

Maja S.K. Ratkje: And sing ...

This album interleaves the composer's own voice as a performer with the ensemble sound of CIKADA and Oslo Sinfonietta. In *«And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep»* the voice is pre-recorded, and the sound files are played through loudspeakers placed among the musicians. In *Concerto for Voice (moods IIIb)* the composer is performing live a solo part for amplified voice, using much wider dynamics and improvisation. While performing has influenced and inspired Maja S. K. Ratkje's composing, the opposite is also true – even though it's too simple to say that she improvises like a composer and composes like an improvising musician: "The process of composition is primarily about mastering form and contextualising elements – both the actual sounds and the formal units – musically," she says.

Denne innspillingen fletter komponistens egen stemme som utøver sammen med det instrumentale fra CIKADA og Oslo Sinfonietta. For *«And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep»* er stemmens lyder spilt inn på forhånd, og disse lydfilene spilles av gjennom høyttalere plassert inne i ensemblet, i motsetning til *Concerto for Voice (moods IIIb)* der solisten får utfolde seg i improviserte, dynamiske forløp. At det utøvende har påvirket og gitt ideer til Ratkjes kompositoriske arbeide er åpenbart, og det er også omvendt – selv om det er for enkelt å si at Maja S. K. Ratkje improviserer som en komponist og komponerer som en improvisasjonsmusiker: «For meg er komposisjon først og fremst en prosess som handler om å beherske form, å kontekstualisere elementer musikalsk, klanglige eller formale», sier hun.

CIKADA & Oslo Sinfonietta

Recorded in DXD 24bit/352.8kHz

5.1 DTS HD MA 24/192kHz Dolby Atmos 48kHz

2.0 LPCM 24/192kHz 9.1 Auro-3D 96kHz

+ mShuttle MP3 and MQA



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Maja S.K. Ratkje

And sing ...
CIKADA & Oslo Sinfonietta

And sing ...

Could the act of composing include my sound as a voice performer? The two works on this album are two different answers to this question. From the moment I started to compose new classical music I have carefully worked on developing my own voice as an instrument. Improvising with others has been a key factor – especially with the ensemble SPUNK over the last 20 years. In addition, the use of live electronics has given me ideas about how to use the voice.

While performing has influenced and inspired my composing, the opposite is also true – even though it's too simple just to say that I improvise like a composer and compose like an improvising musician. The process of composition is for me primarily about mastering form and contextualising elements – both the actual sounds and the formal units – musically.

From early on I composed in studio, using my own voice as a sound source. My solo album *Voice* (released on Rune Grammofon in 2002) was an important manifestation of this. But it was with a commission from Radio France for a concert in 2004 that I first faced the challenge of creating a larger ensemble work that would include me as a soloist. I decided then to focus exclusively on the acoustic side of things, and simply used amplification on the voice to let it meet the sound of the orchestra. I wanted to examine the relationship and distance between the amplified and the acoustic, and I was out to explore the mismatch between what one saw and what one heard. Quiet voice sounds could be amplified and heard side by side with loud acoustic responses in the orchestra. I performed the first version of *Concerto for Voice* with The Norwegian Radio Orchestra in Paris. I later re-wrote the work for a sinfonietta-sized orchestra, and this is the version we hear on this album, *Concerto for Voice (moods IIIb)*.

The voice concerto is in many ways a traditional concerto for soloist and orchestra; it adheres to a fairly orthodox concerto form, with exchanges between the soloist and the orchestra. Thematically, the work begins with a progression of chords – these are so-called spectral chords derived

from spectrum analysis of the tenor saxophone. This is something I have worked with earlier, in pieces for electronics and saxophone: hence 'moods' in the title, referring to other works in the same series. The harmonic side theme to the *spectral* chords is a three-tone-based motif taken from common frequencies in selected *multiphonics* – these, too, from the saxophone. On top of that, I have let noise sounds and percussive sounds clash with this harmonic backdrop, rhythmicizing, fragmenting and accentuating moments in the music's progression. This is where the idea of using an old typewriter occurred to me, as a sort of *sidekick* to the solo voice. A typewriter is also suggestive of associations with what is pronounced – the consonant sounds of the voice.

