

Roraima

SIGURD HOLE

Featuring

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Roraima is the northernmost state of Brazil. It is home to the Yanomami and several other Indigenous peoples, and like the rest of the Amazon basin it is also home to an incredible diversity of animal and plant life. While listening to field recordings from the Amazon for the first time, I was surprised by how densely packed the whole sound spectrum was; a perfectly executed orchestration literally teeming with life. It took some time getting accustomed to this intense quality of sound, but after a while I settled into a more relaxed mode of listening. Suddenly, a bird cut through the dense wall of sound repeating a simple phrase with a very distinct tonality. This phrase, which I later learned was performed by the red-billed toucan, reoccurs in many of the different movements throughout the musical work *Roraima*.

Roraima is both a celebration of the soundscapes of the natural world, an expression of grief as many of these sounds fade away – and a prayer. A prayer that world leaders will finally listen to the voice of our planet as it begs us to change our course. The growth imperative of our economic system wreaks havoc on all of nature, and will ultimately lead to our own demise.

However, there is another way to be found. The ancient wisdom of Indigenous peoples gives us clues to a completely different approach to interacting with nature. We should listen to what they have to say.

– SIGURD HOLE

*“There is only one sky and we must take care of it,
for if it becomes sick, everything will come to an end.”*

– DAVI KOPENAWA YANOMAMI



01	The Yarori ancestors	5:16
02	The Hutukara forest	8:36
03	The Poriporiri moon being	6:49
04	The Mothokari sun being	6:02
05	The paths of light I	1:37
06	The evil Nē Wari and Xawara beings	2:25
07	The presentation dance	4:44
08	The paths of light II	3:33
09	The xapiri	4:52
10	The jaguar being Iramari	3:03
11	The amoa hi song tree	5:23
12	The paths of light III	1:50
13	The flowers of dream	4:07
14	The words of merchandise	9:07
15	The shaman's death	2:31
16	The great mourning of Roraima	2:03
17	The falling sky	5:56

Introduction

One of my dearest childhood memories is very much about sound. I grew up on a sheep farm in the deep forests of Norway, and spent a lot of time every summer on our family cabin helping my parents look after the sheep grazing in the wild. Every morning I woke up to the sound of the animals, insects and birds - a wonderful symphony of nature embracing the new day. Even now, as I think of it after all these years, this sound is vibrant to my mind's ear triggering all kinds of emotions, and also other kinds of sensory memories like the smell of the rich diversity of flowers surrounding the cabin. As I grew up and moved to the city, I always missed the soundscapes of my childhood even though I greatly appreciated many things in my new "habitat".

I started composing the music for Roraima during the first lockdowns in March and April 2020. One of the things I enjoyed the most in the process, was delving into the soundscapes of the Amazon rainforest. In a period of great uncertainty for what the future might hold, these immersive sounds of nature were as much a comfort as they were an inspiration to never stop searching for a brighter future.

David Bowie once said: *"Tomorrow belongs to those who can hear it coming"*.

Now is the time to start listening.



Background

RORAIMA AND THE YANOMAMI

A few years back I watched a French documentary called *Terra*, a film concerning the relationship between humanity and the rest of the living world. The introduction told a fascinating story about one of the world's most ancient geological formations, Monte Roraima, a table-top mountain in the far northern regions of the Amazon. Table-top mountains act like “ecological islands” in the sky, a place where life emerged millions of years ago and has since developed into several endemic species of both animal and plant life. Even to this day, Monte Roraima remains relatively untouched by the outside world – and by civilisation. However, the same cannot be said about the ground below.

Both the Amazon rainforest and its inhabitants, people and animals alike, are being put under ever increasing pressure by the industrial world. The Yanomami inhabiting the Brazilian state of Roraima and southern parts of Venezuela first experienced sustained contact with western civilisation in the 1940s, a relationship gradually causing devastating

outcomes to the Yanomami. During the 1970s the Brazilian military government built a road along the northern frontier, causing two Yanomami villages to be wiped out by disease. In the 1980s the Yanomami suffered immensely as thousands of gold miners invaded their land resulting in widespread epidemics and violence. During these years more than 20% of the Yanomami population died. Today cattle ranchers and colonists still use the road to invade and deforest Yanomami territory, and gold prospectors continue their extraction (1).

