectanea, St James Church, Sandomierz (Sandomiežas), Poland, 1988. Photo by Sylwester Kryczko. Šarūnas Nakas, leader of the ensemble, is sitting first from right. From Krzysztof Droba's personal archive



Vilnius New Music Ensemble in 1991. Photo by Gintautas Trimakas. From Šarūnas Nakas' personal archive; Šarūnas Nakas, leader – second from left (second row)



that year's symbol in Japanese mythology. In this quartet piece, time is measured precisely, consisting of 365 beats (days), with the rhythm shifting every seventh beat, and the shimmering string fabric pierced twelve times by the ringing of a bell. The string intonation and articulation resembles the sound of archaic Baltic wind instruments called *skudučiai* (panpipes). The form of the work grows like the path followed by the sun to its midsummer culmination and gradual distancing from it. This masterful, hypnotic piece is deservedly considered a classic of Lithuanian minimalism.

Kutavičius first attended one of Droba's festivals in Stalowa Wola in 1979, which featured a concert of his work, including a performance of the new quartet. In later years, Droba invited Kutavičius to festivals he organised in Baranowo and Luślawice. It was thanks to Droba that Kutavičius became acquainted with Krzysztof Penderecki. These connections also brought him to the Warsaw Autumn festival, where a concert of Kutavičius' works took place in 1983, including *Last Pagan Rites* (which Kutavičius himself did not witness because he was prevented from attending by Soviet officials), and in 1988 in Sandomierz, the performance

of three oratorios with the participation of the Vilnius New Music Ensemble, organised especially for Kutavičius' works. This was already during the time of the Baltic rebirth and its 'Singing Revolution', and the Soviet government could no longer suppress the breakthrough of Kutavičius' music. The Vilnius New Music Ensemble was founded by Šarūnas Nakas, one of Kutavičius' former students at the M. K. Čiurlionis School of Art, and today a renowned composer, multimedia artist, and radio programme director. 'When I was a child, I'd run from Kutavičius' lessons – they were boring,' Nakas later remembered. 'Everything changed after I, at 16, was able to attend a performance of *Last Pagan Rites*. That night, everything changed.' While studying composition at the Conservatory, 20-year-old Nakas decided that it was finally time to perform *Pantheistic Oratorio*, which had never again been publicly heard after the previously mentioned less than successful performance in 1970. Nakas gathered together his student friends and, in December 1982, organised a premiere performance of the oratorio twelve years after its unsuccessful hearing. One year later, inspired by the enthusiasm and interest of the young performers, Kutavičius wrote a new oratorio for a vocal ensemble and ancient and unconventional instruments (stones, bottles, *skudučiai* panpipes, a *lumzdelis* flute, a straw pipe, the *kanklės* string instrument, violin, and harmonica) entitled *Iš jotvingių akmens* (From a Jotvingian Stone). The oratorio begins with the beat of actual stones, as if invoking the Jotvingian spirit [The Jotvingians inhabited

an area to the south of the current Baltic states stretching from present-day Poland east into Belarus – Ed]. The work reveals the growth of national self-awareness and creativity, from its primal impulses to folk songs as a perfect and vital form of beauty. 'What Kutavičius does is not just music – it's things that can be incorporated into life. We as performers wouldn't have lasted six months if our work was just a dry recitation of score. This integrates the entirety of culture. This music changes the way we think and encourages us to grow. It helps you realise that the work you put into bringing a score to life is meaningful, because that effort makes up for the longing for values. For us, it offers a direction for how to live, a way of living and communicating,' Nakas said at the time. In 1984, the ensemble performed a concert of Kutavičius' works to great success at the Riga Philharmonic Hall, followed by the previously mentioned tour in Poland, but Kutavičius' true breakthrough in the West came after Lithuania restored its independence in 1990. In that time, the ensemble had assembled a larger repertoire of works by Lithuanian composers, beyond just Kutavičius. After the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the first presentation of music by Kutavičius, Balakauskas, and the younger Algirdas Martinaitis took place in 1990 at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival in the United Kingdom, where participating curators of other festivals became intrigued by the exotic sound of unknown music emanating from a small country freed from Soviet shackles. For that occasion, Kutavičius composed a new oratorio for Nakas' ensemble,



Photo from Droba's festival in Luslawice (Poland) in 1980. From left to right: Krzysztof Droba, Vytautas Landsbergis, Donatas Katkus, Bronius Kutavičius.



Hear the music of  
Bronius Kutavičius  
at mic.it

[Link to LMIC](#)



6

Under the Soviets, the Vilnius Cathedral was turned into the Painting Gallery art museum.

titling it *Magiškas sanskrito ratas* (The Magical Circle of Sanskrit). Invitations to other European new music forums soon followed, one after the other. The ensemble appeared at the Baltic Composers' Peace Days in West Berlin, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and in the autumn, reprised their concert of Kutavičius' oratorios at the Warsaw Autumn festival. In 1991, they participated in the NYFD Festival in Tallinn, followed by concerts in Lviv, Prague, and a tour of Canada, appearing at the Victoriaville festival in Quebec and giving a special concert at the Le Spectrum Center in Montreal. The ensemble's pilgrimage with Kutavičius' music continued in 1992 in Warsaw, Amsterdam, Cologne, Seville (at EXPO '92), Düsseldorf, Strasbourg, and a series of Danish cities. The next year, the ensemble presented Kutavičius' music at the Hammoniale festival in Hamburg. Captivating and memorable performances followed in 1995 at the Prague Spring Festival and at a festival of Baltic music at the Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall in London.

The final presentation of Kutavičius' music took place at the 1996 Easter Festival in Innsbruck, Austria, after which the Vilnius New Music Ensemble disbanded. After fourteen years of active performing and expanding their repertoire, the ensemble's musicians had become disillusioned by the uncertainty of their situation. The first decade of Lithuanian independence was a time of complicated social, political, and economic processes, made worse by a lack of funds and stalled reforms. While the ensemble had reached maturity and attained a high level of professionalism and international recognition, it still lacked institutional and financial stability. Having embarked on their effort with such enthusiasm as students, the ensemble members grew older, started families, and could no longer be satisfied with occasional invitations and earnings. Indeed, because all state-sponsored and national arts groups had a difficult time surviving during this complicated period, no effort was made to seek official status or financing for yet another such ensemble. And what a shame! Some groups had exhausted their energies and failed to adapt to the new circumstances, but more effective reform of the cultural sector was abandoned both out of inertia and because of the resistance by cultural officials left over from the Soviet period. But the Vilnius New Music Ensemble performed an important role in the inspiration and dissemination of work

by Kutavičius and other talented Lithuanian composers, helping also to consolidate standards of new music performance and educating audiences.

Kutavičius' works expanded during this period, and his visions transcended the limits of a small ensemble. He also began to receive commissions from various festivals. His most prominent works from this period include a four-part series, created over several years, entitled *Jeruzalės vartai* (The Gates of Jerusalem), reflecting on the history of world religions from northern shamans to Western Christianity – consisting of *Žiemų vartai* (Northern Gate) in 1991, *Saulėtekio vartai* (Eastern Gate) in 1992, *Pietų vartai* (Southern Gate) in 1994, and *Saulėlydžio vartai* (Western Gate/Stabat Mater) in 1995. In 1998, commissioned by the Musikhost Festival in Odense, Kutavičius created a monumental oratorio entitled *Epitafija praeinančiam laikui* (Epitaph to a Passing Time) reconstructing the history of Vilnius from the legend of its founding as a dream seen by Duke Gediminas in the fourteenth century, through the founding of Vilnius University in the sixteenth century, to a lamentation of the victims of Stalin's gulag, to the return of Vilnius Cathedral to the faithful.<sup>6</sup> The oratorio was later performed at the Vilnius Philharmonic (and broadcast to EBU countries), at the Warsaw Autumn and Prague Spring festivals, and released on CD by the Finnish label Ondine.

At the time, the young Czech musicologist Vítězslav Mikeš became intrigued by Kutavičius' music and grew to love it wholeheartedly. Wanting to gain a deeper appreciation of the composer's work, he learned Lithuanian and even defended his dissertation at Charles University in Prague about the relationship between text and music in Kutavičius' works based on the verse of Sigitas Geda. Thanks to Mikeš, Kutavičius' works have been performed regularly at various Czech festivals and contemporary music forums.

Among Kutavičius' most prominent later works we should single out the opera *Lokys* (The Bear), commissioned for the Vilnius Festival (and performed in 2002 at the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre), based on a novella by French writer Prosper Mérimée, in which nineteenth century Žemaitija (Samogitia, in western Lithuania)

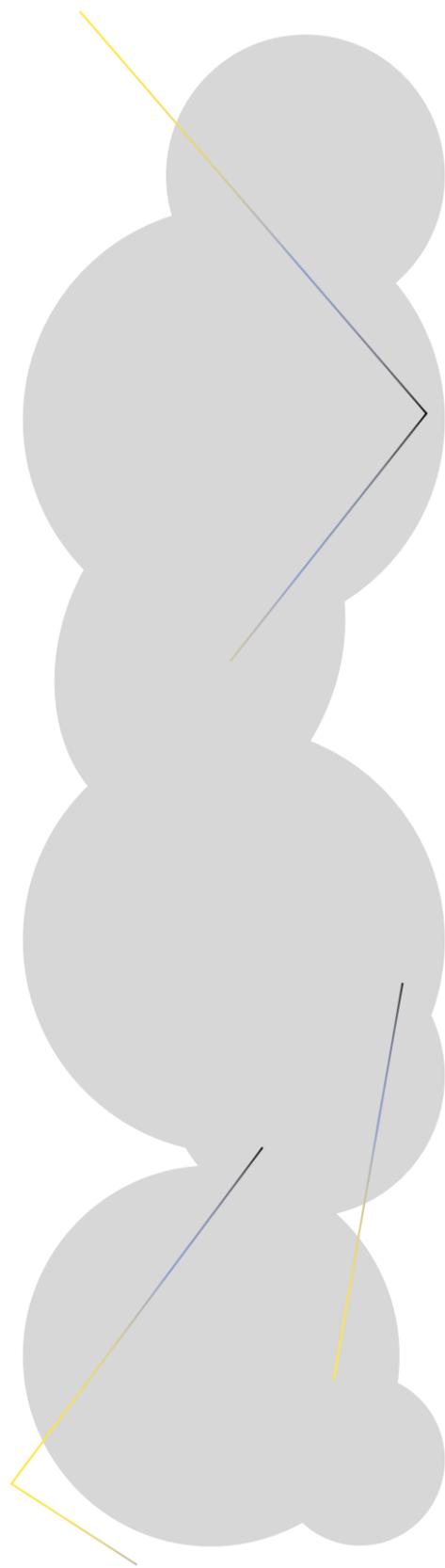
is depicted as an exotic and barbarian land, a backwater of civilisation, where reality intertwines with pagan mythology and magic and eerie stories unfold. But for librettist Aušra Marija Sluckaitė, the novella served only as a framework for the narrative, and she refrained from emphasising the encounter between the barbaric and civilised worlds: The heroes of the opera ascend to the realm of myths. Kutavičius confessed that he had long dreamed of creating an opera in the style of the nineteenth century, with a large orchestra, choir, and ballet. And, indeed, in this work, as never before, he respected the conventions of the genre, but didn't try to follow any historical or modern opera model, and instead returned to its fundamentals: the connection between text and music. As in his other works, the essential characteristics of his music are its pulse and recurring melodic motifs. For September 2022, on the occasion of Kutavičius' 90th birthday, the premiere of *Lokys* at the Klaipėda State Music Theatre was prepared by director Gintaras Varnas, who has earned a reputation as an exceptional master of opera directing. This is a much-anticipated highlight of Kutavičius' jubilee year.

Among Kutavičius' other works created in the twenty-first century, another standout is his monumental series *Metai* (The Seasons, 2005–2008), based on a poem about human labour, emotion, suffering, and sin determined by the seasons, by Kristijonas Donelaitis, the eighteenth century Prussian Lithuanian poet and founder of Lithuanian literature.

In his later years, Kutavičius remained an exceptional, creative visionary. Even his smaller, more modestly scaled and less ambitious works became significant events in Lithuanian musical life. This is a rare case in contemporary music, when professional appreciation, the enthusiasm of performers, and the love of audiences coincide in such a way. After the restoration of Lithuania's independence, when there were no more obstacles to the dissemination of his music, Kutavičius was able to enjoy his recognition and the attention he won from publishers and festival curators in Germany, Poland, Finland, and elsewhere, and when many recordings of his works were released by labels such as Ondine, Telos Music, Toccata Classics, Dreyer Gaido, and by the Music Information Centre Lithuania and other companies. Live festival recordings have expanded the archives of public radio broadcasters in Lithuania, Latvia,

Denmark, Finland, and the Netherlands, as well as the BBC, Deutschlandfunk, Austria ORF, CBC in Canada, and others.

Kutavičius departed this world on 21 September 2021, one week after celebrating his 89th birthday. The Lithuanian music community found itself orphaned, having lost its guru, spiritual leader, and teacher. We understood then that Kutavičius' legacy was so exceptional and influential to our cultural growth that he has become the twentieth century's most prominent figure alongside M. K. Čiurlionis. Both are unique, with their visionary gifts, and both spent their most beautiful, productive years under Russian oppression (one in Tsarist Russia, the other under the Soviets), which prevented them from assuming their rightful place on the international music stage. Redrawing the map of cultural and political influence retrospectively will prove difficult. It is unclear whether the impactful shock of Kutavičius' music, experienced by several generations of audiences, can sustain the same concentration of energy for new generations. One hopes it will. A testimony to this fact could be the Kutavičius Music Festival in Salzburg, under the baton of international star Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, in 2017. Gražinytė-Tyla grew up with Kutavičius' music and sang in the Aidija Choir during her school years, under the direction of her father Romualdas Gražinis, performing many of Kutavičius' works. In Salzburg, Gražinytė-Tyla not only performed *The Gates of Jerusalem* with the Mozarteum Orchestra, but also presented many other works in natural surroundings. The audience followed musical performers through Hellbrunn Park, listening to the children's choirs of the Salzburg Landestheater and festival, and Kutavičius' more intimate works and the children's opera *Kaulo senis ant geležinio kalno* (The Old Man of Bone on Iron Hill) were performed in the open air. 'With the works by her countryman, the Lithuanian composer Bronius Kutavičius, Salzburg Landestheater Artistic Director Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla has revealed the ancient communion of cultures... Kutavičius creates a dense atmosphere by intensifying sound through hypnotic repetitions. The effort by all the performers creates a delight for ears and eyes. Gražinytė's hands wield precision, vitality, and a flight of fancy,' wrote Christiane Kecekeis for *drehpunkt.kultur.at*. Let us hope that Kutavičius' music will sustain its power, life, and the pulse of truth.



The ensemble From Water and Stone. Conducted by Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Salzburg State Theatre, Austria, 2017. Photos by Anna-Maria Löffelberger. Courtesy Salzburg State Theatre.



# The World is Here for You

Yates Norton



Yates Norton is a curator at the Roberts Institute of Art. He often works closely with his companion and collaborator, David Ruebain, on disability justice work. His collaborations and work with artists include singing in Lina Lapelytė, Vaiva Grainytė and Rugilė Barzdžiukaitė's opera, *Sun & Sea*, which was awarded the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale in 2019. He studied at the University of Cambridge, Harvard University and the Courtauld Institute of Art.

Wonder is often related to scale. Sometimes, we can move between two scales, from the intimate to the vast, like when we look at the sky with our naked eyes and then through a telescope; or when we are feverish and space appears to fall in on itself into a knot of intensity, condensed into something minute, intricate or exquisite only to then expand outwards in a rush, as if everything were etched on a stretch of elastic. Sometimes this feeling is simultaneous.

YOU ARE FACING THE GRASS SLOWLY GROWING.  
THE GREENNESS OF YOUR POOL TABLE CALLS BIRDS AND FROGS.  
THAT SCULPTURES CHEEK IN NAUGHTY MARBLE WRINKLES.  
YOUR MANICURED NAILS BRUSH THAT LITTLE DIMPLE.  
YOU'RE FACING THE SOFTNESS OF THAT MOISTURE MOSS.  
AND THOSE PUDDLES ARE OUTLINED BY SHARP YELLOW POLLEN.  
A CHILD JUMPS IN AND HIS EYE SLIGHTLY TICKLES.  
SEEMS LIKE A LACK OF MAGNESIUM.  
LUMEN BY LUMEN YOU SEE THE EVENING THICKENING.



These are the words of Viktorija Damerell which are worked into performances together with Gailė Gričiūtė.

Damerell and Gričiūtė go under the name Eye Gymnastics, which they formed as a performance duo in 2018. Damerell, an artist and writer who has also curated exhibitions, often with fellow artist Ona Jociūtė, is responsible for the text and scenography, and Gričiūtė, a classically trained pianist, and a composer, improviser and sound artist, develops the sound. They perform together, sometimes wearing silicone face masks that strangely accentuate their

foreheads. The way they move makes them appear like spiders, responsive to the vibrations around them. They are at once menacing and sensuous. The mise-en-scene of their performances is often suggestive of the domestic, but in a gothic way: dimly lit and atmospheric.

Both of the artists' wide-ranging practices include a fascination with the incidental and the detail. They make, to quote Anni Albers, space for "almost art": for embellishment and for ornamentation: the elaborated detail.<sup>1</sup> Damerell's work and her collaborations with Jociūtė, are marked by such elaborated details. These little twisted embellishments, like the extra tail placed on a rocking horse (*Two Tales*, 2018) protrude into our view, surprisingly and confusedly. Like awkward impediments and interruptions, they get in the way of smooth narratives or trains of thought. Suggestive, they promise something to come. This gives her work the feeling of both uneasy anticipation and humour, as if we were listening to the unfolding of a joke or becoming aware of something weird and sour in the atmosphere of a room.

There is a similar sensibility in Griciūtė's work. The sounds Griciūtė compiles are textural and intricate. When we listen to these sounds, it's as if we were not only listening but also touching and feeling them. They are curious sounds: we want to ask how they came into being and what mixture of materials and actions produced such rich and unexpected textures; we want to explore, play and grapple with them. Griciūtė underscores this playfulness in how she turns around and slightly twists a sound. In doing so, she asks us to listen deeply to sounds we thought, complacently, we 'knew', like rain falling on leaves, which in her work gradually (but we cannot quite say *when*) becomes something else – a kind of static that is like the dense, rough wool of a jumper (*Synkrisis*, 2018). This inflection of sound peels off to enter into counterpoint with other textures of sound, always opening up, always bringing into life different sonic fields. As in Damerell's work, these elaborated details swerve and shift, promising proliferation over closure, inviting us to keep going along with them as they move, drawing us into their world.

Wonder and a certain form of vulnerability go hand in hand. To be open to the world and what is around us – that is to be vulnerable to it – is what gives us the capacity to wonder. We need to cultivate attention in order to wonder. But cultivating this attention means unlearning habits that close us off from the world. Often, we do not want to be opened out or have something opened out to us. We feel there is too much responsibility, too much at stake: if someone or something opens out onto us they implicate us in the decision to commit to them, to decide that what has been opened up to us is a gift and needs to be taken care of. When we are busy in our own worlds, living precariously and living in a culture where individualism is the supposed source of our integrity, this kind of commitment, care and attention seem risky, too risky. But we are impoverished as a result. Eye Gymnastics is a lesson in moving together in mutual vulnerability:

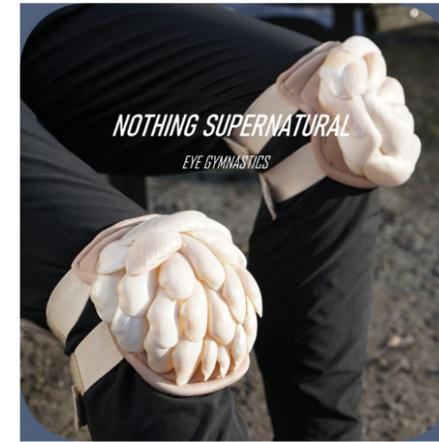


Eye Gymnastics is the stage name of Viktorija Damerell and Gailė Griciūtė. The artists collaborate on the creation of experimental music performances, which often feature verbal instructions, gradually evolving melodic inserts, spoken songs as well as verbal healing charms. In their vocal explorations, sensual timbres merge with deep beats, mental voyages, hypnosis and echoes of pop. Their debut album *Nothing Supernatural* was released in April 2022 on bandcamp: <https://eyegymnastics.bandcamp.com/releases>

1

Anni Albers, 'The Pliable Plane: Textiles in Architecture', *Perspecta*, 1957, Vol. 4, p.40.





like a flower, is always in a state of efflorescing or un- and unfolding. And in this sense, the world that Eye Gymnastics conjures up is like life itself, moving always in formation. As Griciūtė has said regarding her earlier work, *Soft Shoulders* (2016), 'Navigation here is playful and guided, not by cardinal directions, but by sensory adventures, with a focus on auditory experience.'<sup>3</sup> And Damerell: 'If the experience in question is a wave on the surface of water, pouring wax on it will produce a momentary replica. Soon we have more and more moulds, and the ocean still cannot be captured. In my practice I aim to break through this wax-covered surface and leave a gap that would allow us to sense that ocean underneath.'

When we really feel rhythm and vibration, we are carried along with them. At the same time, we must remain attentive to how we are attuned to them so we don't fall out of rhythm and get thrown off course. This experience of rhythm shows us how passivity and activity are always intertwined. We are never merely passively taken up by something nor do we only actively impose on a passive environment. To live fully with the world we must respond to what already exists. And there is so much there, if only we knew how to attend carefully to it. The world is there for you, Eye Gymnastics reminds us: we must now move along with it.

THE COLOURS YOU NEVER WANTED TO EXPERIENCE,  
BECAUSE YOU NEVER KNEW THEY EXIST,  
NOW ARE OPENING UP FOR YOU.  
THE WORLD IS HERE FOR YOU.

Images credits:

Photos by Christian Margolus (p.27); Performance by Eye Gymnastics. Photos by Constanza Melendez, 2021 (p.28); Photo by Laurynas Skeisgiela (p.29); Photo by Eye Gymnastics (p.30); Album cover for Nothing Supernatural by Eye Gymnastics (p.31, top); Photo by Antidote (p.31, bottom)

3

Gailė Griciūtė, *Soft Shoulders*, 2016, <http://gailegriuciute.com/soft-shoulders-2016/>, accessed 23 October 2020.

THE WHOLE WORLD IS OPENING UP FOR YOU.  
THE WORLD IS HERE FOR YOU,  
ENLARGED, INTENSE, LUMINOUS.  
AS IF IN A MOVIE THEATRE.  
THE WORLD IS HERE FOR YOU.

THE COLOURS YOU NEVER WANTED TO EXPERIENCE,  
BECAUSE YOU NEVER KNEW THEY EXIST,  
NOW ARE OPENING UP FOR YOU.  
THE WORLD IS HERE FOR YOU.

THIS INTENSE GREEN, SO INTENSE GREEN, SO INTENSE GREEN  
IS OPENING UP FOR YOU.  
THE WORLD IS HERE FOR YOU.  
IT IS ALL PERVADING; IT GETS INTO YOU.



