

*La quemadura es el lenguaje
con el que juro, manos
abiertos sobre el hielo*
2018

Andrés Guadarrama
Jonas Evenstad
Sebastian Lindland

*Burning is the language with
which I swear with my hands
on the ice*

composer
percussion
percussion

Sentimiento Oceánico
music: 2013 video: 2021

Angélica Castelló
Meritxell Colell Aparicio

Oceanic Feeling

composer
video

*guerrilla de dientes entre
los árboles*
2022

Luis Fernando Amaya
Jonas Evenstad
Sebastian Lindland

*guerrilla of teeth amongst
the trees*

composer
percussion
percussion

Vida
2020/2021

Patricia Martínez
Luis Paris

Life

composer
video

Grito Silente del Mar
2023

Tania Rubio
Linn Marie Haram

Silent Scream of the Sea

composer
flute

do you hear what I hear?
installation, 2023

Ferdinand Schwarz

composer

ANDRÉS GUADARRAMA

After a week of living in the same house, working fifteen-hour days, and communicating with his duo partner, mostly without words, over the electric bass that lay between them, the Mexican composer Andrés Guadarrama still had yet to set pen to paper for his latest composition.

The resulting piece—"La quemadura es el lenguaje con que juro, manos abiertas sobre el hielo" ["Burning is the language with which I swear with my hands on the ice," from a text by the Mexican writer Julian Herbert], for two performers and one electric bass—has since been notated. As Guadarrama has realized, however, playing the work is not a matter of precisely executing sounds, but rather a sort of inverse: creating conditions in which sound can

refuse our control. Over the course of the work, the performers manipulate an electric bass with manual techniques as well as objects, including a plucked African instrument called a kalimba, in order to generate waves of feedback, which largely operates according to its own whims. To perform the work, Guadarrama says, is like trying to write on water—attempting a task knowing full well that one cannot dictate the outcome.

"La quemadura..." the first work Guadarrama composed after graduating from college, was the start of a radical change in his approach. Degree in hand, he had stopped composing, unsure of what he wanted to achieve now that he was on his own. He went back to playing his instrument, the

electric bass, supposing that, as well as he knew the instrument, some new discovery must be awaiting his return. Over the course of composing this work, Guadarrama began to consider his bass as a sort of terrain, he says, comprising different layers and organisms in constant flux—a witness to chains of change.

This performance marks the first time the work will be played by musicians other than Guadarrama and his duo partner, for whom the music, he says, resides in many locations other than paper: in their bodies, in their instruments, in the room, perhaps still. As usual, the score tells only part of the story.

For the Mexican composer Angelica Castelló, the sea has long evoked the subconscious. To produce her tape *Silvertone e il sentimento oceanico*, released in 2013 on the Polish label Monotype Records, Castelló meditated on her grandfather's journey, by boat, from the dictator Franco's Spain and all that such a trip might have entail: the wondering, the wandering, the water's ceaseless thrum.

Among the works on that tape is "Tuba Piece," an electro-acoustic work mixing various recordings, one of a tuba among them, a testament to Castelló's love for low instruments. At points, we hear what might be a pulsing basement show, a fleeting transit announcement, a raucous city street. *I like to play with contrasting textures*, Castelló says, and

I like extremes; *if I were a cook, I don't know if anybody would eat my food*. Why her amalgams of sounds work so well for her, she can't explain, can only trust. Analogies and free association have always felt right to her, led her in the right directions.

A filmmaker, Meritxell Colell Aparicio, had written to Castelló some time ago, hoping she would agree to contribute to an upcoming film, which is still in development. In the meantime, the Vienna-based experimental sonic arts group *czirp czirp* asked Castelló to contribute to a project based on the notion of "oceanic feeling," referring to a spiritual sense of being one with the world—a term famously marginalized by Freud, but here reclaimed—and Castelló invited Colell Aparicio to

collaborate on what became this new work. Their work together proceeded easily, Castelló recalled: after selecting "Tuba Piece", as her desired sound, Colell Aparicio sent Castelló a selection of images for her to approve. Two former strangers thus developed an intimate working relationship.