The Yanomami has been hit hard by Covid-19, the disease being carried deep into the rainforest by illegal gold miners (2). When asked to write a commissioned work for Oslo World 2020, my concern for the rainforest and the Yanomami struggle became an obvious response to the festival theme of 2020: solidarity. We were lucky to be able to premiere this new work, called *Roraima*, in front of a live audience in between lockdowns in Jakob Church, Oslo, October 29th 2020. The concert was recorded and is now released – more or less unedited – as this album.

LISTENING TO NATURE

In *Roraima*, my concern for the loss of biodiversity, both in the rainforest and around the world in general, is thematized in the use of field recordings from the Amazon rainforest made by US soundscape ecologist Bernie Krause. Krause has, through a lifetime of dedicated effort, recorded and archived an enormous collection of soundscapes from different natural habitats all over the world. Through his work, he found some astonishing features regarding the sound of nature. In the early 80's, while on a trip to Africa to record new soundscapes for an exhibition, he realized something peculiar one evening as he was listening through the recordings of a hard day's work just before falling to sleep:

"It was in this semi-floating state – that transition between the blissful suspension of awareness and the depths of the total unconsciousness – that I first encountered the transparent weave of creature voices not only as a choir, but as a cohesive sonic event. No longer a cacophony, it became a partitioned collection of vocal organisms – a highly orchestrated acoustic arrangement of insects, spotted hyenas, eagle-owls, African wood-owls, elephants, tree hyrax, distant lions, and several knots of tree frogs and toads. Every distant voice seemed to fit within its own acoustic bandwidth – each one so carefully placed that it reminded me of Mozart's elegantly structured Symphony no. 41 in C Major, K. 551."

This experience gave birth to the idea behind *The Acoustic Niche Hypothesis* and the term *biophony* – the collective and organized acoustic output as each species establishes a unique frequency and/or temporal bandwidth within a given habitat. To round out the definitions of soundscape sources, Krause and a colleague added the terms *geophony* (non-biological sounds such as wind and rain – sounds that have been around long before any organism was able to hear them), and *anthrophony* (any human-generated acoustic signals).

From Bernie Krause's Amazon recordings I have transcribed the sound of birds, most notably the red-billed toucan, and used melodic phrases from their singing in several compositions. I also included some of the actual recordings in parts of the live performance, inviting the ensemble to respond intuitively to different soundscapes from the rainforest – a one-way interaction as the natural sounds are pre-recorded, but still one that needs careful listening to become meaningful. A good example appearing on the album is an amazing duet between accordionist Frode Haltli and a recording of the *Panthera Onca*, the jaguar. Bernie describes this very special recording in great detail in his notes:

“In tropical rainforests, you must be especially mindful of the information every one of your senses receives: sight, smell, touch, and sound. Use them all. Fortunately, for me, the scent of the jaguar is expressly characteristic. Most members of the feline family spray to mark their territory. In the case of Panthera onca, the scent it leaves is unmistakable, even in a tropical forest full of stimulating aromas and even from a distance. Jaguars are among the strongest creatures in the animal kingdom; one can drag a horse several times its weight many kilometers through the thickest understory. Trying to record jaguars in their home territory is not usually recommended. I discovered this one night when I picked up the marking scent of one as it followed me down a trail keeping itself well-hidden and unheard. No sooner had I set up my mic than the cat stepped up to the instrument and began to sniff, chuff, and growl. With a little luck, I am here to tell about it. The animal only remained at the mic for a bit more than a couple of minutes, vocalizing the entire time. In the dark of the early morning, I never saw it and didn’t want to shine my torch in its direction fearing that it would be frightened and attack. Finally, it ambled off in another direction leaving me quite frightened but relieved.”

