

## ENGLISH PROGRAM TEXT

### **Meditation on Listening**, 13th of august at 7:00 PM, 2025

Final presentation of Halldis Rønning's Ph.d.-project in conducting at the  
Faculty of Performing Arts, University of Stavanger  
With Stavanger Symphony Orchestra

The audience is encouraged to embrace the listening experience during the concert

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**Coloring Echoes** 2025, premiere  
by Halldis Rønning

Voice: Sofia Jernberg  
Organ: Nils Henrik Asheim

Dedicated to Therese Christensen (1946-2017)  
With reference to her exhibition «Echoes of Red and The River», 2017

The work combines graphic and traditional notation and is written in a way so that it can be performed without a conductor.  
Central to the work with the piece has been spatial listening, creative listening and pondering upon questions like the agency of the individual in the large symphonic collective.

**Being conducted by the Ocean** 2024, premiere  
Concept and performance Halldis Rønning  
Film: Eirik Aurlund Sæle

There is a merging between the performer and the element, a receiving and an attentive listening to everything, both outside and inside.  
There is the interesting aspect of a conductor letting herself be conducted, in a situation where everything comes from the ocean. This is still conducting because the conductor uses her embodied conducting movements to relate to the ocean. It might also be dance or performance art.

The work raises environmental questions about humans' impact on, and attempts to control nature as well as questions about hierarchy in relation to agency.

This work was made as a direct response to the art film «Conducting the Ocean» by Lynn Lonidier, as seen in the new documentary:  
Deep Listening- The Story of Pauline Oliveros- 2023  
In Lonidier's art film we see the conductor Tom Nee in a toxido, facing the ocean and "conducting" the ocean with his baton.

## **(How) To Play The Ocean** 2025, pre-premiere

by Maja S. K. Ratkje

This piece is commissioned by Stavanger Symphony Orchestra as part of the project «Essence of Stavanger» in connection to the city's 900th anniversary.

Ratkje has been an outspoken voice on environmental issues for years. This work is a continuation of this commitment where she unites new music and the inheritors of our planet. The life-giving sea has been the basis for growth and development, and now human influence is changing the seemingly eternal cycle along the Norwegian coast.

In «(How) To Play The Ocean», children from Stavanger have been given the opportunity to reflect and respond musically to this issue. Ratkje's audio archive of children from Stavanger interpreting their relationship to their own coast and sea and in light of the environment and climate change has been a source of inspiration as well as transcription when writing for orchestra in «(How) To Play The Ocean». The conductor is encouraged to play with the orchestra like an ocean and is given much freedom in shaping the small and big waves in the piece.

from **Tabula Rasa** by Arvo Pärt, 1977

### **«Silentium»**

Violin soloists: Francesco Ugolini and Dunja Bontek

Tabula Rasa means «blank slate». The violinist Gidon Kremer who commissioned the piece called it «a declaration of silence»,

Arvo Pärt himself said that: «If someone approaches silence with love, then this might give birth to music».

Conducting means a clear leader role where the conductor is the initiator, the one giving direction, instructions and taking decisions. By opening up the creative possibilities of conducting, and by opening up to what listening is and can be, the importance of mutual exchange stands out. The point where nobody is conducting anybody, the point where there is just flow and exchange between performers is something that can happen in all genres and performative constellations.

Silencium is being performed with a performative act from the podium and it points to the fact that for mutual exchange to happen there must be enough receiving.

## **Choreographical Flowers** 2025, premiere

Video art, Anne Marthe Dyvi

Choreography and concept, Haldis Rønning

In this cooperation Rønning and Dyvi have had a poetic approach to visual, bodily and imaginative listening.

The poetry of the process itself has been an anchor in their cooperation.

The original motivation with the piece for Rønning was to find a way to integrate choreography with orchestra playing and to integrate the visual into the listening experience.

Dyvi's visual work is musical, with a conscious relationship to tempo, movement and momentum. The piece has a duration of approximately 4 and a half minutes and is a combination of visual expressions, physical movements and imagined music.

from **Verlaine Suite** by Pauline Hall, 1929

«**Introduction**»

«C'est l'extase langoureuse

C'est la fatigue amoureuse...»

(Paul Verlaine)

This is a beautiful, colorful piece by a pionér in Norway's music life, composer, music critic and founder of the organization NyMusikk; Pauline Hall.

In this piece you can hear the French influence on Hall's music after she stayed in Paris between 1912 and 1914, during those exciting years in music history.

In the artistic research project «Meditations on Listening», Rønning uses the term «post-conducting».

In a post-conducting context it is natural to include a historical piece of music that is conducted traditionally.

**Black Obsidian Suite** 2025 Premiere

Underworld

Shallow waters

Black Waltz

Recomposition/orchestration:

Hilmar Thordarson

Video art: Thorbjörg Jonsdottir

Video edit, co-composer and transdisciplinary curator: Halldis Rønning

The suite is based on the experimental opera Hrafninn/Black Obsidian created by Rønning, Thordarson and Jonsdottir in the period 2019-2022. The work was formed by collective creative work with performers from the Caput Ensemble Iceland, Tabula Rasa Vocal ensemble, and Jostein Stalheim, accordion, Guro Skumsnes Moe, double bass and Else Olsen Storesund prepared piano. It was performed in cooperation with the Icelandic Opera at Reykjavik Arts Festival in 2022.

The piece is about transformation, and the relationship between humans and nature.

The chosen scenes for the orchestral suite: Underworld, Shallow waters and Black Waltz are a combination of imagined landscapes and real Icelandic nature explored in textural qualities and emotional atmosphere.

Poem from the opera:

*Icelandic (original language):*

SPögul tréin blakta í golumni

Tifandi hjarta

Hrjúfir og mjúkir steinar í fjörunni,  
Gljáfagurt svartlitað yfirborð

Glitrar sem frostrós  
í óravídd heimsins.

*English (translation):*

Silent trees flutter in  
the soft wind

A trembling heart

Rough and soft stones  
on the shore,  
shining black surfaces

glimmer like a frozen rose  
in the vastness of the world.

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Everyone is welcome to the bar on the second floor in the Concert House after the concert, for some socializing.

Feel free to write me some lines about your listening experience at the concert or thoughts that have come to you after the concert.

My email is: [halldisronning@yahoo.com](mailto:halldisronning@yahoo.com)

I will treat all messages confidentially. If you would like your comment to be part of the research (anonymously), or you prefer that it stays between us, you can mention that in the email. Thank you!

The concert was made possible through the extensive cooperation between Stavanger Symphony Orchestra, the Faculty of Performing Arts at University of Stavanger and the organization nyMusikk Stavanger.

Technical programming and assistance from Christian Blom at NOTAM, technical expertise from Howevest and extensive planning and cooperation with the skilled staff at SSO.

Thank you to all the wonderful performers who have contributed to this concert! You are the best!

Thank you to Nils Henrik Asheim for valuable input during the work on Coloring Echoes.

Thank you to my fantastic supervisors, Brynjar Åbel Bandlien and Henrik Hellstenius for amazing help and support during the whole process.

The orchestration/recomposition of Black Obsidian was made possible through support from Norsk Komponistfond. The creation of «Being Conducted By The Ocean» was made possible through support from the Grieg Research School.

**Tomorrow at 18:30 there will be an artist talk about the project and film screening of the Documentary Deep Listening- The Story of Pauline Oliveros at Litteraturhuset Stavanger.**