

SONGS of HOURS

Amelia Cuni : vocals, tanpura, mirliton, bells

Maria Jonas : vocals, bells, hurdy-gurdy, shruti-box

Werner Durand : sound design, live-mix, self-made wind instruments

Uli Sigg: video, live-mix

concept and music by
Amelia Cuni, Werner Durand, Maria Jonas
including traditional *dhrupad* and music by *Hildegard von Bingen*
stage and visual project by
Uli Sigg with Cuni and Jonas



The Project

The mystic singing that has been offered for centuries in temples and churches as the highest form of worship is the shared element in this artistic project. The coming together of such inspired musical genres generates interactions which concern tradition and experimentation both. The focus here is not historical reconstruction but rather the search for a contemporary interpretation of these diverse components. This work elaborates **early Indian and European music forms** in non-conventional ways and with various degrees of interplay. At times, the traditional forms emerge followed by unexpected juxtapositions eventually blending into a dialogue reaching beyond cultural and religious frameworks.

The vocal renditions and improvisations interact with **live multitrack mixing of prerecorded voice**. No electronic effects alter the natural character of the human voice, although loops and digital delays

are employed to create melodic and rhythmic patterns. Various instruments traditionally used as **drones** are here played along with self-made, **experimental winds** generating unprecedented textures and soundscapes. This collaboration celebrates the voice and its great evocative power in Indian and European sacred music. It offers a contemporary interpretation of these ancient genres, with great care for the original **modal structures** and **purity of intonation**.

The **choreography** includes dance and symbolic gestures from the Indian temple tradition and the European monastic hand language as well. The presentation strives to integrate seemingly distant artistic expressions sharing common ideals: singing is understood as a celebration and affirmation of the creative principle while the aesthetic experience is seen as integral part of the spiritual growth. The **interplay of music, gestuality, coloured light and projections** is obviously very relevant to the theme of this work: **Uli Sigg** uses video sequences and loops mixing them live according to the flow of the music. The variety of light changes and intense atmospheres created with the help of **live video mixing** attract and absorb the audience supporting concentrated listening and depth of emotions. The stage becomes a **place of transformation**, in which different perceptions of time and ritual confront each other, East and West find a common ground for dialogue in a mythical and symbolic continuum. This performance is sensual and elevating at the same time, bringing together highly cultivated and expressive vocal traditions with mesmerising soundscapes in a multimedia and interdisciplinary stage presentation.

DHRUPAD is the most ancient style of North Indian classical singing still being performed. It flourished in the Hindu temples and Mughal and Rajput courts from the fourteenth century onwards. It is rooted in the ritualistic chanting of the Veda and Nadayoga practices while influenced by the regional artistic expressions of the time. It has been transmitted by generations of music families in an uninterrupted line of temple and court singers and it is considered to be the foundation of Hindustani music. It strictly adheres to the classical principles of aesthetics maintaining the purity of the raga (musical mode, melodic-type) and its intonation. It is an inspirational, devotional genre and at the same time passionate and earthy. It is highly melodious and its meditative moments are balanced by structures of great rhythmic vitality.

Amelia Cuni's performances of the ancient and uplifting tradition of dhrupad singing have attracted widespread acclaim worldwide and in the Indian national press as well. She has been collaborating with composer/performer **Werner Durand** for more than 15 years experimenting with the tradition and has realized several new music works featuring her dhrupad singing in a contemporary setting.

HILDEGARD VON BINGEN (1098-1179), the legendary visionary, prophetissa teutonica, sybil of the Rhine, was one of the most important figures of the Middle Ages. Although highly educated, she presented herself above all as a person operating not through her own knowledge but as the "instrumentum" of God's will. Her creations – her books, her writings, her music - must be seen as resulting from her personal, mystical experiences of God's revealed realm.

Hildegard began to compose liturgical poetry and music in the 1140s, at the time when she first felt the courage to write down her visions. She gathered them into a lyrical cycle "Symphonia harmoniae caelestium revelationem" - Symphony of the harmony of heavenly revelations. This contains some sixty antiphons, responsories, sequences and hymns.