A rather different way of lining up voice/ensemble interplay can be heard in the work "*And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep*", which was commissioned by the Cikada Ensemble in 2012. Here the voice is pre-recorded, and the sound files are played through loudspeakers placed among the musicians via a sampler. The soloist is not physically present.

In contrast to *Concerto for Voice*, in which the soloist can improvise dynamically and execute expressive phrasing, the voice in "*And sing...*" is to all intents and purposes almost clinically confined to certain fixed sounds, each with their own timbral character. (The title, by the way, is a quotation from Shakespeare.) All the voice sounds are untreated acoustic recordings, even though they may sound "electronic". I have developed sounds like these over many years of performing, and you can say they might also be inspired by electronic music.

In "*And sing...*" the recorded voice sounds that are played back also serve as a score for all the instrumental parts. This means that the work cannot be realised with a soloist singing live. It is the exact contents in every recorded sound that determine everything in the score. Helped by computer technology I have zoomed into the complex voice sounds and written the score – at micro level – for the instruments in accordance with the precise frequencies I found. I often stretch the instrumentation – making a longer instrumental passage out of a short voice sound. The work is a construction of the differently transcribed voice samples. And then I have chosen to add to the ensemble the original voice sounds, played back in interplay with their transcriptions.

The stretched instrumentations sound very different from their sources, the original voice samples; however, one can also often hear resemblances and synchronisation, as with the opening sample, which is followed by a precisely matching sustain in the ensemble. The next played-back voice sample is an uneven, extremely high-pitched sliding gesture. It is answered by a stretched instrumented version of the same sample in the same register. This particular phrase undergoes a development later in the piece, and it is also used when breaking down the formal structure over the last third of the piece, with the stretched ensemble part being repeated over and over again with small variations right until the whole work crumbles away. Each repetition in this long coda is introduced by a motif in the percussion part; these notes are in fact the only elements in the score not originating from the voice sounds. The work's long final section has also been constructed based on an idea which has impinged itself on my original compositional idea: one by one the musicians are replaced by a recording of me singing, peeping or whistling their part, while they instead switch to playing a pattern of short notes we have heard earlier. Finally, the clarinet is left alone, playing the original glissando instrumentation, and with that the work has reached its close. *The Mirror in the Mirror* by Michael Ende or impossible, ever-repeating drawings by M.C. Escher are inspirations when the voice goes into micro-level and reproduces a detail from its own sound. In this way one can continue to imagine future generations with the voice reproducing the voice reproducing the voice ...

Maja Solweig Kjelstrup Ratkje 2016

Maja S.K. Ratkje's music is performed worldwide by performers such as Ensemble Intercontemporain, Klangforum Wien, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Fretwork, TM+, Mivos and Bozzini string quartets, Quatuor Renoir, crashEnsemble, Pearls for Swine Experience, Torben Snekkestad, Marianne Beate Kielland, Frode Haltli and many others. Portrait concerts with her music have been heard in Toronto and Vienna, and she has been composer in residence at festivals like Other Minds in San Francisco, Trondheim Chamber Music Festival,

Nordland Music Festival, Avanti! Summer Festival, Båstad Chamber Music Festival and Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. In 2001 she was the first composer ever to receive the Norwegian Arne Nordheim prize. Her solo album *Voice* won a Distinction Award at Prix Ars Electronica in 2003. In 2013 she was nominated for the Nordic Council Music Prize for her vocal work, which includes solo works, the quartet SPUNK (founded in 1995), and collaboration with the trio POING. Ratkje has performed her own music for films, dance and theatre, installations, and numerous other projects.

