



Photo by Tim Daisy

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'If we want peace, we have to be peace. Peace is a practice not a hope.' (Thich Nhat Hanh)



Over the past two years, we have been placed in a fundamentally unreasonable situation: the uncertainty and unpredictability of a state of emergency. Just as our lives were gradually beginning to stabilize - structures in the cultural sphere still remaining very fragile - the Russia-Ukraine conflict escalated..... And again, this will indirectly influence our work. How can such an ephemeral art form as music deal with this situation? Shortly before this crisis I received a commission for a vocal piece. Through a Canadian-Ukrainian musician friend, I managed to establish contact with a Ukrainian poet and I want to set one of her current poems to music. It feels like 'stumbling' from one state of emergency to the next, a real stabilization is not yet in sight, the way I perceive it, but I trust that despite everything we will find new ways to collaborate and support each other both in the cultural field and in life.

I think that we musicians can and must actively contribute to shifting the weight within our own structures in order to search for more just structural and cultural forms.

However, as far as the previously mentioned situation is concerned, we will have to set out without 'guardrails'. My ability to practice and to explore serves as a compass for my own artistic work, which always enables me to learn to deal constructively with ever new ambiguities and uncertainties, both in artistic production and in life. Especially in times of crisis and social transformation, we have to recognize and endure contradictions. That is what characterizes an open society. And it is precisely this openness that creative music has always been able to convey.

Elisabeth Harnik



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First tour this year 2nd Europe since the pandemic.

Touring Europe became much harder since the pandemic tho many restrictions were lifted now and less forms to fill and no test results needed within the EU. But I was still very cautious and careful and masked all the time as hearing many musicians got stuck in the place for a week because of Covid-positive during the tour. Although it was hard not to hug or at least to be closer with friends musician after not seeing for years..

I had performed in Basel at Kaseme-solo and Hamburg with John Zorn's reflection program at Elbphilharmonie, then artist residency and concert at Gnracion, Braga, Portugal

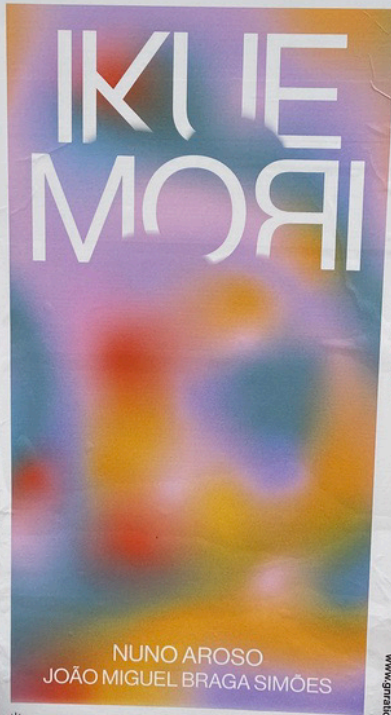


caleidoscópico

Ikue Mori, um dos nomes mais respeitados na música contemporânea, apresenta um concerto com Nuno Aroso e João Miguel Braga Simões, dois dos mais ativos percussionistas contemporâneos portugueses.

música / imagem /  
residência artística  
sáb 18.00 - blackbox  
gratuito - nv6

gnration



26 março 2022

[www.gnration.pt](http://www.gnration.pt)



from Tim Daisy

After more than two years of delay due to the pandemic, I have begun my first European tour in May of 2022 with a great group of friends: Elisabeth Harnik on piano, Fred Lonberg-Holm on cello and Dave Rempis on alto saxophone. Earscratcher! I can't think of a better way to start our tour than in one of my most favorite places in the world:

St Johann in Tirol !!









A

# IN NIGHT

ST. LOUIS

For some composers, the opportunity to hear their music played live is worth almost any price. They seem to spend as much time securing performances as they do composing. After a performance is scheduled, they might travel halfway around the world to hear their piece.

So... as a "young" composer in my early 30's it was very exciting to learn that a piece of mine was going to be performed by a new music ensemble in St. Louis. And all I had done was place a copy of the score in the library of the American Music Center. The piece in question, "Peace Plans", had been written almost a decade earlier and so far there had been only an informal reading of it. I was as happy as could be. The piece, a series of short movements, explores and re-imagines the relationship between piano, violin and cello on equal terms. While much of the standard "classical" repertoire for this instrumentation involves relatively fixed roles and relationships between the instruments (violin is soloist, the piano accompanies with the cello often doubling the pianists left hand), I had been exploring a more fluid relationship with a greater shared set of roles and materials. The piece was composed during Jesse Jackson's '88 bid for the presidential nomination. I was a fan (he was the first politician I donated money to) and his call at the time for "common ground" influenced my conceptualization of the piece (and hierarchy in general). It seemed only natural to dedicate the piece to him.

