

Knut Vaage
multiMORF

NyNorsk Messingkvintett
Thorolf Thuestad — electronics

Multimorphologi:

multiMORF V (2020)
for trombone, echo quartet
and electronics

multiMORF VI (2020)
for trumpet, 4 brass players
and electronics

multiMORF VII (2021)
for brass quintet
and electronics

In the beginning, there was the question. The year after Chilean poet Pablo Neruda died in 1973, a posthumous book of remarkable simplicity yet inspiring complexity was published: *Libro de las Preguntas, The Book of Questions*. In this small text, he asks childish and naive questions such as:

- If I have died and don't know it,
of whom do I ask the time?
- Where can a blind man live who is pursued
by bees?
- If the colour yellow runs out,
with what will we make bread?

multiMORF V-VII are three pieces for wind instruments, electronics, and light design. They are like radio signals of sound sent out long ago, something dynamic, sonorous, powerful, and perforated that have been drifting in a void for all eternity, but which suddenly find an air pocket in the earth's atmosphere where someone can perceive the existence of said signals. For what is music when it is no longer heard? Does it still exist? Of whom will the muted music ask the time? Let alone the question of: What is music that has not yet been heard, which has still not been awoken and brought to life? What then do the clocks on Easter Island, Kilimanjaro, or in Arkhangelsk do? Does music in this state become a guessing game?

multiMORF V-VII is where Vaage further develops his *multiMORF* series (2007-13), where he and sound designer Thorolf Thuestad created a hybrid electro-acoustic soundscape by expanding the sound spectrum of the instruments through extensive use of electronics. Sounds and tones are transformed through electro-acoustic sound and video, an interaction between different art forms, where the musical elements are in a constant state of transmutation and taking on new forms. The pieces were developed in digital forums across closed borders during a prolonged pandemic. Nordic nature is explored as a possible way out of the crisis, in search of a world where one

can live in harmonious symbiosis with both nature and electronics. Sound recordings from a waterfall are mixed in with the trombone's natural pitches.

The wind players restrain any impulses, only to suddenly expand them and give them more space and new infusions. There is compression, expansion, injection, as well as all variations and sequences of this. The electronics emerge from a geyser and rearrange sequences, frequencies, and lines; they exchange eruptions, interruptions, and dynamics. It all becomes a current image of a situation when things suddenly became uncertain, forcing the listener to discard what seemed like a valid answer just seconds ago, and which instantly becomes a newer question of utmost importance.

John Cage touches on something similar, not only with his deeply original music, but also his multi-faceted writings, which always behaved as if they were new beginnings. It's as if one has a unique ability to find the roots of naivety and return to the place where all adults once came from - early childhood. It is akin to awakening to a world and you're still not quite sure of its extent, but you intuitively sense it exists out there. Without hyper-alert senses the child would not grow up, and with the same degree of senses, all adults would die - it would simply be too much to bear. But a middle ground will never hurt.

Subtle sounds from the brass instruments such as clicking valves, kissing sounds with the lips, and tongue claps are captured. Varying the distances between the microphone and instrument creates a nuanced soundscape, which Thuestad processes into a unique creation of electro-acoustic sound weavings.

But this is also rhythmic music, as the brass players move between performing synchronously and asynchronously with the electronics. One by one, the musicians from the NyNorsk Mesinkvintett (Brass Quintet) leave the electro-acoustic soundscapes to embark on a promenade in the

form of an acoustic solo. When they return home to the ensemble and the electroacoustic sound image, they are embraced with a chorale.

They say the quality of the question determines the quality of the answer, and with *multiMORF V-VII*, Knut Vaage has managed to ask the musicians the crucial questions in the right place and at the right time. Instead of asking what it was he said, he chooses to ask: "What did I ask about?" It all becomes like a great river flowing out into the sea. The masses of water lean forward as if monks in prayer receiving the blessing of the sea. The chorale at the end of the journey.

If 60 minutes of music can say something about both 60 milliseconds and six billion years, we are onto something wonderfully significant, which is up to us listeners to use for what it is worth. *multiMORF V-VII* is both the question and the answer, without claiming itself to be the definitive guide to any of the points. The music permeates into us and leaves it up to the listener to use the sound as a multi-tool for understanding an existence that during the hour the work lasts - the life cycle of the piece, from the sources and down to the sea - we are given something inviting, inspiring, and marveling.