Hildegard's poetic language is among the most unusual in medieval European lyric. She shows her awareness of the imagery of mystical love as depicted in the Song of Songs. Hildegard delights in poetic freedom and in taking diverse kinds of language to new limits, that sparkles with intellectual innovation while remaining rhapsodic in its impulse. Her poetic effects are often strange or even violent, and never - as in the hymnody of most of her contemporaries - smooth.

Maria Jonas contributes with her in-depth research on Hildegard's music and sings it using the appropriate Pythagorean tuning and fitting instrumental drones.

Demo track (14.000 kb) following the link

-> [SONGS OF HOURS](#)

contact:
Ars Musica – MusikAgentur
Julia Ortmann
Rötebuckweg 35
79104 Freiburg
Germany
+49 (761) 5563494
www.ars-musica.com

short biographies

Amelia Cuni was born in Milan and lived in India for more than 10 years studying dhrupad singing from renowned masters (R.Fahimuddin Dagar, Bidur Mallik, Pt. Dilip Chandra Vedi). She was awarded scholarships by the Indian Government for four years. She also learnt kathak dance from Manjushri Chatterjee and pakhawaj drumming from Raja Chatrapati Singh. She performs internationally: i.e. solo concerts at the House of World Cultures, Podewil and Schauspielhaus in Berlin, Gasteig in Munich, Zentrum f.Kunst und Medientechnologie in Karlsruhe, Barbican Centre, I.C.A. and Purcell Room in London, Tropical Museum and Die Ijsbreker in Amsterdam, Accademia Filarmonica Romana and Auditorium in Rome, Serralves Museum in Porto, Yerba Buena Center in San Francisco, Interpretation Series/Merkin Hall in New York, BiennaleMusica in Venice, Nehru Centre in Bombay, Kamani and I.I.C. in N.Delhi.

Her music is featured on several solo CDs and collaborations. She has recorded for radio and TV productions. Amelia's projects are of traditional as well as experimental orientation and she collaborates with artists from various backgrounds (Early and New Music, electroacoustic, ambient, experimental, jazz, folk, dance and theatre). One of her latest collaboration is a duo with Terry Riley (Raga d!oltreoceano).

With her own works she has taken part in international festivals in the UK, Germany, Italy, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, Poland, Spain, Portugal, USA, Canada, Brasil, India, China... Together with Werner Durand she has been awarded an ARTIST IN RESIDENCE grant at the PODEWIL-Zentrum für Aktuelle Kunst, in Berlin for 1999. They have been selected by the City of Berlin for the Festival of Vision 2000-Berlin in Hong Kong and Berlin_London at the Insitute for Contemporary Arts. She has conceived and performs worldwide in the multimedia work ASHTAYAMA-Song of Hours, co-produced by Podewil-Berlin and ZKM-Karlsruhe.

Composers like Terry Riley, Roland Pfengle, Maria de Alvear, Chico Mello, Fernando Grillo have written for her voice. In March 2006, she premiered the complete SOLO 58 (18 microtonal ragas) from John Cage's SONG BOOKS (1970) coproduced by several European venues and performs it internationally. A studio recording has been released in Fall 2007 on the Californian label OTHER MINDS. She has written several articles and contributions for specialized publications. She teaches Indian singing at the Vicenza Conservatory in Italy and at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, gives workshops and lec-dems at several institutions around the world (universities, conservatoires, music and drama schools). Amelia has been based in Berlin since 1992.

www.ameliacuni.de, www.myspace.com/ameliacuni

Maria Jonas, based in Cologne, specialised in early, contemporary and improvised "music. She has founded a number of ensembles to realize her own projects, including **convoce.coeln** (vocal music of the 16th - 17th century), **condanza** (early and contemporary music combined with modern dance), **Ala Aurea** (medieval duett on the base of improvisation) and **Ars Choralis Coeln** (women schola for medevieal music).

With these groups she is invited to concerts and festivals worldwide including Adelaide and Melbourne Festival (Australia), Hebbel-Theater (Berlin), MDR-Musiksommer, Rhein-Vokal, Voix et Route Romane (France), Styriarte, Trigonale (both Austria), Utrecht Early Music Festival (Netherlands), Macau Arts Festival (China) among others. She also has worked and recorded in Europe, Australia and the United States with artists and ensembles as Jordi Savall, Sir John Elliot Gardiner, Roy Goodman, Sequentia, Hilliard Ensemble, English Baroque Soloists, European Baroque Orchestra, Robert Wilson, Philip Glass and Dennis Russell Davies and has appeared in theatres: Bochum, Ludwigsburg, Luxembourg, Teatro Regio di Parma, Teatro Comunale "di Ferrara, Teatro Real de Madrid, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Royal Albert Hall London, Teatro Camoes Lisbon, the Carnegie Hall and in the State Theatre New York during the Lincoln Center Festival performing the title role of Philip Glass/Robert Wilson opera ,The White Raven!.

