

# **International Symposium**

## ***Galina Ustvolskaya: New Perspectives***

Friday, May 27, 2011  
10.00-17.00 hrs.

Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ

BAM Zaal

Piet Heinkade 1

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[www.muziekgebouw.nl](http://www.muziekgebouw.nl)

[musicology.nl](http://musicology.nl)

[http://www.muziekgebouw.nl/agenda/Concerten/1375/Symposium  
\\_i\\_s\\_m\\_UvA/Oestvolskaja\\_Festival/](http://www.muziekgebouw.nl/agenda/Concerten/1375/Symposium_i_s_m_UvA/Oestvolskaja_Festival/)

Organised by

Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ,

AskolSchönberg,

Dept. of Musicology (University of Amsterdam)

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Program directors: Rokus de Groot and Elmer Schönberger.

Co-organisation: Floortje Smehuijzen (Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ)

Please register at the box office of Muziekgebouw aan't IJ.

Symposium fee 23 €; students: 10 €.

Avant-garde composer Galina Ivanovna Ustvolskaya (1919-2006) occupies an eccentric position within the history of music, including the history of the former Soviet Union and present-day Russia.

During her life Ustvolskaya has done everything to disappear behind, and in her music. The traces left by the composer in speech and writing are extremely scarce. The few lines she has devoted to her work are repeated in publications over and over again like a mantra, constituting the foundation of what may be called the 'myth Ustvolskaya'. Her appeal to 'those who really love my music, to abstain from theoretically analyzing it' has been taken more seriously than is justified in the study of the history of music and culture.

During this symposium an international group of musicologists will address fundamental questions which the music of Ustvolskaya is confronting us with.

They will present and discuss the current knowledge and interpretations of her work and its contexts, and develop new research perspectives.  
Also some of Ustvol'skaya's compositions will be played at the Symposium.

The Netherlands has played a key role internationally in the (re)discovery of Galina Ustvol'skaya's music in the late 1980s and 1990s, through the pioneering work of Elmer Schönberger and Reinbert de Leeuw.

A unique context of this Symposium is offered by the performance of a large part of Ustvol'skaya's music during the *Oestvol'skaja Festival*.

The Oestvol'skaja Festival of May 27-29 will feature Askol Schönberg, the Noord-Nederlands Orkest, the Orchestra of the Conservatory of Amsterdam, conducted by Reinbert de Leeuw, the Chamber choir Oktoich, conducted by Aliona Ovsianikova, the Doelenkwartet, as well as soloists.

<http://issuu.com/Muziekgebouw/docs/flyer-oestvol'skaja-festival>

## Symposium Program

1

10.00

Opening by Prof.dr Irene Zwiep,  
(Director Institute of Culture and History, University of Amsterdam)

Chair: Rokus de Groot

2

10.05

Alexander Ivashkin  
(Goldsmiths College, Music Department, University of London)  
*Galina Ustvol'skaya: Minimalist or maximalist?*

3

10.50

Elmer Schönberger  
(music critic, composer, playwright and novelist)  
*Ustvol'skaya in The Netherlands: The Lady with the Hammer*

11.20

Coffee break

4

11.50

Leo Svirsky, piano  
Galina Ustvol'skaya, *Piano Sonata Nr. 6*.

5

12.00

Olga Panteleeva

(PhD student History and Literature of Music, University of California, Berkeley)

*The Story of the Sibyl:*

*Metaphors in Music Journalism and Scholarship on Ustvol'skaya, 1940s-2000s*

12.30

Lunch

Chair: Elmer Schönberger

6

13.30

Elena Nalimova

(Chetham's School of Music, Manchester UK)

*Bringing Ustvol'skaya's chamber music to the next generation: Performance, pedagogy and presentation*

7

14.00

Sander van Maas

(University of Amsterdam, University of Utrecht, Depts. of Musicology)

*The hyperbolic dimension in Ustvol'skaya's music*

8

14.30

Anne Veinberg, piano

Galina Ustvol'skaya, *Piano Sonata Nr. 5.*

14.50

Tea break

9

15.20

Rachel Jeremiah-Foulds

(Goldsmiths College, University of London)

*An Esoteric Iconography: Orthodoxy and Devotion in the World of Galina Ustvol'skaya*

10

15.50

Rokus de Groot

(University of Amsterdam, Dept. of Musicology)