Each voice in the biophony, in the great animal orchestra, operates within its own frequency area of the sonic spectrum. Mammals and amphibians tend to operate in the lower frequencies, a bit further up is the domain of birds, while the highest frequencies are occupied by insects and the ultrasonic

communication of bats. I find it inspiring to think about how animal sound has developed over millions of years into this intricate and carefully orchestrated web of communication. Humans must surely have been a more integral part of the natural soundscapes of our planet in earlier times. This heritage still lives on in places like the Amazon rainforest where the Yanomami and other indigenous peoples communicate with the forest through sound. French anthropologist Bruce Albert gives a wonderful description of this phenomenon in his 2013 article “The Polyglot Forest”:

“When out hunting or gathering, the Yanomami, as they make their way through the forest, maintain an ongoing dialogue with its many different voices. Their attention is thus continuously turned toward and listening to the biophony of the forest, and they are always quick to use mimicry to respond to their nonhuman interlocutors. The Yanomami language has a verb to describe the “choruses” of cicadas, amphi-bians, or red howler monkeys: herii. This word also refers to the collective singing of humans.”

Roraima also features a couple of recordings of the Yanomami made by American sound artist Stephen Vitiello, who spent a week in a Yanomami village in 2003 recording material for an exhibition at the Foundation Cartier in Paris. In an NPR interview, Stephen mentions a few examples of how natural sound is an integral part of everyday life in the village:

“In this village there was about 140 people, and they actually had 11 shamans. The shamans are the the cultural leaders, the educators, the ones who channel the spirit world into the concrete world (...) Lourival (the elder shaman) was explaining the sounds that he had heard that morning and what each one of them meant. Through his practice he was able to identify that a certain bird might mean that a certain kind of person would enter the village, or an insect would signify another kind of event that has happened or will happen”.

THE LOST SOUNDS

In January 2020 I had the pleasure of visiting Bernie Krause and his wife Katherine in their home in California. During my visit, Bernie introduced me to different aspects of his work. He is, amongst many other things, one of the founders of the ecological discipline soundscape ecology, using sound as a means of studying the health of natural habitats and understanding how they are affected by human activity. One of the things we talked about was a particularly disturbing pattern he had found in his recordings over the years, namely that the overall richness in natural sound was declining. This can be seen as a very direct sonic imprint of loss of biodiversity and loss of natural habitats around the world.

Since the early 80's, Bernie had been recording at a place called Lincoln Meadow in the Sierra Nevada mountains. The soundscapes he recorded there were full of life, with a

remarkable density throughout all frequency bands. Then, in 1988, a logging company started a process of selective logging – a supposedly environmental friendly activity – in Lincoln Meadow. Upon returning to the meadow a year later after the operation, Bernie was pleased to see that the place still looked as if not much, if anything at all, had changed. However, the new recordings he made told a completely different story. As it turns out, the sound of a natural habitat may reveal valuable information about its true state, revealing insights that the eye cannot:

“Gone was the thriving density and diversity of birds. Gone, too, was the overall richness that had been present the year before. The only prominent sounds were the stream and hammering of a Williamson's sapsucker.”

Bernie told me that he returned to Lincoln Meadow a total of 15 times since 1989 to do new recordings, the last time was in 2016. During all these years, the biophony did not manage to recover. Selective logging for sure had an immediate impact on the habitat, but other factors like warming temperature, lack of snow, early spring and drought might also be part of what kept it from recovering

In Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, California, a mere 20 minute drive from his home, Bernie made recordings approximately



once a week every spring for eleven years between 2004-2015. California has been plagued by prolonged drought since 2012, with 2014 holding the record for the most extreme drought conditions up until 2021. The biophony of Sugarloaf Ridge State Park was gradually losing density up until 2014, when it showed a dramatic decline in richness of sound as compared to the vibrant soundscapes of earlier years. The recordings from 2015 were almost completely silent.

The acoustic biodiversity of our planet is part of the Earth's heritage, and for that reason alone I believe it should be valued and protected by society like other aspects of the natural world. And as human made sounds take over ever increasing amounts of the sonic environment, the unintended decline in natural sounds conveyed through the lens of soundscape ecology also becomes another valuable indicator of our impact on planet Earth.

THE FALLING SKY

Another important inspiration in the music are the thoughts of Yanomami shaman Davi Kopenawa as expressed in his book *The Falling Sky* (2013), co-authored by Bruce Albert. *The Falling Sky* is a remarkable tale about the Yanomami, one in which Davi Kopenawa also expresses his fears for the future, addressing what he calls western civilisation's

“words of merchandise” and the harm they cause the living world. He is afraid all the shamans will eventually perish, that they will not be able to protect the forest any more:

“If the xawara epidemic beings continue to invade our land, the shamans will all die and no one will be able to stop the forest from turning to chaos anymore. If the breath of life of all of our people dies out, the forest will become empty and silent. The sky, which is as sick from the white people's fumes as we are, will start moaning and begin to break apart. The back of the sky bears a forest as vast as ours, and its enormous weight will brutally crush us all.”