Eye Gymnastics  
*Tree tops*

[Link to Soundcloud](#)

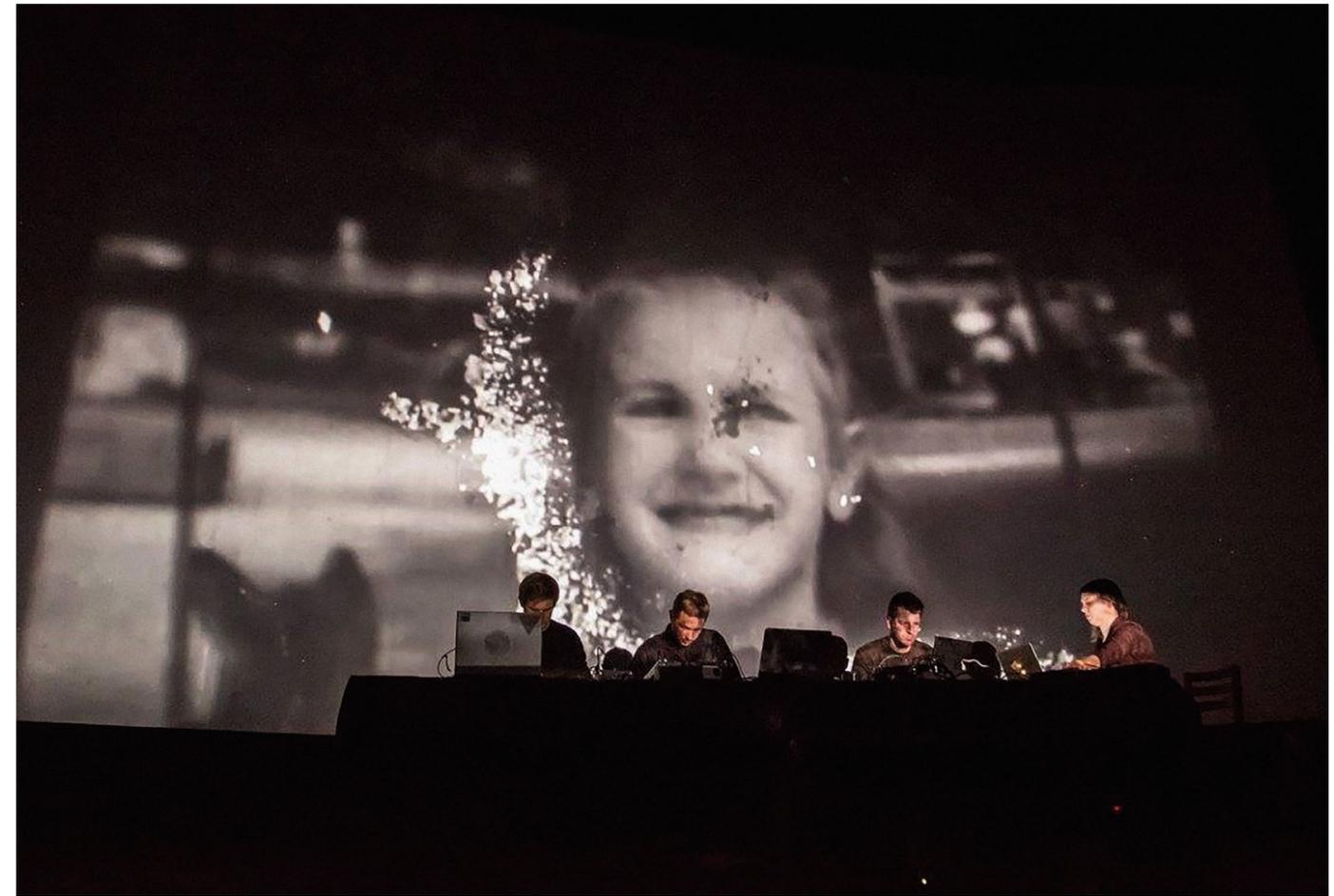
2

Dennis Smalley, 'Spectro-morphology and Structuring Processes', *The Language of Electroacoustic Music*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986, p.37.



# On the Enduring (Mythic) Legacy of Twentytwentyone

Damian Lentini  
interviews Arturas  
Bumšteinas



Myths and rumours are rife throughout the world of music and sound art. It is often said that, if Woodstock had actually hosted the number of people who subsequently claimed they had attended, then the event would have been four times the size! A similar sort of mythos surrounds the (retrospectively) seminal Lithuanian sound group Twentytwentyone: for although their performances have become the stuff of legend – in the course of researching this journal, I was told by three different people that their inclusion was ‘imperative’ – this assessment stands in stark contrast to that held by the group themselves. And indeed, perhaps this more honest and humble assessment is also something of a myth, and has as much to do with the subsequent careers forged by each of the group’s four members. Irrespective of where the truth lies within this spectrum of opinions, there is little doubt that Twentytwentyone left an indelible mark on the work of its four founders – Antanas Dombrovskij, Lina Lapelytė, Vilius Šiaulys and Arturas Bumšteinas – as well as on the wider experimental music scene in Lithuania. In order to gain a deeper understanding of this impact, I interviewed Arturas Bumšteinas across several email exchanges, asking him about the group’s origins, its influences, as well as with the obdurate legacy of these myths.

Damian Lentini:

You have always drawn upon such a wide variety of musical sources. Who were your inspirations growing up, and did these influences inform the founding of Twentytwentyone?

Arturas Bumšteinas:

From the age of ten I was already going to the Vilnius Jazz festival, which always had a diverse programme, including the most extreme forms of free jazz. Then in 1994 I saw a

large touring exhibition called the 'Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus art collection' at the Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius, which showed me the direction I wanted to move in with respect to my own work. Another major influence was the Lithuanian Open Society Foundation, which was founded by the great humanitarian George Soros. It was here that I was able to access the internet for the first time, and they also had a great phonothèque and videothèque with very well curated content. The same foundation enabled Šarūnas Nakas to organise Musica Ficta in Vilnius: the first real international festival of contemporary music where I heard Bang on a Can play *Hoketus* by Louis Andriessen, which really impressed me. In 1997 I got my hands on the five CD box set *Tulpas* compiled by Ralf Wehowsky, which introduced me to a very wide spectrum of 1990s experimental music, as well as pointing me towards emerging digital approaches to music production (even though I was still mostly drawn to experiments involving audio tapes and things involving speech). I also participated in the Mail Art movement and if I'm not mistaken I'm the first Lithuanian composer to make music using the internet to gather sounds from people. Later, when I started playing in festivals abroad with my laptop (electronic musicians all lived in 'Laptopia' back then), I shared the stage with so many greats from the experimental electronic music scene. The ones that most impressed me were the Finnish duo Pink Twins; Pan Sonic; Cellule d'intervention Mentamkine; Pure (and almost everything else on the Mego label); Farmer's Manual; Carsten Nicolai; Supersilent; Merzbow; Scanner... these are the names that come to my mind now, but of course there were dozens of other influential acts. It's also important to note that the electronic scene was only one of my diverse musical interests – my favourite composers then were Robert Ashley and Morton Feldman, and I was also very interested in contemporary dance and performance art. This all influenced the sort of art I wanted to make and our laptop quartet was mostly an outlet for digitally processed sound experiments...

DL:

Can you describe the Lithuanian sound art scene at the time of the group's founding? How was it different to today?

AB:

The sound art scene at the beginning of the twenty-first century was ok. There were interesting people making music, doing fun festivals from time to time, and organising performances in both interesting locations and quite ordinary bars and cafes. Actually, the great Café de Paris in Vilnius was very welcoming to anything new and experimental. In contrast to then, when the scene was almost solely male-dominated, nowadays there is a big sense of diversity in terms of both content and creators; and the funding situation is also much better. Vilnius is actually a very cultural city, with many open-minded institutions and enthusiastic young people who are both well educated and well travelled. I guess it will remain so as long as we remain a western democratic state, and there will be less marginalisation in the social and cultural spheres.

DL:

So how specifically was Twentytwentyone founded?

AB:

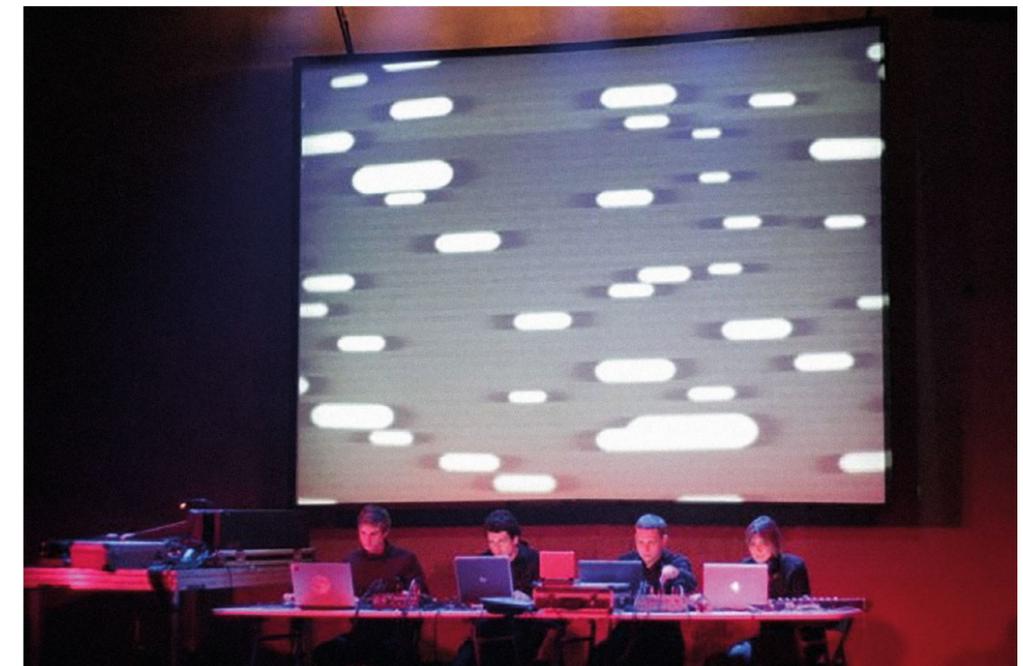
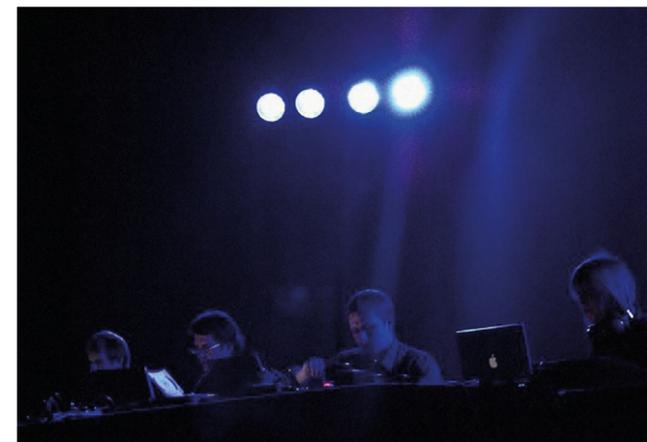
In 2005, when I was studying at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theater, I began travelling to festivals with my own experimental music. I saw plenty of great electronic music acts that inspired me to create a group of my own; one which would merge Laptopism with the academic music avant-garde. For the first few months, the group was called Laptop Quartet and I chose to use my computer as an instrument, as most of my friends were also making and performing music in this manner (the modular synth scene was yet to arrive). I wanted the group to be a quartet in reference to this well-recognised form of classical chamber music; a kind of continuation of the 'haus musizieren' tradition. I invited my good friend and experimentalist Antanas Dombrovski to join, as well as a young and talented underground ambient artist Vilius Šiaulyš, and a violin student at the Music Academy named Lina Lapelytė whom I met in the corridors for the first time and whose Duchenne smile and irresistible charisma I fell for. We started rehearsing in an underground bunker, which had been converted into a sound studio and rehearsal space by Antanas.

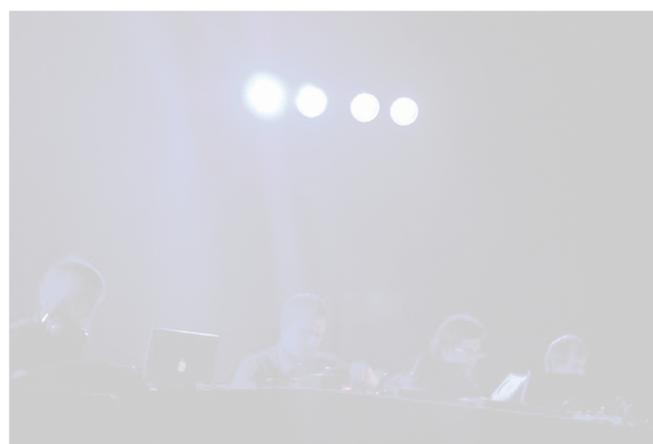


I found this film stock eaten by mould in a trash pit. Antanasa and I cleaned it and then digitised it. It appeared to be a reel about talented Lithuanian children in the 1970s. When we played a soundtrack to it as part of the festival Exposition of New Music in Brno, Lina Lapelytė stepped up to play a live violin accompaniment to the violinist in the movie.



Here we are performing at the Holland Festival, interpreting Robert Smithson's *Heap of Language* as a musical score or trampoline.





One of the finest music venues in London - Wiltons - heard us play one part from Stockhausen's *Aus den Sieben Tagen*. The concert was broadcast on BBC radio and it was all curated by a good friend, Anton Lukoszevics, for the Cut and Splice festival.

DL:

So what precipitated the change in name to Twentytwentyone? And what were your initial aims for the group?

AB:

As I mentioned, we were first called Laptop Quartet, because I wanted to merge old and new, but then I thought that this was a rather primitive idea, and that too much attention was focused on the technology. So I then came up with the name Twentytwentyone for three reasons: it still had the old/new element in it (although not as explicit); we were all around about this age when we founded the group; and lastly, we decided that we would only be active until the year 2021 and would then quit to pursue other projects (actually, we disbanded the group much earlier). The main aim was to compose adventurous music programmes and to tour the international festival circuit. However, we didn't have a promoter, and many of the heads of new music in Lithuania didn't really think much of us. So we were left hanging by a thread in the beginning and would only receive a couple of offers each year. Now I hear some people say that our performances in Vilnius were legendary... but this of course is mainly said by people who didn't attend the concerts themselves.

DL:

Can you speak a bit more about the specific 'instruments' you used, as well as the relationship between analogue and digital?

AB:

Back when we were founded, we used a whole variety of Windows-run PCs; basically we were young and poor and could not afford the computers we really wanted. A few years later we were using Apple Powerbooks, but still reliant on software like Ableton, Reaper, Adobe Audition etc. This is what I mean by Laptopism: a genre of music which is defined by the way music is made and performed. It's not a musical style like Minimalism of course, but refers more to the involvement of technology in the tradition of music. For us, the laptop was basically a tool to play back files, although the files themselves were not often digitally generated. When trying to define Twentytwentyone's sound, I'd say that it's inputted acoustically, processed digitally, and played back as a sound file or set of files. Or sometimes (quite often in fact) it's processed digitally live.

DL:

How did you approach the idea of composition and collaboration?

AB:

The first piece we played together was Cornelius Cardew's *Treatise* and I remember that the rehearsals for this were really exciting. From the very start, I knew that the group would be dedicated to electronic renditions of various graphic scores, and I chose these on account of their accessibility for non-classically-trained musicians. Most of them can't even be called scores, but rather trampolines from which you launch into your own personal interpretations. The meaning of the various signs can be determined among the group and this democratic approach was really attractive to me. While working on *Treatise* for example, we would each choose four pages for our solos. During these moments, the others would play accompanying sections, or we would divide different parts of the score between one another. We did not so much discuss the overall sound, but rather left it to chance to decide. When the result was too muddy we would go for a more organised tactic of sound formation. By 'sound' I of course mean the sonic quality of the final result, the aesthetic objective.



A collage by Antanas explaining why we are called a quartet.

DL:

What drove your selection of the scores? Was there something about these works that made you think that they would be interesting to be reinterpreted via laptops?

AB:

As I mentioned earlier, I was interested in using graphic scores because they were very accessible and open for interpretation. I was doing research in this field and I found many



Here is a photo of us playing an improvised set at the Jauna Muzika festival in Vilnius; not using any visual material as a reference point. This was something new to us as a group back then.

composers (both older and contemporary) working with graphical notation – but for the first performance I chose several classics of this genre, as we were playing at a contemporary music festival. If we were debuting in a club, I guess I would have chosen a completely different set of scores. But most likely *Treatise* would have featured anyway, as it's a real masterpiece which has been interpreted in so many different ways by people around the world (just like Terry Riley's *In C*).

DL:

What did each individual bring to the project? How did you differ from one another?

AB:

I was mostly responsible for the sounds that would be synchronic and in time with the score's timeline. I wasn't afraid to be illustrative because I wanted the audience (who could see the scores projected on the screen above us) to connect the music to the visual figures that littered the scores. Antanas was mainly into heavily processed sounds and especially pulsating ones. Vilius is a drone/ambient artist, so I would often argue with him, trying to convince him to break with his continuum and not to drown out everything in one flow (I behaved like an annoying dictator sometimes). Lina would do the most minimal things, tiny sounds, sine waves, some clicks and bleeps. I remember we all used non-generative software, just playing sound files – wave forms – with the most obvious commercial software available. We weren't really computer wizards, maybe that's the reason why we later started expanding our instrumentation: I'd start using guitars and objects, Antanas would circuit-bend old mini-keyboards, Vilius would use samplers and other various live electronics, and Lina would take out the violin more often.

DL:

Tell me about your first concert. What happened after that?

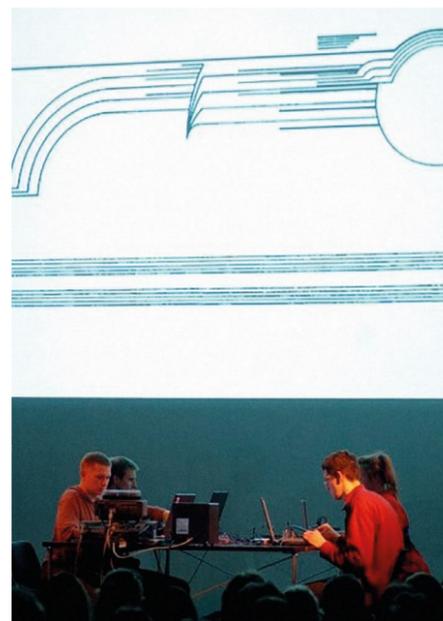
AB:

Our first concert was in late 2005 at the Jauna Muzika festival that took place in Vilnius' Contemporary Art Centre. We played a programme of graphic scores by the Lithuanian composer Vytautas V. Jurgutis; a conceptual visual score by architect Tomas Grunskis; James Tenney's piece *Never Having Written a Note for Percussion*; Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Studie II*; and of course Cardew's *Treatise*. This caught the attention of Lieven Bertels, who immediately invited us to play at the Holland Festival (he was one of the artistic directors of the festival). This invitation wasn't received well by the new music community in Lithuania, because they wanted to promote their own artists, but instead, completely out of the blue, our strange, shy, very young laptop-gazing quartet got to play at a big festival in Amsterdam. Our appearance wasn't mentioned in any Lithuanian press, even though it was the first time Lithuanian experimental music was presented in such an 'upper class' context. Later, we played at festivals like Skanumezs in Riga, Cut'n Splice in London (which was broadcast on BBC Radio 3), Concertgebouw in Bruges, iFEM festival in Northern Lapland, Exposition of Music in Brno,



Quartet  
Twentytwentyone –  
TREATISE – Cornelius  
Cardew "Treatise"

[Link to Soundcloud](#)



Our first appearance took place at the Contemporary Art centre, Vilnius where we played Cardew's *Treatise*, which was our all-time hit.



as well as some smaller gigs at galleries. We also released some of our music online and created a split LP. We would later incorporate early experimental films such as Marcel Duchamp's *Anemic Cinema* (1926) or Viking Eggeling's *Symphonie Diagonale* (1924) into our programme; treating them as moving graphic scores and trying to catch the changing, fleeting, abstract forms and sculpt them in sound. However, as we were not actively promoting our work, there were not really that many Twentytwentyone concerts. We slowly began to become busy with our own work, and the band dissipated.

DL:

Could you speak some more about the relationship between the visual and the aural in the group's work?

AB:

This was during a period in my life when I thought that translating visual information into the domain of sound was a really interesting idea. This act of translation and the possibility to see/hear the transformation process seemed like an interesting thing to behold. I had a leaning towards the classics of experimental cinema because I loved analogue film. I loved the celluloid grain and grit; Jonas Mekas for me was the main guy, so anything from his Anthology Film Archives could be considered by us. Later on, we also did some performances using the work of visual artists such as Christian Frossi. He gave us his silent film *Ricostruzione approssimativa del Manifesto Spazialista* (2007). And if we were still around today, I imagine that we would be working mainly with contemporary visual artists... or even making our own graphic scores. Who knows...

DL:

What about the legacy of Twentytwentyone? Can you speak briefly about each of your careers after the group wound up? How has the project impacted each of your practices?

AB:

Well, Vilius and Antanas keep on creating their incredible electronic music, which should be featured at leading festivals around the world. But neither of them has the ambition to promote themselves, so their work will probably never reach international audiences, unless some sort of miracle happens. Lina went on to become an international star in our field. I really mean it – she's a gift to the world. In twenty years she will be as big as Laurie Anderson or anyone from the eye-level shelves.

# The Loop

Simona Žemaitytė

Simona Žemaitytė is a Lithuanian artist currently working in Naples. In 2011 her work received an award at the 15th Tallinn Print Triennial and was nominated at Sheffield DocFest. She has exhibited internationally, including the 13th Kaunas Biennial; Kasa Gallery, Istanbul; GalataPerform, Istanbul; BAFTA, RichMix, London; Contemporary Art Centre, Galerija Vartai, Malonioji and Kaire-Desine in Vilnius; Riga Cinema Shorts; CreArte (touring exhibition in Pardubice, Linz, Genoa). She is currently doing a practice-based PhD at Vilnius Academy of Arts, where she also teaches.

Saulius Čemolonskas – Sal – was a DJ, vinyl collector, experimental musician, and a sound designer. An escapee from the USSR, Lithuanian by origin, stateless for a while. He lived most of his life in London. To most of those encountered, he has been a great source of musical knowledge, a creative counterpart, and a bit of a pain in the ass.

I met Sal in London, around the year 2011. He arrived on an old bike, wore a purple zip-top and a grey cap. He didn't have a mobile phone. He told me to rely on 'trust' for our meeting. I did. We went up to his studio in Bethnal Green. We had tea and chatted. He told me he was allergic to technology. It was hard to make sense of his stories the first time around.

His story here is told mainly through memoric fragments. Of his own, of his friends. I met them while making a movie on Sal. Yet memories don't always represent reality, nor the truth. Intertwined with emotions, they become biased. Biased is this portrait of a person who is now gone. Sal's ashes rest in his friend's studio in London. For the time being. Jingles, bits of sound, noise and fragments. All subjective. That is how Sal would tell a story. In feedback loops, in snippets. Make of it what you will.

## Friendly Definitions

Sal was a dear friend, Laure Prouvost says as we are drinking coffee in Notting Hill. It is 2019, and it's winter. Sal has been gone for more than a year now. We chat, but it is extremely noisy in this cafe. I hope the recording will be ok. She compares him to a tricky horse. She says she went horse riding when she was little. And would always pick the horse that was a bit feisty, a bit difficult. He was like that, she says. Extreme intensity, dearly passionate, extremely talented in what he was doing with sound and experimentation. She continues. Life is a bit unfair to these kinds of characters. She looks down at her cappuccino. Just less of a norm, she explains, just off norm. And that was what attracted me to him as well, she says. He was like a child. You had to work around him and with him. At the same time he was so loving, so loyal, and passionate, he says. It would be very hard to live with him, but as a friend he was perfect. He would be extremely there and then go. Sal would arrive and leave. He was like that.

A few months back, and Martin Stiksel and I are in east London. We pull out some chairs from the garage so we can sit outside. It is a sunny morning. This garage belongs to Sal's friend Felix. Sal had stored his stuff here. Some furniture. Some vinyl. Some record players. I had never met Martin before. But I had heard a lot about him. I also stayed at his house once, when Sal was house sitting for him, and organised a party there. The day is good and there is an aeroplane passing above our heads. We stay quiet for a bit, waiting for the plane to pass. Sal was Martin's friend and a collaborator. It seems like Sal had a certain life cycle with people, Martin says. You get going, everything is fine... and I would defend him: look he is a polarizing character, he pisses people off, but I don't care, because the result of the work is so great, that it doesn't bother me too much. Martin continues. He had a knack for pissing people off. And he liked doing that. And at times it was funny, but sometimes – not helpful. Behind us is Sal's garage. The garage that served Sal as a storage space. And an occasional place to sleep. But that was towards the end of his life.

Terry Burrows is a writer and an experimental musician. I met him in his flat in Hackney. He doesn't leave the house very often. He used to play music with Sal. And chat. And listen to records. And talk about life. And drink coffee, he says. I always had a feeling that Sal had a very strong moral code of his own. I nod. Everybody else's standards just didn't apply to him. I listen. He was a very free spirited guy, who was difficult to control. Difficult for himself to control. He pauses.

Gerard Abeille is a sound designer and recordist. We chat in a cafe, in Swiss Cottage – an area in north west London. He was my best friend, he says. You know, he was not a breeder. Even though he had a daughter in the end, he was still not a breeder.

The following memory belongs to Artur Builov. He was an actor. Now, a yoga teacher. We drink tea in his flat in Vilnius. He remembers: I would walk down the street with Sal. He would stop, look at me, and say: look man, I think I will continue on my own from here.

