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Benedicte Maurseth Mirra

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Photo: Agnete Brun

On the album *Mirra*, the innovative folk musician Benedicte Maurseth once again invites us to the vast Hardangervidda plateau—this time with a focus on the wild reindeer.

When Benedicte Maurseth released the album *Hárr* in 2022, the visionary Hardanger fiddle player was praised for creating a masterpiece. Her blend of the distinctive sound of the Hardanger fiddle and the use of concrete sounds from wildlife immersed listeners in a unique soundscape.

For *Hárr*, she received the prestigious Nordic Music Prize, and the album was named one of the world's top ten folk music releases of the year by *The Guardian*.

Now she releases the long-awaited follow-up *Mirra*, which, like *Hárr*, is a concept album where concrete sound plays a central role in the compositions. This time, the focus is on the wild reindeer, native to Maurseth's home area of Eidfjord in Hardanger. The work follows elements of the reindeer's distinctive sounds and annual cycle, as in "The Calf Rises," "Summer Grazing," and "Hunting March," as well as their behavior and masterful adaptation to the nature they live in harmony with.

Mirra is an old, forgotten dialect word from Hardanger, describing when reindeer run together in a circling pattern—both to keep warm and to ward off predators. The word was also used to describe a time when reindeer "teemed" in large numbers.

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The music is repetitive and marked by the hypnotic repetitions of folk music, also inspired by American minimalism, krautrock, and free improvised music.

The concept and music are presented and composed by Benedicte Maurseth and further developed and arranged in collaboration with her outstanding fellow musicians: Håkon Stene on melodic percussion, Mats Eilertsen on bass and electronics, and Morten Qvenild on keyboards. The album was recorded by Morten Qvenild at Ugly Lyd Studio in Nesodden in 2024, and produced by Benedicte Maurseth and Jørgen Træen.

Benedicte Maurseth says:

"Only twice in my life have I seen wild reindeer. The first time was a large herd—probably several hundred animals. They ran tightly together with intense focus, blending almost completely into the gray-brown landscape around Dyranut on the Hardangervidda plateau. I was seven years old. Many years later, I witnessed them once again, by chance, heading east one spring day.

This despite growing up in the mountains, at Maurset in Eidfjord, right at the base of the vast mountain plateau where I've wandered for years in every direction. There too, the reindeer have wandered for thousands of years. So they've never been far away, even though they remain elusive.

They dig through the snow with their hooves all winter to find food. They're in constant motion—migrating. When the winter wind settles over the landscape for days at a time, the reindeer lie still and wait, without a sound. They endure fierce wind and blowing snow in their thick, well-adapted fur—up to minus forty degrees. They give birth to calves in the damp snow of spring. An hour or two later, the calf rises and runs after its mother. In summer, they flee from swarms of mosquitoes while enjoying lush birch shoots, reindeer lichen, and mushrooms. In autumn, they flee from hunters but gather again for the rutting season, before the females and males part ways once more, digging again through another white winter for nourishment.

They communicate with grunts and clicking sounds from their hooves, whether they step on wet marshland or hard ice. They live in herds—all to survive in this seemingly desolate landscape filled with rocks, glaciers, snow, rivers, heather, and moraines. This is where they belong.

Mirra continues the thread from my previous work *Hárr* (2022), with ecosophy as its guiding stone, this time with the reindeer in the lead role. They are remarkable, beautiful creatures—but also threatened. Mainly by humans, who slowly but surely reduce their space, year by

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year. Unless we're careful, the wild reindeer of Hardangervidda may disappear forever."

Additional guest appearances on the album include other endangered species that currently or historically coexisted with the reindeer on Hardangervidda (Track 7): snowy owl, arctic fox, wolverine, Lapland bunting, whimbrel, curlew, golden plover, scaup, gyrfalcon, green-winged teal, common scoter, long-tailed duck, marsh harrier.

Track list:

Side A

1. Mirra (07:22)
2. Dagar med vind (6:12)
3. Kalven reiser seg (02:23)
4. Sommarbeite (05:32)

Side B

5. Kvitkrull (01:33)
6. Jaktmarsj (02:55)
7. Nysnø over reinlav (08:14)
8. Simleflokk under månen (06:48)

The premiere and launch concert of *MIRRA* will take place at the [PUNKT Festival](#) in Kristiansand on September 6, 2025. A tour in Australia follows in November, including a performance at the [Sydney Opera House](#) on November 23. In spring 2026, a tour organized by the [Vestnorsk Jazzsenter](#) (West Norwegian Jazz Center) begins on February 19 at Victoria National Jazz Scene in Oslo and concludes at Vossa Jazz in March.

The tour schedule is updated continuously [here](#).

Biographies of the contributors

Benedicte Maurseth is an acclaimed Hardanger fiddle player, composer, and author—an exceptional and award-winning performer. She studied for decades under master fiddler Knut Hamre, specializing in traditional folk music from Hardanger. Maurseth has toured extensively as a soloist in Norway and internationally and collaborated with a range of renowned artists across genres, including Jon Fosse, Kronos Quartet, and Marilyn Crispell. She has composed numerous commissioned works for prestigious

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ensembles and institutions, as well as for TV and film. Her albums have been released on Heilo, Hubro, and ECM.

Håkon Mørch Stene is an award-winning percussionist who studied in Oslo, Freiburg, and San Diego. From 2005–2008, he was part of Rikskonsertene's Classical INTRO launch program for young soloists. Håkon performs actively as a chamber musician and soloist around the world, including with ensembles such as asamisimasa, Pantha du Prince & the Bell Laboratory, Ensemble Modern, Oslo Sinfonietta, London Sinfonietta, 2e2m, Klangforum Wien, and the Nils Økland Ensemble. His latest solo album, *Lush Laments for Lazy Mammal*, won the Norwegian Grammy (Spellemann) in the contemporary category in 2014.

Mats Eilertsen has been a prominent figure on the international jazz scene for the past 30 years. He has contributed to countless recordings and been central on major ECM releases alongside artists such as Tord Gustavsen, Trygve Seim, Mathias Eick, Nils Økland, Wolfert Brederode, and Jakob Young. He leads several of his own projects, including a trio with drummer Thomas Strønen and Dutch pianist Harmen Fraanje. Their latest release, *And Then Comes The Night* (2019, ECM Records), received a Spellemann Award and international acclaim. In 2022, Eilertsen received Norwegian jazz's highest honor, the prestigious Buddy Prize.

Morten Qvenild has been an active musician and composer in European jazz and related genres since 1998, touring internationally throughout that time. He has made artistic contributions as a solo artist and in numerous bands and collaborations, including In the Country, The National Bank, Solveig Slettahjell, A-ha, Marit Larsen, Susanne Sundfør, Arve Henriksen, Thomas Dybdahl, Martin Hagfors, Ingrid Olava, The Budding Rose, Nils Petter Molvær, Shining, Jaga Jazzist, Trinity, and Susanna and the Magical Orchestra.

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