The Falling sky is however not all doom and gloom. It is also a wonderful, poetic account about a way of life lost to modern man; a caring relationship with nature built upon a foundation of reciprocity and respect. While reading, I was deeply moved by the colourful and at times dreamlike descriptions of this fundamentally different interaction with the natural world, a world in which the spirits of the forest, the *xapiri*, and all other beings – plants, trees, insects and animals alike – are considered to be persons of their own, all equally important threads in the web of life. Certain text passages from *The Falling Sky*, some of which are included in this booklet, became a direct influence in the music as sonic visualisations of the strange but still vaguely familiar feeling of shared experience that arose within me while reading.

HUMAN NATURE

At times I find the cognitive dissonance of being part of modern society too much to bear. On one hand, I know deep within that fundamental change is needed in regards to our relationship with nature, and I feel a great moral responsibility to help make Earth a better place for all life. On the other, it is close to impossible to be a part of everyday life in the 21st century without also being part of the destructive mechanisms that put ever more pressure on the natural world. However, one thing seems clear to me: it is not, as we are often told, human nature that is the main problem. Indigenous people for one should make that painstakingly clear. Where did it all go wrong? If human nature is not to blame, then what is?

Figuring out what is causing the damage and finding ways of fixing the problem in one thing, but truly understanding and correcting the deeper mechanisms at play is quite another. Reducing emissions, a quick transition to renewable energy sources and downscaling consumption are all crucial parts of the solution. But will this kind of pure problem-solving without addressing the deeper cause of climate breakdown and loss of biodiversity truly work in the long run? I fear not. To me, this is a bit like fixing a crack in the ceiling without correcting the foundation settlement that made the structure unstable in the first place. The main structural

problem in modern society seems to be our very economic system, and the obsession with endless economic growth inherent in capitalism. If we dig even deeper, we find that the foundation settlement giving rise to our structural failure is a direct consequence of our relationship with nature.

“Ultimately, what we call ‘the economy’ is our material relationship with each other and with the rest of the living world. We must ask ourselves: what do we want that relationship to be like?”

— JASON HICKEL

In *Less is More* (a *Financial Times* book of the year 2020), economic anthropologist Jason Hickel proposes a fundamentally different take on world economics through a shift away from capitalism and endless growth, and toward the concept of *degrowth*. Not only as a means of addressing environmental issues, but also as a means of combatting global inequality. The two are closely intertwined, and a more equal distribution of wealth, resources and opportunity is a crucial part of a successful green transition. Hickel gives the following description of degrowth in *Less is More*:

“It (degrowth) is about reducing the material and energy throughput of the economy to bring it back into balance with the living world, while distributing income and resources more fairly, liberating people

from needless work, and investing in the public goods that people need to thrive. It is the first step toward a more ecological civilisation. It is about shifting to a different kind of economy altogether – an economy that doesn't need growth in the first place. An economy that's organised around human flourishing and ecological stability, rather than around the constant accumulation of capital.”

Whether green nor black, growth would still require an ever increasing use of natural resources and energy to continue growing, thus causing devastating damage to the natural world on a finite planet. This kind of growth is really counter-intuitive. Many things grow – trees, humans, a population of caribou – but nothing grows *forever*. Because in the end, there would be nothing left to grow from. It is quite simply a concept beyond logic and reason. Why should we expect our economy to behave any different?

In addition to addressing the more troubling aspects of capitalism and putting forth realistic scenarios of a post-growth, post-capitalist world, Hickel also points to something else, something that runs much deeper than the overall systems governing our lives:

“The rise of capitalism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries didn't come out of nowhere. It required violence and dispossession and enslavement; but even more than that it required crafting a

new story about nature. It required getting people to see nature, for the first time, as something fundamentally distinct from humans; something not only inferior and subordinate, but devoid of the animating spirit we ascribe to people. It required splitting the world in two. It required, in a word, separation. For the past 500 years, the dominant culture on our planet – the culture of capitalism – has been rooted in that rift. Once we grasp this, then it becomes clear that the struggle before us is more than just a struggle over economics. It is a struggle over our very theory of being. It requires decolonising not only lands and forests and peoples, but decolonising our minds. To begin this journey, we need new sources of hope, new wellsprings of possibility – new visions for how things could be otherwise.”

