

Curriculum Vitae

Magda Mayas

Piano/Clavinet, Composer, Performer, Researcher

www.magdamayas.com

Bio

Magda Mayas (b. 1979) is a Berlin-based pianist, composer, and performer whose work over the past 25 years has redefined the sonic possibilities of the piano. She has developed a distinctive vocabulary that explores both the interior and exterior of the instrument, employing amplification, preparations, and objects that serve as extensions of the piano itself. Recently, she has also focused on the clavinet.

Drawing from the traditions of prepared and inside piano techniques, Mayas has crafted a highly personal and innovative approach that expands the language of internal piano making. She holds a PhD in Music Performance and Interpretation from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. She is a professor and researcher at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, where she has taught improvisation since 2019.

Mayas performs internationally, both as a solo artist and in collaboration with a wide range of musicians and composers. Her current projects include Spill, a duo with drummer Tony Buck; a duo with saxophonist Christine Abdelnour; Jane in Ether with Biliana Voutchkova (violin/voice) and Miako Klein (recorders); and Filamental, an ensemble featuring leading figures in improvisation.

She has performed and toured in Europe, the USA, Australia, Asia, Mexico and Lebanon and collaborated with many leading figures in improvisation and composers such as John Butcher, George Lewis, Andy Moor, Nate Wooley, Peter Evans, Eddie Prévost, Phill Niblock, David Sylvian, Zeena Parkins, Fred Frith, Hamid Drake, Joelle Leandre, Paul Lovens, Ikue Mori, Ken Vandermark, Okkyung Lee, Nic Collins, Elliot Sharp, Maja Ratkje and Marilyn Mazur.

Mayas is a co-founder of the artist collective smallest functional unit, which publishes experimental music scores through Graphème (founded 2020), and of Khomasi, a Berlin-based curatorial collective that produces Making Waves, a series of conversations and screenings around art and politics.

She was awarded a residency at Villa Aurora, Los Angeles in 2016, at the Montalvo Arts Centre, USA in 2017 and 2019, and at the Piano Mill, Harigans Lane Collective, NSW, Australia in 2023. She has produced radio pieces for ABC Australia and Deutschlandradio Kultur and released over 40 albums to date.

Academic Studies

2015–2020: PhD in Music Performance and Interpretation, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

2002–2004: Diploma in Jazz Piano Performance, Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler, Berlin (under Georg Gräwe)

2001: Erasmus Exchange Year, Conservatorium van Amsterdam (under Misha Mengelberg)

1999–2001: Jazz Piano Studies, Universität der Künste, Berlin

Research Projects

Sounding Care (2024–ongoing)

An ongoing artist-led research project by Anthea Caddy and Magda Mayas exploring how sound and language can act as critical tools for shaping and transforming practices of care under intensifying socio-political pressures. Working with spatial sound, voice, language, and improvisation, Sounding Care addresses issues such as economic precarity, censorship, ideological division, and the erosion of cultural infrastructures. Drawing on feminist and decolonial frameworks, the project treats sound as a relational force capable of fostering solidarities and reconfiguring power.

The project includes extensive interviews with over forty voices—artists, theorists, and cultural workers from Berlin. A sound installation was presented at the historic Kleine Wasserspeicher, Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin (November 2024), creating an environment where listening becomes both a political act and a form of collective imagination.

Research Catalogue exposition:

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/shared/10a692e05adbe6e942b660448894e567>

Doctoral Thesis (2020)

PhD thesis at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, investigating the need to organize sonic experiences and the multilayered qualities of memory as a connecting force in structuring and composing with sound.

Available at: <https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/62283>

Other Artistic Research Collaborations

2022–2024: Splitter Orchester Berlin artistic research project "Improvisation and Ethics" (Doctoral School for Artistic Research, University of Music and Performing Arts Graz)

2022–2023: Berlin Artistic Research funding project with Andrea Parkins

2021–2023: Collaboration with Stephan Meidell (PhD, NMH Norwegian Academy of Music)

2021: Collaboration with Andrea Parkins (PhD, NMH Norwegian Academy of Music)

Publications

Mayas, Magda. 2019. "Creating with Timbre." Research Catalogue Exposition. Unfolding the Process. Norwegian Academy of Music. ISBN 978-82-7853-270-6.