Whoever asks questions shall receive answers. Not just one, but several, which in turn gives rise to new questions when we inhale, exhale, and breathe in all the zones between. There is no conclusion, only unused beginnings. The winds blow on in a multi-formatted manner, and the dead suddenly sense where they can finally ask the question about how many churches there are in heaven.

Øivind Hånes



Knut Vaage

Knut Vaage is a full-time composer living in Bergen, Norway, where he majored in piano and composition at the Grieg Academy. He has worked with multiple styles of music, although with a main emphasis on improvisational and contemporary music, and in several projects has explored the boundaries between improvisation and composition. Developing a hybrid acoustic/electronic sound is another important parameter in his music, and he has participated in several collaborations between contrasting art forms. Vaage's output ranges from symphonic works and opera to solo pieces and his works are often performed at concerts and festivals both domestically and internationally. These include the Bergen International Festival, Ultima, Borealis, Ilios, Grec Festival (Barcelona), Prague Spring Festival, Nordic Music Days in Stockholm and Reykjavik, and in Carnegie Hall. He has provided full-scale opera productions at the Norwegian National Opera & Ballet, the Ultima Festival, Bergen National Theatre, and NOSO in Tromsø, as well as internationally at Phalztheater, Stadttheater Giessen, Theatre National Luxembourg (TNL), and at the Armel Opera Festival in Hungary. Vaage was nominated for the Nordic Council Music Prize for 2022 with his work *Hybrid Spectacle* and has been awarded The Lindeman Prize for 2024.

Knut Vaage
photo: Anna-Julia Granberg



Thorolf Thuestad

Thorolf Thuestad is a composer, sound designer, and kinetic sculptor. He studied composition and music technology at the Utrecht School of Arts and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and holds a PhD from the University of Bergen's Grieg Academy. Thuestad has extensive experience in performing arts and contemporary music and has been part of numerous theatre, music, and stage productions, with a main emphasis on contemporary music expression.

NyNorsk Messingkvintett (Brass Quintet)

Erlend Aagaard-Nilsen, trumpet
Jørgen Arnesen, trumpet
Marie Solum Gran, french horn
Ingebjørg Bruket, trombone
Berger Iver Færder, tuba

By combining contemporary music with performing arts and literature, the NyNorsk Messingkvintett has created a repertoire with a thoroughly unique expression. In collaboration with writers such as Kjartan Fløgstad, Knut Nærum, and Ole Paus, the performing arts



group Fakta Morgana, as well as artists such as Tora Augestad, Trygve Seim, Per Arne Glorvigen, Frank Havrøy, and Silje Aker Johnsen, the ensemble has developed unique concert experiences and performances.

The quintet has made a name for itself with its 49 premieres since 2016 and was awarded the title Performer of the Year 2021 by the Norwegian Composers' Association for its contribution to Norwegian contemporary music.

The NyNorsk Messingkvintett has performed at festivals such as Ultima, Only Connect, Oslo Chamber Music Festival, Nordland Musikkfestuke, the Northern Lights Festival

and the Norwegian Organ Festival. They have also held masterclasses at higher music education institutions in Norway and the Baltic countries and organized workshops with young composers. The ensemble has released two critically acclaimed albums on LAWO Classics: *Hornflowers* featuring music by Nils Henrik Asheim (2021), and *Megalithes* (2023), with music by Gerard Grisey and Anders Tveit.

Thorolf Thuestad & NyNorsk Messingkvintett
 photo: Thomas Wolden

Knut Vaage (1961)

1. **multiMORF V (2020)**
for trombone, echo quartet and electronics 17:18
Solist: Ingebjørg Bruket
2. **multiMORF VI (2020)**
for trumpet, 4 brass players and electronics 17:42
Solist: Erlend Aagaard-Nilsen
3. **multiMORF VII (2021)** for brass quintet
and electronics 25:16

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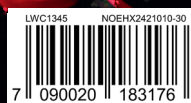
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