A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

Can humanity coexist in truly interdependent relationships with all other beings on Earth? Is it even plausible for us to undergo such a fundamental, far-reaching cognitive revolution as the one needed to pave the way for this new world suggested by Hickel and others, scientists, anthropologists, philosophers, thinkers and economists alike? I believe the answer to both questions is a solid “yes”. Learning about the ecological way of life of indigenous people, and learning about new ideas giving clues to what modern, post-growth and post-capitalist society might look like, has given rise to a new kind of hope. Hope that change is possible. Hope that there is another, more ecological way


to be found. In fact, a 2018 scientific review of surveys on economic growth and environmental issues in Europe and the US shows that the large majority of people are willing to sacrifice economic growth in order to protect the environment (3). It seems something is stirring within the foundation of capitalism. But transforming humanity into a civilisation operating safely within planetary boundaries will not happen overnight. And as time runs out, as it becomes ever more evident that old dogmas won't get us any closer to nature but rather just preserve and further widen the gap that is already there, it is essential that we seek new questions, and new answers, to help our predicament. We must dare question not only what has been and what might be, but also what we might become.

Physicist and host of the BBC 2 series *Universe*, Professor Brian Cox, said in an article in *The Guardian* ahead of COP 26 in October 2021, that the demise of planet Earth and humanity – for whatever reason – might rid our galaxy of meaning, and that this was something he thought world leaders should know. It seems the conditions that made intelligent life emerge on Earth might actually be quite rare, requiring a string of cosmic coincidences that some astronomers believe might happen only once or twice on average, if at all, in each galaxy. Other, very basic life forms might be more common, but if one accepts that meaning is

indeed associated with intelligent life we might be the only such life in our own home galaxy, the Milky way. If this is true, it shifts our efforts to galactical proportions, something that in itself should serve as an injection of motivation to protect what might be even more precious than we have yet come to understand. And even if astronomers supporting this theory are wrong, and both the Milky Way and billions of other galaxies throughout the universe are teeming with intelligent life of all sorts, life on earth would continue to deserve nothing less than our full attention and care. After all, life here on Earth is all that we know. Even though human beings might be intelligent, we are still fully dependent on the other life forms on our planet to survive. Everything is interconnected, every organism has its part to play. Some of the soundscapes of our planet are already lost forever, but there is still time for us to save what is left.

What truly sets us apart from all other life on Earth, is our ability to reflect upon our own existence in the first place. With such abilities comes an even greater responsibility. For all the creative powers humanity as a whole possess, I believe we have tremendous potential to change our ways and not only preserve life on Earth, but turn it into a planet on which all beings might thrive. If we fail, we would lose everything. If we succeed, it would make a world of difference.



The background of the entire page is a repeating pattern of stylized, light-colored leaves. Each leaf is detailed with fine lines representing veins, and they are arranged in a vertical, slightly overlapping manner, creating a textured, organic feel.

TRYGVE SEIM *saxophones*
FRODE HALTLI *accordion*
HÅKON AASE *violin*
HELGA MYHR *hardanger fiddle and vocals*
TANJA ORNING *cello*
PER ODDVAR JOHANSEN *percussion*
SIGURD HOLE *double bass*

All music by
SIGURD HOLE

Recorded live in Kulturkirken Jakob,
Oslo, October 29th 2020

Recorded, mixed & mastered by
AUDUN STRYPE

Produced by
SIGURD HOLE & AUDUN STRYPE

The words of a Yanomami shaman

THE YARORI ANCESTORS

Omama and his brother *Yoasi* first came to existence alone. Before them, in the beginning of time, only the people we call *yarori* existed. These ancestors were human beings with animal names. They constantly metamorphosed.