I had just moved to Chicago from New York when I heard about the upcoming performance. As airfare from Chicago to St. Louis was inexpensive at the time, I wrote and said I would attend. The ensemble's director was pleased and invited me to stay in his home. He also invited me to a wine and cheese reception (of course!) at a board member's house the night before! I felt like a real swell.

For the uninitiated, "new music" in the classical realm meant fully notated instrumental music written largely by college educated white males in post-war America and Europe. Improvisation and electronic instruments were rare in this world as were women and BIPOC composers (especially those outside the academy). At the time, such people or approaches were so unusual as to seem "exotic"; I regret to say that as a student, I often overlooked this issue as it was the norm. Even the excellently diverse Brooklyn College where I was a student when I wrote the piece had a mostly white male music department. Worse was Mills College where I went for graduate school; because of its reputation as a top-ranked all-women's college, I expected to meet many women composers and yet there too the faculty and graduate student body was largely white and male.

But back to the story...

When I arrived in St. Louis, I was taken directly to the party which was held in a beautiful mansion dating back to when St. Louis was one of the richest cities in America (I'm not sure but it might have been near the house where the lawyer couple waved guns at BLM marchers not so long ago.) Present were members of the board and their spouses, some donors, most of the ensemble's musicians and myself, all white and mostly male; I remember no darker faces. Although I engaged in occasional small talk, I knew no-one and mostly wandered around the house by myself admiring the art and furniture.

Afterwards, I was taken to the house where I was sleeping, a two-flat on a corner in a typical residential neighborhood, and shown to my room. During the night there was a strange and disturbing domestic squabble on the street but that's another story.

The following morning I was taken to the dress rehearsal. It and the concert were in a nice chapel on the campus of one of St. Louis's most prestigious academic institutions. As the concert was about to begin, I noticed an interesting detail in the program. The title of my piece had been changed to "Peace Plans for Jesse Jackson." This seemed odd as the dedication is usually not included in the title (or at least it's made clear that it is a dedication, not the title — If I had wanted Jackson's name in the title, I would have placed it there). In spite of this annoying detail, I enjoyed the performance. While the program was not very wide ranging, the performers were generally good and took the music seriously. The concert featured pieces by an array of composers: an elder statesman of "new music," a fast rising young star of the Darmstadt scene, a local academic who was highly regarded but largely unknown outside the school he taught at, a student at another one of the schools in the area, and of course, me. Not surprisingly but sadly all white and all male.

After the concert there was another social event, this time at a nice (very nice!) restaurant. Fortunately a board member was paying or else I would have just enjoyed the delicious breadsticks. Everyone at the table was very pleasant and I only had to explain a few times that I didn't personally know Jesse Jackson.

While waiting for the flight back to Chicago, I picked up the local free weekly newspaper to kill time. I came across an interesting article. The headline read "Local New Music Group to Celebrate Black History Month." The group in question was the one I had just said goodbye to and the concert was the one I had just attended. The group was "celebrating" Black History Month by including a performance of Fred Lonberg-Holm's "Peace Plans for Jesse Jackson"!

