

for the workshop was exactly the opposite of that, to arrive, counterintuitively, with compositions/installations/performances that were incomplete. A week is a very short time in which to bring something (either entirely or mostly) new to a point where it can be presented to an audience, even if it is shown as a 'work-in-progress'. By first exposing one's inchoate dream to the small Collaboratory world, population 14, planet ESC Gallery, one also had to commit to it, dare to run with it, break it, reinvent it, throw in the towel, and then reinvent the towel. The collaboration itself fell into two distinct parts: the sounding board that was the group which facilitated the refining and decision-making aspect of the creative process, and then the involvement of participants as a resource for experimentation so that ideas could quickly be tried out, scrapped, changed and retried so that a piece could develop, passing through multiple iterations in a very short space of time. One piece required three violinists in addition to its author/performer, and over the course of several run-throughs/rehearsals, each performer contributed essential elements to the resulting final piece. The roles of 'composer', 'director', and 'performer' bled together, raising questions of authorship (and the relativity of its importance). Another piece began with a simple concept that, through a series of improvisations with different members of the group, moved from being a piece for multiple muted instruments to an improvisation for a mixed ensemble, to a piece for three violins combining movement in space, to a piece for three (and eventually four) performers using only their voices and bodies in a semi-structured improvisation. Each of these versions went through a phase of trial, error, and experimentation, being discarded or revised until reaching a conclusive version.

The final presentation was the first time that these works, after their intensive week-long incubation, would receive feedback from anyone outside of the 'bubble' of the glass walls of the ESC. I felt there to be an acute awareness of our insularity from the rest of the festival, and a certain degree of uncertainty about how these works would be perceived from an external perspective. We certainly no longer had any. Thirteen participants ricocheted around inside the gallery an incessant exchange, generating their own reality. The group, which Prins had managed to guide without leading, had become a living and breathing sounding board, a hyperactive hive mind, with the capacity to optimise the creative process (if the quantity of feedback didn't overwhelm the work before it even started)

and, finally, a support system in which the participants, having contributed to each other's projects, could take pride in their final form.

Athena Corcoran-Tadd
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Mimitabu at Atalante, Gothenburg

Why Swedish contemporary music over the past few decades has been such a provincial affair is a mystery. Most of the pieces receiving critical attention from the media are using neo-Romantic aesthetics – bombastic orchestral sounds more connected to the world of Richard Strauss than Helmut Lachenmann. Hearing this type of music, often characterised by its excesses of art nouveau ornamentations, one may wonder what century one is living in. Where is the contemporary world?

Of course there are exceptions. There are quite a few very talented experimental musicians coming from Sweden, many of them moving back and forth between free improvisation and composed music. For example, the pianist Lisa Ullén, the saxophone player Anna Högberg, the violinist Anna Lindal and the clarinet and saxophone player Magnus Granberg. The two last names have collaborated in a series of wonderful pieces released on CD by the Another Timbre label. This is quiet music in the post-Feldman tradition, but with an open door to a new and unknown landscape, full of musical wonders.

Another exception is the Stockholm-based Curious Chamber Players, run by the composer Malin Bång and the conductor/composer Rei Munakata. Since its inception in 2003 the group has premiered and introduced an immense number of new pieces, engaging in a most needed dialogue with an international experimental music scene.

Rei Munakata is also the musical director of Mimitabu, a smaller group based in Gothenburg, consisting of eight musicians. One of the intentions of the group is to work as a fruitful ground for younger composers, and several of the members are active as composers as well. In the beginning of December, 2016, the group presented an alternative Christmas concert in Atalante, a space for contemporary dance, music and performance art in Gothenburg. Four pieces by four Swedish composers were played: *Kylan, plötstlig* (The Cold, Sudden) by Lina Järnegård, *Vox Terminus* by

Fredrik Gran, *Rita cirklar* (Draw Circles) by Johan Svensson and *Anti Focus* by Tony Blomdahl. The programme also included one piece by the French composer Maria Misael Gauchat, *Le cinquième élément* (The Fifth Element), and one, *Glam*, by the Norwegian composer Kristine Tjøgersen, who additionally performed in most of the other pieces as a clarinet player.