## The Records

Sal was born in Kulautuva, a small town in Lithuania. As a teenager he started collecting



Lenin. Still from Sal's personal video archive, Kaunas 1980s



Sal and friends. Still from Sal's personal video archive, Kaunas 1980s



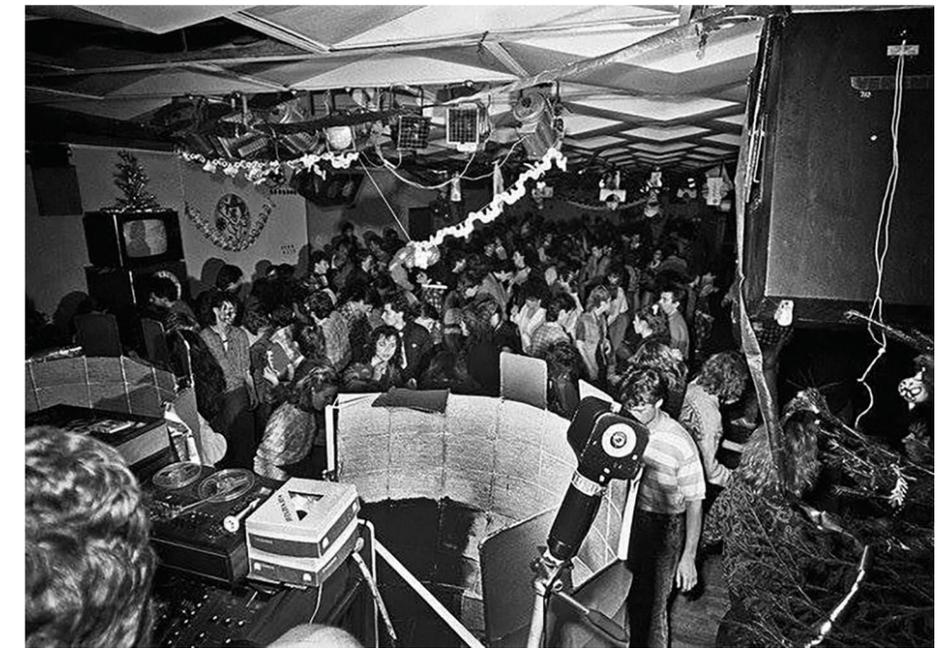
A performative bow to Lenin. Still from Sal's personal video archive, Kaunas 1980s



Still from Sal's personal video archive, Kaunas 1980s



Trestas. Still from personal video archive, 1990s



Trestas disco. From social media archive, 1980s

and exchanging records. Lithuania was part of the USSR. He worked on construction sites in his hometown. All day, all summer – he says – to earn money. Still at school. Sal and I speak in his kitchen. It's 2012, and it's summer. I want to know what it was like for him in Lithuania back then. The reward was buying records, he explains. The exchange. Everyone was bringing me unwanted music. He smiles. He is proud. The music that was not popular, he continues. Back then everyone wanted disco. After that, disco rock. Then classical rock and metal. Soul and black music was not very popular, he says. He collected the 'non popular'. Soul, funk, jazz. An exchange market. It became his lifestyle.

Sal became a DJ in Kaunas, in the 80s. He played in a club called Trestas. They often played Western music there. They organised the first metal discos. Spirits were high. And so was the push back. Everyone was constantly monitored by the KGB. Unconventional hairstyles and dress codes drew attention. One vinyl cost a month's salary. Sal often carried 10 or 20 of them. To give out information about the seller meant putting friends and family at risk. Parents were confused. Are the kids doing something good? Are the kids doing something bad? This whole Western music business. They made up record prices during interrogations. You had to avoid telling them the unnecessary stuff, Sal explains. Employ some fantasy, he continues. And stick to your story.

'Iron Maiden. Russian Army Go Home. Metallica.' Sal and his friend wrote on a tank once. It is publicly exhibited in one of the forts in Lithuania. They did it at night. Before a military commemoration. In the morning people arrived with flowers. The feeling was unreal, Sal says. It was as if we'd done something quite remarkable.

Clothing and vinyl often came from relatives living abroad: the US, the UK. Music in the Soviet Union did not sound like that, Sal says. Everything was different in the West. The quality of sounds, the machines. He imagined. American Voice. Radio Luxembourg. The West was imprinted in the vinyl inlays. The smell of pine. Information about the artist. This flared up curiosity. He wanted to go where nobody from the USSR had been. He wanted to be where the vinyl was published. He is talking about New York, he is talking about London. Sal just wanted to escape. To speak freely. But to say what? He pauses. It is 2012, and it has been more than a few decades since he was in London.

#### The Escape

Sal had a younger sister and brother. He and his brother didn't get along. The brothers loved their sister dearly however. She was still at school when it happened. She hung out with them at times. They all belonged to different groups. All alternative. All rebellious. They did, however, have some friends in common.

But mutual friends didn't always realise their family ties. And then the sister had a headache. It happened suddenly. She died. She was possibly misdiagnosed, some say. Possibly mistreated, say others. Everyone was lost. And then there was silence. No one spoke about it again. Sal started playing different music at the discos. They just didn't have the same vibe anymore. He left the country shortly after, Terry says: it seemed as if there was almost a before and after sort of thing... and I didn't even know... that she existed.

I want to go to the United States, Sal said. Gerard is now telling the story. The authorities told him: you need to wait for three weeks or a month. Sal was like: I am not waiting, I want to go now. If you want to go now, we will send you to Israel, they said. And then again, Gerard: so this is Sal, in Israel. 1989 to 1991. They gave him a TV set, 2000 dollars, and he worked in a kibbutz. And he did it for a while. And then he was like: this is rubbish. He took his money and came to London.

Artur continues. He fancied this girl from his hometown, you know. But she was a bit above his league. They did like hanging out together though. He went to Israel. And then she sent him a postcard saying she was in London. So with that card Sal went to some kind of migration office... and managed to get permission to leave Israel.

And so, Sal arrived in London. Without much information about the place, Sal explains. Only a little bit... from a book of Sherlock Holmes *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. He got off the train at London Bridge. He says he imagined it slightly differently. London was like a book. Like something you find in the library. Like a linocut. The shadows, and the buildings. The basement flats. The surreal architecture. Contrasts, walls, fences, the bridges. He explains: it seemed photographically quite cosy when I first entered. It was just a picture, he adds. This was how I wanted my background to look.

#### Limbo

For a long time Sal was in a limbo state, in terms of his citizenship, Martin explains. He left Lithuania while it was still part of the Soviet Union. Lithuanians did not really feel responsible. The only official documentation he had was a Soviet passport. The Soviet Union

didn't exist anymore. He couldn't really travel. Eventually he did get a Lithuanian passport, but it involved a process that took many many years. Martin adds: but he made great hay out of the fact that he was stateless. I think he kind of enjoyed that. Whenever someone would ask him where he was from he would say: I am stateless.

#### The Encounters

Artur and his friend arrived in London in 1991. They decided to look for a job. They were told to say 'cash in hand'. They went around. The days went by. No job. Artur remembered someone telling him: there is the Lithuanian House. And there is a guy living there, somewhere, in the basement. Artur tells the story: we arrive. We go downstairs. There is some kind of wooden door.. We knock. We hear a sleepy voice. I mean, it was midday. He giggles. Sal just woke up. His room... how to put it, was a creative mess. Artur describes: Sal had long hair at that time. To me, you know, long hair meant 'a hippie'. All those who had long hair in the USSR were hippies. Next to Sal, on a mattress, there was also a girl. Both seemed hungover. Artur remembers. Sade was playing. He says. Probably even *Smooth Operator*. He laughs again: I mean, some sort of absolute nonsense. Sal asked us for a phone number. I thought nothing would happen. But two days later he called. At 11pm. One of you has to be at work shortly, the voice said. At three o'clock in the morning.

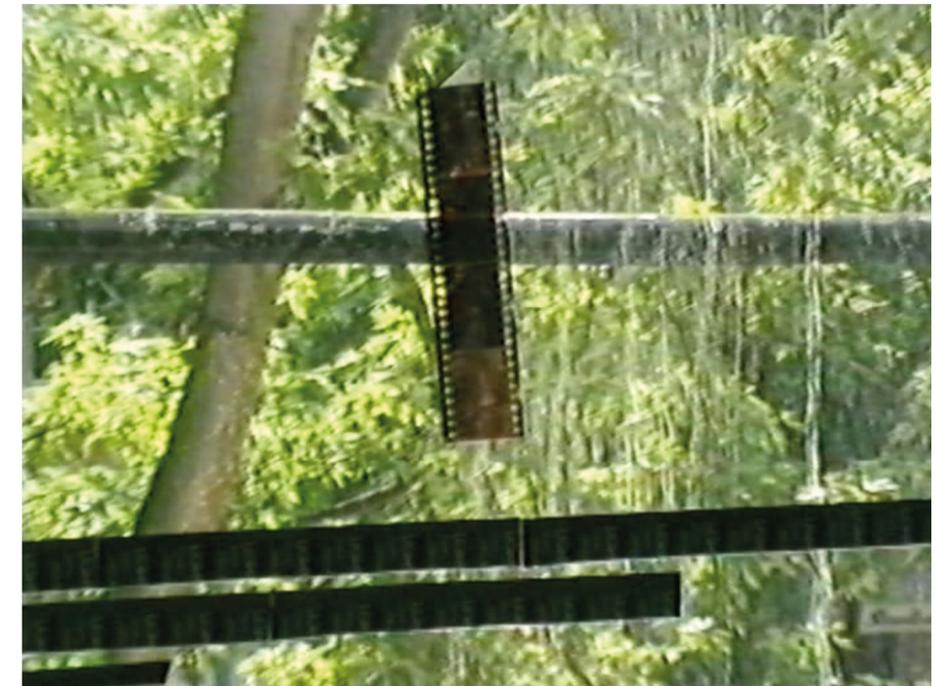
Gerard met Sal at the Market Bar, at work. He recalls: in 1989 Notting Hill went through a transformation. Many people moved in. Trendy, middle-class-arty people. Market Bar, at that time, catered for them. Gerard continues. The environment was Gothic. They played Northern Soul. The place was open after 11pm. I worked there behind the bar, he says. Sal was working there too. As a kitchen porter. And the first conversation we had was about Can. Gerard had just bought their latest album. It must have been 1993. We became friends straight away, really, Gerard says. And nostalgically: two lost souls in London. Sal's home became his refuge for a while. For the first four or five years, Gerard says. I had never had friends from the Eastern Bloc before. He is French, he explains. He continues: Sal had a Yamaha effects unit at that time. My favourite one was called 'infinite'. It created loops. We used to make noise. White noise. Then we would mix in some 'poppy' track, or some



Piccadilly Circus, London. Still from Sal's personal video archive, 1990s



London. Still from Sal's personal video archive, 1990s



Sal's home in Notting Hill. Still from Sal's personal video archive, 1990s



Artur. Photo from Sal's personal archive



Notting Hill. Photo from Sal's personal archive



Sal. Still from Sal's personal video archive

Drum & Bass. And five hours later we would have a recording of six tapes.

Martin met Sal on a Digital Sound Design and Music Production course. Sal told him later that he actually wanted to do a film course. But he didn't get in. From here Martin tells the story. So there was Sal, sitting in the lobby of a college. He saw an ad for a sound course and thought: oh well, I will do that then. It was the very early days of digital music production. We had very basic Macintosh computers with Cubase, Martin explains. It must have been 1999 or 1998, last millennium for sure, because we celebrated 2000 together. Martin continues: at one stage I fancied myself as someone with great musical knowledge. I challenged Sal, I mean, I was in my 20s. I said: make me a tape where I don't know anything, but I like it all. Sal said ok, alright then. And he made me a tape with songs that I had never heard. Nor the singers, nor the labels. But I liked it all. Martin thought: oh wow, this guy, obviously, knows his stuff. It was a very humbling experience to learn that there was a

whole world of music that I had no idea about, he says.

Fast forward to the new millennium. Terry has a dog. He is in Hackney and it is late. It was last thing at night, Terry says. I took the dog out to pee before going to bed. And Sal was out there, having a cigarette. And he just... started talking 'at' me. He asked me: what do you do? I said: I'm a musician and write books as well. Sal said: I am a sound designer. And immediately, we started talking about music.

And Laure. When we met, I was struggling, completely, as a human, as well as an artist. I was quite lonely, I'd just finished college, she says. I wanted to experiment with narrative, and went back for a year to Goldsmiths. I asked Sal to do the sound for what was a performance. She recalls: and we were just perfect. Leaving space for each other. And then he would become annoyed, like: fuck this, I was carrying things for you all day. She continues: at the same time, when he was there, we enjoyed doing it so much. She means

the performance. We would practice a lot in Bethnal Green, where he had a big studio.

### The Work

And the first job Sal found for Artur and his friend was to make sandwiches. It was horrible, Artur remembers. You stand there, cutting bread, like a machine, he says. A friend left London shortly after. But Artur decided to stay. Here he was, back at Sal's basement flat. Again, in need of a job. Sal was working as a kitchen porter at the time. He went to his managers to ask for an extra job. For his friend. The managers said no. He shouted, he accused them of their privilege. This guy is in a difficult situation, Sal said. He meant Artur. He continued until they gave up. Sal and Artur started doing dishes together, at the Market Bar. Sal also took his friend in, to live in his basement flat.

Gerard exhales. Then something happened in 1996. He said: I am done with being a kitchen porter. And that was the end of it. It was about pride, Gerard says. Everyone was equal for Sal, and had to be treated equally.

Then there was Martin and Sal in the autumn of 1997. They were doing a sound course together. At some point Martin's flatmate, working for a design company, was in need of a sound piece for a commercial. This was the first time Sal and Martin worked together. Martin suffers from a fear of a blank canvas. Sal had the confidence to place things there, in a new arrangement. The project went well. The client was happy. They did another project together. And another. They started a company. New Breed of Alternative Workers, they called it. All the software was illegally downloaded, they didn't pay for anything. Digital music peaked. It had become much more user friendly and mainstream. Martin's grandfather got him his first laptop. I was with Sal in the park, Martin recalls. With the headphone splitter, so we could both hear the music, we were working with samples loaded in from CDs. We stayed in the park until the batteries ran out. Making little jingles. It was great fun, Martin smiles.

We kept getting more work, and bigger projects. In the end we were pitching for Mercedes, Vodafone's sound logo, commercials with David Beckham. Stuff like that, Martin says. But then the internet took over and ate music as a whole. The whole custom made sound business world crumbled.

Record labels were not making any money anymore, and were instead pushing into the market of pre-recorded music for commercials. There was no more money in jingles.

### The Internet

Martin continued to study. He met some programmers. He said: why don't we do something so you can listen to music online? They knew a lot of musicians at that time. But the problem was always the same: how to get your music heard without involving radios or labels? The first ADSL connections showed up. They started playing with Napster. They knocked up a simple website called Insign. A lot of people were uploading their music by this point. Martin says: our stuff was there. Our friends' stuff was there, and then the whole thing exploded. People were uploading music from all over the world, he recalls. They created a tracking system based on what people listened to before. Sal helped by ripping and uploading CDs. He enjoyed doing that. Martin clarifies: but he was never part of that internet project. It was such a fluid thing, he says, we played a lot of computer games, smoked a lot of weed. Someone would bring a piece of music, someone would bring in a design. It was all great fun. And later those around would say: I started last.fm.

Last.fm was later sold to Sony. For millions.

Laure says: he told me how he had a contract there and then they shredded it, no? She continues: it was still a bit... It became more about money than friendship. It would have been nice if he had his own flat, she thinks. Sal didn't have a mind for business that's for sure. He was the content. He would search for music, he would upload so much for them. He was into the creative side of music, more than the mediation. It was just by chance, but he was there, I think, more than... She pauses. And it is not blaming anyone, for sure, there is no blame, but... I want to support friendship as well. She says.

And then Gerard speaks. Sal lived on nothing, he needed a few quid to buy records. Records were his currency. He would find a record for three quid and sell it for twenty. Occasionally he would also perform as an extra. In big film productions. Like, in a Spielberg film. When he was skinny he could be a refugee camp prisoner. At other times



Artur and Sal. Photo from Sal's personal archive



Sal with friends. Still from Sal's personal video archive



Celebrating in London. Still from Sal's personal video archive, 2000



Gerard. Still from Sal's personal video archive, London 1990s



Sal. Still from Sal's personal video archive, London 1990s



With friends. Still from Sal's personal video archive, London 1990s

he would also look like a German soldier. He was perfect. That's why they loved him, Gerard says. But he eventually got sacked. For taking pictures on set, for example, while playing dead. He laughs.

When we were together it was often to prepare a performance. Laure remembers. We also did a gig for the Whitechapel Gallery. She continues. It involved stories about my grandad who got lost in a tunnel, who was a conceptual artist, and who was digging a tunnel to North Africa. There were many stories made about it. For me, Sal was in a tunnel as well, he was digging. We were digging over realities, over sensations, over languages, over words. Especially with music. He made music for my videos also. Which... was nice. I would tell him that I need a watery, disturbing sound. And he would bring something and I would say... This is not what I imagined, Sal! She laughs. But at the same time it was perfect. Sal made a strong impression on people. He was not pushing himself in front. He was really sensitive in the band, she thinks. He was so happy as well when he was making music. When he was in the creation. It was his language, the rest was not. Also, English was not his first language, it was not mine either, so it was really through art that we could talk and get something much more complex, she says.

### The Gigs

Sal constantly dragged Artur to concerts. Sal knew everything. Where Alice Cooper was playing, where B.B. King had a gig. He wore headphones everywhere he went. At home there was always a radio on.

A friend of a friend called Felice invited Sal and Artur to a concert by Brian Adams. She says: he was my classmate. Then we were in, and for Artur it was the first gig of that scale. Wembley Stadium was full. People were screaming. Sal and Artur left the lodge. They passed security guards. They entered a room. And then another one. Artur says: with things to eat. They started drinking. Another VIP room. They discovered: it's Brian Adam's birthday. They heard 'Felice! Brian!' behind them. They turned around. Brian is short, Artur says. Skin - so-so. Dirty t-shirt, e describes. And then Sal goes: do you have a job for us? To carry speakers or something? His request is quickly passed on

to a secretary. Brian does not give them a job, but extends another invitation to a concert the following day. And Sal recalls. It was in early 1992. Brian gave me some fireworks. I didn't use them. I didn't like fireworks so much. I don't like shooting.

Fast forward to the end of the 1990s. Martin and Sal met Matias. They went to see a band called Farmer's Manual, from Vienna. On stage they saw a group of men with laptops. With crappy laptops, they say, doing real time sound modifications. Laptop boy band, they call them. Sal, Martin and Matias wanted to start their own laptop boy band. They called it Crowd Formation. Because two is a company, and three is a crowd, Martin explains. And there were three of them at the time. Their first gig was at Windmill Brixton. They had a table, a little contact microphone, and an alarm clock. Their laptops kept crashing. But they had fun. They did realtime sound processing of recordings, live input, songs that they liked...

Terry speaks. A lot of my relationship with Sal was based on him trying to get me to do things that were not necessarily... in character. He explains: you know, I am very much a sort of... home bird. He giggles. My natural environment is very much here. He looks around. Whether it is about an interaction with people or work. We are in his flat in Hackney. And Sal would always try to get me out, he says. We did some very odd things together. He pauses. Like those Drum & Bass parties in a warehouse at 2 o'clock in the morning, where someone would send you a password on Facebook two hours beforehand. And I would be like: I am not going to a Drum and Bass party, Sal. We will be about ten years older than everyone else there. At best. But then of course you go there and that's not the case. There is always some odd bloke who is in his 60s, with long white hair doing something strange.

### Environment

And the first night in London, he slept in Holland Park. Gerard speaks: and then he moved to the basement of the Lithuanian House. Ladbroke Grove first, then Notting Hill, then east London, Hackney. The way he saw Sal's environment was: chaos, creative tools, loads of microphones, things you could write on, places to throw yourself against the wall. That was the environment that Sal

wanted to be in. Not a square flat with white walls, he says.

Shortly after receiving the tape with unheard music, Martin visited Sal in his home, in Notting Hill. It was a small place, he recalls. Sal didn't have many things. But he had a lot of music. His collection blew my musical horizon, he admits. Later, for years, they shared a studio. Martin says: he always filled up the space that he had. A lot of great things, but also a lot of junk. Martin looks back over his shoulder. There's the garage with Sal's stuff. Sal was what held the stuff together, he says. Without him it is just stuff.

Laure remembers: we would lend him a house when we'd go off. And then you'd come back, and there was really thick hashish smoke coming from the basement. She giggles. And then you got Sal, in the basement, smoking hashish for the past week or whatever. She says. And exhales: he was like a brother. But life is hard when you don't want to fit within the system. He couldn't even find a stable flat. Property prices became too high, she says. And that's the story for many people nowadays. She continues: but he would always find people who would completely attach to him. Sal had a lot of friends. But he did not have a space. He left his stuff everywhere.

And then there would be times when he was couch surfing, and he would mention in passing that he was sleeping in his garage, Terry says. And you'd think, he adds: fucking hell Sal, you should have called me, you can sleep here.

Gerard remembers: Sal didn't tell anyone where he lived. At times he was staying in a Violin repair shop in Dalston. With a lot of dust.

P.s. the couch-surfing happened towards the end of his life.

#### The End

Terry is in his flat in Hackney. He says: life is less good now that Sal is not around. He exhales. He used to come over and he would play records and we would drink wine. He remembers: Sal would say that he liked me better when I was drinking because I was less English. More inclined to talk personally, I suppose, he explains. It was real life. There was this person that would make me do things. Dragging me out for coffee. Making me go out. He became an important figure in my life. A lot of the time we would meet up and talk about how crap life was, and drink coffee, and talk about music and things like this, he says. And maybe I was a buffer



Sal. Photo from Sal's personal archive



Sal rehearsing with Laure, 2012



Sal in his studio in Bethnal Green, 2012

between him and all that was going on? He pauses. But also, with Sal, I never really knew what was going on.

And suddenly Sal stopped smoking. He lost weight. He was itchy everywhere. He talked about finding a doctor, Gerard says. He told Sal: find somewhere to live, you are not healthy. It was 2016. And Sal had lung cancer. By then Sal and Gerard had slightly fallen out. I wasn't in Sal's good books, he explains. Sal was in Homerton Hospital. Then he got out. He said he was better.

Back at Terry's. Sal used to come over, he says. The idea was that he would bring a bag of records and play some stuff to me, and I would play some stuff to him. It never worked out that way, he recalls. He would just sit there, next to the record player. And I would sit here, and he would just play me stuff. I wasn't allowed anywhere near it, Terry explains. In Sal's selection there was a lot of jazz, a lot of very interesting jazz. A lot of Eastern European jazz I didn't know of Terry says. And adds: a lot of which he left with me three or four months before he died. He would come over, play stuff, and then ask if he could leave his bag there for the moment. Sal also curated bags of other things that he knew I liked. Terry says. Like Calypso artist Mighty Sparrow, he explains. He had an awful lot of records by him and he seems to have left them

here. Terry pauses. A lot of people say they experienced the same thing.

Like Laure. Sal left some record bags with her too. And then, just before he died she visited him at the hospital. She speaks: I remember seeing him there. I am not very good with factual moments of stories. And continues: I took him to the sunshine, we lay in it. It felt like we could be doing a gig. He had lost his hair. He smoked a cigarette although he was not allowed. I just managed to get a bit of sun on his face. He was just deeply in love with life, I think. People said: ah, Sal, he is difficult... But I didn't have that with him. I was so touched by his life story and how he got here. She means London. How he left Communism for the Western world. The music sort of pushed him away from the rigid regime... She finishes.

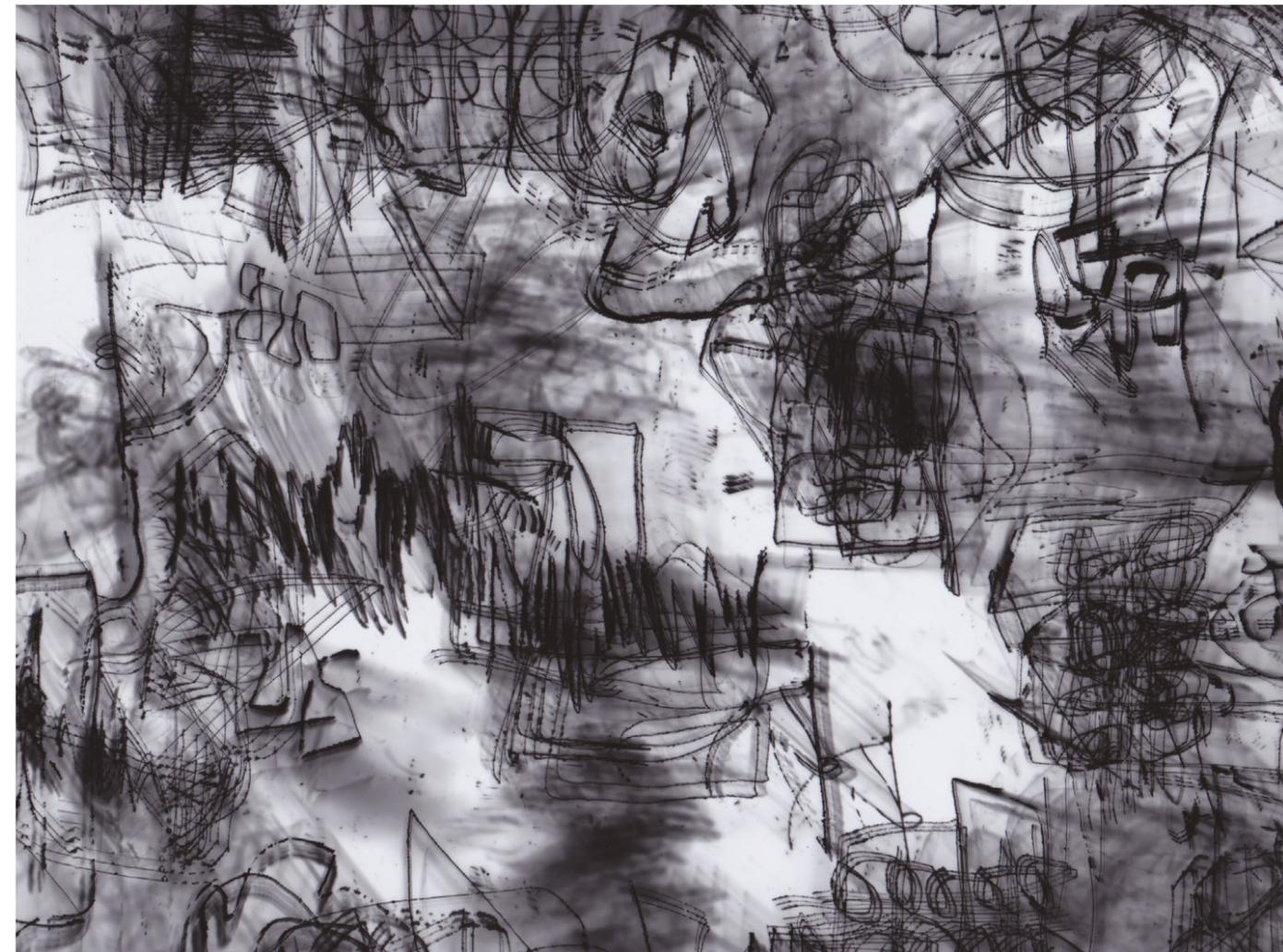
And here is Sal, a few years before his death. We talk about escaping. But is this the most important thing in life? You can only answer that once you have experienced it. Was the UK really for me? He asks rhetorically. At the end of the day you learn more about yourself, your limitations and possibilities, and you can assess the price. At the end you find out what kind of picture you want to paint. But that process can take... a lifetime. It is like a boxing match, he adds. You are pushed out then you want to come back and kick some ass.