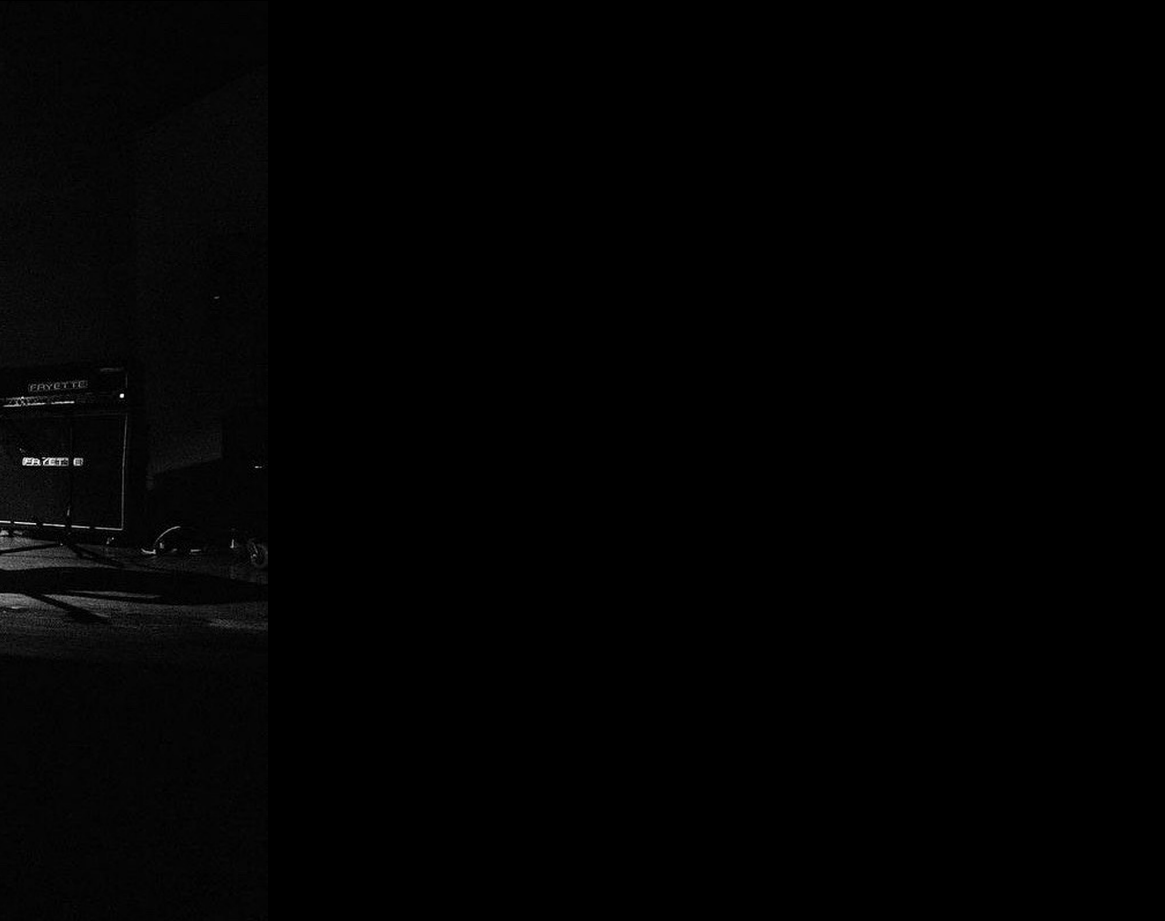
When I got home I sent them a "thank you" note asking what they were thinking. I never heard back. Later I sent them a list of important and/or interesting black composers that they might consider programming in the future but never heard back about that either.

from Tashi Dorji

I was able to start touring around August of 2021 with my band MANAS and followed by an EU tour with KUZU. January of 2022 I toured with my comrades Aaron Turner and Marshall Trammell in the West Coast, followed by another MANAS west coast tour in March 2022 supporting Godspeed you! Black Emperor. I think I have been fortunate enough to have been able to tour and make some income during these uncertain times. Many new projects came into fruition during the lockdowns. The availability of technology really helped collaborative and new imaginations, somehow possible remotely.

I am sharing some tour pictures from 2021 and 2022.







AT/MT/TD picture at The Lab, SF 2022 by Ratskin Records  
MANAS picture at The Sinclair, Boston 2021 by Ben Stas  
MANAS Picture at The Phoenix Theatre 2022 by Emi





when?  
was this?  
planning?  
chaos  
head in disorder

In the middle of the pandemic I did not recognize the so often mentioned passive feeling. My need to create was always there. I enjoyed the silence and the room the pandemic gave me. Only the last few months I realized the pandemic affected me too: rescheduled moved postponed postponed again and then the activities tumbled over each other. Slowly I noticed my brains, my thoughts were tumbling over each other, I had to guard my self-confidence, felt jittery, vulnerable, at the same time I felt blessed to be able to create.

a non-flowing river  
pool spinning within itself  
time in confusion  
ongoing moment  
of stagnation

Within the last eight month's all of the mostly postponed activities happened: I became a knight, several improvised concerts in solo, duo and quartet combinations, seven premieres of new written works and recomposed works, and in between a twelve-day residency in Scotland situated in a dazzling landscape.

Before and after  
When does after begin?  
For me there is still no after  
I live at a distance from the world  
No room to be ill  
Get to work  
It's so much fun





from Ken Vandermark

Though there were many experiences and emotions that took place when I was able to return to a more "normalized" concert schedule in September of 2021, few things sum up the range of joy and complexity which occurred last autumn as the performances that had been planned at the Blue Tomato in Vienna for November of that year. There have been many venues around the world that have made significant contributions to the history and support of improvised music, but these performance spaces rarely last more than a handful of years. What Günter Werner and Gerti accomplished at the Blue Tomato over the course of four decades, where they presented weekly concerts on an ongoing basis, was nothing short of miraculous and it was an immeasurable gift to the range in creative development and variety of this music. The club was scheduled to close at the end of 2021, and the fact that three nights of music with Paal Nilssen-Love had been organized there for the second half of November, which would feature duo music to be recorded by Austrian radio on November 22nd, and performances with Susanna Gartmayer, Christof Kurzmann, Thomas Lehn, and Nina Polaschegg as guests on the other nights of the program, was very, very important to me.