*Ustvol'skaya's work in the context of the Turn to religion in 20<sup>th</sup> century new music*

11

16.20-17.00

Final Discussion

## Abstracts

### Alexander Ivashkin

(Goldsmiths College, Music Department, University of London)

#### ***Galina Ustvolskaya: minimalist or maximalist?***

*Mini* and *Maxi* have long been major aesthetics categories in fashion studies associated with Roland Barthes's *Système de la mode*. These two categories also relate indirectly to Erich Auerbach's classification of the two types of art in his seminal book *Mimesis*. One is direct (tracing its origin to ancient Greek culture); the second is indirect, ambivalent, deriving from Old Testament texts and in need of interpretation. *Mini* offers no hidden agenda, you get what you get, no less no more. *Maxi* brings the element of representation and requires interpretation.

Ustvolskaya's affinity to simple and repetitive rhythmic and melodic patterns based on sparse formulas, the lack of traditional development and conventional proportions in her music show some similarities with the principles of minimalism. These elements of Ustvolskaya's style have been inherited by so called Russian minimalist composers, Alexander Knaifel (1943–), Nikolai Korndorf (1947–2001), Vladimir Martynov (1946–), and Valentin Silvestrov (1937–).

However, Ustvolskaya's uncompromisingly monumental style also laid a firm foundation for so called Russian 'maximalism', which is different from minimalism because of its representational and narrative agenda.

The nature of Ustvolskaya's works is often closer to folk, ritual, pop, rock and rap than to patterns of so-called serious professional music. Following Ustvolskaya, a younger generation of Russian composers is in search of common and archaic roots in verbal and musical language. Like in Ustvolskaya's works, their minimalist maximalism 'recalls a forgotten and a lost music and returns to music in its original nature.' (Vladimir Martynov).

**Alexander Ivashkin** is a writer, cellist and conductor. He has performed in more than forty countries, including over 50 world premieres. Professor of Music and Director of the Centre for Russian Music at Goldsmiths College, University of London, he has published eighteen books on Schnittke, Ives, Penderecki, Rostropovich and others. His numerous (more than 200) articles on the twentieth century music and on history/ theory of performance have been published in Russia, Germany, Italy, the US, the UK and Japan. A recording artist for the Chandos, BMG, Ode, Brilliant Classics and Naxos labels, Ivashkin has recorded over forty CDs, including the complete cello

music by Rakhmaninov, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Roslavets, Tcherepnine, Schnittke and Kancheli and collaborated with great composers such as Cage, Crumb, Penderecki, Kagel, Part, Schnittke, Sculthorpe, Gubaidulina. He also directs annual festivals in London.

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## **Elmer Schönberger**

(music critic, composer, playwright and novelist)

### ***Ustvolskaya in The Netherlands: The Lady with the Hammer***

As a former programmer of the Holland Festival being responsible for the introduction of the music of Galina Ustvolskaya in The Netherlands, I ask myself why, being a music critic and a musicologist, I have never felt a need for critical distance or intellectual reflection in spite of my lasting involvement with her oeuvre. It seems that the inapproachability of Ustvolskaya as a living artist has enabled me to dovetail the work's persona and the creator's person and thus to make her into a personal hero. However, this does not make me into a believer in the 'myth' Ustvolskaya, that limited repertoire of statements, verdicts and tiny bits of biography which time and again are being repeated like a mantra as soon as her name is mentioned. For that matter, it remains to be seen whether the composer deliberately forged her own myth as a divinely inspired recluse or meekly looked on how others (e.g. her publisher) did so for her. The myth may also be interpreted as a result of the composer's resistance against the reality that beset her or as a stronghold to entrench behind in existential loneliness.

In The Netherlands, mainly owing to the Holland Festival and the Schönberg Ensemble (now AskolSchönberg), Ustvolskaya has become solidly, though peripherally rooted in musical consciousness, growing from hype to myth, from a heavily bungled Russian name to 'The Lady with the Hammer'. As a true 'paramodernist' – that is, assuming a position being beside modernism – Ustvolskaya has not passed unnoticed beyond the fixed borders of contemporary music as is shown by J. Bernlef in his collection of poems *Kiezel en traan* (Gravel and tear) or the music of Ig Henneman, which belongs rather to the world of Bimhuis (improvised music) than of the Muziekgebouw (contemporary concert music).