The film is fairly abstract, evoking, for Castelló, those occasions right before sleep when you are unsure whether you are still awake or already dreaming. Just as Castelló is inclined to collage sounds, Colell Aparicio enjoys collaging images, here taken with her Super 8. Much of what we see and hear is only suggestive, snatches of images and sound that glide through our experience as though they were memories of our own.

To grow up in Aguascalientes, Mexico, as the composer and percussionist Luis Fernando Amaya recalls, was to grow up with insects. Whole trees vibrating with insects, so many that, should you wish to climb up, you made sure you did so very carefully.

While a doctoral student at Northwestern University, Amaya met fellow graduate student and poet Pedro Varguillas at a party; reading one of Varguillas's works later on, he encountered the line "*guerrilla de dientes entre los árboles*," or "guerrilla of teeth amongst the trees." *He's talking about insects*, Amaya thought immediately. The line, for him, so perfectly captured the way that the insects of his childhood, like guerrillas, aggregated with a common, almost political goal, and how they clacked together

on account of their hard exoskeletons, as though they were strangely shaped teeth indeed.

Perhaps Varguillas hadn't had insects in mind at all. (The rest of the poem was fairly erotic—not that insects couldn't be erotic in their own way.) Yet Amaya followed his instinct anyway, back to another old memory of when he'd lived in Mexico City, composing in a house with ceramic floors, and he'd heard something moving along the tiles, something that had to be big on account of how much sound it was making. Finally he found it: a lumpy potato bug, whose Spanish name is the creepy *cara de niño*, "child's face." Amaya had long hoped to use this memory for some project, but he hadn't known exactly how to start. The line from Varguillas's poem, however,

had kickstarted an idea, which, after some time, settled as a percussion duo for semi-open instrumentation, to make it accessible for more players. The music creaks, zigzags, and gleams—a creepy-crawly of sound, basking in its own unsettling resonance.

Amaya has moved many times, finding fewer and fewer insects in every place. Mexico had the most; Chicago fewer; Puerto Rico a few more, but not as many as he'd thought; fewer still in Spain; and now, in Norway, in the winter, nothing. He misses the insects, in all their creepiness and annoyance, and what they signify about the health of the environment. This work, he thinks, is a way of bringing them back.

In 2020, with the pandemic well underway, the Argentinian artist Luis Paris received an email from Patricia Martinez, a composer and sound artist, proposing that they join forces. Martinez had found a video that Paris had made online and thought he'd make an apt partner for a contest, for which the assignment was to create a work that considered the relationship between humans and the planet, namely the forest fires that wreaked havoc across the Amazon rainforest in 2019. She sent him the sound she had already made, a five-minute excerpt from a larger work comprised of digitally processed field recordings that Paris admired for how open and organic it felt, how it seemed like a space he could walk inside.

For some time, Paris had been working on "Frecuencias," his long-term project in which he

sought to translate sound into visual landscapes. In this new project with Martinez, which the duo titled "Vida," he decided to extend the approach he'd been using in "Frecuencias" and imagine a way to mix two- and three-dimensional animation to create a dialogue between visuals and sound. Martinez's composition is spare and ominous, with a ceremonial feeling induced by bells and drum hits. In response, Paris portrayed flickering outlines of mountains and forests in shades of black and grey, but which, when activated by sound, are cast periodically in piercing light. With a limited timeline, Paris worked strategically, experimenting with duplication, enjoying how the same animated segment would synchronize with one portion of the score and behave contrapuntally with the next. Martinez encouraged his approach, and,

later, their submission was declared the contest winner.

Paris finally met Martinez in person at a performance of her works a year later, a concert that dazzled him. (In all their meetings, she had never said a word about being sick; only later, through a mutual friend, did he learn she had been suffering from an autoimmune disease from which she would die, in 2022, at the age of 49.) The project stayed with him, and he has continued to seek collaborations with composers, intending, at some point, to create what is often the case with "Vida": a work in which sound and image can stand as equals.

TANIA RUBIO

With any composer, an interest in new sounds is a given. In nature, however, the Mexican composer Tania Rubio finds sounds she feels are as contemporary as any generated today.