# Fallen Light

Anton Lukoszevieze

*Ghost Air Trope*, Cliché verre, gelatin silver  
print, © Anton Lukoszevieze, 2021





Anton Lukoszevieze is a Lithuanian-English interdisciplinary artist and musician, and the founder and director of London-based group Apartment House. Recent group exhibitions include: 'Autographs of Sound and Silence' at Prospekto Galerija, Vilnius 2022; 'Audiosphere' at Museo Nacional Centro del Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid 2020; and 'After Leaving' at the Kaunas Biennial 2017. His publication *A Companion to Contemporary Drawing* was released by Wiley Blackwell in 2020.

These recent works – titled *Ordinary Music* – are all photograms, made by exposing gelatin silver paper to light. The colours embedded in some of the photograms are created using chemicals that react with the silver halides in the surface of the paper, a process known as chromoskedastic. The photograms are a subliminal response to the music of Ornette Coleman. The work was commissioned by a musicians' collective in Myanmar. Myanmar is currently under a military dictatorship. The images of people are from photos, which appeared in issues of National Geographic, published in the 1930s when the country was known as Burma. The images are combined with different graphic elements using drawing and fragments of musical notation. I draw onto black painted sheets of glass and then draw into the paint with different utensils. These sheets then act as negative masks for the photograms. The title *Ordinary Music* references the fact that in times of war and military dictatorship it is usually ordinary people that most often suffer.

Left: *Stocker Jump Trace*, Cliché verre, gelatin silver print, © Anton Lukoszevieze, 2020

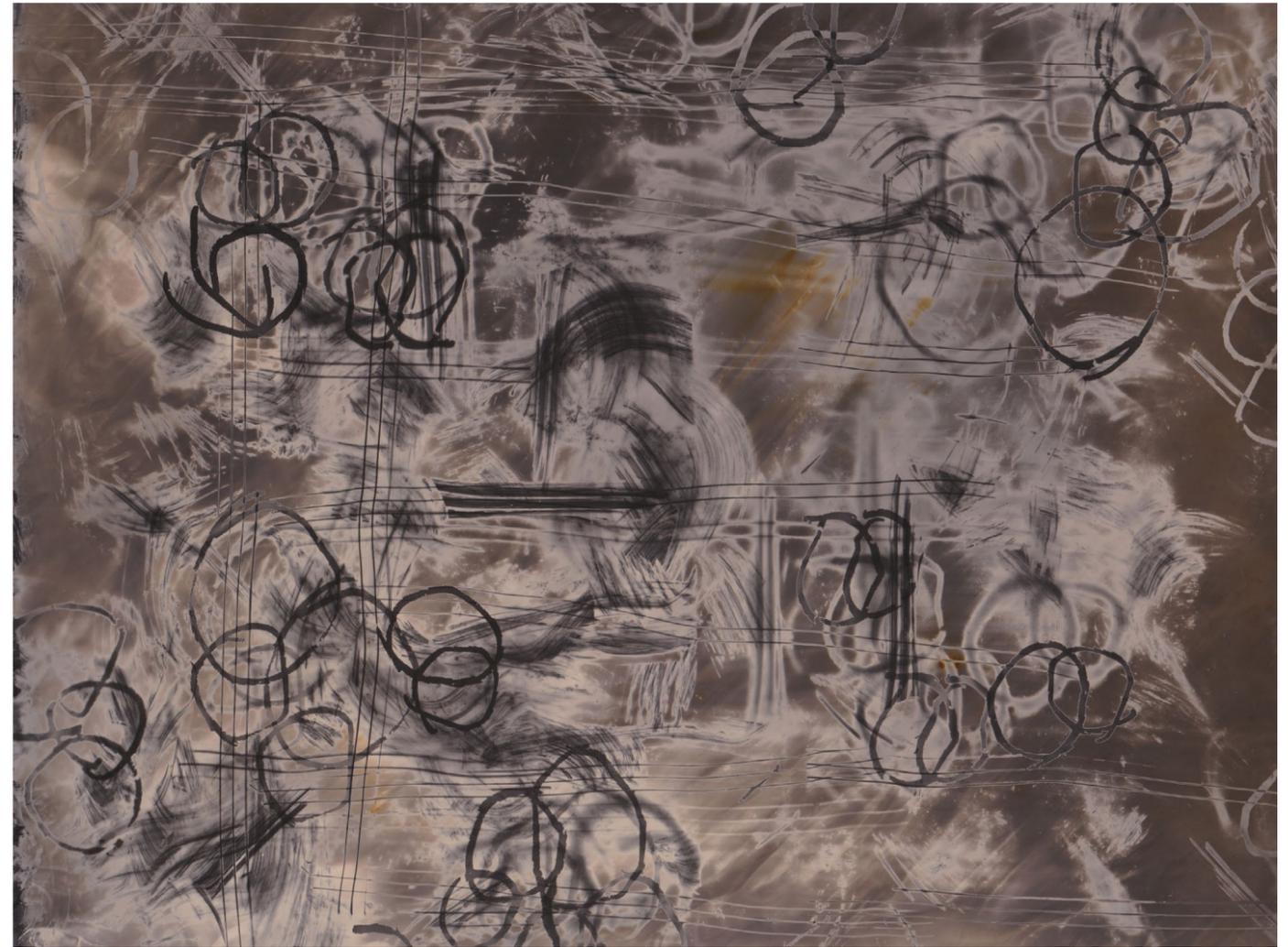
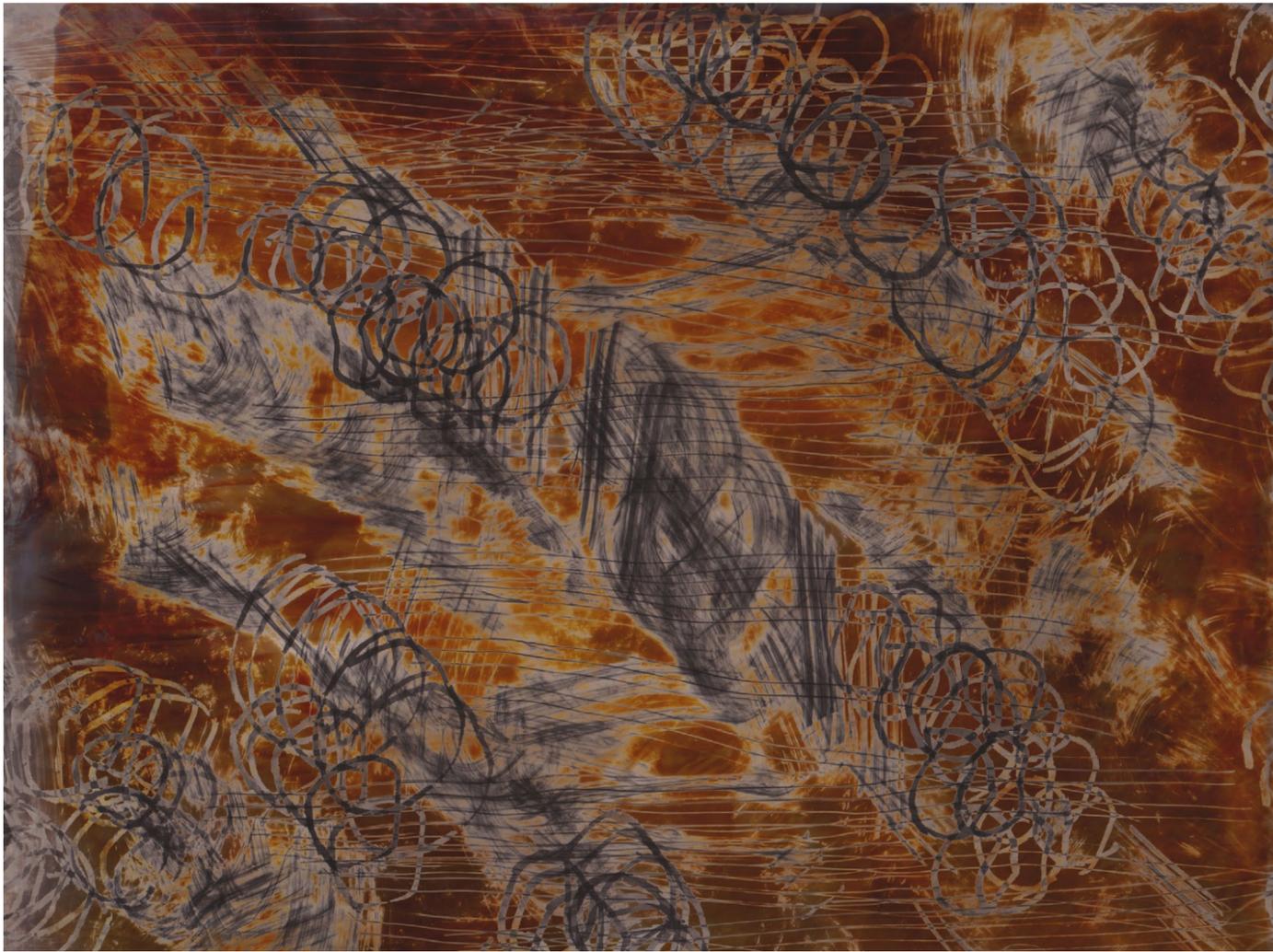
Above: *Pull Slant Map*, Cliché verre, gelatin silver print, © Anton Lukoszevieze, 2020





Overleaf: *Stereo Step Trail*, Cliché verre, gelatin silver print, © Anton Lukoszevieze, 2021

Left: *Verse Form Edge*, Cliché verre, gelatin silver print, © Anton Lukoszevieze, 2020

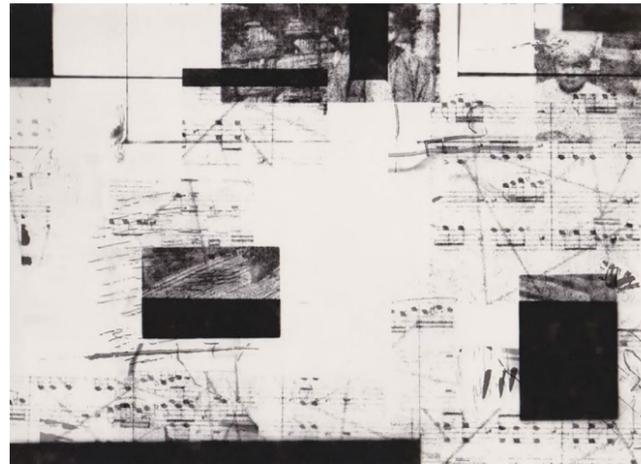
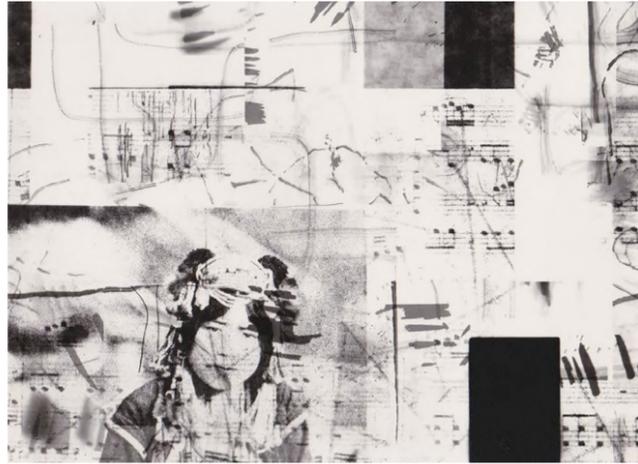


Left: *Out On Over*, Cliché verre, gelatin silver print, © Anton Lukoszevieze, 2020

Above: *Point Swerve Klang*, Cliché verre, gelatin silver print, © Anton Lukoszevieze, 2021



*Wrist Lens Double*, Cliché verre, gelatin  
silver print, © Anton Lukoszevieze, 2020



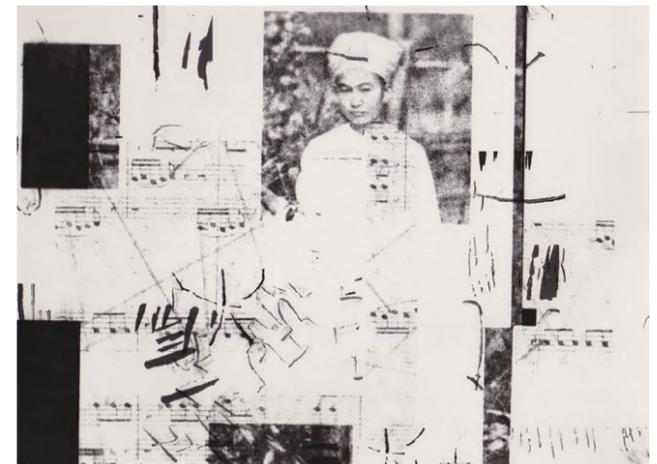
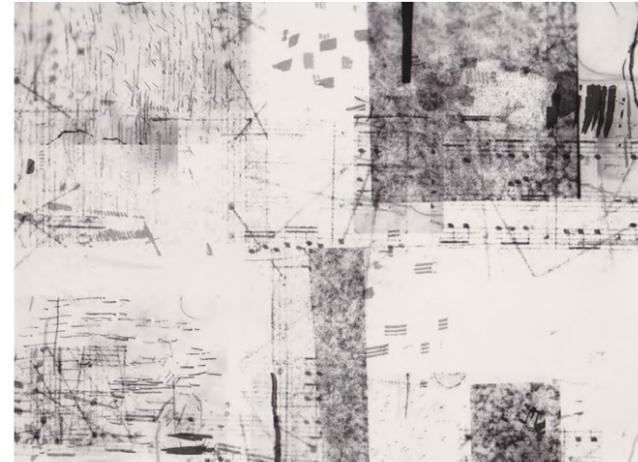
Anton Lukoszevieze  
*Ordinary Music* (2022)

8 pages, individual pages may be performed alone, or in series, the order is free.

Each page can last between 1 to 5 mins, performers to decide on the duration of a page. Each page may be performed by any instruments, objects, voices, with or without electronics.

4 environmental field recordings may be made and inserted into a performance of the work. Each one should be 20 to 40 seconds in duration.





# Lithuanian Soundscapes

Andrej Vasilenko



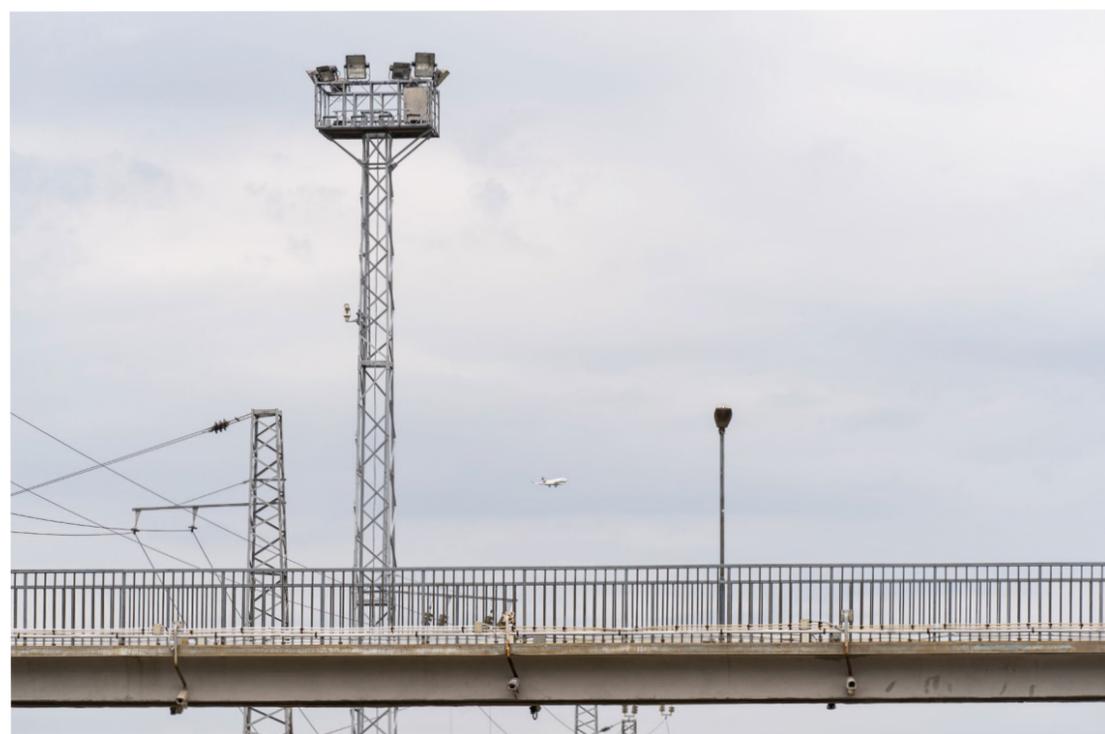
Andrej Vasilenko is a Lithuanian photographer who lives and works in Vilnius. His works have been exhibited in various contemporary art centres including the Whitechapel Gallery in London and the Contemporary Art Centre and Mo Museum in Vilnius. In 2014 he began the project *This is Vilnius*, earning him a creative residency at Diaphane, a photography centre in Beauvais, France in 2017. An eponymous book was released in 2019 to present the project. In 2018 Vasilenko's works were exhibited at the Photomanles festival exhibition in Beauvais and were presented in two solo shows at the Kaunas' Old Town Library (as part of Kaunas Photo festival) and Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania.

As physical waves moving through space, sound has always been shaped by its physical environment. From the sound of wind rushing through trees, to the drone produced by the vibrating walls of Paleolithic caves, to the timbre of mechanical horns and sirens bouncing off the concrete urban environment, nature and architecture produce the conditions both for sounds creation as well as its reception – this is what we speak of when we talk of a city or a place having its 'own sound'. With this in mind, we asked noted photographer Andrej Vasilenko to go out and document Lithuanian 'sounds' in terms of the environmental conditions which shape and give form to these waves. From the smallest, most incidental urban occurrence, to the most spectacular natural panorama, the parameters for the project were his to choose. As Vasilenko noted: 'Emptiness and stillness were the key factor for me while photographing for this brief. Emptiness gives you the possibility to experience the sound of each place, whether it is the wind, a train, ambient city sound or an echo in abandoned building. The moment of stillness is like a pause button which gives you the possibility to concentrate your attention on the sounds around you it create an atmosphere of the space in which you are in. Photographs are silent but you can imagine what you could hear and feel in each of them.'

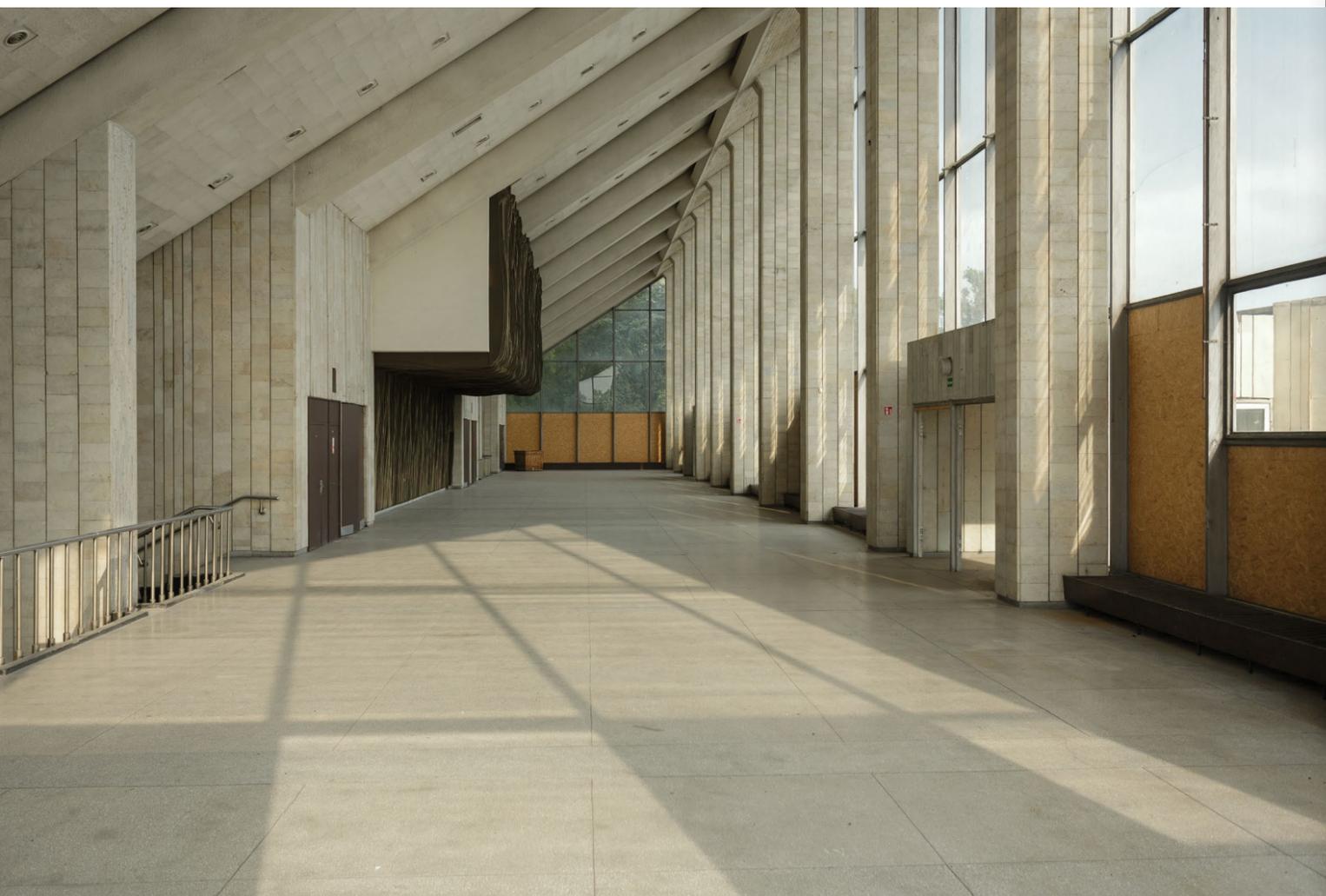
Images credits:

Skroblų Street, 2022 (p.69), Ukmergės versmė quarry, 2015 (p.70-71), A4 Highway, 2022 (p.72, top), Vilnius Railway Station, 2022 (p.72, bottom), Madžiūnai, 2022 (p.73, top), Vilnius Railway Station, 2022 (p.73, bottom), Pine tree, 2014 (p. 74-75), Verksionys quarry, 2022 (p.76, top), Sports Palace, 2014 (p.76, bottom), Fir trees, 2022 (p.77, top), Mars in the pool, 2014 (p.77, bottom).









# I Was Thinking About What You Said

Radvilė Buivydienė  
interviews Guy Dubious

Film strip from the experimental documentary *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* (2000) directed by Jonas Mekas. Photo courtesy of The Estate of Jonas Mekas



In 2022, to mark what would have been the 100th anniversary of Jonas Mekas, the world and Lithuania have celebrated the life and work of one of the country's most prominent cultural figures of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries through Jonas Mekas 100! – a programme of events including film screenings and retrospectives, exhibitions, readings, workshops, new publications and translations of Mekas' writings, and concerts celebrating the spirit of his works. A global cultural phenomenon in his own right, Mekas is considered by many to be the 'godfather of avant-garde cinema'.

