

The Nature of Music: Polar Soundscapes with Cheryl Leonard, 4 of 6



Identifier

NOM.2016.05.11.D

Description

The Nature of Music: Polar Soundscapes, featuring Cheryl E. Leonard with Phillip Greenlief. Wednesday, May 11, 2016 7:30pm. Goldman Theater, David Brower Center, Berkeley, CA . This is a 6 part program with 5 compositions by Leonard and a post-performance conversation led by Paul Dresher.

Presented by Other Minds and the David Brower Center as a closing event for the exhibit: Vanishing Ice: Alpine and Polar Landscapes in Art 1775-2012.

1. Meltwater, with Phillip Greenlief
2. Sila, with video by Genevieve Swifte
3. Fluxes, with video by Oona Stern
4. Ablation Zone, with video by Oona Stern
5. Glugge, with Phillip Greenlief, video by Oona Stern
6. Q & A with Cheryl Leonard and Paul Dresher

Ablation Zone (2014) for one player on penguin nesting stones and amplified Adélie penguin bones, with field recordings of the Marr Ice Piedmont on Anvers Island in Antarctica.

The “ablation zone” of a glacier is the area below a certain elevation where there is a net loss of ice mass due to melting, evaporation, sublimation, calving, wind scouring, and so forth. Within the Marr’s ablation zone I collected sounds from meltwater streams and crevasses teeming with icicles. In the ocean near the Marr’s terminal ice cliffs I recorded icebergs, brash ice and bergy bits that it had jettisoned.

The Marr produced a beguiling array of unique sounds. Each meltwater stream bubbled, gurgled, or sputtered it’s own rhythms and melodies, sometimes sounding like electronics or machinery. Icicles dripped the intricate

layers of gamelan songs. Icebergs crackled and snapped like giant pop-rocks, or provided large cavities for waves to resonate within. To these field recordings, full of motion and energy, I added the subtle sound of polished penguin nesting stones rubbing together, and then otherworldly moans and howls produced by bowing Adélie penguin vertebrae.

[Notes taken from concert program.]

About The Nature of Music:

From the music of Haydn, Dvorak and Messiaen, classical composers have long been using the sounds of the natural world as source material. With the advent of reel-to-reel tape recorders that inspired composers of the musique concrete movement, we could hear sounds slowed down or speeded up to bring new ears to common everyday sources. Along the way John Cage proposed in 1952, with 4'33", a silent piece for piano, that a listener could create their own concert by simply listening to ambient sounds without altering them, recognizing that they too have form and content. With the advent of personal recording equipment like the cassette recorder, environmental sounds have been recorded, sampled and integrated into composed and improvised music. In 1970, Charles Amirkhanian and Richard Friedman launched the World Ear Project at KPFA in Berkeley. They invited people from around the world to record continuous sound for 15 minutes or longer without alteration. The result was a long-running program in which listeners driving over the Bay Bridge would be mystified by long segments of sounds of a street market in India or frogs and crickets at night in Cayucos, California. The David Brower Center and Other Minds will present complementary concerts for each visual art show in the Hazel Wolf Gallery.

Musical Selections

Ablation Zone (2014) [video by Oona Stern] (05:24) / Cheryl E. Leonard

Artists

Other Minds (features)

David Brower Center (features)

Leonard, Cheryl E. (features)

Stern, Oona (features)