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/portals/issue?issue=712447>

Mayas, Magda. 2019. "A Fuchsia-Colored Awning - How to structure a composition in real time." Seismograf (experimental audio paper). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.48233/seismograf2201>

Mayas, Magda. 2017. "Transmitting a Listening." In *Série Diálogos com o Som. Ensaios; v.4 Música, transversalidade*, edited by J.A.B. Zille, 45–66. Belo Horizonte, MG: EdUEMG.

Teaching

Luzern University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSLU), Switzerland

Since 2019: Professor and researcher, program coordinator improvisation

Academic Roles

2020–2024: External Examiner, Rytmisk Musikkonservatorium-RMC Copenhagen

2023: PhD Examination Panel/Jury Member, Mary Rapp, The University of Sydney, Sydney Conservatorium of Music

2022: PhD Committee Member, Ingar Zach, NMH Norwegian Academy of Music

2021: Peer Review, Artistic Research Project Jacob Anderscov, RMC Copenhagen

2019: Peer Reviewer for Seismograf Audiopaper Sounds of Science

University of Gothenburg, Sweden

2015–2020: Teaching in Department of Composition, Jazz and Improvisation, including individual piano and improvisation instruction, masterclasses, and MA thesis supervision

Selected International Teaching (Workshops, Lectures and Artist Talks)

2025: Artist Talk, University of Gothenburg

2024: Performance at Improvising Care Conference, McGill University Montreal with Anthea Caddy

2022: Artist Talk, University of Gothenburg

2022: Artist Talk, Rytmisk Musikkonservatorium-RMC Copenhagen

2019: Mills College, Seminar and Workshop (Zeena Parkins' class)

2018: Conservatorium of Sydney, Approaches in Improvisation with Tony Buck

2017: Columbia University (George Lewis' composition class, with Zeena Parkins)

2014: SOMA Singapore, Prepared and Inside Piano in History and Modern Practice

2012: Mills College, Lecture and Workshop on Contemporary Improvised Music Approaches

Neue Musikschule Berlin

2007–2017: Co-founder, director and instrumental teacher, offering instrumental lessons at 10 different schools across Berlin, as well as interdisciplinary projects and workshops with guest lecturers including Marc Sabat, Barre Phillips, Axel Dörner, Peter Ablinger, Tony Buck and Burkhard Beins.

Discography (Selected)

2025: *Tides in the Mirror* (with Francesca Gemmo), Hat Hut Records

2025: *Night* (with Jason Kahn)

2025: *One Another* (with Jim Denley)

2024: *Same Place* (Erb/Mayas/Hemingway Trio), Veto Records/Cubus Records

2024: Magda Mayas' Filamental – *Ritual Mechanics*, Relative Pitch Records

2024: Thuluth (Ute Wassermann, Raed Yassin, Magda Mayas) – *One Third of the Sun*, Al Maslakh Records

2022: Spill (Tony Buck & Magda Mayas) – *Mycelium*, Corvo Records

2022: Great Waitress – *Back, Before*, Splitrec

2022: Erb/Mayas/Hemingway – *Bathing Music*, Veto Records

2022: In Situ Ensemble, Veto Records

2021: *Objects of Interest* (compositions by Tina Douglas), Room40

2021: Magda Mayas' Filamental – *Confluence*, Relative Pitch Records

2021: Erb/Mayas/Hemingway Trio – *Dinner Music*, Veto Records
2021: Jane in Ether, Confront Recordings
2020: Duo with Christine Abdelnour – *The Setting Sun Is Beautiful Because of All It Makes Us Lose*, Sofa Records
2018: Spill – Stereo, Corvo Records
2016: Solo – *Terrain*, Gaffer Records
2013: SPILL – *Fluoresce*, Monotype, Poland
2013: Trio with Tony Buck and John Butcher – *Plume*, Unsounds
2012: With Annette Krebs and Anthea Caddy – *Thread*, Another Timbre
2010: Solo – *Heartland*, Another Timbre

Radio Work

2015: "Home is where the heart is" (sound essay), ABC Australia Creative Audio Unit
2014: "Free Music in Beirut" / "Dream Machine Beirut" (documentary), ABC Australia / Deutschlandradio Kultur
2014: "Real Time Music Berlin" (documentary), ABC Australia
2013: "Inside Piano" (radio program), ABC Radio, 53:50 minutes

Curatorial Projects

smallest functional unit / Graphème (2020–ongoing)

Co-founder (with Tony Buck, Mazen Kerbaj, Ute Wassermann, Racha Gharbieh) of an artist collective publishing experimental music scores. Five volumes of Graphème published to date (2021–2025), featuring unconventional notational formats and graphic scores by international composers.