Since its 1989 formation in Oslo, **Cikada** has developed a refined and highly acclaimed profile on the international contemporary music scene. From the very beginning, Cikada has consisted of flute, clarinet, piano, percussion, string quintet and conductor Christian Eggen. All ten are equal, permanent members, and the ensemble has become synonymous with the Oslo Sound of fresh, vibrant, warm and virtuosic interpretations of consciously selected, contemporary repertoire. In concerts at major international festivals and on numerous albums, Cikada's distinct ensemble profile manifests itself in strong programming. Integral to this work is a wish to develop long-term collaborations with composers and to build composer portraits with commissioned works over time. The nine musicians also play in various formations within the group: the Cikada String Quartet, the Cikada Trio (flute, clarinet, piano), the Cikada Piano Trio and the Cikada Duo (piano and percussion) work as independent Cikada units, enhancing the ensemble's international identity. Cikada was awarded the prestigious Nordic Council Music Prize in 2005.

Oslo Sinfonietta is one of Norway's most innovative and respected ensembles. Founded in 1986, the ensemble is the oldest within the Norwegian contemporary scene. Conductor and artistic director is Christian Eggen, who has been at the helm since 1993. The ensemble plays the best music of contemporary composers and seeks to engage and challenge the audience through inspiring productions of the highest artistic quality. Oslo Sinfonietta has an extensive discography and plays regularly at festivals at home and abroad.



And sing ...

Kunne komposisjongjærningen ta opp i seg lyden av meg som improvisasjonsvokalist? De to verkene på denne utgivelsen er to forskjellige svar på dette. Fra da jeg startet å komponere ny klassisk musikk, har jeg gjennom nitid arbeid også utforsket min egen stemme som instrument. Improvisasjoner med andre har vært avgjørende, særlig de siste 20 årene med improvisasjonsgruppa SPUNK. I tillegg har bruk av live-elektronikk også gitt ideer tilbake til hvordan jeg bruker den fysiske stemmen.

At det utøvende har påvirket og gitt ideer til det kompositoriske arbeidet, er én ting, men det er også omvendt – selv om det er for enkelt å si at jeg improviserer som en komponist og komponerer som en improvisasjonsmusiker. For meg er komposisjon først og fremst en prosess som handler om å beherske form, å kontekstualisere elementer musikalsk, klanglige eller formale.

Tidlig komponerte jeg verker i studio der jeg har brukt min egen stemme som lydkilde. Solo-plata *Voice* (utgitt på Rune Grammofon i 2002) var i så måte en svært viktig manifestasjon av dette arbeidet. Men det var på bestilling fra Radio France til en konsert i 2004 at jeg for første gang fikk utfordringen om å skape et større ensembleverk der jeg selv skulle inngå som solist. Jeg bestemte meg da for utelukkende å fokusere på den akustiske, men oppmikkede lyden av min egen stemme, og la den møte orkesterklengen. Jeg ville utforske avstander mellom det forsterkede og det akustiske, og jeg ville skape misforhold mellom det man så og det man hørte. Små stemmelyder kunne bli store og sidestilles med lydsterke svar i orkesteret. Den første versjonen av *Concerto for Voice* framførte jeg sammen med Kringkastingsorkesteret (KORK) i Paris. Senere har jeg skrevet om verket til sinfoniettabesetning, slik vi hører det her.

Stemmeconcerten er på mange måter en tradisjonell konsert for solist og orkester: Den følger noenlunde en tradisjonell konsertform, og solisten er i vekselvirkning med orkesteret. Tema-

tisk inneholder verket en akkordprogresjon med såkalte *spektrale* akkorder hentet fra overtone-analyser av tenorsaksofon. Dette har jeg tidligere utforsket i elektroniske verker med saksofon, derav også betegnelsen 'moods' i tittelen, som viser til andre verker i samme serie. Sidetema til spektralharmonikken er et tretonebasert motiv som kommer fra fellestonene i utvalgte såkalte *multiphonics*, også fra saksofonen. Det harmoniske bakteppet har jeg latt kolliderere med støy og perkussive lyder som rytmiserer, fragmenterer og skaper momenter i forløpet. Her dukket også ideen om å inkludere en gammel skrivemaskin opp, som en slags *sidekick* til solostemmen. Skrivemaskinen gir også assosiasjoner til det uttalte, til stemmens konsonantlyder.

