A person wearing a bright yellow jacket and headphones is playing a violin on a boat. A professional microphone is suspended on a boom in front of them. The background shows a calm body of water and a distant shoreline with trees under a clear sky. The overall scene is peaceful and artistic.

Sounds by Water and Trees

Norrbotten NEO
Västra kajen Piteå

**SOUNDS AND
COMPOSITION BY**
Anders Hultqvist
Stefan Östersjö
Jan Berg

Sounds by Water and Trees

Västra kajen Piteå

1	Part I (Intro)	01:35
2	Part II	14:00
3	Part III	11:32
4	Part IV	13:15
5	Part V	13:36
6	Part VI	08:58
	TOTAL	62:56

SOUNDS AND COMPOSITION BY
Anders Hultqvist/Stefan Östersjö/Jan Berg

MUSICIANS

Stefan Östersjö *guitar*

Nguyễn Thanh Thủy *đàn tranh*

NORRBOTTEN NEO:

Sara Hammarström *flute*

Robert Ek *bass clarinet*

Daniel Saur *percussion*

Mårten Landström *piano*

Lovisa Ehrenkrona *violin*

Peter Olofsson *violin*

Mina Fred *viola*

Nikolay Shugaev *cello*

Sounds

by

*as in originating
from*

*and
in the nearness*

of

Water and
Trees

Ecological Unity

Sounds by Water and Trees was created through a participative approach to the sonic environment, where performers produce sounds in dialogue with a specific site: an approach to environmental sound art that moves beyond preservation, as a model of ecology, towards interaction and co-operation with the environment through participation rather than representation. 'Natural' and man-made sounds become enmeshed in and through a network that in many ways instantiates itself. There's no inherent hierarchy of importance in the flow of sounds, and in the systemic flow different sound constellations emerge as occasional forefronts of the overall soundscape. A sort of recursive dependency evolves in the way sounds of different origins grow out of, and in relation to, each other.

The project started out in September 2021 with recordings made at Västra Kajen (The West Quay) in Piteå, a marina near the city



centre. These recordings were made using a series of different approaches, going beyond standard formats for surround recording and reproduction, for instance through the combination of closeup recording of water waves and underwater recordings using hydrophones. But this approach also sought to expand the interaction between human and environment in the recording situation by inviting members of the Norrbotten NEO chamber ensemble, together with the aeolian guitar performed by Östersjö, to explore the sound captured through these different recording techniques and to engage in site-specific performance. The violinist Lovisa Ehrenkrona, Robert Ek on the clarinet and Sara Hammarström on flute, separately improvised in relation to the 'magnified' environmental soundscape mediated through individual headphones.

The final recording session was carried out with the entire Norrbotten NEO ensemble in a recording studio in the Piteå School of Music

at Luleå University of Technology. Prior to this session, Anders Hultqvist created a score with mainly through-composed materials for the entire group, related to selected sound files from the sessions at Västra Kajen. The compositional process, enacting a series of loops between the inner hearing of the writing process and the concrete listening to the pre-recorded sound from the



site, displayed the nested character of such an engagement with composition and soundscape listening. The scored and the improvised materials were created through a sort of double mirroring: the written material takes as its point of departure both the raw sound recordings as well as how the musicians respond to the sounding environment.

A third musical level emerges when the scored music is performed by the entire ensemble, effectively bringing the artistic response to the original site-specific explorations to a recording situation in a studio environment. A sounding geography is created where detailed acoustic events are put into a clear relief but also in relation to, and included in, a larger ambient sounding *milieu*.

A fourth level of interaction can be observed in the complex set of loops, initiated with Östersjö's aeolian guitar recordings on site, which were transformed in several steps by playing back the original recording through different acoustic instruments, using transducers attached to the instrument. The first step was to "filter" the original recording by playing it back through a semi-acoustic electric guitar, tuned to a particular low scordatura, which generated a more sonorous version of the original track. This track was in turn played back through a 10-string guitar, or through

a Vietnamese zither, the đàn tranh, and in one session, with the two instruments playing together. In all of the latter recordings, Östersjö and Nguyễn improvised along with the aeolian track, thus creating new melodic and gestural materials, which were eventually woven into the scored music.

This album seeks to capture the complexity of these interactions between musician and site-specific experience, as well as with many layers of listening to a place, mediated through different recording technologies. Sounds by water and trees: the sound




of water rising in a tree at dawn; the wind sonified by an aeolian guitar; the cyclic pounding from the sawmill; the waves hitting the shore as a power boat passes by. But *Sounds by Water and Trees* is essentially an attempt to stage a set of interactions between human and environment, wherein at times the intentionality of the sound produced by the wind and the waves has a similar agency to that of performers and composers, all engaging in the shaping of sound.



RECORDED BY Jan Berg at Västra Kajen in Piteå and in studios at
the School of Music in Piteå at Luleå University of Technology,
August 2021–February 2022

MIXED BY Jan Berg, Stefan Östersjö, Anders Hultqvist and Per Sjösten

MIXED IN Dolby Atmos  Dolby Atmos

MASTRING Per Sjösten

PHOTOS Jan Berg, Stefan Östersjö, Anders Hultqvist

GRAPHIC DESIGN Jocke Wester

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