Those who had the opportunity to meet him in person frequently share memories of the informal, friendly and cosmic atmosphere he created over conversations and drinks that were accompanied by his great sense of humour and taste in music. Jonas Mekas grew up surrounded by Lithuanian folk songs, later by talented musicians and celebrities, improvisations, experiments and participated in those performances himself. He was a very musical person, who could play anything.

Through a combination of several coincidences and the alignment of stars, two music organisations – the Felicja Blumental Library and Music Centre in Tel-Aviv and the Music Information Centre Lithuania in Vilnius – in cooperation with the Lithuanian Culture Institute joined the Jonas Mekas 100! programme with the project 'Temporary Soundtracks'.

Radvilė Buivydienė:

How did you manage to connect the dots between two music organisations and Jonas Mekas and create a project that holds value for artists in both Lithuania and Israel?

Guy Dubious:

It's always interesting for me to think about the way connections are made, or relations are formed. It seems to me that in most cases these things happen 'by accident' but then develop into a narrative as the connection gains meaning and gravity. So, I will try to answer this from both ends of the ladder so to speak.

The accident was a friendly meeting with Elena Keidošiūtė, the Lithuanian Cultural attaché in Israel, on a sunny day just outside the Felicja Center. I was only a few months into my position as director, still deep in the process of learning and getting to know the Center with all the people and things in it.

I was describing the wonderful and problematic history of the place, when all of a sudden Elena said something about Mekas' centennial celebration the following year, and within the same breath dismissed it as not exactly being in the field of music. 'Mekas!!! This is exactly what I want to do... no clue what or how,' but I remembered a night in New York in 2011, at the Anthology Film Archives, where I attended an event titled 'Mekas' Birthday'. I was expecting a cinema night with some kind of surprising screening but nothing of that sort happened. Instead, arriving at the lobby, already crowded with people, a drum kit awaited in the corner, with all sorts of musical instruments and gadgets scattered around it. Not long after, someone began arranging the equipment, and we realised another plan was taking place. I was happy to have my small tape recorder with me. Meanwhile, in the lobby people were conversing, some faces were familiar from Mekas' movies, others just felt so because of the generous spirit of hospitality. It was a strange and unique feeling of stumbling into a party half invited. Everybody seemed to know one another already. Still, we felt welcome, and as if anything could happen.

The performance was insane, it was the first time we saw Dalius Naujo, and I also got it on tape.

The image of that scene is indelibly imprinted in my mind, with the impressions of it still

Radvilė Buivydienė has worked in the fields of music management, publishing, communication and music export for more than 13 years. She started out as a cultural journalist and producer of various music festivals, events, projects and music albums and is now the head of the Music Information Centre Lithuania – the country's leading non-profit NGO within the field of music.

Guy Dubious has been developing his music and art practice with tapes and recording machines from an early age. In 2008 he founded Zimmer in Tel-Aviv, an autonomous community space for experimentation in art, mainly in the fields of sound and music. In 2014 he began researching the poetic mechanics of recording at Birmingham School of Art, in the UK, where he completed his PhD. He is currently the head of the Felicja Blumental Library and Music Center, in Tel-Aviv.



Jonas Mekas plays a Lithuanian folk instrument *daudytė* (birch trumpet). Photo courtesy of The Estate of Jonas Mekas



'I always had a bayan. I never learned to play it, but I always played anyway' Jonas Mekas, 1953. Photo courtesy of The Estate of Jonas Mekas



Jonas Mekas with Auguste Varkalis at the Sideshow Gallery, Brooklyn, New York, 2003. Photo courtesy of The Estate of Jonas Mekas

ringing in my ears. Sitting on the bench with Elena I thought how great it would be if we could have an event like this at Felicja. Something that will advocate our presence with the famous 'Now We Are Here'.

So, the project, you might say, was sparked by the recording, emotionally and musically of that night. It was up to me to begin working those lines of flight and form a project that would migrate Mekas into music.

The trouble was the question of affiliation between Mekas and the respective organisations – between his work and music. These relations can be manifested in different ways over the course of his films, projects and the social activities he was creating and involved with: the relations between sound and image in his diaries; the role of music in the notion of expanded cinema; his own musical aspirations manifested in his writings; and his late turn into installation involving compositions and sound pieces. We were curious about the possibility of imagining Mekas as the composer or the musician, in some parallel universe. The idea was that this Mekas wouldn't be that much different to the one we are familiar with but instead of making films he would be making sounds.

Such a parallel universe indeed existed to a degree with Mekas but also with other filmmakers in his milieu; Tony Conrad is a great example of someone who made the crossover between music and film. Watching Mekas' 1968 film *Walden* again, from this new perspective, it can be experienced as precisely that – a line of flight forming between fragments of light and noise. What could become of Mekas if he was situated within the field of music making? This question became the setting stone of the project.



Jonas Mekas  
365 Day Project,  
2007

[Link to 365 Day Project](#)



Jonas Mekas and Friends. Serpentine Gallery, London, 12 December 2012. Photo courtesy of The Estate of Jonas Mekas



*Reel and Sound: Israeli Records Monthly, issue 3 (November).*  
Published by Record and Listen, Israel, 1967.

Mekas spoke of himself as a diarist – a gatherer, a note-taker. Obligated to the significance or the poetics of the encounter. Filmmaking as a process of mattering time. Films made not of a narrative, a story, but of durations, of movements that are introduced and reintroduced through the art of filmmaking – a musical score for light and people. The intuitive manner of composing those images with his Bolex, the poetic relations between the cinematographer and the camera expressed, for example, in the use of variable speed and double exposures. These could be thought of as gestures of play that form the modulation of exposure in a similar way to the variations in sounds created through musical play.

The critical axis that both organisations and Mekas are related to, is the archive. Felicja holds the personal archives of early composers in Tel-Aviv. Given the historical situation these composers, musicians and music educators who donated their personal archives to the Center in Tel-Aviv, were all immigrants from Europe. All working in the tension between the 'new' not-yet-home and the tradition of the old home that most of them could not return to, which is not dissimilar to Mekas' situation.

The archives of the Music Information Centre Lithuania were established in 1946 by the Lithuanian section of the Music Fund of the USSR. This collection consists of the sound archive of classical and contemporary music by Lithuanian composers and the library which holds published scores, as well as books, periodicals, photographs, etc. The collection of scores by Lithuanian composers is the most significant and largest archive of its type in the country.

For both organisations, the archive is seen as a source of creativity, it is not an end point but rather a foundation from which new music can emerge. I considered this approach very much in line with Mekas' approach to his own archive. It is not so much the documentation of his work, but the building blocks which constitutes his creative act. In that sense, the archive is the meeting point of both organisations and Mekas. We want it to be a celebratory meeting, a gathering of different beings and approaches, an expansion of what can be thought of, or become with Mekas' work.

RB:

Lithuanian artists have been strongly influenced by Jonas Mekas' films and poetry. Composers have incorporated his texts in their works and field recordings or conceptual walking projects have gained popularity in Lithuania. Sound artists have used recorders for documentation, albums or art installations just like Jonas Mekas used his camera. Do you think these kinds of sound projects fit into your imagined parallel universe?

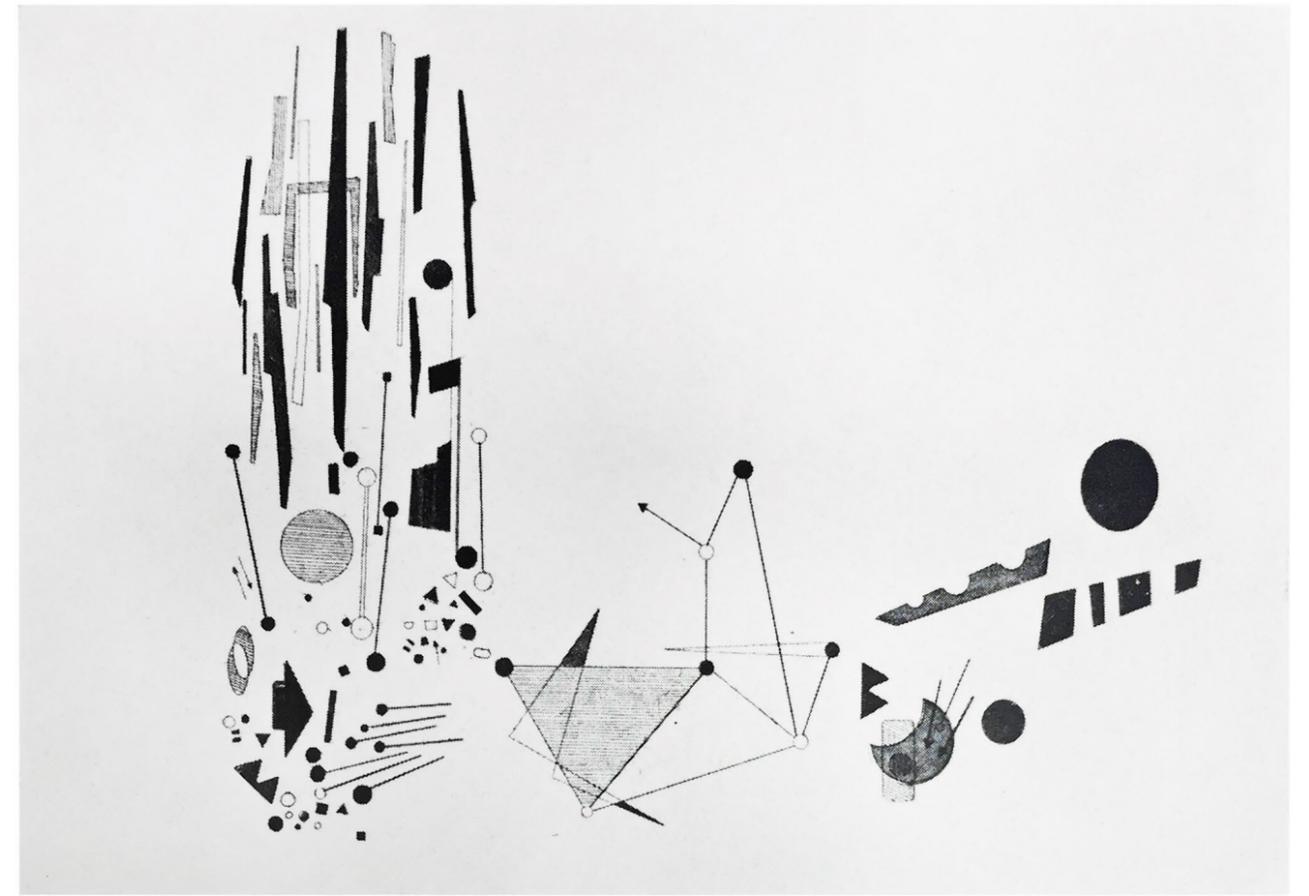
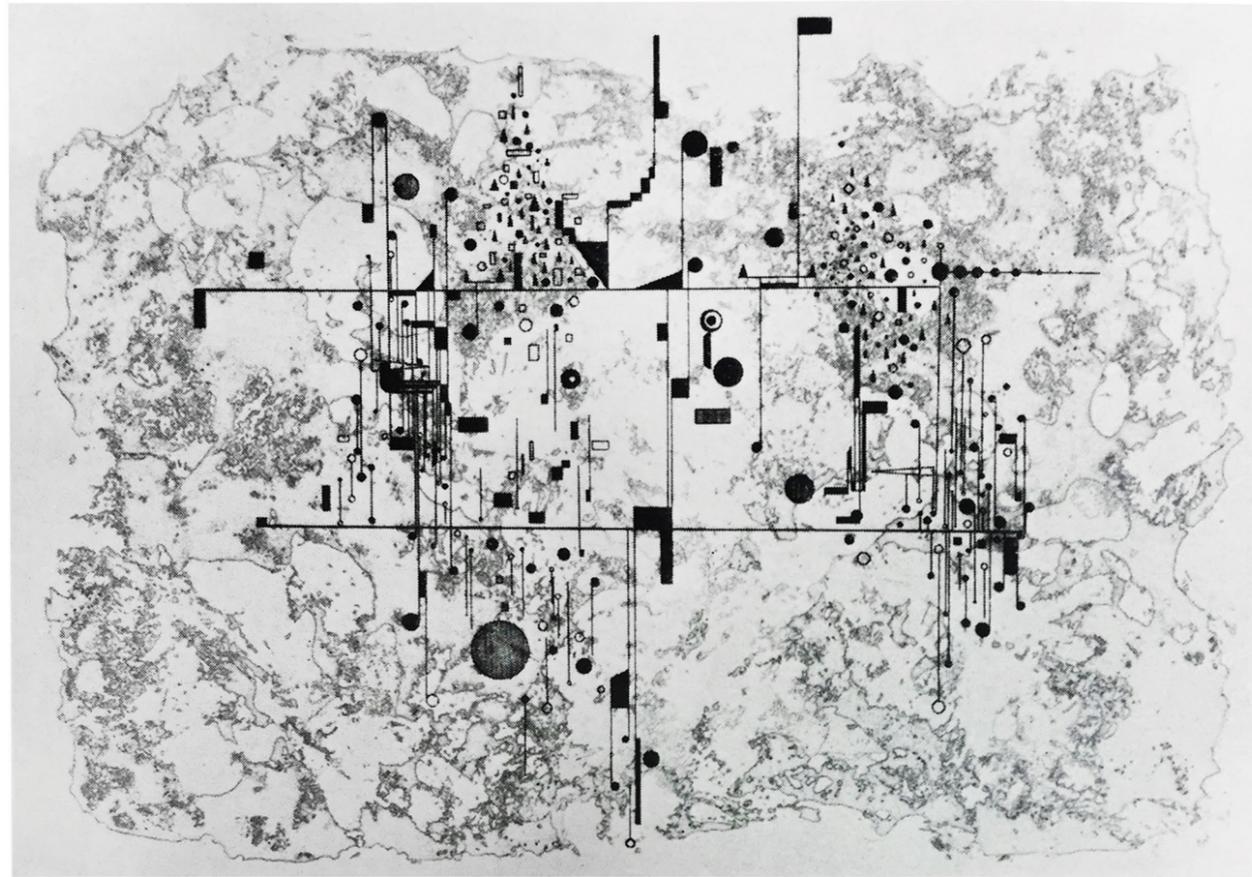
GD:

The link you propose between Mekas' use of the Bolex camera and the practice of field recordings in the contemporary situation, is important. They share something in common in their misuse of certain practicalities, supposedly inherent to the practice. Field recordings have gone from being a practice of surveying culture or natural phenomena – you might consider music anthropology at one end of the scale and soundscapes concerned with the natural world at the other end. In both, the paradigmatic position of the recorder is supposedly impersonal. The recorder is expected to be a reliable technician, operating the machines to deliver the best representation of whatever the subject is. Field recording today has become an interesting playground for many artists, and the issue of representation is no longer the main focus. Field recording became a way of interacting with the sonic, a way of engaging with the world as well as with the medium itself. Field recordings became poetic means.

This is a critical point, I believe, for the understanding of both sides of this parallel universe – Mekas and the contemporary world of music and sound artists. To grasp that Mekas' attitude towards the world, as a continuous happening, could not have been developed without the relations forming between him and Bolex camera. Such relations cannot be grasped solely as means to an end, Mekas is not merely documenting. Mekas is very much a participant within the situation he is filming, he is dancing with the camera, and with the other movements that intersect the Bolex-Mekas world. Field recordings today mark a performative practice rather than an academic one.



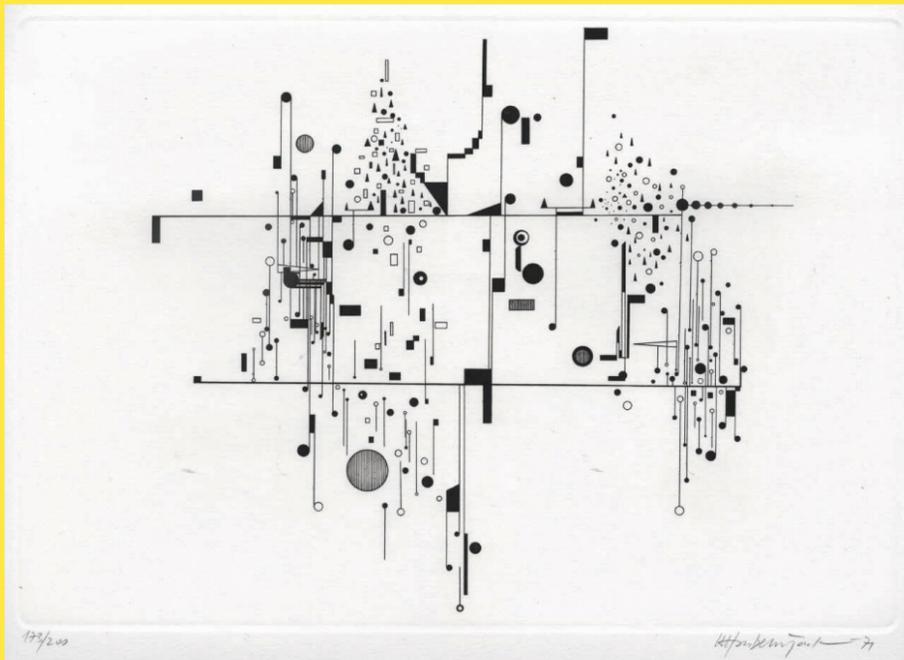
An old logo of the Library of Music, found on an old writing paper. Tel Aviv Municipality. The logo portrays the former building of the library.



Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, *Konstellationen*, 1971. A series of 25 sheets in engraving, etching and Aquatint. Courtesy Galerie Ariadne, Wien.



Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, *Konstellationen*, 1971. A series of 25 sheets in drypoint, etching and Aquatint. Courtesy Galerie Ariadne, Wien.



RB:  
What is the idea behind the open call for "Temporary Soundtracks"? What kind of material will be used for these soundtracks?

GD:  
The open call creates an opportunity for artists to work with selected material from Mekas' film archive, composing soundtracks for it. The soundtracks will be as temporary as the happening itself.

However, 'temporary' does not just refer to the matter of time, or shortness. It is also about the moment, the irreducible moment to moment, the endless effort of experiencing, living and re-living, which Mekas' films have always been about.



Photo manipulation by Liudas Parulskis.



Yiorgis Sakellariou making field recordings.  
Photo by John Grzinich



Jonas Mekas 100!  
Program

[Link to Program](#)

'Temporary' also relates to the question of sound in general, being that which dissipates upon emergence; and the question of sound within the particular relations it forms with the moving image.

These are some of the daring points we hope to explore through this open call: the potential for expansion within the relations between sound and image, and how sound can become an agency that modulates the different aspects of the screening. For example, it can explore absurdist responses between the archive and sound making. It can open the films up to improvisational practices of all kinds. I guess there are plenty more we haven't yet thought of.

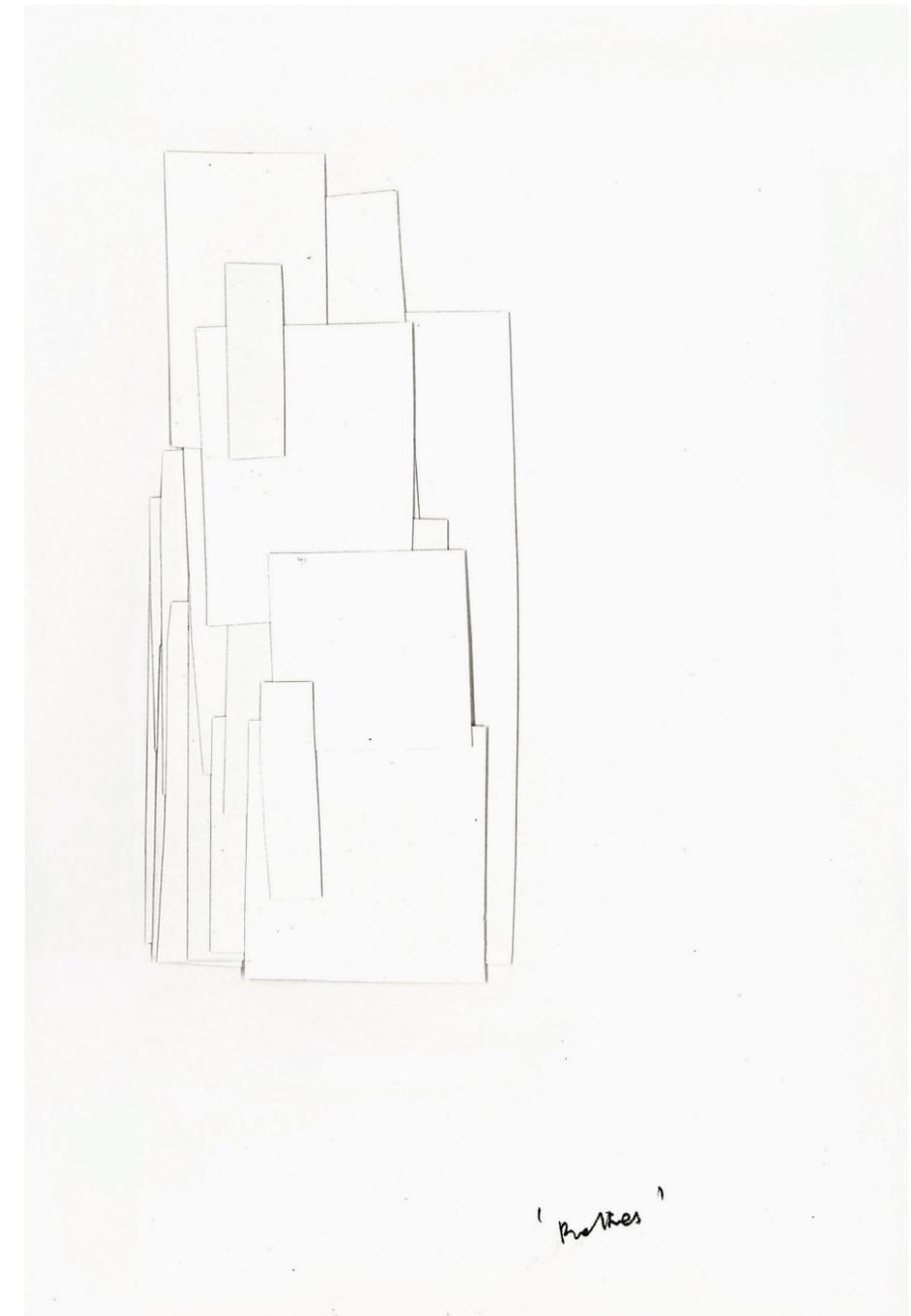
In short, the idea of 'Temporary Soundtracks' is to side-step the classic soundtrack position of amplifying the visual content, and to explore their encounter as, more or less, equal forces.

When I thought of the idea of temporary it was immediately related in my mind to the celebratory aspect found in much of Mekas' work, and the general attitude – his famous 'Now We Are Here,' as perfect example. It is not necessarily a joyful celebration, in fact to a degree it is not even emotional. It is rather a point from which to cherish whatever and whoever is here now: a dare to embrace the existing sense of fragility and be indebted to the loss.

# Post-Soviet Gendered Soundscapes: Lithuania

Sandra Kazlauskaitė

Sandra Kazlauskaitė is an artist and researcher working across the disciplines of sound installation, sound performance and theory-led projects in auditory culture. With her works, Sandra explores the concepts of silence/silencing, gendered soundscapes as well as the production of political and embodied sonic space. Her practice is embedded in feminist writing and practice, including the works of Pauline Oliveros, Ursula Le Guin and Sara Ahmed. Sandra is a Lecturer in Sound and Music Theory at the University of Lincoln, where she researches and teaches theory and practice of soundscapes, practices of listening, audiovisual arts practice, sound and music cultures. In 2019, Sandra was awarded a PhD at Goldsmiths College for her practice-based project 'Expanded Aurality: Doing Sonic Feminism in the White Cube'. Her publications include 'Soundscapes of the Post-Soviet World Today' in Leonardo Music Journal (2015), 'Doing Sonic Feminism' in Atlas of Diagrammatic Imagination (2019) and 'Women Sonic Thinkers. The Histories of Seeing, Touching and Embodying Sound' in The Bloomsbury Handbook of Sound Art (2020). Sandra also makes ambient music and is a part of the female and non-binary DJ collectives SISU and GUYZ.



Composition: 'Bolt'as'

'Egidijus accepts my Bolt taxi ride request. It takes him 15 minutes to arrive at Vaišvydava, where I have been waiting. We both turn to our phones to verify the booking: I check the number plate of his car; he checks my name. Our ride begins. Egidijus is unreserved. He talks about his "real" job – the family business that hasn't been doing well since the pandemic. We discuss the politics of "Bolting", the rise of the gig economy in Lithuania and issues

with unionising. As our voices momentarily align, the soundscape of the taxi ride unfolds with a shared dissonance against free market systems, capitalism and our support for workers' rights. The tone, however, changes abruptly.

