

BE HERE WHENEVER

notes by Henry Kaiser

Danielle DeGruttola:

Improvising Cellist, Danielle DeGruttola, is both classically and jazz trained. Danielle has performed and recorded as a solo artist and with other outstanding musicians including Henry Kaiser, Richard Thompson, Cecil Taylor, David Lindley, Paul Plimley, John Oswald, Jim O'Rourke, Blevin Blectum, Buckethead, Lukas Ligeti, Dave Tucker, Ashley Adams, Miya Masaoka, Aurora Josephson, Willow Williamson and Damon Smith. Danielle received her MFA in Electronic Music and Recording Media at Mills College, and her BFA in music from Smith College graduating Cum Laude. She has also studied at Berklee College of Music (90-92), the Center of New Music and Audio Technology (CNMAT, 95-96), and the New England Conservatory of Music (NEC, 82-86).

Henry Kaiser:

Henry Kaiser has had three careers in his life: as a filmmaker, a professional musician, and a scientific diver. Above all, Henry Kaiser is a “human cornerstone” of experimental guitar improvisation. He has appeared on more than 350 albums as a guitarist, often collaborating with many of his musical heroes. In the early 1990s, Kaiser traveled with his pal David Lindley to Madagascar and Norway to perform and record with local roots musicians. The 14 albums he produced on these trips mixed local music cultures and radical improvisation. Henry has been deployed to Antarctica 13 times over the past 20 years as a research diver in the US ANTARCTIC PROGRAM and has recorded many CDs of music inspired by the region and his experiences under the ice. Norwegian artists Henry has collaborated with in recent years include Ivar Grydeland, Ingebrigt Håker Flaten, Hedvig Mollestad Thomassen, Ståle Storløkken, Hans Magnus Ryan, and Arild Andersen.

Benedicte Maurseth:

Benedicte Maurseth has devoted her musical life to the Hardanger fiddle. She has studied and performed the music of her Norwegian home region, Hardanger, as well as from Telemark and Setesdal. She also performs the traditional vocal music from Norway, composes new music for the Hardanger fiddle, and increasingly performs free improvised music based on her traditional roots. Maurseth has released two solo albums and several collaborations for the labels Grappa and ECM, and has performed in Norway and internationally. Both as a soloist and with other artists such as Nils Økland, Marilyn Crispell, Rolf Lislevand, Mats Eilertsen and others. She has also devoted much time to non-fiction writing. Her debut «To Be Nothing. Conversations with Knut Hamre, Hardanger Fiddle Master», was translated to English and published at Terra Nova Press / MIT Press in 2019.

Stein Urheim:

In recent years, Bergen-based guitarist and composer Stein Urheim has appeared in numerous contexts involving multiple genres and studio work with a wide range of artists.

He has toured and performed in Norway and internationally since the mid-90s, releasing seven albums under his own name, in addition to appearances on more than sixty recordings with Mari Kvien Brunvoll, Jørgen Traeen, Per Jørgensen, Kjetil Møster, The Last Hurrah!!, Erlend Apneseth's Fragmentarium, Hildo (Tore Brunborg & Berit Opheim) and others.

He has written several commissioned pieces for various festivals in Norway. Since 2012, his solo albums – including *Kosmolodi* (2012), *Stein Urheim* (2014), *Strandebarm* (2016), *Utopian Tales* (2017), *Simple Pieces & Paper Cut-Outs* (2019), and *Downhill Uplift* (2020) – as well as ensemble collaborations – have been released on Hubro Music, a label dedicated to Norway's jazz and improvised music scene.

HOW WE GOT THERE

Back in 1991, when David Lindley and I traveled to the Big Red Island of Madagascar to record our series of A WORLD OUT OF TIME albums, we had some unusual and undeniable contact with Ancient Malagasy Ancestral Spirits. They told us that they were no longer in their tombs, but they were so old that they were part of the island's air, earth, and water. They told us they communicated with the ISLAND'S current inhabitants through cultural traditions – music, dance, song, poetry, art of all kinds – and they explained that they could speak directly to us Vazaha (strangers) because we did not have the sort of recent Madagascar ancestors who conversed noisily with the island's current Malagasy population. Too much background noise from the recent dead, they told us. The Spirits gave us a long series of instructions and tasks that resulted in a very successful series of recordings for the Shanachie label; a total of twelve albums that revealed the full spectrum of Malagasy music to the rest of the world.