THE HUTUKARA FOREST

Then it was *Omama's* turn to come into being and to recreate the forest, for the one that existed before was fragile. It constantly became other until finally the sky fell on it. This is why *Omama* had to create a new, more solid forest, whose name is *Hutukara*.

THE PORIPORIRI MOON BEING

It was *Yoasi* who created the *Poriporiri* moon being. *Poriporiri* is a man who travels through the immensity of the sky every night, sitting in his pirogue like in a kind of plane. At first he is a young man, but he gets older and older day after day. Then finally he dies. Then his daughters and the toucan spirits cry for him relentlessly. Their tears turn into heavy rain, which falls on the forest for a long time. Once their father's body has decomposed, they carefully gather his bones. Then they bloom again and *Poriporiri* comes back to life.

THE MOTHOKARI SUN BEING

As for *Omama*, he had created the sun being who never dies and whom the shamans call *Mothokari*. The sun and the moon possess images that only the shamans can bring down and make dance.

THE EVIL NĒ WĀRI AND XAWARA BEINGS

Later *Omama* got angry at his brother *Yoasi*, for *Yoasi* had furtively made appear the evil beings of disease we call *nĕ wāri*, as well as those of the *xawara* epidemic, who are also eaters of human flesh. *Yoasi* was bad and his thought full of oblivion.

THE XAPIRI

In the end, *Omama* created the *xapiri* so we could take revenge on disease and protect ourselves from the death with which his evil brother afflicted us. The *xapiri* are the images of the *yarori* ancestors who turned into animals in the beginning of time. They came into existence when the forest was still young. During their presentation dance, the *xapiri* wave the frayed leaves of young *hoko si* palms, which shine a vivid yellow. They move in rhythm, floating gently in place, above the ground, like a flight of hummingbirds and bees. They dance eagerly, like young guests entering their hosts' house. But they are even more beautiful!

THE AMOA HI SONG TREE

The *xapiri*'s songs follow each other endlessly. They go gather them from the distant song trees we call *amoa hi*. *Omama* created these wise-tongued trees in the beginning of time so the shaman's spirits could fly there to acquire their words. Since then, the *xapiri* have stopped by them to collect the heart of their melodies.

THE FLOWERS OF DREAM

You fly in dream, very far from your house and your land, on the *xapiri*'s paths of light. From there, you can see all the things of the sky, the forest, and the waters that the elders could contemplate before you. We shamans possess the spirits' value of dream inside ourselves. It is they who allow us to dream so far away.

THE WORDS OF MERCHANDISE

In the beginning the first white people's land looked like ours. Yet little by little their thought strayed onto a dark and tangled path. They cleared their entire forest to open bigger and bigger gardens. They began greedily tearing minerals out of the ground. They built factories to melt them and make great quantities of merchandise. By visiting each other from one city to the next, all the white people eventually imitated each other. So the words of merchandise and money spread everywhere on their land. It was with these words of merchandise that the white people started cutting all the trees, mistreating the land, and soiling the watercourses. First they started

all over their own forest. Now there are few trees left on their sick land, and they can no longer drink the water of their rivers. This is why they want to do the same thing again where we live.

THE SHAMANS' DEATH

Today the *xapiri* can only fight the *xawara* epidemic when it is very young, before it has shattered its victims' bones, torn their lungs, and rotted their chests. If the *xawara* epidemic beings continue to invade our land, the shamans will all die and no one will be able to stop the forest from turning to chaos anymore. *Maxitari*, the earth being, *Ruëri*, the cloudy weather being, and *Titiri*, the night being, will get angry. They will mourn the shamans' death and the forest will become other.

THE FALLING SKY

The shamans do not only repel the dangerous things to protect the inhabitants of the forest. They also work to protect the white people who live under the same sky. If the breath of life of all of our people dies out, the forest will become empty and silent. The sky, which is as sick from the white people's fumes as we are, will start moaning and begin to break apart. The back of the sky bears a forest as vast as ours, and its enormous weight will brutally crush us all. We will perish before we even notice. No one will have the time to scream or cry. The angry orphan *xapiri* will also smash the sun, the moon, and the stars. Then the sky will remain dark for all time.