For years, Rubio's curiosity about the musical potential of natural sounds has manifested itself as an interest in bioacoustics, the study of sounds produced by or affecting living organisms. Her work in this field has led her to listen to animals near and far, suffusing her with respect and fascination for the natural world. One can know intellectually that Earth is populated with other beings, and that we all just share space, she said. To truly understand coexistence, however—for Rubio, after an encounter with a whale on a research trip—changed her life immeasurably. In Argentina, during her master's studies, she

formed relationships with fishermen and divers, even learning to dive herself, so as to expand her insights.

"Grito Silente del Mar," or "silent scream of the sea," originated as a commission for flute, which was fortuitous—wind instruments holds a particular fascination for Rubio, as they feel more embodied, connected as they are to the breath. The piece draws upon Rubio's research on the vocalizations of seven marine species from threatened habitats in polar regions—killer whale, sperm whale, false killer whale, leopard seal, vaquita marina, Amazon river dolphin, and Antarctic krill. For each of these species, sound is not only a means of communication, but also a source of information about their environments: where to find food, how to avoid predators, and how the condition of their icy environments has fared,

particularly as the climate crisis continues to advance. These vocalizations are channeled by the flutist, who performs a host of languid and percussive techniques on different flutes, and via recordings that play at various points during the work.

The piece also involves a number of objects—among them, silk sheets, plastic, a small tray with a mound of ice on top, dry leaves, and a gas lighter—with which the performer generates sounds evocative of what Rubio heard underwater. Some of these objects are clearly symbolic—ice and plastic, for example, both of which are present in whale habitats—while other aspects are less straightforward. At points, the performer seems to embody the animals; at others, the performer communicates with them. On stage, a mercurial ecosystem comes and goes.

In an old Brutalist church in Cologne, the German composer and trumpeter Ferdinand Schwarz considered the organ. For some time, he had been curious about ways to sustain notes for long periods—not an option on the trumpet, where one does eventually have to breathe. Now he began to experiment with placing objects onto the keys to sustain notes. He paced around the room, in awe as the harmonies, in dialogue with the room, seemed to morph with every step.

Perhaps some of this could be tried at home. Schwarz began thinking about melodicas—cheap, easily acquirable instruments, in particular a toybox mainstay—which mimic qualities of the organ, but which one plays by blowing into a tube. Their sharp, almost belligerent sound quality felt ideal for his purposes, as melodicas

produce particularly noticeable overtones; merely two pitches can offer a rich world of beatings and combination tones, which occur when frequencies interfere in space. As Schwarz found, the instruments are also relatively easy to use, namely to retune to his desired pitches, though the process takes time: take a screwdriver, scrape the reeds on the front or back, reassemble to hear the results, repeat.

Keen on sustaining a steady flow of sound from the melodicas, Schwarz happened upon a video of someone doing just that with the help of a medical-grade anti-snoring device, which can funnel a continuous stream of air into a source. He found a used device on a German resale site and began to experiment, working first with one melodica to test combinations of pitches and air

pressure, then, having settled on one or two pitches, expanded his setup to include more of the instruments, of which he now owns seven. For every performance, Schwarz arranges the instruments according to the properties of the room, as sound behaves differently in every space. The listener can pad through the space, perhaps as Schwarz did, observing sounds in ways unheard.

Schwarz, long fascinated with listening as a practice and making ways of listening available to new audiences, has found his own listening shift over the course of working on *do you hear what I hear?*. Not much is involved in the work, on its face. And yet, he says, a little material turns out to be more than enough, if you trust it.

Emerging artist Luis Fernando Amaya curates works that challenge euro-centric anthropocentrism in new music, insisting on the agency of the more-than-human.

This program, curated by the Oslo-based Mexican composer Luis Fernando Amaya, features works that engage with or seek to embody non-human others—plants, other animals, objects, and environments. Most of the works in this concert are by composers from Latin America, a region that has been particularly impacted by socio-ecological crises and whose cultural perspectives are rarely showcased in Scandinavia.

Following the performance will be a conversation with Oslo-based ecophilosopher Martin Lee Mueller.

The program notes for this event were written by Jennifer Gersten.

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