**Elmer Schönberger** (1950) studied musicology at Utrecht University, piano at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague and composition with Rudolf Escher. Apart from being a leading music critic in the Netherlands he is known as composer, playwright and novelist. Music plays an important role in his literary work as well. His *Quartets*, that successfully established his reputation as a dramatist, is set for a string quartet and four actors. The main character in his latest novel *Vuursteens vleugels* is a pianotuner who in vain strives for musical as well as human purity. His most recent compositions are *A questo punto* for choir and *Arme oude magie* (Rouge dame, amie) for instrumental ensemble and singing actress. Together with Louis Andriessen Schönberger

wrote the key reading *The Apollonian Clockwork – On Stravinsky* (1982). As a programmer for the Holland Festival he was responsible for the introduction of the music of Galina Ustvolskaya in The Netherlands. Complete list of works and activities on [www.elmerschonberger.com](http://www.elmerschonberger.com)

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**Leo Svirsky** is a pianist, composer, and improviser currently based in the Hague. He has performed at many prestigious venues, including the Smithsonian Institute, the National Arts Center of Canada, the Kennedy Center Terrace Theater, the Kremlin, the Vortex Jazz Club, Zaal 100, and WORM among others. He has taken master classes with many leading musicians including Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Lang Lang, Peter Takacs, Antonio Pampa-Baldi, Ursula Oppens, the Juilliard Quartet, the Zurich Trio, Boris Berman, Charles Rosen, and Arie Vardi. He was first prize winner of the Isabel Scionti Piano Competition, the Arthur Fraser Concerto Competition, and most recently the recipient of the Labberté-Hoedemaker prize at the Peter the Great Festival. As an improviser, he has shared the stage with among others, Raoul van der Weide, Onno Govaert, Yedo Gibson, Anne La Berge, Ig Henneman, Marshall Allen, John Berndt, and Veryan Weston. His performance of Veryan Weston's large-scale open form piece *Tessellations* was recently released by the British improv label Emanem. He is currently studying at the Royal Conservatory of the Hague with Rian de Waal and Cornelis De Bondt.

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### **Olga Panteleeva**

(PhD student History and Literature of Music, University of California, Berkeley)

#### ***The Story of the Sibyl:***

#### ***Metaphors in Music Journalism and Scholarship on Ustvolskaya, 1940s-2000s***

In her rare public utterances – conversations with a few trusted interviewers – Galina Ustvolskaya insisted that her music had nothing to do with any particular epoch, country, religion or gender. Rejecting the earthly constraints and emphasizing the tropes of transcendence, inscrutability and timelessness, Ustvolskaya comes across as a veritable follower of the discourse of absolute music, which she upheld in her very lifestyle. In the 1990s, one finds her public image elevated by the post-Soviet rage for the esoteric and adorned with a stable cluster of metaphors that revolve around the figure of a female prophet, whose music wields cosmic power – thus, a discourse that retains all its historical, national, religious and feminine dimensions.

In tracking the way in which descriptions of Ustvolskaya's music have changed over the course of sixty years, the present paper attempts to trace how the current discourse came into being. Press publications spanning six

decades, personal records from the St.Petersburg Conservatory archive, interviews with her former pupils, musicological articles and Ustvol'skaya's own performance instructions reveal how the early label of 'formalism' migrated from the official evaluations, written by conservatory professors, into the first press notices, and then gradually mutated into the tropes of austerity and concentration that have been increasingly influenced by the composer's own perspective.

**Olga Panteleeva** studied piano and musicology at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. During her conservatory studies she was also active as a music critic and involved in organization of contemporary music festivals in St. Petersburg. In 2007-2009 she completed the Research Masters program in musicology at Utrecht University (with Prof. Emile Wennekes and Prof. Karl Kügle), writing her master thesis on the Dutch contralto Aafje Heynis and the cultural change of the 1960s as reflected in performance tradition. Since August 2009, Olga Panteleeva is a PhD student in Musicology at the University of California, Berkeley, studying with Prof. Richard Taruskin. Recent research projects deal with social and aesthetic aspects of online discourse about classical music and performance culture. Olga Panteleeva's research interests focus mainly on contemporary art music and music practice (especially in Russia and The Netherlands), new technologies in music, performance studies, music sociology and historiography.