Photo by Doris Bauer



On Friday, November 19th, during a tour in Hungary with István Grensó, Elisabeth Harnik, and Didi Kern, I woke up in Békéscsaba to find out that Austria was going to go back into a COVID lockdown starting on Monday, the first day of the scheduled concert run with Paal, and it meant that the three shows at the Blue Tomato would be cancelled. This was devastating news. I then got a phone call from Christof Kurzmann who told me he was working with Günter Werner to organize a last minute performance at the Blue Tomato on Sunday night, before everything was to be shut down. Through remarkable planning, they put together a trio gig for Christof, Didi Kern, and me. After a concert in Szeged, Hungary, the next morning, Didi and I took home COVID tests because everyone at the concert Sunday night needed to be vaccinated and have a negative PCR test to attend. Then we traveled with Elisabeth by train to Vienna, to submit the tests to the Austrian pharmacy system in time, with fingers crossed that the results would be negative. Thankfully, they were.

Before Sunday's show I was filled with mixed emotions. Despite losing the three concerts scheduled with Paal, getting the chance to play again at the venue before it closed, even though things were about to back into lockdown, made me happy. At the same time, the thought that this might be the last in-person concert at the club before it had to permanently shut its doors in mid December depressed the hell out of me. I had performed on many, many occasions at the Blue Tomato, but no audience was as galvanizing for me as the one that Christof, Didi, and I played to that night. When we walked onstage the reception we received from the packed house, before playing a single note, gave me such a profound sense of joy, it made me realize again how truly lucky I am to get to do what I do and how much music means to me. It was an exhilarating and celebratory occasion and, without the last minute efforts and ingenuity of Günter and Christof, it would not have taken place.

On Monday, Austria- aside from essential workers- went into a lockdown. Despite this, the duo concert scheduled for Paal and me, which couldn't take place for an audience, COULD take place without anyone in attendance because it had been originally scheduled to be recorded by the ORF Radio Wien. Somehow, according to Austrian protocol, the radio recording was considered essential, and since there wouldn't be an in-person crowd for the performance, it could still take place. Paal flew to Vienna from Lisbon that morning, changing his original itinerary to travel to Norway on Tuesday; I rebooked my ticket to head to Poland that day as well, where I would begin a tour with Terrie Ex later in the week. Aside from the radio crew and Günter and Gerti, only a few close friends were present, allowed as "technical assistants." For the purposes of the radio show, we were asked to play as if it were still a performance for a regular audience, talking between pieces, etc. The scenario felt truly strange- it wasn't really a concert and it wasn't really a studio recording session. In any case, once the technical aspects of the ORF setup were finished, Paal and I dove in and played.

The gig the night before, with Christof and Didi, had truly felt like a party. As the music moved from piece to piece with Paal, who I had not seen or performed with since our tour in Japan during December of 2019, it grew in emotional intensity. What started with excitement over finally being able to work together again began to shift as we explored music and expressed feelings that had been bottled up for two long years, as we said goodbye to a place that had meant so much to everyone in the room. Sunday had been a celebration to commemorate all that had been accomplished during 40 years at the Blue Tomato. The performance with Paal on Monday evening was exuberant but it also filled me with mourning. After the last sound disappeared into the room, the silence that followed the duo's music was truly powerful, shared by a handful of friends saying goodbye to more than an era, unaware that the Omicron Variant was about to take its toll.





Photo by Ken Vandermark

Creative work is creative work. No matter pandemic or not.  
Priorities are priorities. They are now different.

War is war. Never ending stupidities. The ultimate stupidity.  
Streams of refugees. Streams of fear. Streams of despair.  
Just around the corner from where we live. Only an 8-hour car-drive away.  
Priorities are priorities. They are now different.  
Focus has to change a bit now.

Can WE change anything with our music? Is change possible, at all? At ALL?  
I really don't care much about traditional touring right now. I care more about  
playing in eastern Poland. Ukrainian border. Solidarities. Help. Support.  
What can we do now?

The pandemic put a pause to... a lot of things...  
And started up -stired up- some bad shit. Embarrassing conspiracies.  
Never-changing polarities-of-hate. Stupidities all around.  
Some people going plot-nuts.  
"What is wrong with you?" as Joe McPhee once said.  
A new time. Post pandemic.  
What does it mean?  
Why? How? When?  
Priorities are priorities. They are now different.  
What can we do now?