En ganske annen måte å la stemmen møte et ensemble på er verket *«And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep»*, skrevet på bestilling fra Cikada i 2012. Her er stemmens lyder spilt inn på forhånd, og disse lydfilene spilles av gjennom høyttalere plassert inne i ensemblet via en sampler. Sangeren er fraværende i samspillet.

I motsetning til *Concerto for Voice*, der solisten får utfolde seg i improviserte forløp med dynamiske utsving og gestisk frasering, viser *«And sing ...»* stemmen nærmest klinisk avgrenset til statiske klanger av ulik karakter. (Tittelen er for øvrig et Shakespear-sitat.) Alle stemmelydene er ubearbejdede akustiske opptak, selv om de kan høres elektroniske ut. Slike lyder har jeg kommet fram til gjennom mange år med utøverbirsomhet, og de kan nok også være inspirert av elektronisk musikk.

I *«And sing ...»* er stemmelydene som spilles av også utgangspunkt for alle instrumentalpartiene. Derfor kan heller ikke verket realiseres riktig med en levende solist tilstede. Det er detaljene i den innspilte lyden som avgjør alt som noteres i partituret. Jeg har ved hjelp av datateknologi zoomet inn i de komplekse stemmelydene og instrumentert ut det nøyaktige frekvensinnholdet jeg fant, på mikronivå, ofte strukket ut i tid slik at en kort lyd kan bli til et langt instrumentalparti. Verket er en konstruksjon av de ulikt transkriberte stemmesamplingene. Og så har jeg valgt å legge inn de opprinnelige stemmelydene i samspill med de spilte analysene.

Strukne instrumenteringer klinger langt unna de originale stemmesamplene, men ofte hører man også slektskap og samtidighet, slik som med åpningsampelet, som får en ren, transkribert etterklang i ensemblet. Neste avspilte stemmelyd er en ujevn, ekstremt lys glissandobevegelse. Den svares av en strukket versjon av det samme samplet i samme register. Denne lyse frasen er også gjenstand for en utvikling senere i verket, og den brukes til å bryte ned formen i siste tredel av verket. Her gientas den strukne ensembleversjonen av den lyse oppoverglissanden med variasjoner helt til verket smuldrer hen. For hver variasjon har jeg lagt inn et motiv i slagverk; det er det eneste spilte som ikke kommer fra stemmeanalysene. Den lange slutten er også formet etter en idé som griper inn i den opprinnelige kompositoriske ideen: Én etter én av musikerne blir erstattet av et opptak hvor jeg synger, piper eller plystrer deres part, mens de går over til å spille et mønster av korte toner som vi har hørt tidligere i verket. Tilslutt er bare klarinetten igjen i den opprinnelige glissandoinstrumenteringen, og stykket har spilt seg ut. *Speilet i speilet* (Michael Ende) eller en evig gjentakende tegning av Escher har vært assosiasjoner når stemmen går inn på mikronivå og gjenskerper en detalj i sin egen lyd. Slik kan man fortsette å tenke seg videre generasjoner med stemmen som gjenskerper stemmen som gjenskerper stemmen ...

Maja Solveig Kjelstrup Ratkje 2016

Maja S.K. Ratkjes musikk er framført over hele verden av utøvere som Ensemble Intercontemporain, Klangforum Wien, Fretwork, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Avanti! kammerorkester, Arve Tellefsen, Frode Haltli, Marianne Beate Kielland, Trondheim Voices, Det Norske Jentekor, Vertavo, Engegårdkvartetten og alle norske orkestre. Hun har blitt portrettert med konserter i bl.a. Wien Konzerthaus og i regi av Kanadisk Radio i Toronto. Hun har vært profilert komponist under Other Minds i San Francisco to ganger, og festivalkomponist under Trondheim Kammermusikkfestival, Nordland Musikkfestuke, Avanti! Summer Festival