Khomasi (ongoing)

Co-founder of Khomasi, a Berlin-based curatorial collective that produces Making Waves, a series of conversations and screenings around art and politics, committed to fostering open dialogue and sparking change.

Previous Festivals

2019: Co-curator, "Music Unlimited" Festival, Wels, Austria (with Kazu Uchihashi and Joe McPhee)
2013: Artistic Director, "COMPASS" Festival, Berlin (with Tony Buck) – an exchange between Lebanese and Berlin musicians
2009: Artistic Director, "Biegungen" at ausland Berlin (with Clare Cooper)
2005–2009: Founder and Director, "Tasten – Berliner Klavier Tage" festival, presenting contemporary approaches to piano (featuring John Tilbury, Anthony Pateras, Chris Abrahams, Ian Pace)

Awards and Residencies

2023: Residency at the Piano Mill, Harigans Lane Collective, NSW, Australia

2021: Stipendium der Akademie der Künste Berlin
2021: Arbeitsstipendium Ernste Musik und Klangkunst des Berliner Senats
2021: Arbeitsstipendium Jazz des Berliner Senats
2018/2019: Residency at Montalvo Arts Centre, California, USA
2016: Residenz und Stipendium Villa Aurora und Thomas Mann Haus e.V., Los Angeles, USA
(with Tony Buck)

Selected Performances and Collaborations (2020–2025)

2024: Solo at Roulette, New York
2024: Performance at Improvising Care Conference, McGill University Montreal (with Anthea Caddy)
2023: Wien Modern with Polwechsel
2023: ZKM Karlsruhe, Performing Artemi Giotis BIAS II
2023: Kaleidophon Ullrichsberg and International Jazz Platform Poland with Jane in Ether
2022: Konzerthaus Berlin, performing Hanno Leichtmann, solo
2022: Splitter Orchester Berlin, Synethisia by Mazen Kerbaj
2020: Performing George Lewis Voyager, HKW Berlin
2020: Accretion solo with 3 pianos in Berlin (Studio Boerne) and Gothenburg (Vasakyrkan)

Major Festival Appearances

Maerz Musik (2012, 2015), Documenta (2012), Berlin Biennale (2014), Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (2015), Jazzfest Berlin (2015), Ultima Festival Oslo (2018), Willisau Jazz Festival (2018), Wien Modern (2023)

Selected Press

"Magda Mayas has expanded the language for internal piano music making." — Peter Margasak, *Downbeat Magazine*

"It's hard to believe that it's a recording of solo piano music. Mayas' training as a classical musician has helped her develop a highly attuned sense of touch for the keyboard, which is still in evidence but now extends to the percussive treatment of strings, arresting control of attack and resonance, and the real-time orchestration of timbres...she's developed an approach to the piano that grapples with the entire instrument, from strings to soundboard, keys to frame." — Michael Rosenstein, *Paris Transatlantic*

"Put together, it's an exhilarating sonic brew: after her introductory drones disperse, the music flies with cartoon-like velocity. Metrically intricate, brittle patterns ricochet against the instrument casing like it's a pinball machine, strings twanging together like the expressive tuning of a blues guitarist. Towards the finish, keyboard harmonies get more emphatically struck — Mayas began with the future and has worked back to the instrument we already know." — Phillip Clark, *The Wire*

"It is one of the widest and deepest adventures into the sonic heart of the piano, including its entire cardiovascular system attached to it. It is so powerful that it's captivating." — Stef Gijssels, *Free Jazz Blog*

***Objects of Interest* (2021)**

"Fascinatingly strange, discreet and direct, intimate and tender—there are many liminally opposing, yet not conflicting impulses that run through the work of Australian, Berlin-based pianist Magda Mayas and composer Tina Douglas. Mayas' realization of Douglas' scores on *Objects of Interest* finds such moments of brief irritation and the rediscovery of calm and peace almost permanently. Despite the repeated use of prepared piano, this has little to do with neoclassicism in the usual sense. More with timelessly timeless drifting in sound and melody. This is wonderful music at the end of music." — *Groove.de*

"Irresistible beauty." — Massimo Marchini, *Rockerilla*

"*Objects of Interest* reveals the hidden beauty of what surrounds us, a source of creation for those who desire to go beyond the classical use of instruments, everything becoming possible with a little imagination and openness, the gesture and attitude counting as much as the base material. A fragile work of caressing intensity. Magical." — Roland Torres, *SilenceAndSound*