

Glasba našega časa, music program, Third program of Radio Slovenia – Ars, RTV Slovenija

Madli Marje Gildemann

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presented by Primož Trdan

<https://ars.rtv slo.si/podkast/glasba-nasega-casa/173251270/175240349>

Mechanical Translation:

This time we are listening to music by Estonian composer Madli Marje Gildemann from her new album released by KAIROS. Madli Marje Gildemann, born in 1994, studied composition at the Georg Ots Tallinn School of Music and music for film and theater at the Zurich University of the Arts. In addition to performing at festivals such as the Estonian Music Days, the Baltic Festival, and the World Music Days, she the Al(t)chemie Festival and the Swiss festival “L’esprit de l’utopie,” she frequently creates music and sound design for theatre projects and radio. We’ve already featured her works on our programs; in 2022, her piece **Transpiration** for strings earned her a recommendation as a composer in the young artists’ category International Rostrum of Composers, and through a concert recording of her piece **Nocturnal Migrants** from the Musikprotokoll festival. The **Dream Sequence** release, inspired by Ancient Forest, also includes these pieces as some of the most notable works created between 2017 and 2023.

Madli Marja Gildemann’s music is influenced by bioacoustics—biological processes that she seeks to translate into music in new ways. The album opens with a triptych of works for various ensembles titled *Osmosis*, *Transpiration*, and *Photosynthesis*—processes that, through the way the material unfolds, metaphorically wind their way through the musical flow. The inspiration for the piece **Nocturnal Migrants**, for example, is the phenomenon of light attraction in nocturnal birds, which are drawn to streetlights—an object that is alluring to birds but often proves fatal. The title track is not so much a conceptual journey as an imaginative one between silence and the emergence of sound, while the closing track, **AH-64 Apache/Sumiseja, sumiseja...**, cuts into the abstraction of nature with the sounds and noise of a military helicopter. This work, oldest and most extensive work on the album, written for an unusual ensemble consisting of a throat singer, an overtone singer, two violins, two double basses, percussion, piano, and field recordings. The AH-64 Apache is a combat helicopter, an object with a distinctive sound; in this piece, the composer attempts to transform it into a sort of mythological creature, a great flyer that carries souls. In doing so, she draws on the purely sonic affinity of the helicopter—a humming, buzzing machine that can also evoke associations with animal-like fliers. The Estonian word *sumiseja* (“buzzer”) appears in the title, as well as within the piece itself, and is repeated like a mantra, a spell, a rhythm. Maausk, a neo-pagan faith in Estonia to which Gildemann also refers, asserts that everything—even inanimate objects—has a soul. The helicopter simultaneously becomes a fly, a bird, and a spirit. This spiritual component in the contemporary soundscape is emphasized by the singers, who are skilled in the practices of

throat singing and overtone singing, yet this, in turn, connects very naturally with the composer's writing for instruments.

As Johanna Mängel emphasizes in the accompanying notes, the tracks are not merely the most striking examples of the composer's recent work; rather, together they form a unified arc, and are thus more than the sum of their individual parts. Within this arc, one might also find a thematic thread stretching from the minutest natural processes to the phenomenon of human interventions in nature and the state of nature in the Anthropocene.

In fact, unity is not only a characteristic of the album but also a feature of Gildemann's compositional style—in which, regardless of the work's structure, he shapes the music through a series of crescendos and decrescendos of sound, often based on pedal tones, drones, fragments of ostinatos, and the glimmer of harmonics. This sonic landscape is complemented by just enough onomatopoeic details that, even without additional information, the listener senses a closeness to natural processes. This universality—the music's resonance within the familiar realm of static soundscapes and subtle references to living environments—naturally has a flip side that all too easily aligns with many other compositional concepts of the contemporary era and other conceptual trends. But if Madla Marja Gildemann's music is therefore all too easily lost in similar concert programs, it is perhaps best to enter her sonic world precisely through a complete portrait such as this album.