"I really do not understand why women are allowed to drive taxis", Egidijus asserts. He is outraged by "young" women taking on part-time "Bolting": "I would not want to see my wife or my daughter driving taxis at night, or day! It is just not the right

profession or a hobby for them.” He pauses. “What if the car breaks down, what if a *marozas* [aggressive type] disrespects you, how will you *duosi jam į snukį* [punch his face]?” He pauses again. “If anything, we need less women in front of the wheel.” I try to confront Egidijus’ fury. He has, however, stopped listening. “All men think the same”, he asserts and silences the space. The soundscape of the taxi slowly develops a darker tone and timbre. My voice, for Egidijus, becomes noisy, an intrusion. To silence it, he blasts the volume of the radio. Bonnie Tyler’s classic *Total Eclipse of the Heart* feels somewhat uncomfortable. The ride ends.

A message from Bolt pops up on my phone: “Would you like to tip the driver?” I click 1 Euro. The driver responds with a smiley emoji.’

## Introduction

‘Bolt’as’ is a sonic note, an encounter, a composition, an experience, a soundscape, a moment, a space, a time, a commonplace. ‘Bolt’as’ is an auditory ‘detail’, taken from “‘Post-Soviet’ Gendered Soundscapes” – a sonic arts and research project I have been developing since the start of 2022. The term ‘soundscape’, introduced by the acoustic ecologist and composer R. Murray Schafer in the 1970s, is often understood as an acoustic totality of a lived sonic environment, including its noises, music, nature, and technologies.<sup>1</sup> A soundscape can also be conceptualised as a context that surrounds and unfolds in ‘complex symphonies or cacophonies of sound’.<sup>2</sup> For Jonathan Sterne, a soundscape ‘speaks to the physicality of sonic space’ moulded by historical, social, cultural, political and technological processes.<sup>3</sup> Whether material or abstract, the soundscapes of the past and present serve as a fabric to our lived environments, shaping how spaces and places are remembered, understood, produced and experienced.

As a practising sound artist and researcher committed to feminist thinking and practice, I am interested in what we might discover if we *listen*, rather than look, for gender in our lived environments. In this entry, I turn my attention to what Christine Ehrick calls ‘gendered soundscapes’<sup>4</sup> and explore how sound and gender are projected, performed and embodied in my immediate

‘Post-Soviet’ locale – Lithuania, where I was born and grew up. Thinking about soundscapes as gendered and gendering, Ehrick argues, can help us understand how ‘power, inequality and agency might be expressed in the sonic realm’.<sup>5</sup> Listening to our lived soundscapes, in this sense, can help us grasp how sound contributes towards the production and embodiment of socio-political differences, including gender, sexuality, race, age, and ethnicity, in lived spaces.<sup>6</sup> As the products of histories and ideologies, spaces, to use Doreen Massey and Henri Lefebvre’s thinking, are utterly political constructs that change and shift over time.<sup>7</sup> Spaces, in this sense, as active channels of power, are able to enforce silences, construct exclusions, generate resistances and offer agencies, both visually and sonically. In this entry, I tune into the auditory dimension of space and explore how gender, sound and space might interrelate. I conceptualise their relationship as a live material dialogue, through which gender hierarchies, norms and subversions might be projected, enacted, maintained, embodied, internalised, disputed or resisted.

Led by feminist curiosity as well as my own lived experiences of growing up as a ‘girl’ and later a ‘woman’ in the newly re-established Lithuanian state, I am interested how our public and private spaces have continued to categorise gender roles since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, and how gender has been represented, performed and experienced spatially through the sonic. What power imbalances, tonalities, harmonies and discriminatory dissonances might we discover, if we listen to voices, noises and silences that unfold in the continuum of Lithuanian lived soundscapes? I explore these questions and this precise geopolitical context through my sonic arts practice. Using field recording, note-taking, sound scoring and composing, I listen out to everyday lived public and private spaces and question how different thresholds of sound contribute towards the production of social and political space, where prescribed gender roles and binaries continue to resurface and prevail.

Arriving from Pauline Oliveros’ methodology of ‘Deep Listening’, I listen openly and globally.<sup>8</sup> I tune into the auditory dimension of structural inequalities, stereotypes as well as patriarchal family systems and attitudes. I listen out to the omissions, the silences and the gendered

1

R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: The Tuning of the World*, Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1993.

2

Paul Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense, and Place*, London: Routledge, 2011, p.86.

3

Jonathan Sterne, ‘Soundscape, Landscape, Escape’, *Soundscapes of the Urban Past: Staged Sound as Mediated Cultural Heritage*, ed. Karin Bijsterveld, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2013, p.182.

4

Christine Ehrick, *Radio and the Gendered Soundscape: Women and Broadcasting in Argentina and Uruguay, 1930–1950*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

5

Christine Ehrick, ‘Vocal Gender and the Gendered Soundscape: At the Intersection of Gender Studies and Sound Studies’, *Sounding Out*, 2 February 2015, <https://soundstudiesblog.com/2015/02/02/vocal-gender-and-the-gendered-soundscape-at-the-intersection-of-gender-studies-and-sound-studies/> accessed 14 July 2022.

6

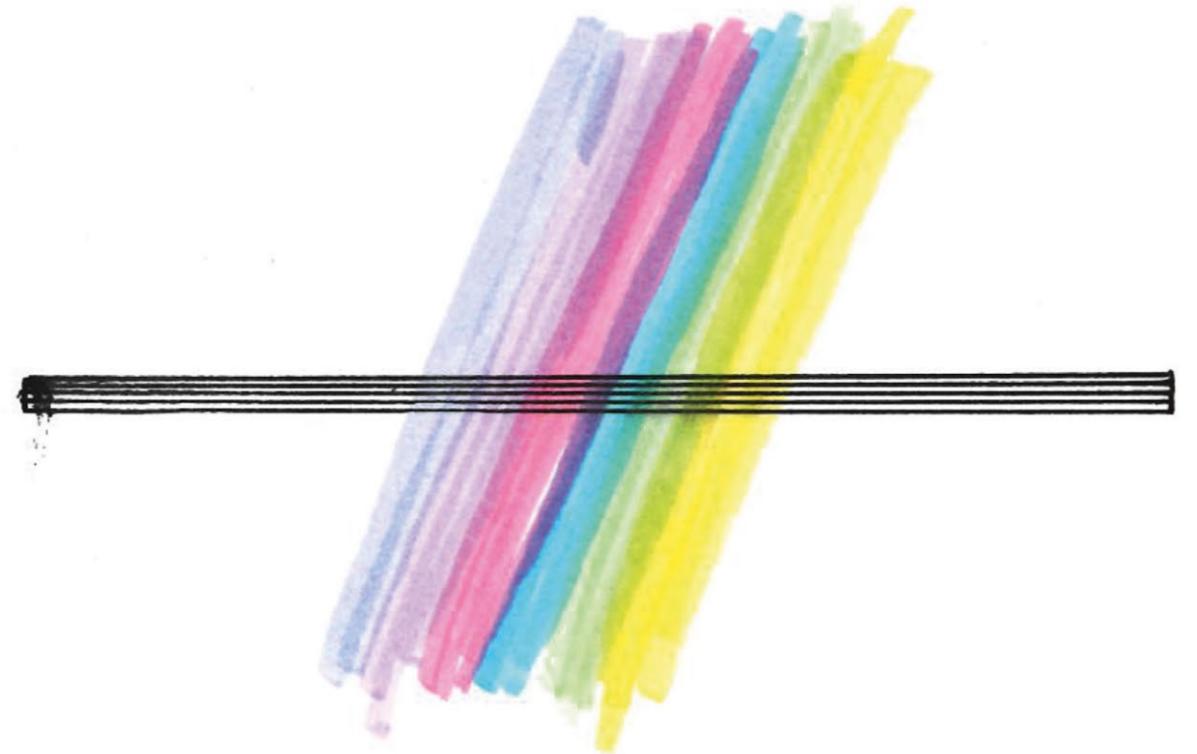
The idea of ‘lived space’ is explored in Henri Lefebvre’s work. In *The Urban Revolution*, Henri Lefebvre writes: ‘Space is only a medium, environment and means, an instrument and intermediary [...] [It] never possesses existence in itself but always refers to something else, to existential and simultaneously essential time, subjective and objective [...]’. For more, refer to: Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003, p.73

7

For more, refer to: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991 and Doreen Massey, *For Space*, Los Angeles: Sage, 2005.

8

Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening: A Composer’s Sound Practice*, New York: Universe, 2005.



Jilchen 1

hums. I also search for auditory subversions, critiques and moments of resistance that obstruct the dominant masculine ideals and structures. The process of global listening in the context of listening for gender is ongoing and undertaken in-situ. As argued by Järviluoma, Moisala and Vilkkö: 'when studying gendered lived spaces, it is [...] necessary to interpret the sounds situationally. [...] We need to study the subjective and shared meanings of sounds, in situ and dynamically',<sup>9</sup> accounting for the peculiarities of each context and its 'sound effects' (l'efets sonaires)<sup>10</sup> – the cultural, spatial and perceptual contingencies of sound. The remainder of this entry offers some initial reflections on sound, gender and the 'Post-Soviet' Lithuanian space, alongside written scores and encounters, during which, noise, voice and silence were listened to and embodied as the constitutive elements of gendered/ing soundscapes.

#### Composition No. 2: The Kitchen

'Dinner is about to be served in the kitchen. She will not sit at the table. She will continue to wash the dishes, pass the salt, slices of bread and sausages from the pan onto his plate, if and when needed. The plate, fork, and a knife have already been laid in its usual arrangement – the usual spot. He seats himself at the table. The TV is on, and it is loud – it is the way he likes it. He begins to eat; he listens to the news; he and she are in silence.

The room, however, is not silent, but filled with a wide spectrum of noises. The sounds of the dish washing and cleaning, a gruesome news report emitting from the TV about a car accident that took place in the last 24 hours and the general hum of eating and movement slowly fill the domestic soundscape. "I have a good one", he adds to the cacophony. She does not respond. He proceeds: "Why do women wear high heels, make-up and perfume?" No answer. "Because they are small, ugly and smell bad!" he laughs. She responds with a quiet smile. He finishes his meal and leaves the room. She picks up the plate and leftovers from the table and puts it all in the sink. The noise continues.'

#### Sound and Gender

In her essay 'The Gender of Sound' (1995), the poet Anne Carson traces the history of gendered sound. She writes that since classical

antiquity, 'putting the door on the female mouth has been an important project of patriarchal culture', as 'women's' sound only leads to 'monstrosity, disorder and death'.<sup>11</sup> Reflecting on the feminine/masculine binary parameters, the author acknowledges that Western civilisations have continuously admitted women's sound as lacking 'the ordering principle of *sophrosyne*'<sup>12</sup>, deficient in moderation, harmony, logic and order. Since the ancients, Carson writes, 'women, calamites, eunuchs and androgynes' have been understood as 'deviant from or deficient in the masculine ideal of self-control'<sup>13</sup> because of their 'high pitch' sound and the 'bad' ('feminine') tones. In order to maintain the order and reason, Carson reflects, women's 'disorderly and uncontrolled outflow of sound' had to be regulated and kept being silenced.<sup>14</sup> 'Silence', she continues, 'is the *kosmos* [order] for women.'<sup>15</sup> Carson's observations resonate with those of the writer Anne Karpf, who also reflects: 'if silence is the ideal for women, then any talk in which a woman engages can be too much'<sup>16</sup>, suggesting that women's sound, when in use, is always already too excessive and undisciplined – it disrupts the structures and spaces of reason. Marie Thompson further asserts that the category of 'woman' has been 'met with fear and degradation; she has been the perversion of reason, morally bankrupt and the abject defilement of the sacred and the pure'. 'A woman' should be looked at, not heard.<sup>17</sup> Carson, Karpf and Thompson's accounts demonstrate how the noises, silences or voices produced by some bodies have been continuously subjected to erasure, undermining, fine-tuning and tweaking in line with universal masculine ideals.

The relationship between sound, gender and space is, indeed, one of entanglement. After all, sound is not a static materiality or medium. It grows, transforms and dissipates according to the physical as well as broader social, cultural and political contingencies. Gender too, as a socially constructed (and performed) category, to follow Butler, shifts and transforms according to historical, social and cultural practices.<sup>18</sup> Thus, how sound might be gendered will depend on the context in which gender is produced, understood and experienced. In addition, while sound may shape gender and gender may shape sound, the relationship between the two, as Marie Thompson argues, is 'not simply of mediation',<sup>19</sup> but one of relationality. As Thompson further asserts:

9

Helmi Järviluoma, Anni Vilkkö, and Pirkko Moisala, *Gender and Qualitative Methods*, London, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2003, p.104.

10

Jean François Augoyard et al., *Sonic Experience: A Guide to Everyday Sounds*, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011, p.123.

11

Anne Carson, *Glass, Irony, and God*, New York: New Directions, 1995, p.121.

12

Carson, *Glass, Irony and God*, p.126.

13

Carson, *Glass, Irony and God*, p.119.

14

Carson, *Glass, Irony and God*, p.126.

15

Carson, *Glass, Irony and God*, p.127.

16

Anne Karpf, *The Human Voice: The Story of a Remarkable Talent*, London: Bloomsbury, 2007, p.160.

17

Marie Thompson, 'Gossips, Sirens, Hi-Fi Wives: Feminising the Threat of Noise', *Resonances: Noise and Contemporary Music*, New York and London: Continuum International, 2013, p.299.

18

For more, see: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, London: Routledge, 1990.

19

Marie Thompson, 'Gendered Sound', *The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies*, ed. Michael Bull, Abingdon: Routledge, 2018, p.108.

20

Thompson, 'Gendered Sound', p.108.



'Kitchen 2'

'gender is constituted "with, through and alongside" the sonic.'<sup>20</sup> When thinking about sound and gender in the context of soundscapes (including its 'sound effects'), it is important, thus, to consider the relationship between sound, gender and space as active, 'multidirectional and co-productive',<sup>21</sup> rather than causal. After all, according to Blesser and Salter, 'a soundscape is a living organism with a personality that arises from the composite behaviour of the inhabitants.'<sup>22</sup> As lived materialities and social constructions, sound and gender oscillate and fluctuate in time, consequently shaping the 'life' of the soundscape, how it might be represented and embodied.

### Gender & 'Post-Soviet' Lithuanian Soundscapes

The so-called 'Post-Soviet' Lithuanian soundscape could be conceptualised as a living compound structure reverberating in knotted cacophonies and interwoven euphonies. Over the last two centuries, Lithuania has been subjected to harsh political, social, cultural and economic transformation, most recently under Soviet rule. The state was occupied and annexed during the Second World War and only regained its independence in 1990. Lithuania's accelerated transition into Western democracy has resulted in the production of hybridised socio-political soundscapes. The sounds that permeate lived spaces, as a result, have become entangled and complex. They are attached to both, the West and the East; they are hyper-capitalist and neoliberal, while simultaneously, they are still tied to the yet-to-be-processed communist past. While accelerated in their cacophony, heterogeneity and capitalist reality, the soundscapes of 'Post-Soviet' Lithuania continue to oscillate between oppositional thresholds and extremes, between past traditions and contemporary realities, often exposing their uncanniness and eerie discomfort of having to adapt and change.

The 'uncanny' nature of the 'Post-Soviet' Lithuanian soundscapes can also be heard through the dimension of gender. During the Soviet regime, the ideology behind a 'Soviet woman' and the 'Soviet family' promised an erasure of gender differences as a way of emancipating women and offering equality. As the right and obligation to work was at the core of the socialist values, women ended up undertaking waged labour as 'working

women and mothers' as well as performing the usual (unpaid) social reproduction work, such as housework, looking after children, husbands and grandparents. In this sense, within the Soviet gender hierarchy, women were considered as both, 'breadwinners' and 'worker-mothers'.<sup>23</sup> The reality behind the superficial image of women's equality, advocated by the Soviet regime, was, however, rather different. According to Olga Voronina, women were the domestic slaves of socialism: 'their labour held up our extensive economy for many long years at a low cost [...]. On the exploitation and appropriation of women's unpaid labour in the family, the family has maintained itself as an institution for the perpetuation of labour-power,<sup>24</sup> as has the patriarch-state, which devours that power.' If anything, the role of women as 'paid workers, wives/partners, (lone) mothers, providers of care/health/education, and participants in public life'<sup>25</sup> only deepened the already ingrained inequality.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the abrupt transition into the Western democracy, the newly established independent Lithuanian state underwent a hyper-capitalist re-organisation of life. Lithuania was quick to adopt neoliberal free market systems, consequently pushing the country into an economic crisis and mass unemployment, which resulted in the 'feminisation of poverty'.<sup>26</sup> The category of a 'woman' during the early years of independence was quick to reverse back towards the old patriarchal gender regimes, albeit set within the framework of the 'new' family ideology. Women 'could become women' again, do 'womanly things' – things that are closer to 'their nature' and 'nature' more broadly – be housewives, child bearers and be beautiful. While Soviet women were seen as lacking feminine traits, the women of the new independent Lithuanian state, now freed from the Soviet regime, could be 'themselves again' and return to their 'naturalised femininity'.<sup>27</sup> Within the liberalised free world, 'stay-at-home-mothers' and wives, as a result, returned to the more feminised activities and duties, such as shopping and (unwaged) domestic work, while men continued to dominate the public cultural and political domains, this way reproducing the deep-seated gendered divisions of labour.<sup>28</sup>

Composition No. 3: Meat Hall,  
Station Market

21

Thompson, 'Gendered Sound', p.109.

22

Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, 'The Other Half of the Soundscape: Aural Architecture', World Federation Acoustic Ecology Conference, 2009.

23

Sarah Ashwin, 'A Woman is Everything: The Reproduction of Soviet Ideals of Womanhood in Post-Communist Russia', in Al Rainnie, Adrian Smith, Adam Swain (eds), *Work, Employment and Transition. Restructuring Livelihoods in Postcommunism*, London, Routledge, 2002, p.119.

24

Olga Voronina, 'Soviet Patriarchy: Past and Present', *Hypatia* 8, no. 4, November 1993, p.10.

25

Herwig Reiter, "'In My Opinion, Work Would Be in First Place and Family in Second": Young Women's Imagined Gender-Work Relations in Post-Soviet Lithuania', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, Volume 41, no. 4, December 2010, p.532.

26

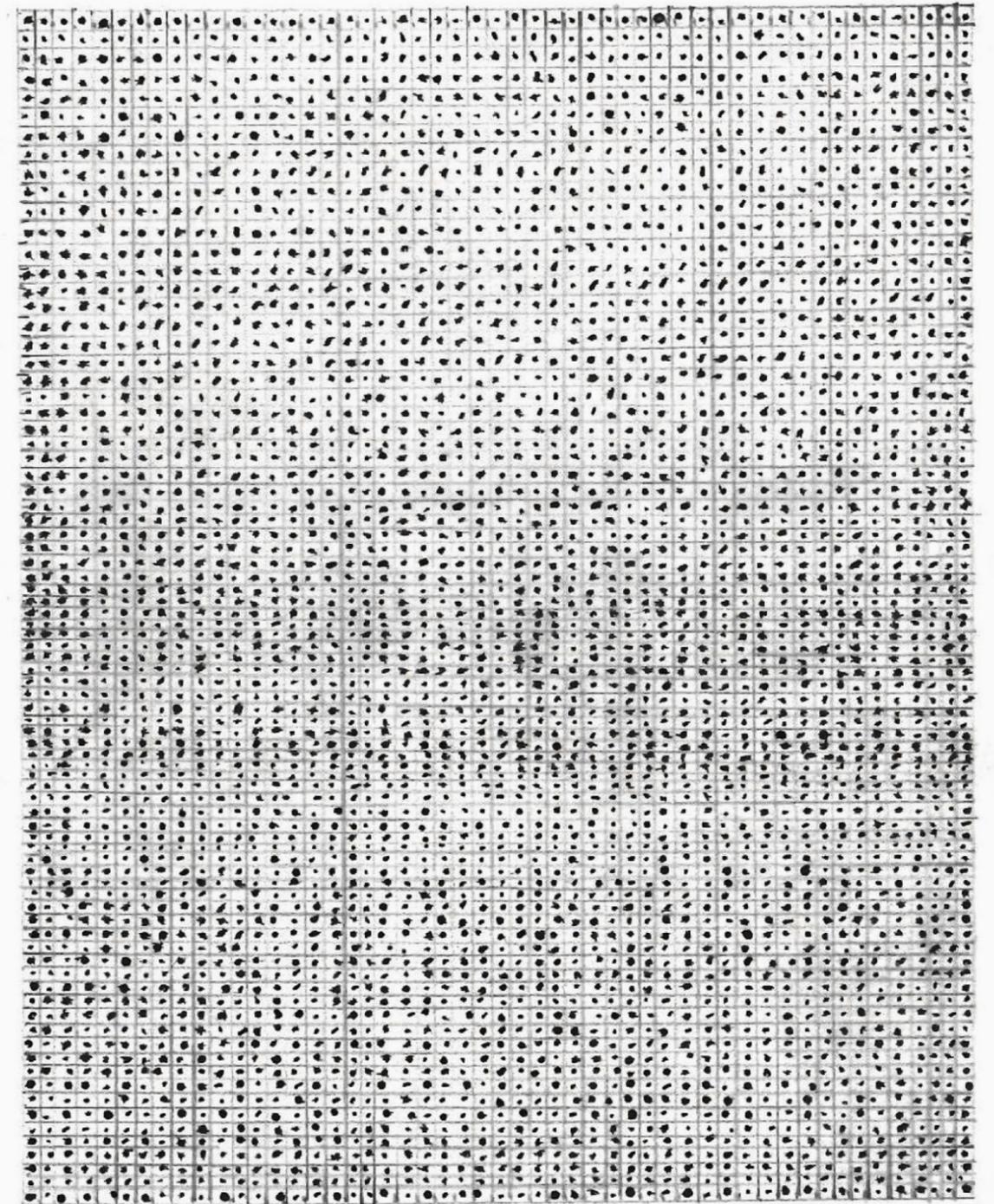
For more on this topic, read: Éva Fodor, 'Gender and the Experience of Poverty in Eastern Europe and Russia after 1989' in *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Volume 35, no. 4, 1 December 1997, pp.369–82.

27

Viktorija Kolbešnikova, 'Post-Feminism in Post-Socialist Lithuania: Soviet Woman Becomes Woman', 2019, p.60.

28

Jolanta Reingardienė, 'Lyčių Politika Lietuvoje. Smurto Prieš Moteris Šeimoje Atvejais', *Sociologija. Mintis Ir Veiksmas* 9, no. 1, 10 July 2002, pp.16–33.



4,182 silences  
in the meat hall,  
station market

Walk around the meat hall  
in circles  
for 5 minutes.

Listen to the general hum of the trade:  
buying, selling, packing.  
Stop.

Listen to voice 1: 'Neeeee, nepirk pas tą  
seną bobą, jos visi produktai sukrešėję'.  
[Noooo, do not buy produce from that old  
woman, it is all gone off]  
Turn around.

Listen to voice 2: 'Kur ta prostitutka pa-  
davėja? Turbūt užmigo tūlyke.' [Where's  
that prostitute saleswoman, she probably  
fell asleep on the toilet somewhere]  
Continue walking. Eavesdrop further:  
'Ne jūs ką, ką čia moteris ir už vyrą mokės?  
Tegul vyras moka, dar to betruko.' [No no,  
why should a woman pay for a man? Let  
the man pay, ridiculous.]

Stop. Listen globally for gender for two  
minutes.

Note down.

Leave the hall.

Can you hear the traffic?

The gender structures, the way they are  
projected and experienced within, through  
and alongside the sonic in contemporary  
Lithuanian environments, continue to present  
hybridised tonalities, as the socio-cultural  
and political attachments to gender lines and  
binaries, are still seen, felt *and* heard. These  
lines can be discovered within the lived spaces  
of the everyday as well as the governance of  
Christian-led government and institutional  
bodies promoting and protecting the notion  
of 'family' as a heterosexual institution  
through 'family strengthening' laws and  
policies. The everyday life, as the initial  
recordings and notes reveal, is suffused with  
normative hierarchies and exclusions, sexist  
jokes, misogynist tones, casualised racism,  
homophobia and transphobia. Listening  
*for* gender reveals that society continues to  
organise itself predominantly within the  
bounds of the two-gender binary (female/  
male, masculine/feminine) and patriarchy-led  
gender hierarchies. Tuning into the everyday,  
you quickly discover how the voices and lives  
of single mothers, carers, victims of domestic  
abuse, LGBTQI+ and Trans people continue  
to be diminished, ignored, excluded and  
invisibilised.