Since 1999 she has held teaching positions in historical vocal technique at the Folkwanghochschule Essen and is also invited for projects in other Conservatories in Germany and Europe (i.e. Rostock, Zürich, Tilburg, Belgrad). She herself studied first oboe in Cologne and after a long stay in Venezuela, where she was the director of a music school, she studied with **Montserrat Figueras** (Barcelona),

Rene Jacobs (Basel) and with **Jessica Cash** (London). She released several CDs with different labels in Germany (Deutsche Grammophon, Marc-Aurel, Raumklang, Chrismon) and France (Alpha) in the last years. During the "Romanischer Sommer" 2008 she assumed the direction of the Klangwerkstatt (sound workshop) "Kolumba singt!"

www.ars-musica.com/maria.html

Werner Durand performs his own music for saxophones, iranian ney, and self-made wind instruments since the late seventies. He studied with Ariel Kalma in Paris, Indian classical music in India and Berlin (with Kamalesh Maitra) and Iranian ney with Ali Reza Asgharia. He started to build wind instruments out of plexi-glass and PVC in the early 80s, which led to the foundation of THE THIRTEENTH TRIBE in 1990.

His current projects include ASHTAYAMA with dhruwad singer Amelia Cuni; ANCIENT TRENDS & NEW TRADITIONS IN INDO-EUROPEAN MUSIC with Amelia Cuni and percussionist Marika Falk; the group ARMCHAIR TRAVELLER with Sebastian Hilken (cello and percussion), Hella v. Ploetz (glassharp) and Silvia Ocougne(ac.guitars), and providing drones for Amelia Cuni's Realisation of 18 MICROTONAL RAGAS (SOLO 58) FROM SONGBOOKS by John Cage.

Werner Durand has collaborated with numerous composers/performers including David Behrman, Samm Bennett, Fast Forward, David Moss, Fatima Miranda, Muslimgauze, Henning Christiansen, David Toop, David Maranha and Ulrich Krieger as well as with visual/ sound artists Michaela Kölmel, Victor Meertens, Andreas Oldörp and Rolf Julius. He was a member of Arnold Dreyblatts Orchestra of Excited Strings from 1990- 1997.

In 1989 he received a grant from the city of Berlin for the Cité des Arts, Paris. He was granted a residency at **Podewil** (Berlin) for 1999 together with Amelia Cuni. For 2003/4 he received a grant for the **Worpswede** artist colony.

He has collaborated in the organization of festivals of traditional as well as avant-garde music in Berlin like „Urban und Aboriginal“, „Pipeline“ , „USArts“ „Minimalisms „ and „Intonations“.

He has composed music for theater, documentaries, dance and radio features. Coming from the minimalist tradition, Werner Durand's music has evolved into a personal style over the years. Inspired by various kinds of traditional musics and instruments, he started to create his own music and instruments reflecting this. A variety of materials and playing techniques enables him to bring out unusual sounds and with the help of digital delays he can create rich textural and rhythmic pieces, which might recall tribal music from Africa or the Pacific, but at the same time sounding experimental or even (post-)industrial. www.myspace.com/wernerdurand

Uli Sigg lives in Cologne and Berlin, Germany and works within temporary project partnerships with other musicians and artists from all around the world. To this end he co-founded Club-Orch ID, a creative pool of artists, musicians, philosophers and scientists, and has become a pioneer of this new art form which has grown out of the rave, ambient and dance-club cultures. Sigg calls his own work "visual sampling" and uses as his raw material video images which are blown up, cut to pieces, reordered and reassembled. The results, says Sigg, are visual ciphers, codes and clues to a particular moment, event or experience. His live shows are the visual equivalent of the work of audio DJs who created new sounds by combining those sampled from other sources.

www.ulisigg.de