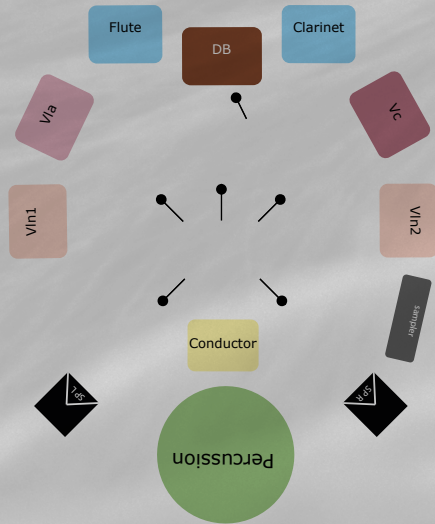
i Finland og ved den anerkjente festivalen i Huddersfield. I 2001 mottok Ratkje, som første komponist, Arne Nordheims komponistpris. Hun er kjent som utøver, først og fremst av egne verker, og som improvisasjonsmusiker bl.a. i gruppa SPUNK. Hun har laget og framført musikk til hørespill, dans, teater, installasjoner, film og litteratur. I 2013 var hun nominert til Nordisk Råds musikkpris for sin stemmebruk, samme år fikk hun Rolf Gamleng-prisen for deltakelse på over 100 plateutgivelser, blant annet på Rune grammofon, Tzadik og Important Records.

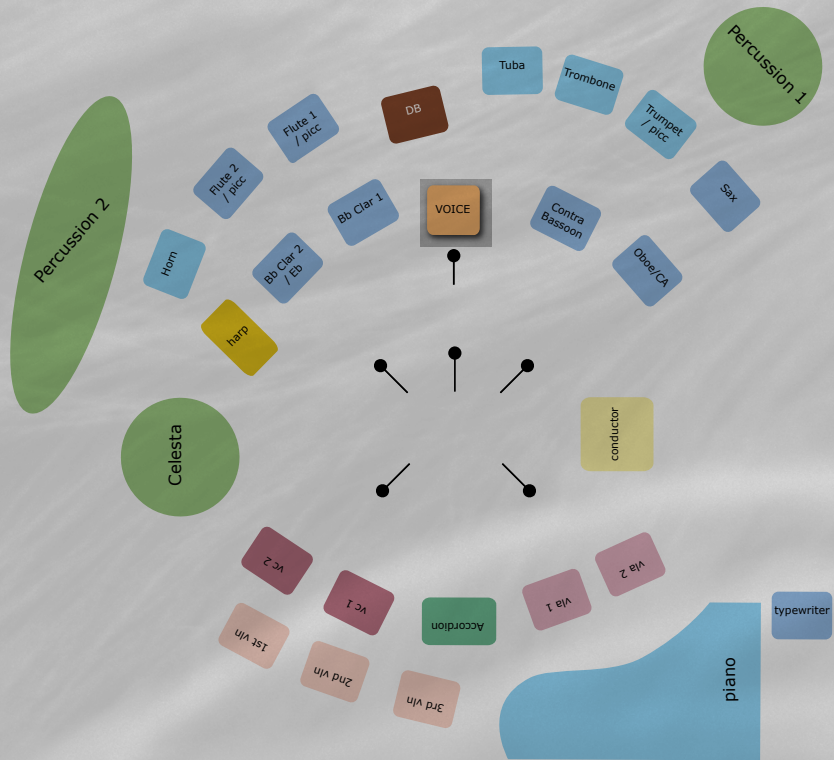
Siden starten i 1989 har **Cikada** etablert en rendyrket og velrenommert profil på den internasjonale samtidsmusikkscenen. Ensemblet har siden begynnelsen bestått av fløyte, klarinett, piano, perkusjon, strykekvintett og dirigent Christian Eggen. Alle ti medlemmer er likestilte, faste medlemmer. Ensemblet knyttes sterkt til den såkalte Oslo Sound med sine friske, energiske, varme og virtuose interpretasjoner av et bevisst utvalgt repertoar. Cikadas distinkte ensembleprofil manifesteres gjennom sterk programmering i konserter ved store internasjonale festivaler og i en rekke plateinnspillinger. I kjernen for dette arbeidet ligger ønsket om å utvikle langvarige samarbeid med komponister og over tid å bygge opp komponistportretter bestående av verker skrevet til ensemblet. De ni musikerne danner også flere mindre formasjoner innenfor gruppen: Cikada Strykekvartett, Cikada Trio (fløyte, klarinett og piano), Cikada Pianotrio og Cikada Duo (piano og slagverk) opererer som uavhengige grupper. Cikada ble tildelt den prestisjetunge Nordisk råds musikkpris i 2005.