The broader geopolitical context of the  
neighbouring 'Post-Soviet' states further

contributes towards the country's already  
knotted socio-political soundscapes. When  
extending the ear and listening out *for* gender  
in Poland, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia, for  
example, one quickly begins to discover a  
spectrum of dark resonances: attempts to  
control and re-nationalise women's bodies,  
far-right nationalist groups' acts against  
women's reproductive rights, a rapid increase  
in gender-based violence and domestic  
abuse, the silencing of LGBTQI+ and Trans  
communities, exclusions of racialised bodies,  
including migrants and refugees, and their  
retainment at the border, as well as the  
weaponisation of women's bodies in Russia's  
war against Ukraine. Listening *for* gender, in  
the contemporary moment of 'now' within the  
'Post-Soviet' bloc, is, indeed, a heavy task.

As I continue to listen *for* gender,  
however, I also discover the sounds of agency  
and resistance, reverberating against toxic  
masculinities and institutional walls and  
structures. These are the audible resonances  
of feminist acts, activist organising, 'safer'  
sounding spaces created for women, LGBTQI+  
and non-binary communities to do collective  
work, archives and art initiatives, echoing and  
growing with time. While located within the  
margins and the edges, while communicated  
and shared, at times, with and through silence,  
the soundscapes of resistance and agency are  
present, and that matters. They matter because  
they are able to educate, offer new imaginaries  
and project alternative social and political  
realities, based on collective power. The task,  
thus, is to keep listening, listening deeply  
and openly, with the hope and confidence  
that by listening, noting and sharing, gender  
roles, lines and binaries can be obscured and  
eventually eradicated.

To do that, I continue to listen out to  
homes, workplaces – from markets, offices to  
beauty salons, I tune into social and political  
places (both physical and virtual) and explore  
the uncomfortable socio-economic hierarchies  
and exclusions further. I record 'mothers'  
kitchens', including their silences and unpaid  
labour, I listen to the 'feminised' duties and  
jobs within the current liberalised economy  
and note down feminist voices and echoes.  
While I listen, I turn the uncomfortable  
tones, discovered within the everyday, into  
soundscape compositions as a way of offering  
collective forms of processing how gender, in  
our lived spaces, might be sounded, and sound  
is gendered.

TEGUL  
VYRAS  
MOKA. O  
KO NE ?



'meat hall  
excerpt'

# The Contours of Paranormal Music in Lithuania

Domininkas Kunčinas



Ramūnas Jaras & Band. Sumirimas, 1996

Domininkas Kunčinas is a journalism graduate of Vilnius University, an independent researcher of alternative music, editor of the (sub)cultural web magazine Ore.lt, radio host of Radio Vilnius and an environmentally friendly music selector going by the name of 'Direktorius'. He previously published the zines *Decibelai* and *Kablųs* sung in the ska/punk band dr.Green; ran the illegal underground venue GreenClub; organised the DIY open air jam, Darom, in the beginning of 2000s; and promoted bands like NoMeansNo, Handsome Furs, Paprika Korps and was stage manager for various festivals including Generatorius, Satta Outside, STRCamp among others. Kunčinas contributes texts to Ore.lt and various Lithuanian cultural publications. His fields of interest cover various aspects of subcultures and alternative music.

The contemporary music festival Sumirimas (Die In), later known as Didelis pasaulis! (Big World), launched 25 years ago, and the opera-performance *Sun & Sea* that was awarded the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale in 2019, are not directly connected, but demonstrate how Lithuanian sound art is interrelated and taking on new forms. In her youth, Lina Lapelytė, the composer of *Sun & Sea*, drew inspiration from experimental music performances in Kaunas, and her colleague, writer Vaiva Grainytė and the opera's librettist, once belonged to the avant-garde group Sugybulinos Latakams and participated in the Sumirimas festivals. Ramūnas Jaras organised the first revolutionary festival event in Kaunas in 1996. Digitised videos of Sumirimas, consisting of over 60 hours of paranormal sounds and images, were recently published on the internet.

Speaking about *Sun & Sea*, contemporary culture researcher Jurijus Dobriakovas draws attention to one particular trajectory in contemporary Lithuanian sound art: 'I

would say that the work itself is a triumph for all Lithuanian art, because the sound within it is not somehow exclusively thematised, the significant accents are focused entirely elsewhere. In my view, this reflects the overall situation of current Lithuanian sound art: the best and most interesting works in which sound is an important concept element are those which do not distinguish themselves namely as works of sound art, since that would inevitably confine them within a genre "ghetto" of sorts, and that simply is no longer effective and becomes formalistically limiting. For this same reason, any kind of national sound art "school", whose contours may still have been tangible in prior decades, can hardly be said to exist today – the most relevant Lithuanian sound artists have simply dispersed throughout the entire field of contemporary art and the world, while others have probably abandoned this activity or simply limited themselves to creating music.'

The vanishing boundaries between different artistic disciplines drives the search



Ramūnas Jaras & Band. Sumirimas, 1998

for new terminology with which we might encode the media arts that involve creative activities and various sound experiments that no longer fit (or don't even try to fit) within the definition of 'music'. Initially, such experiments were called 'exploratory music' or 'sound sculpture', but the concept of 'sound art' took hold around 1980. It's often debated whether sound art belongs to the field of the visual arts or experimental music, or to both, but within it we can find the traces of many other movements: conceptual art, minimalism, site-specific art, sound poetry, electroacoustic music, avant-garde poetry, sound design, etc. Before they were even identified as such, works of sound art were created by the Dadaists, Surrealists, Situationists, Fluxus artists, and others. The organisers of the Skaņu Mežs festival in Latvia describe its content as 'adventurous music'. Because the concept of sound art is a bit fuzzy, in this article, I'll try to sketch out the contours of adventurous music in Lithuania from about the 1990s to the present.

Art historian, curator, and interdisciplinary artist Tautvydas Bajarkevičius, when asked at what point experimental, improvisational, contemporary and other similar music becomes sound art, replied that: 'Music, in and of itself, does not, apparently, become any other form of art. At the same time, sound art is constantly defined as existing between contemporary music, media art, and the visual arts. In this respect, it often seems to lack autonomy.'

Simply put, you won't hear sound art at a concert – unless we use this concept as a poetic description of music, as a metaphor. Most often, sound art is exhibited, and sometimes it's broadcast. Stage performance is also possible within the limits of sound art, but here the distinction is sometimes difficult to discern and justifiably raises questions like this one, to which it's not always easy to provide a straightforward answer. Sometimes, especially here in Lithuania, it's also a question of identity – given the creative methods they use, experimental music artists tend to call themselves sound artists, even though many of their stage performances don't really go much beyond usual concert conventions.'

Jurijus Dobriakovas feels that music simply meant for listening can hardly be considered sound art, no matter how 'non-standard' its form may be: 'In order to be able talk about sound art, the sound phenomenon itself, as well as its various psychoacoustic, cultural, social, political, and other contexts have to be activated and conceptually reflected, in one way or another, within a particular work. This means that it must encourage reflection on the part of the listener/viewer, and not, on the contrary, some immersion into a kind of hypnotic state.' For this reason, Dobriakovas believes that it is difficult to say which field is closest to sound art – music or contemporary visual art, although he does prefer the latter: 'An in-depth exploration of sound phenomena requires not so much a concert space, but an exhibition space, capable of accommodating

installations that combine several means of expression and involving the listener/viewer. The creation of sound art also often requires a connection, of one or another type, between sound and imagery, which then meaningfully expands the field of sound experience and comprehension. To be sure, this can also take the form of an audio-visual demonstration or performance, but in this case, there is often a risk of elementary illustration. If there is no conceptual link between sound and image, it's likely that the moving image is simply accompanying the sound to make it easier to listen to certain sounds that are not very easy to assimilate, or are just rather monotonous – but sound art is not born of that.'

Before the late 1980s, sound art had very few chances to gain ground in Lithuania – formalism and abstractionism were deemed undesirable in Soviet art and everything was overseen by censorship agencies. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 led to new restrictions and ideological requirements, and the regime's control tightened even further in Lithuania in 1972, after the self-immolation of Romas Kalanta, who had left behind a message in his notebook: 'Only the system is to blame for my death.' The Baltic republics in the western part of the Soviet Union were known as 'the near abroad', thus it is not surprising that it was precisely here that some westerly winds penetrating through the Iron Curtain were most keenly felt. One such manifestation was the contemporary musical festival *Warszawska Jesień* (Warsaw Autumn), held in neighbouring Poland since 1956.

The Singing Revolution began in Lithuania in 1988, led by folk and patriotic songs, but rock music was also given its 15 minutes of fame. Once the romantic euphoria subsided, airwaves were taken over by cheap and easily consumable pop music. Polish composer and multi-instrumentalist Mieczysław Litwiński, who has lived in Lithuania, observed: 'Music always describes the state of society. As goes society, so goes its music. The music that children listen to tells us what the society will be like in the future.'

According to Dobriakovas, the origins of Lithuanian sound art are rooted in various performative practices that emerged on the arts scene in the 1980s and 1990s, such as the *Anykščiai* happening festivals of 1988 and 1989, organised by contemporary music composers (including Gintaras Sodeika,

Šarūnas Nakas, Rytis Mažulis, and Ričardas Kabelis) together with artists from other fields. These events offered a space to hear experimental music and free, live artistic creativity in general that could not be so openly performed elsewhere (in the biggest Lithuanian towns, for example). Other examples were the *Sumirimas* (from 1996 to 1999) and *Didelis pasaulis!* (from 2000 to 2014) avant-garde music festivals organised in Kaunas by Ramūnas Jaras. Culture researcher Dobriakovas believes that it was likely this format of happenings/performances/live art/free improvisation that determined that the field of experimental sound art in the first decade of the twenty-first century was based primarily on live performances, and not on the 'more sculptural' or installation forms more closely associated with contemporary art.

One of the first events featuring 'adventurous' sounds was the *Jauna muzika* (Young Music) festival, presenting artists working with sound and music as an experimental form of art. Composer Antanas Jasenka remembers the unexpected financial support he received. A stranger presented the emerging composer with 3,000 dollars – the

price of a one-bedroom flat in Vilnius at that time. Jasenka transferred the money to the account of the Lithuanian Composers' Union and in 1992, together with Remigijus Merkelis, Kipras Mašanauskas, Egidijus Čirvinskas, and Darius Butkus, began the story of one of the oldest musical festivals in Lithuania. As Jasenka notes, he and his colleagues were interested in technology, experimental music, and what lies beyond music.

Organisers sought to present contemporary classical music and academic electro-acoustic works. As musical concepts changed, so did the festival itself. Today, *Jauna muzika* presents an especially broad spectrum of music, often transcending the boundary where sound is no longer a requisite condition for music and exploring musical genotypes and stimulating the sensitivity of audiences' vestibular, inner ear.

In recent years, Jasenka has been creating intensive, dynamic, and multifaceted music, whose texture is enriched by all sorts of sound objects (harsh noise, glitches, soundscapes, etc.). Since 2008, he has been a member of the experimental project *DISSCC Orchestra*,

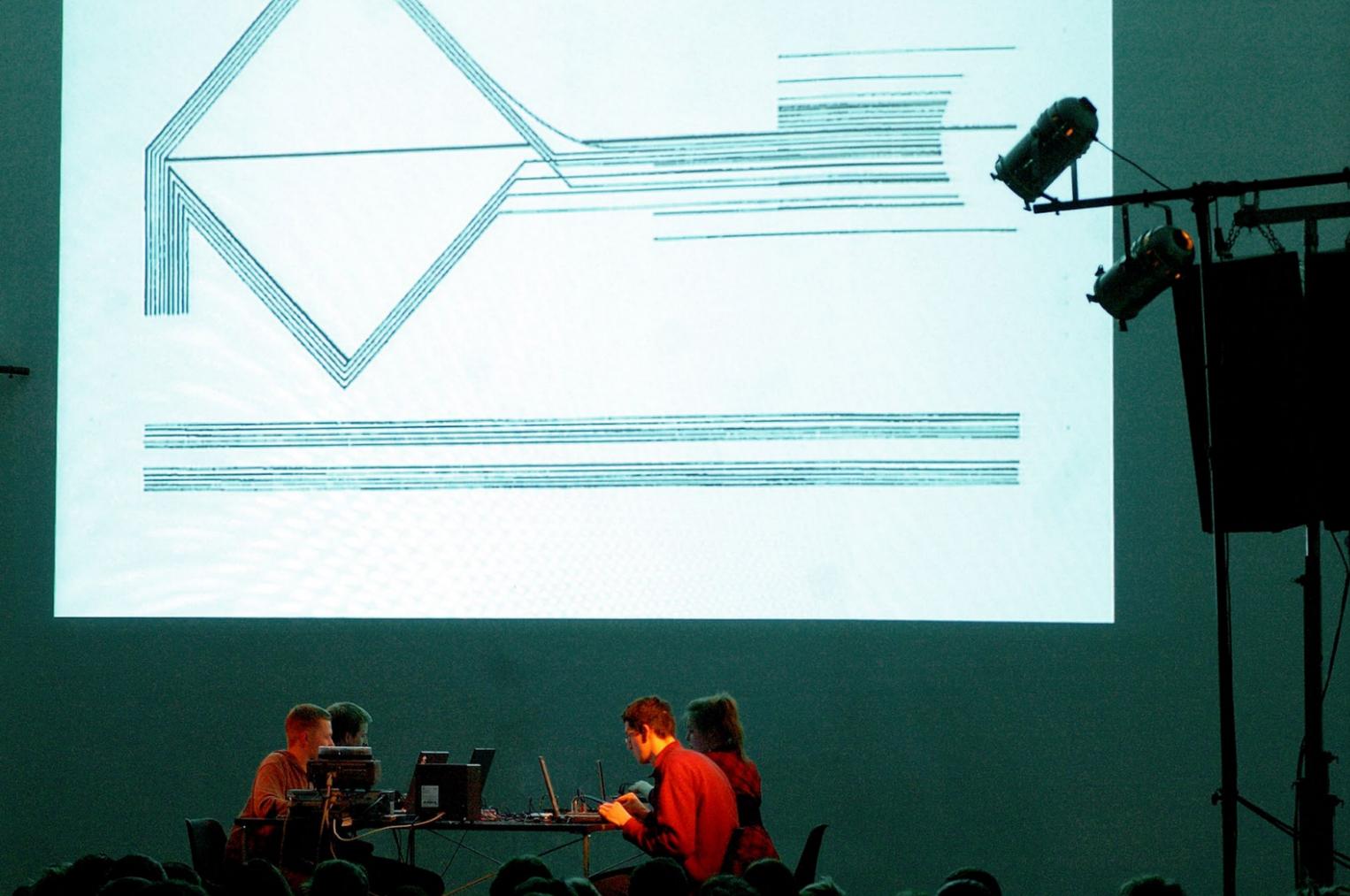
along with Martynas Bialobžeskiš, Jonas Jurkūnas, Vytautas V. Jurgutis, and Arūnas Zujus.

The band *NAJ* released its debut album *Fixthemeteronthezeroposition* in 1994. In the early years of his creative work, architect Darius Čiuta and his colleagues Algis Mielius and Rolandas Cikanavičius became interested in unconventional and experimental types of music, industrial music tracks, and the aesthetics of noise. Later, the US record label *RRRecords* included *NAJ's* album *Restitution Smile*, together with such stars of experimental music as Merzbow, Aube, Thurston Moore, and others, in its Pure series – establishing a new territory on the map of international experimental music.

Several years later, in 1997, the *Musica Ficta Contemporary Music Forum* was held in Vilnius, including the presentation of work by Philip Glass and the documentary film *Four American Composers* by Peter Greenaway (about Glass, Robert Ashley, John Cage, and Meredith Monk), and featuring participating performers such as the *Kronos Quartet* and *Piano Circus* (an ensemble of six pianists),



Antanas Jasenka. Photo by Michail Rashkovsky, 2005



Arturas Bumšteinas. Photo by D.Matvejev. Jauna muzika, 2006

and the presentation of works by Lithuanian composers such as Rytis Mažulis, Vytautas V. Jurgutis, and others.

The transition from a planned economy to the free market produced something akin to an esoteric ether in which UFOs and other paranormal phenomena also found their own audiences. In their attempt to come to terms with a changing reality, people began searching for salvation in parallel worlds. One of the most popular publications on this subject, the weekly *Žvilgsnis* (Sight), published in Lithuanian and Russian, saw its circulation expand by more than 35 times, surpassing 175,000 by 1993.

Within this context, the contemporary art promoter, curator, composer, writer, and poet Ramūnas Jaras, also known under his artistic pseudonym Echidna Aukštyn, combined satire and humour in his ‘paranormal’ creations with atonal sound experiments and melodies, compelling listeners to arrive at a state of the ‘here and now’. Jaras became known for his face-covering mask and characteristic shirt. Around 1997, he created and performed his work in his own style called *kaholizmas*. Often unjustly criticised, this pioneer of Lithuanian performance and musique concrète has regularly toured the world with his performances: persecuted by the local police in China, nearly trampled by elephants during a performance in Ghana, losing his personal documents in New Guinea, and appearing in such countries as India, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Bermuda, and elsewhere.

In 1996, Jaras came up with the idea to start a paranormal music festival called Sumirimas in Kaunas. Speaking with journalists during the festival, Jaras said: ‘I want people to listen to music that is not just enclosed in a shell of human understanding. Let’s say I want to eat, I want to sleep, I want this or that. This is music that says, maybe I want to go out of my mind, or I want to go into my mind. Avant-garde music and its exploration are only accessible through nonexistence. One abstract line of measurement passes into another abstract line at the zero point. Other dimensions can only be reached through zero, only through death. Death is the chance to end up somewhere else, which is why “sumirimas” is the best name for a paranormal music festival.’

‘Paranormal music was defined as such because it was “paranormal” to society at the time, because society didn’t know what contemporary music was and anything contemporary was seen as abnormal,’ Jaras remarked recently. ““Paranormality” is a gentler way of describing the contemporary, acknowledging that, OK, I know this music is abnormal for you, but look: maybe it’s actually PARAnormal, and not just abnormal? Our society is a post-Soviet one, after all, and it considers abnormal something that is normal in the normal world. And I don’t associate “paranormal” with the paranormality of unidentified flying objects. There was just no more room to dig around for the right term.’

As the festival’s mastermind, Ramūnas Jaras actually understood ‘contemporary’ to be ‘post-post-modern’ music, so the festival’s innovative nature caused a stir in the media, and some of the bands that played in the festival were even ridiculed afterwards. Acts were performed on stage that contrasted sharply with the Soviet understanding of music. The festival featured most of the contemporary Lithuanian bands or performers of the time, a dozen or so every day, and even as concerts ended, usually in the early hours of dawn, audiences were reluctant to go home.

Jaras funded most of the festival out of his own pocket, driven by the idealistic goal of providing a stage for contemporary Lithuanian music. ‘In 1996, the most popular band in Lithuania was Dinamika. It’s a great band and the public really loves them. When I went looking for sponsors for Sumirimas, one said to me: “Oh. These are all unknown bands”,’ Jaras recalls. ‘I had some knowledge of what was going on in the world, but that was not the internet era. For example, composer Giedrius Kuprevičius, a friend of the festival and a strong critic, gave me a catalogue of festivals taking place in Europe at the time.’

Sumirimas attracted all sorts of performers of ‘strange’ music. The festival featured the aforementioned NAJ, Donis, Gintas Kraptavičius, N. N. N., Mieczysław Litwiński, Gailė Gričiūtė, Marius Salynas, GYS, Betoniniai triušiai, Žuwys, Tautvydas Bajarkevičius, Benas Šarka, Šalikapalikau, A. Jasenka, Empti, Sosudduara, 7b Orchestra, Drigentai, Ženklo grupė, Nils Ille, Girnų giesmės, Arturas Bumšteinas, Gintas

Gascevičius, and others. Also, the prominent band Ir visa tai, kas yra gražu, yra gražu, whose early recordings are scheduled to be released by the British label Strut Records. The band leader Baras was a known collector of books and records and the joke goes that he owned some Merzbow releases that even Masami Akita didn’t know about. Baras was also active in experimental filming. Zona Records is about to release the double vinyl Baras soundtracks – various adventurous sound artists contributed their pieces inspired by his movies.

Sumirimas was held regularly up until 2003, and then resumed after a break under the title Didelis pasaulis. ‘After several festivals I just continued the phase, I didn’t end it, because life is in death, and death is everywhere, just like its opposite, which is not completely opposite, because life exists always, and is an opposite only upon death. The current state of Sumirimas will be revealed in due course; now it’s in the form of a surprise,’ said Jaras, leaving us wondering.

At the start of the new century, the greatest focus was directed at the established fact of ‘non-format’ sound creation and live performances, mostly using portable computers and visualisations that were meant to raise the already fairly static action (regardless of the activity of the sounds themselves) to the level of sound art. In Dobriakovas’ view, those creating more conceptual work, using different tools, included Andrius Rugys (PB8) and Arturas Bumšteinas and his laptop quartet called Twentytwentyone, which in addition to Bumšteinas include Lina Lapelytė, mentioned at the start of this article, as well as Antanas Dombrovskij and Vilius Šiaulyš.

Rugys developed multifaceted, usually collective projects (which we might call artistic exploration today) that reflected the significance of sound in our lives and surroundings, as well as the motley scene of sound creators itself and its identity (e.g., Rugys’ 2006 thesis project PB8\_001\_+V). Bumšteinas was one of the first composers and experimental electronic music artists who felt equally at home in contemporary art galleries and concert spaces. In works that approximated conceptual art, sound was in one way or another important, but it was not necessarily the most significant element in the piece. In its performances,



the Twentytwentyone quartet use images conceptually – not simply as a distraction for the eyes, but also as a means to demonstrate graphic scores (guidelines for performing works written by means of unconventional music notation systems that lack the fixed meanings usually found in conventional sheet music) created by various contemporary music composers, which the quartet would then interpret in real time.

One of the most prominent sound artists of the past decade is experimental music creator and performer Armantas Gečiasuskas, better known as Arma Agharta, who was particularly active on the alternative cultural scene in Lithuania and abroad for two decades, staging over 500 performances in different parts of the world, from Greenland to Indonesia, from Siberia to Brazil. According to art critic Alberta Vengrytė, ‘in his performances, Arma doesn’t limit himself to “sound in itself”: the performer’s unexpected movements that transcend traditional systems of emphasising, and his improvised games, DIY “cheap magic tracks”, and the new, non-existent “languages” that Gečiasuskas discovers during his performances, all convey the artist’s principled anti-referentiality.’

Several years ago, exhausted from his constant touring, Gečiasuskas began working with sound cassettes and created an e-commerce site called Tapekiosk.com. He also participates in different flea markets. Sharing his memories in an interview about the start of his creative career, Arma Agharta recalled: ‘I managed to catch the start of the 2000s, when computer music began to blossom. What I remember most are the events, because that direct, live experience was the biggest hook. Festivals like Garso zona (Sound Zone), Jauna muzika with Merzbow, Baltas triukšmas (White Noise) in Birštonas, E-xpansija in Kaunas, the Virpesys club in Vilnius, as well as the Homo Ludens festival, with all its strange music and art, in my hometown of Jonava.’ Adventurous sounds could also be found at the Centras media art festival in Kaunas, or at Enter in Šiauliai, as well as other music and media art events.

Ten years later, Gečiasuskas himself and his label Agharta invited visitors to educate themselves, listen, and seek out new experiences at the Speigas (Frost) Festival,

and in 2018 he curated Garso Teatras (Sound Theatre), an international event that brought together sound art and theatrical spaces in Panevėžys. The programme included the technical theatre of Erika Alalooga, a ritualistic performance by Benas Šarka, the multilayered compositions of Waterflower, ID M Theft Able, and Opera Maleta, as well as Dadaist pranks by Arma Agharta himself. The sound art examples included objects and instruments by Simonas Nekrošius, a sound sculpture by Antanas Dombrovskij, and a multisensory installation by Tadas Stalyga.

‘Most of the work then called sound art was more within the realm of experimental music, but that shouldn’t diminish its value. One interesting detail is that a large group within this community were architects by training and by profession, which probably led to the “architectural” nature of their sound creations, and the digital conversion of sound data into image structures and vice versa, particularly in the case of Tomas Grunskis (ad\_OS),’ said researcher Dobriakovas, acknowledging that ‘there were far fewer interactive installations and other similar spatial forms, although sound was sometimes used in different interdisciplinary new media projects, where it was combined with various visual forms and presented as site-specific installations in galleries or alternative exhibition spaces, such as Lina Miklaševičiūtė’s work *Prospektas* (Prospect) in 2006, in which sound from Gedimino Prospektas was broadcast live into the gallery, and a section of the building’s façade was displayed on the inside, using photographic means.’