Two years after the success of our first A WORLD OUT OF TIME release, Lindley and I had meticulously planned with Birger and Rammy (our co-producer and engineer from the Madagascar project) a trip to Central Asia to attempt a similar project there. A few weeks before our scheduled departure, the Malagasy Ancestral Spirits suddenly appeared simultaneously to Lindley and I in each of our respective California home kitchens and told us we must not go to Central Asia, where we would die. They told us to go to Norway instead. This was a totally unexpected development. Lindley and I spoke on the phone seconds later, after the Spirits left, confirming that we had each received the same message and assignment from the Ancient Ancestors.

While still on the phone with Lindley, I looked at my kitchen counter, where a new CD I had ordered from a Norwegian label lay. It was TRAMP by Knut Reiersrud. When David and I finished talking, I got Knut's number from Norwegian Information and called him. Knut answered and, when I introduced myself, he told me he was shocked because he was at that very moment playing A WORLD OUT OF TIME on his stereo. He held the phone up to the speaker and I heard the unmistakable moment in Rossy's AMBILANAO ZAHO when my guitar had channelled the sound of Indri Lemur vocalizations. The Indri is the voice of The Ancestors. Everything suddenly seemed pretty clear. With Knut's invaluable and diligent help we traveled to Norway a few weeks later and recorded the two CDs of our SWEET SUNNY NORTH project: collaborations with Norwegian musicians, structured similarly to our Malagasy recordings. This project was also a tremendous success. In January 2019, when I was last in Oslo, the Norwegian guitarist Ivar Grydeland told me that he was first exposed to Norwegian roots music through the SWEET SUNNY NORTH albums. It is funny and surprising how things come full circle sometimes!

And the cross-cultural circling continues with BE HERE WHENEVER. In the Autumn of 2019 I was contacted by Stein and Benedicte. They had been referred to me by Knut Reiersrud, who suggested they visit me at my home in Santa Cruz, California, during their upcoming USA travels. As an inveterate collaborator I suggested we record together. Since they came as a pair, in fact as husband and wife, I further suggested that we play as a quartet with cellist Danielle DeGruttola, with whom I have had a near telepathic musical rapport for about 30 years. I had missed the live sound of the Hardanger fiddle since that SWEET

SUNNY NORTH project. When we visited Hallvard T. Bjørgum's house in Setesdal, he played many different fiddles for us! And also a USA release SSN support tour back in 1994, with me, Knut, Annbjørg Lien and the late Paolo Vinnaccia. I could listen to Hardanger fiddle all day. So I was very excited to be in the same room with a Hardanger fiddle again. I knew that Danielle's cello and Benedicte's fiddle would have very special exploratory conversations together. Stein and I also have many different guitar traditions in common and are a natural fit for one another. When the four of us got into the studio, this album created itself within a few hours.

In retrospect, I realize that another connection is going on here. For the past twenty years, over thirteen Antarctic scientific diving deployments, I have recorded more than a dozen disks of music inspired by my Antarctic experiences. I also seem to have a special affinity to both the high and low polar regions. When Ivar Grydland and I recorded IN THE ARCTIC DREAMTIME (Rune Grammofon), a soundtrack for a 1925 silent documentary about Roald Amundsen's failed attempt to reach the North Pole, I was shocked to discover that I had worked on a scientific diving project at exactly the same spot IN Ny-Ålesund where Amundsen and his team had filmed some major scenes. I had been diving under the sea ice at the exact location where they had worked out some trouble with their aircraft. Weird and unlikely, but true.

Wherever humans go, they make music about place. As elsewhere, Norwegian roots music takes the form of music about place, and I have been making music about Antarctica for twenty years now. The one continent on Earth where humans have never lived permanently. When I listen to BE HERE WHENEVER, it feels like Antarctica is reaching out through me to embrace and commune with music about Norway. So it's not only Stein and my American-roots-tradition guitars interacting with Norwegian tradition here, but also my admittedly very young Antarctic guitar "tradition" interacting with traditional Norwegian sounds. Music about both of those places, that goes beyond us musicians, and beyond us as players on a stage of life. Maybe the aforementioned connections established by the Malagasy Ancient Ancestors are still a part of their long game here?

Most traditional cultures possess Shamanic Musics; in other words, music that summons Spirits. I have had much experience playing roots Shamanic musics with traditional players from the Malagasy and Korean traditions. I have made quite a few albums of this sort of material. I'd say that I have often been to a strange place where Sinawi meets Tromba. (Sinawi = Spirit trance music of Korea, and Tromba = Spirit possession music of Madagascar) However, maybe this recording of Danielle, Stein, Benedicte and myself is an example of something quite different? Not Shamanic Music for summoning Spirits, but perhaps Music that was summoned by Spirits? That's my guess of how we got there; to a musical place outside of time: BE HERE WHENEVER.

- Henry Kaiser January, 2021