The most interesting thing about this concert, apart from the high quality of the performances, is the emergent alternative map. Taken together, the six pieces say a lot about the possibilities of sounds and no sounds, how to combine them and how to read the contemporary landscape. Both parts of the concert started with the humorous lighting of sparklers. The tiny crackling sound of these objects, so reminiscent of Christmas, was a reminder of the energy fields of the silence and the ambiances of the room, and all of the pieces more or less paid respect to this dialogue, acknowledging the fact that all sound situations have theatrical aspects.

Lina Järnegård's *Kylan, plötslig* (2013), for clarinet, violin, percussion and piano, has an icy character. The opening piano figure uses the trills of Beethoven's *Für Elise* as a colouring effect, a bit like getting stuck in the physical memory of the phrase. But the friction created, with the other instruments bringing a combination of fragile and sturdy sounds, has its own intensity, and the piece uses an interesting combination of controlled and erratic forces.

Fredrik Gran's *Vox Terminus* (2015), for clarinets/objects, percussion, violin and cello, uses an animated graphic score that is shown to the audience while the piece is performed. Each musician is represented by a colour on screen and interprets the respective signs on the screen. An abstract visual language, easy to follow, with harsh noises, small breathing sounds, stuttering attacks and fluttering harmonics, like an updated version of the Bauhaus aesthetic, open to the irrationalities of our media-focused times.

Rita cirklar, for flutes, piano, percussion, violin, viola and cello, is a fairly old piece by Johan Svensson, written in 2010. It creates a series of fragmented moments by the playing of the strings against a monochrome, repetitive piano tone, a superfast figure reminiscent of Terry Riley's *In C*. After a while, silence takes over, creating bigger and bigger holes, and then, at the end of the piece, a quite brutal cluster chord on the piano is played against the delicate character of the other instruments.

Tony Blomdahl's music uses noise sounds, often played at aggressive strong volumes. But

Anti Focus, for flute, washboard, piano, violin, cello and electronics, is more sublime and timid, in all its harsh repetitiveness. The overtones make it beautiful.

But the best piece of all was Kristine Tjøgersen's *Glam*, for violin and cello, from 2016. It starts like an ironic version of the rhetoric of Lachenmann's early scrape music à la *Pression* and *Streichtrio*. But after about two minutes the sound activities are accompanied by visuals from the 1980s heavy metal band Ratt's video *Round and Round*, and suddenly a most fascinating counterpoint takes place between the physical movements of the music and the strange action going on in the video. A bourgeois dinner is invaded by rats, and the video is invaded by the strictly choreographed avant-garde sounds. It's a funny piece, playing intelligently with collage effects. It's also the piece with the most obvious connections to the conceptual methods of fellow Scandinavian composers Øyvind Torvund and Trond Reinholdtsen from Norway and Simon Steen Andersen from Denmark. It's a new kind of realism, hypnagogic and freewheeling, saying yes to the disturbances of the world. It has nothing to do with Richard Strauss, but hardly with Lachenmann either. It's the music of today.

Magnus Haglund

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Juliet Fraser and Plus Minus, Café OTO, London, 7 February 2017

On a gloomy winter's night in Dalston what could be better than Kammerklang at Café OTO? Out of the cold and into a packed house – standing room only for many of us, and sauna-like levels of humidity – for an evening in which an audio-visual piece about bells by Christine Sun Kim and a new string quartet by Lisa Illean frame the main event, two new pieces by the Canadian composer Cassandra Miller.

First is *Tracery: Hardanger*, for solo voice and pre-recorded voice. It begins with a repeated, sustained sung tone and, from where I am standing, it is not immediately clear whether it is live or pre-recorded, but soon Juliet Fraser adds live ornamentations around the repeated note: strange, half-strangled ululations, not like any sound I've ever heard this wonderful singer make before. Each phrase is the length of a breath, usually with a falling melodic trajectory. Sometimes the live melody anticipates the sustained note, sometimes it follows. We could be