A new generation emerged after 2010, drawing inspiration from somewhat different fields, such as the students at the Sculpture & Photography and Media Arts Departments at the Vilnius Academy of Arts, who used sound according to the principles of conceptual, contemporary (visual) art. Perhaps they were influenced by an exhibition entitled ‘Pionier’, mounted at the Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius in 2011 by German artist Carsten Nicolai (known in the music world as Alva Noto), in which sound was inserted using sculptural means and kinetic (moving) installations. Dobriakovas believes that the second decade of the new millennium saw the increasing emergence of certain ritualistic, mental, and meditative sound qualities, including by the aforementioned

Andrius Rugys and his creation of inclusive installations meant for the deep listening of environmental recordings and other sounds (his Garso korys project) and his promotion of group exercises devoted to honing one’s *garsuotė* – a new Lithuanian term akin to ‘sound-ination’, combining the Lithuanian word *garsas* (sound) with *vaizduotė* (imagination). Audrius Šimkūnas, best known for his heavy metal and post-industrial music band Sala, also rose to increasing prominence as a sound artist, applying a conceptual but also ritualistic approach to field recordings, radio waves, contact microphones, electromagnetic resonance meters, and similar technologies used to ‘make the inaudible audible’. Arturas Bumšteinas’ latest projects combine sound art and theatre, and the exhibition ‘Stereoscopus’, held in Vilnius in the spring of 2022, was mainly devoted to forms of sound art and consisted nearly entirely of sculptural and installation forms that variously reflected the relationship between sound and the surrounding environment.

Speaking about the sound art scene in Lithuania, experimental electronic music creator Gintas Kraptavičius (known by his pseudonym Gintas K) noted that, given the size of Lithuania’s population and the percentage of creative people there, Lithuania surpasses most of the world’s big cities. Of the nearly 4 million people who lived in Lithuania in 1990, slightly less than 3 million remain, but one can still encounter the full range of frequencies heard around the world. In his effort to present a broader overview of local creators, Kraptavičius released an album in 2012 entitled *Lietuvos garso menas* (Lithuanian Sound Art), featuring objects created by A. Rugys, Antanas Dombrovskij, audio\_z, V. V. Jurgutis, L. Lapelytė, A. Bumšteinas, Gintas K, ad\_OS, A. Jasenka, and SALA. ‘This stylish collection gives the impression of a tried-and-true album. The tracks, from various subgenres of experimental music, work well together, with an electroacoustic piece accompanying a cut of ambient sounds, a collage composition picking up from a glitch atmospheric work, and a computer electronic etude complementing an ambient creation. There are no works that fall out of or stand apart from the context; the album has a good vibe to it.’ So ran the review of the album by Robertas Kundrotas, the writer and former editor-in-chief of the influential new

music magazine *Tango*, adding that ‘if this work aspires to be comprehensive, then it has its gaps, but if it is only the first window into the large and colourful contemporary music world in Lithuania, then, even having missed such pioneers as Darius Čiuta, Raimundas Eimontas, Orlandas Narušis, or Atrac, I believe that a place will be found for them in this work’s next monumental volume.’

In 2019, the Music Information Centre Lithuania (MICL) released a promotional sampler entitled Note Lithuania Experimental/Electronic, which did not include any of the pioneers mentioned above, but which did showcase sounds from recent years created by: Patris Židelevičius, Skeldos, Daina Dieva, Distorted Noise Architect, NULIS:S:S, Tiese, Unit 7, Fume, Nortas, avidja/devita, and others. One of the compilers of the album, Jurijus Dobriakovas, with whom we spoke for this article, presented it thus: ‘This new Note selection clearly demonstrates two things. First: the familiar mainstays of the Lithuanian post-industrial, noise, drone, and dark ambient electronic music scene is still very active and in great shape – which means vital continuity. Second: their trademark sound is being chased closely by rising local and Lithuania-based international talent that also offers a welcome stylistic expansion – which means healthy evolution. Together, these facts ensure that the small but rich Lithuanian adventurous music universe remains as exciting as ever, and definitely worthy of global attention.’

Indeed, the sound art scene and its related reverberations reflect processes that began 30 years ago and are today a fully-fledged part of the global soundscape.

Around the year 2000, composers Mindaugas Urbaitis and Šarūnas Nakas began speaking about new music on Lithuanian public radio, and since then have produced over 500 episodes of the radio show Modus. To this day, every week the duo explore an array of new music angles, including: ‘Music styles that didn’t become movements’, ‘Is the avant-garde still out in front?’, ‘The splendour and poverty of hedonism’, ‘The electro-acoustic face of Iran’, ‘Gone with symphonism’, ‘Mickey Mouse the Modernist’, ‘Self-isolation and creativity’, ‘What Gen Z girls look for in music’, ‘Girls just want to make noise’, etc. The show was

also accompanied by the launch of a new music e-magazine at modus-radio.com, which published texts by music professionals on contemporary music of different styles. Unfortunately, the project has been neglected of late and has not been updated with new text contributions.

The internet radio project Rasų radijas (rasuradijas.lt) began broadcasting in the spring of 2021, presenting shows led by sound artists, philosophers, writers, and curators of artistic and social projects who explore various manifestations of sound art from different perspectives. Rasų radijas is a sound art platform that initiates creative processes and listening sessions. It is a radio gallery devoted to experiments and undiscovered sound experiences, as well as personal audio journeys. The project’s goal is to study sound art manifestations, bring together the artistic community in Lithuania and on the internet, and promote the study, creation, and dissemination of various forms of sound art. The project is curated by sound artist and improviser Gailė Griciūtė, who also took part in one of the already legendary Jaras’ festivals.

Arturas Bumšteinas, one of today’s most prominent sound artists and also a former participant in Sumirimas/Didelis pasaulis festivals, recalls those days thus: ‘Word reached Vilnius about the plans for Sumirimas in 2000. At the time, I’d taken a break from music and had immersed myself in Old Town bar-hopping. So, my friend says to me: Sumirimas is coming, let’s do a project! Inspired by his enthusiasm, I began writing a piece that I planned to submit to Jaras, the organiser of Sumirimas; I wrote and wrote for so long that I missed the actual festival. But I finished the piece – it’s called *Storulių Muzika* (Fatso Music) – but unfortunately, I can’t remember why – maybe it had something to do with jazz...’ Bumšteinas taught in the UK and Germany, and today speaks about sound expression at the Vilnius Academy of Arts. He has held solo and group exhibitions and taken part in festivals in Europe and the US. Bumšteinas’ work has been released by labels in Lithuania and abroad. He is a recipient of the Palma Ars Acustica prize from the European Broadcasting Union and was awarded the Boris Dauguvietis Earring for his integration of sound experiments within new theatrical forms. For the past few years, Bumšteinas

has been curating the Jauna muzika festival programme.

In Vilnius, paranormal sounds can be heard in places like the Studium P gallery, where interdisciplinary artist Simonas Nekrošius presents his objects and sculptures, and whose work is characterised by the DIY and ready-made principles, devoting considerable attention to process, intuition, experimentation, and improvisation. DIY principles are also quite familiar to Paulius Burakas, curator of the Kirtimai Cultural Center, who organised the sound art and experimental events series titled ‘Susikirtimai’ (Intersections), among other projects. The artistic director of the Empty Brain Resort space, Matas Aerobica, in addition to events held in Vilnius, curates the Braille Satellite music and arts festival together with Oscar Olias Castellanos of the Octatanz duo. In Kaunas, the field of experimental sound is being expanded by promoters from the Ghia label. It’s no surprise that in the era of globalism, some foreign artists like French Phil Von (ex - Von Magnet), US performer Zan Hoffman or Italian sound researcher Demetrio Castellucci found their home in Lithuania.

In 2021, the Artūras Areima theatre mounted the experimental art festival technė, whose main idea and goal was to introduce completely different forms and genres of music creation and performance, to broaden the perspective of music and its perception, and to introduce listeners and viewers to the possibilities of expression in contemporary music and the techniques and specific considerations of alternative/experimental music creation and performance.

Art critic Tautvydas Bajarkevičius doesn’t perceive any special national aspects, with the possible exception of the rather ephemeral and fragmented nature of the sound art scene arising from various specific local circumstances. He acknowledges that it is quite difficult to speak in any general way about Lithuanian sound art and he hesitates to draw up any summation: ‘I suppose we have to admit that, over the last 30 years, the epithets “sporadic” and “intense” have become more expressive than “fragmentary” and “individual”.’

# A Compilation of Lithuanian Sound Art

Curated by  
Eye Gymnastics

Karolina Kapustaitė is a composer, moderator of therapeutic sound experiences and a sonic material developer. She works in the field of applied sound art creation, which also incorporates therapeutic sound installations, moderated live. From 2019 she has curated the activities of the public institution Healthy Sound, which mainly includes therapeutic healing through art forms. Since 2021 she has contributed to the initiative of Rasų Radio ([rasuradijas.lt](https://rasuradijas.lt)) in the autumn season and each month hosts a live audio therapy broadcast for listeners.

<https://rasuradijas.lt/garso-terapija/>

Karolina Kapustaitė  
*Garso Terapija vol.4*



[Link to Soundcloud](#)



Photo by Karolina Kapustaitė

Ambulance on Fire is an alternative electro-acoustic music duo, whose dance rhythms are intertwined with layered textures, lyrical melodies and minimalistic texts.

Ambulance on Fire grew out of the friendship of Jūra Elena Šedytė and Mėta Gabrielė Pelegrimaitė, the duo's members who share musical tastes and emotional experiences. By combining unusual elements of various music genres – IDM, ambient, alternative, breakbeat, 90s electronica, post-rock, synth-pop, experimental – as well as using their knowledge of improvisational techniques and composition, they create subtle musical eclectics that avoid categorisation and stereotypes. Efficient lyrics gently evoke the feeling of empathy and speak about human states such as anxiety, anger or fear that can feel more pronounced in a specific musical atmosphere. The synthesis of live and electronic instruments produces overlapping textures of lyrical, sometimes sharp melodies and includes motifs of lo-fi and experimental music, all accompanied by the dark rhythms of electronic dance music. A little touch of irony can be felt in the easily recognisable kitschy rhythms and timbres of old-school digital synths.

<https://ambulanceonfire.bandcamp.com/releases>



Ambulance on Fire  
*MYM*

[Link to Soundcloud](#)



Photo by Vismantė Ruzgaitė

Antanas Dombrovskij is a sound artist who creates edgy and unpredictable sound structures while manipulating samples and modified synthesizers. The result is somewhere between noise, glitch, drone and *musique concrete*. His performances are based on broken rhythms and with every passage listeners face fresh and unexpected soundscapes. Antanas Dombrovskij's music requires concentration, and through active listening his musical chaos proceeds into a solid, considered and surprising avalanche of sound. Dombrovskij commonly drifts between various genres and concepts, playing many roles in the experimental electronic music scene such as the solo project Gana2 to joint projects including Betoniniai Triušiai, Tiese and Twentytwentyone.

<https://apport.bandcamp.com/album/a-004-fata-for-gana>

Antanas Dombrovskij  
*Fata for Gana*



[Link to Soundcloud](#)



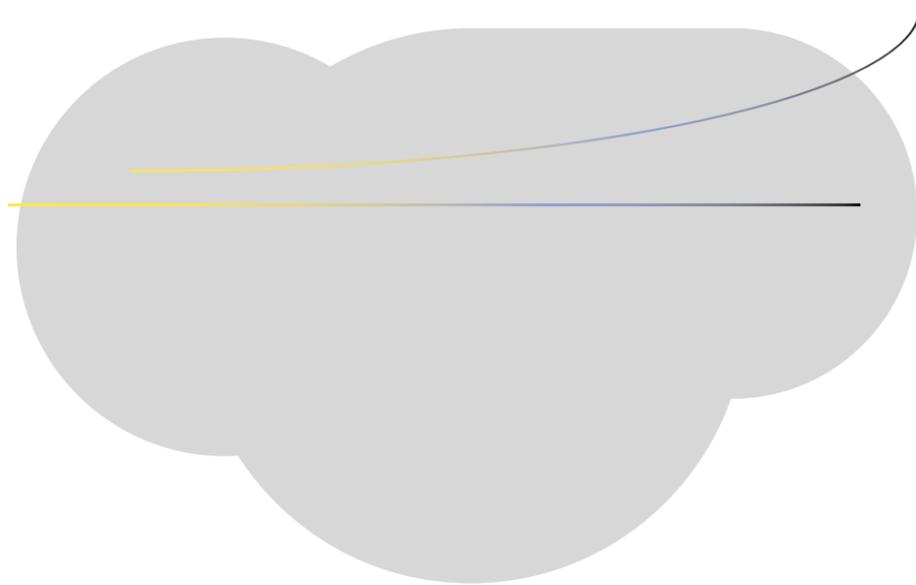
Photo by Gintautas Trimakas

Augustė Vickunaitė is a Lithuanian Berlin-based sound performer with a background in physics. She predominantly uses reel-to-reel tape recorders to play, record, and create sounds that contain diverse field recordings, malfunctions of the old technology she is using and intentional sounds/instruments recorded in natural environments. She is interested in the errors of old technology, the randomness of nature, and the aesthetics of boredom and slow art. Additionally, she collaborates with other musicians and dancers in which her works often take the form of audiovisual contributions.

<https://archive.org/details/@augustevi>

Simonas Nekrošius is a sound artist, performer and experimental instrument creator. Nekrošius is active in the fields of contemporary art, experimental music and sound art. He focuses on the creation and construction of sound objects and sculptures, which he uses in live performances. His works are often defined by a distinctive style and unconventional ways of producing sound, which often relate to the concepts of DIY and ready-made and dwell on processuality, intuition, experiments and improvisation.

@simonasnekrosius




Nina Guo and Augustė Vickunaitė  
*Electricity*

[Link to Soundcloud](#)

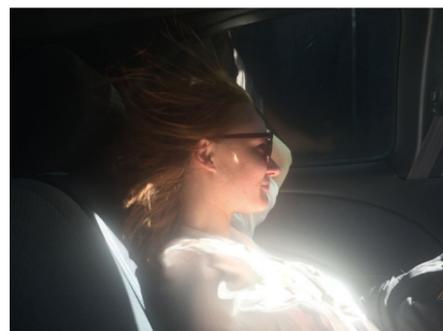


Photo by Urtė Sabutytė



Simonas Nekrošius  
*Packed After Celebration*

[Link to Soundcloud](#)



Photo by A. Samarski

Holly Childs and Gediminas Žygas

Holly Childs is a writer, artist and performance-maker based in Naarm, Melbourne. Their work, across fiction, poetry, visual art and performance focuses on the shifting mechanisms of storytelling in a contemporary world in which physical matter is constantly being reshaped, recontextualised, and rewritten by emerging technologies.

Gediminas Žygas is a Lithuanian artist working within the fields of sound, film and performance. Their practice focuses on the experience of selfhood in the post-Anthropocene.

They have released two albums, *Gnarled Roots* (2021), exploring twenty-first century mythologies that revolve around the fall of the twin towers on 9/11; and *Hydrangea* (2020), exploring intimacy, disconnection, and reality bubbles. Together they have created performances based on these two albums that have been performed in botanical greenhouses, galleries, a medieval church, a former bathhouse and a former bear enclosure.

<https://hollychilds-gediminaszygas.bandcamp.com>



Holly Childs & Gediminas Žygas  
*Forking*

[Link to Soundcloud](#)



Photos by Gedvilė Tamošiūnaitė & Wei Huang

Arma Agharta is a sound performance artist and promoter from Lithuania devoted to improvised and experimental music. He became involved in the international underground music scene more than 20 years ago by publishing zines, running labels, playing in bands and organising shows and festivals of experimental music. Currently, Arma performs as a solo artist and runs the tape shop and label Tapekiorsk.

Since 2007 he has done more than 550 performances all over the world. His intense and high energy shows span a broad territory between the eruptions of chaotic noise and hypnotic psychedelic ritual to dadaist humour, odd bodily movements, spontaneous improvised games, cheap magic tricks and glossolalia.

[www.arma.lt](http://www.arma.lt)



Arma Agharta  
*Seeing Illusion*

[Link to Soundcloud](#)



Photo by A. Samarski

Adomas Palekas and Greta Galiauskaitė

Adomas Palekas is a sound artist, electrical engineer and biotechnologist working at the intersection of science and art. Currently, his main focus falls on sonifications – the sonic embodiment of processes, objects or even chemical reactions, that often have little connection with music or sound. Adomas' works and collaborations have been presented in Lithuania, Italy, Belgium as well as at international festivals such as Ars Electronica, ŪMĖDĖ, Sirenos, and the Venice Biennale of Architecture.

Greta Galiauskaitė is an interdisciplinary artist from Vilnius, Lithuania. Her creative approach is rooted in the practice of collecting artefacts and errors, either physical, digital or spiritual. Her works traverse different mediums, such as moving image, sound, clay or metal. Galiauskaitė's projects have been presented at Eye Filmmuseum, Neverneverland, Ars Electronica: Garden Vilnius, ŪMĖDĖ, Atletika.

Palekas and Galiauskaitė's collaborative work *Antennae* has been presented at Empty Brain Resort (Vilnius, 2022) and Instrument Inventors Initiative (The Hague, 2022)

@someplastic, @gretagaliu



Adomas Palekas and Greta Galiauskaitė  
*Antennae*

[Link to Soundcloud](#)



Photo by Edmundas Karasnikovas

Vitalija Glovackytė creates music that brings together second-hand analogue machines, conventional / home-made instruments, electronics and lo-fi visuals. Aside from her solo work, Vitalija is one-half of the experimental pop duo Hyperdawn with Michael Cutting. From vast and sad looped choirs to creamy R'n'B croons, Hyperdawn hones its own off-kilter sound with sprawling reel-to-reel tape loops, modified keyboards and vocals. Informed as much by the temperamental machines as the duo itself, this is raw, haptic pop music held together with sellotape.

[www.vitalijaglovackyte.co.uk](http://www.vitalijaglovackyte.co.uk)



Vitalija Glovackytė  
*We Are For a While (Apartment House UK Tour) – excerpt*

[Link to Soundcloud](#)



Photo by Ilmė Vyšniauskaitė

*Imprint*

*Guest editor*

Damian Lentini

*Editor*

Kotryna Lingienė

*Contributors*

Andrej Vasilenko  
Anton Lukoszevieze  
Daina Pupkevičiūtė  
Damian Lentini and Arturas Bumšteinas  
Domininkas Kunčinas  
Eye Gymnastics (Gailė Gričiūtė and Viktorija Damerell)  
Jūratė Katinaityė  
Radvilė Buivydienė and Guy Dubious  
Sandra Kazlauskaitė  
Simona Žemaitytė  
Yates Norton

*English language editor*

Gemma Lloyd

*Translator*

Darius Sužiedėlis (pp. 14–25, 98–107)

*Editorial board*

Vaiva Grainytė  
Adomas Narkevičius  
Rūta Statulevičiūtė-Kaučikienė

*Acknowledgements*

The Lithuanian Culture Institute is grateful to members of the initiative group of *\* as a Journal*: Dovydas Kiauleikis, Ernestas Parulskis, Gražina Michnevičiūtė, Jogintė Bučinskaitė, Julijonas Urbonas and Kristupas Sabolius.

*Principal design*

Godspeed Branding

*Issue design*

Ugnė Balčiūnaitė

*Publisher*

Lithuanian Culture Institute  
Z. Sierakausko str. 15, LT-03105  
Vilnius, Lithuania  
asajournal@lithuanianculture.lt  
www.asajournal.lt

The Lithuanian Culture Institute presents Lithuanian culture and professional art abroad and enhances the opportunities

on the international scene for cultural professionals and artists, as well as for specialists and organisations working in these fields. The mission of the Institute is to create sustainable international cultural partnerships and promote the value of Lithuanian art. Consistently strengthening the role of Lithuanian culture in the world, the Lithuanian Culture Institute is a state budget institution established by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania.

*Lithuanian Culture Institute team*

Aušrinė Žilinskienė  
Ignė Alėbaitė (project coordinator)  
Rūta Statulevičiūtė-Kaučikienė  
Rūta Nanartavičiūtė  
Vlada Kalpokaitė-Kručauskienė

© Lithuanian Culture Institute, 2022  
All rights reserved.

*Printed by*

UAB „Baltijos kopija“, Vilnius, Lithuania

*Paper*

MultiArt Gloss  
Curious Transluents Clear  
Munken Lynx, explore the sound of Munken Lynx:



*Print run*

700 copies

*Supported by*

Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania

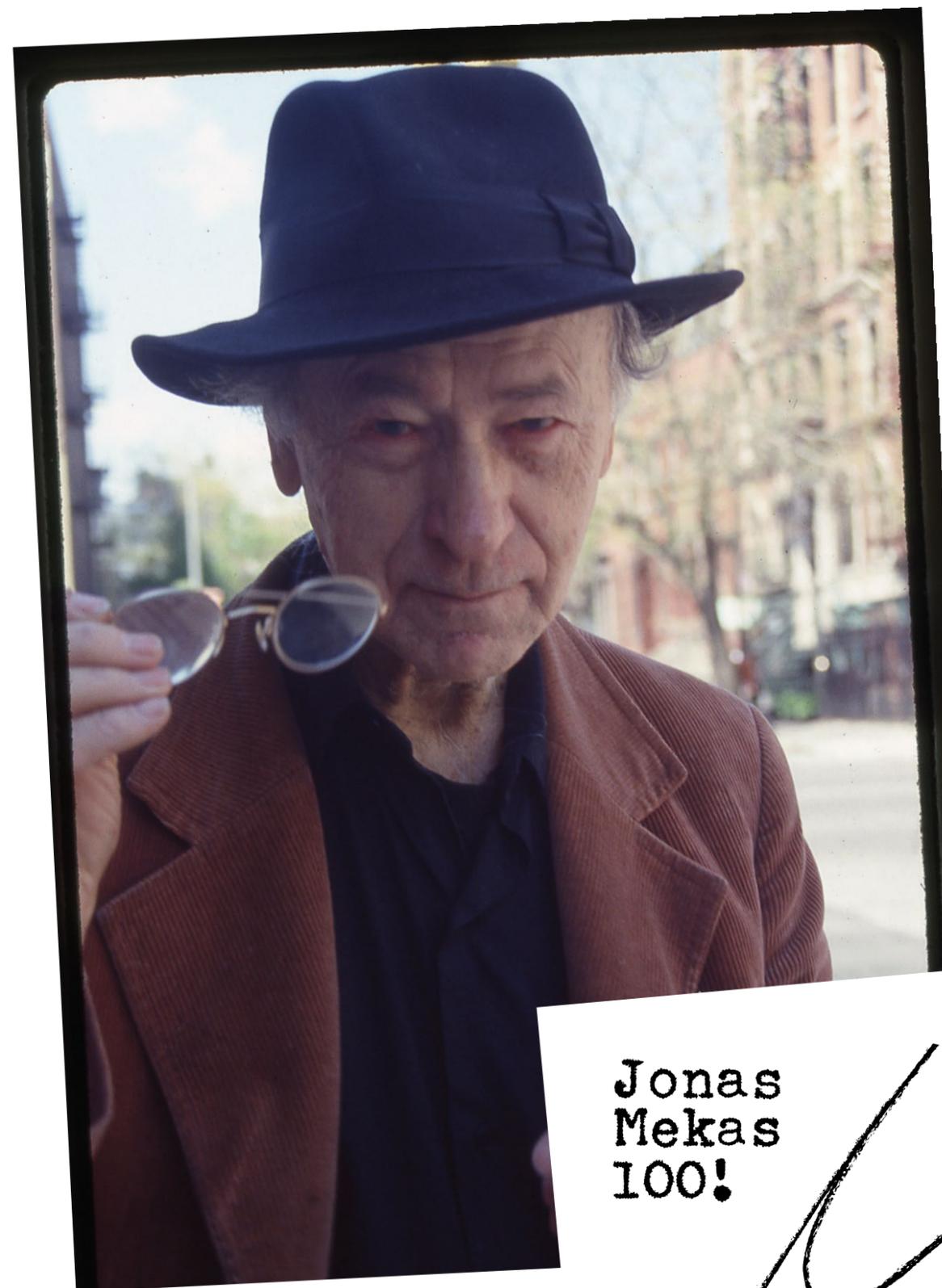


*\* as a Journal*

ISSN 2783-5685

*Cover images*

Arturas Bumšteinas. Photo by Mirjam Wirz.



© Photo by Arturas Kulikauskas. 1997

Find out more about the Jonas Mekas 100! program by visiting [www.jonasmekas100.com](http://www.jonasmekas100.com)

The fourth issue of *\* as a Journal* will focus its lenses on the body. Limited in space, bodies are immense in their potentiality. And yet today, in the face of a crisis – ecological, military, economic and social – it is their vulnerability that defines them most. Guest edited by Neringa Černiauskaitė, a writer, curator and one half of the artistic duo Pakui Hardware, the Body issue will scrutinise vulnerability in order to show that it is often structural – evoked by systemic flaws rather than personal failures. At the same time, vulnerability will not be treated here as something to be anxious about, but as a tool for building community, for transforming rigid structures, for bringing the flesh into theory, and to open up oneself to the other.

ISSN 2783-5685

[www.lithuanianculture.lt](http://www.lithuanianculture.lt)