Whatever one might think of animism, one thing is certain: it is deeply ecological. In fact, it anticipates the core principles of ecological science that lie at the heart of the discipline today, which can be boiled down into a single phrase: everything is intimately interconnected; behave accordingly. And this is not just nice rhetoric. It works. Living this way has real, material effects on the world. Scientists estimate that 80% of the planet's biodiversity is to be found on territories stewarded by Indigenous peoples. Clearly they are doing something right. They've protected life. They've nourished it. Not out of charity, or because it's beautiful, but because they recognise the fundamental interdependence of all beings.

— JASON HICKEL



The soundscapes of *Roraima*

Thinking of how the music of *Roraima* came to be, two things in particular come to mind: my experience listening to and visualizing the sound of the rainforest as seen in the context of the Yanomami creation myth, and the different musical ideas that I explore in my solo double bass project.

Before I start composing, I often spend a lot of time deciding what kind of instruments, and also which musicians, to bring into the mix. In this process I try to imagine how any conceptual ideas I might have – like the inspirations drawn from *The Falling Sky* – might be expressed musically. Which instruments, or combination of instruments, would be best suited to bring the different timbres, colors and soundscapes I hear in my mind's ear to life? An example of this is an image that kept coming to mind as I read *The Falling Sky*: streams of light shining through the dense vegetation of the rainforest from above. I imagined this light as a transparent stream of sound, both vibrant and flickering, yet at the same time steadily flowing towards the ground. The flickering quality of the light reminded me of my approach to bass playing on my solo double bass albums, where I often experiment with overtones and harmonics in a way that can be reminiscent of light. Rather than playing this role myself, I wanted several other string instruments in the ensemble that would be able to not only do something similar, but widen the sound / light spectrum further, both in regards of frequency and timbral qualities.

Another important aspect of the music is the relationship between the written material and what is improvised. All the musicians in the ensemble are strong ensemble players, but also highly skilled improvisors and soloists. This gave great flexibility to create a musical environment in which everyone could be trusted to improvise contextual music in the moment, either alone or together with others, while also being part of a greater, interconnected whole whenever the music needed.

It was not until the last day of rehearsals that I presented the ensemble with the idea to improvise along with rainforest field recordings in parts of the piece, the aim being both to blend in with, and make independent contributions to, the biophony of the Amazon. All the musicians were happy to try out this approach, and by doing so, we created what I would dare to call a quite remarkable sonic melting pot that I am thrilled to include on this album.

To all of you who lends an ear to this music and the words accompanying it: Thank you for listening. I hope you feel, in one way or another, enriched. If what I create might cause even the smallest flicker of light in the continuous stream of perception, I am satisfied. Anything else would be a bonus.

— SIGURD HOLE



Tracks 1, 10 and 16

Field recordings and production: Bernie Krause. © 2020 Wild Sanctuary. All Rights Reserved. Used with permission.

Track 11

Recording of the Yanomami: Stephen Vitiello. © 2003 Stephen Vitiello.

Track 15

Recording of late Yanomami headman and shaman of the Wind Mountain community, Northern Amazon, Brazil: Stephen Vitiello. © 2003 Stephen Vitiello.

The texts on pages 24-27 are citations from *The Falling Sky: Words Of A Yanomami Shaman* by Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert, translated by Nicholas Elliott and Alison Dundy, Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 2013 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Notes

1) www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/yanomami (2019).

2) www.rainforestfoundation.org/yanomami-yekwana-miners-out-covid-19-out/ (2020).

3) Stefan Drews et al. (2018), *Challenges in assessing public opinion on economic growth versus environment: considering European and US data*, *Ecological Economics* 146.

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- T. Fisher and L. Coy (2015), *Animal Music, sound and song of the natural world*.
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Supported by Arts Council Norway and The Norwegian Composers' fund



I wish to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this project: Oslo World, Bernie Krause, Stephen Vitiello, Bruce Albert, Audun Strype, Jan Erik Holto, Rune Mortensen, Jason Hickel, Elin Waagen, Dan Snow, Bjørn Kruse, Rain forest foundation Norway, Kulturkirken Jakob and the amazing musicians Trygve Seim, Frode Haltli, Tanja Orning, Helga Myhr, Håkon Aase and Per Oddvar Johansen for bringing life to my music.

I would also like to thank Ida, Einar, Liv and the rest of my family for all their support along the way.



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