Oslo Sinfonietta er et av Norges mest innovative og anerkjente ensembler. Grunnlagt i 1986 er ensemblet Norges eldste innen samtidsmusikk. Dirigent og kunstnerisk leder er Christian Eggen, som har hatt ledelsen siden 1993. Ensemblet spiller den beste musikken av nåtidens komponister og søker å engasjere og utfordre publikum gjennom inspirerende produksjoner av høyeste kunstneriske kvalitet. Oslo Sinfonietta kan vise til en innholdsrik diskografi og spiller jevnlig på festivaler i inn- og utland.



“And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep”





Concerto for Voice (moods IIIb)







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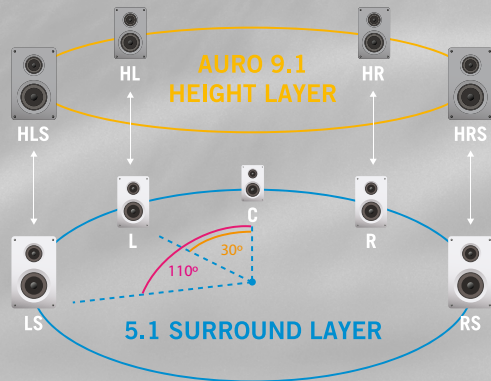
Morten Lindberg balance engineer and recording producer

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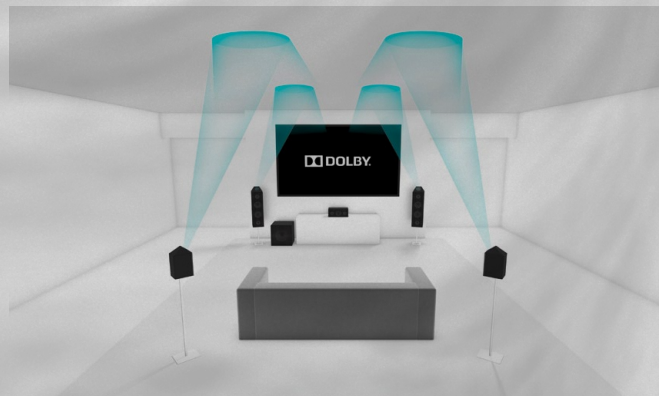
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4. Select booklet and audio files to download from the Blu-ray to your computer.



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Auro-3D encoding **Galaxy Studios** • screen design **Hermann Enkemeier** • authoring **Martin Seer**

Blu-ray producers **Morten Lindberg** and **Stefan Bock**

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This recording was made by Lindberg Lyd AS with DPA microphones and HORUS converters to a PYRAMIX workstation. Digital eXtreme Definition is a professional audio format that brings "analogue" qualities in 24 bit at 352.8 kHz sampling rate.

Note on Low Frequency Effect channel: For SACD and FLAC audio files, all six channels (including the Lfe channel) are calibrated for equal playback levels. However, in the audio streams for the Blu-ray the Lfe channel is lowered by -10dB in the mastering process, anticipating a +10dB elevation in cinema-style home theatre playback.

Maja Solveig Kjelstrup Ratkje

- 1 “And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep” 20:33
- 2 Concerto for Voice (moods IIIb) 23:24

CIKADA & Oslo Sinfonietta