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### **Elena Nalimova**

(Chetham's School of Music, Manchester UK)

#### ***Bringing Ustvol'skaya's chamber music to the next generation: performance, pedagogy and presentation***

This paper demonstrates the challenges encountered during the process of studying and performing three of Galina Ustvol'skaya's compositions - *Trio for clarinet, violin and piano* (1949), *Violin Sonata* (1952), and *Grand Duet* (1959), and summarises the distinctive characteristics of Ustvol'skaya's musical text as perceived and interpreted both by us, the performers, and our audiences.

To enhance the performance aspect of my PhD research, I collaborated with students of the Chetham's School of Music. During the preparation for the recitals, I realised the unique practical value of this aspect of my research, which combines performance and interpretation of Ustvol'skaya's ensemble compositions, enriched by my own performing experience and scholarly knowledge of the subject, with teaching the works to talented young musicians from different cultural backgrounds.

Based on the analysis of research and performance data, such as student interviews and observations made during rehearsals, audiences' responses,

score comparison, and recorded recitals, this paper will demonstrate how we approached the ensemble-playing challenges presented by a score with no bar lines; how we tackled the apparent graphic simplicity of the text; and how we learnt to embrace the immense intensity of the music.

Performing these works consecutively enabled us to highlight the evolution of Ustvol'skaya's instrumental writing, particularly that for the piano, whilst playing them alongside piano works by Bach, Shostakovich, Knaifel and Nikolaev allowed us to appreciate the unique nature of Ustvol'skaya's style and to perceive her music as part of a tradition.

The success of the project proved the validity of my research, and demonstrated a developing interest in Ustvol'skaya's music among young musicians.

Born in Russia, **Elena Nalimova**, graduated from the St. Petersburg State Conservatoire with a First Class Honours Degree. She came to the United Kingdom in 1997 after winning the Inches Carr Scholarship in accompaniment at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. Elena completed her Masters degree in Solo Performance in 2000, and held the prestigious Geoffrey Parsons Junior Fellowship at the Royal College of Music, London, in 2001-2003.

Elena has won several solo and accompaniment prizes, including the Megan Foster Accompanist Prize and the Gerald Moore Award. She took part in many Master classes with distinguished artists such as Natan Perelman, Dmitry Alexseev, Barry Douglas, Konrad Richter, Boris Berman, Martino Tirimo, Graham Johnson, Elly Ameling, Martin Isepp, Malcolm Martineau, Thomas Allen, Paul Hamburger, Sarah Walker, Jane Manning, Robert Holl, György Kurtág, and Anthony Marwood, and has given solo and chamber music recitals in the Glasunov and National Philharmonic Hall (St Petersburg), Pollock House (Glasgow), Art Gallery Hall (Aberdeen), Grand Saloon, Theatre Drury Lane, St Martin-in-the-Fields, the Royal Opera House's Crush Room, St. James Piccadilly (London), Sheldonian Theatre (Oxford), and many other concert venues and festivals throughout Russia and the UK.

Elena taught piano at the Junior Department of the RSAMD (Glasgow) and Ardingly College (Sussex) before joining the team of Piano Accompanists at the Chetham's School of Music in 2009. In that capacity she performed throughout the North-West of England, having accompanied four finalists of the BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition 2010.

In addition to her performing and teaching careers, Elena is an enthusiastic scholar, with a particular interest in pedagogical and performance aspects of the music by G. Ustvol'skaya.

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**Sander van Maas**

(University of Amsterdam, University of Utrecht, Depts. of Musicology)

## ***The hyperbolic dimension in Ustvol'skaya's music***

This presentation explores the significance of the hyperbolic, quasi-parodic and even satirical dimension of Ustvol'skaya's music. The exploration takes as its background the general development of modernist listening.

**Sander van Maas** is Buma Professor of Dutch Contemporary Music at Utrecht University and Assistant Professor of Contemporary Music at the University of Amsterdam. His work focuses on the philosophy and criticism of twentieth and twenty-first century music. Key themes in his work are theories of listenership and musical post-metaphysics and religion. His publications include *The Reinvention of Religious Music: Olivier Messiaen's Breakthrough Toward the Beyond* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009) and his inaugural lecture at Utrecht University, *Wat is een luisteraar? Reflectie, interpellatie en dorsaliteit in hedendaagse muziek* (2009, forthcoming in English). His current research focuses on the constitution of the listener in recent musical history and he is preparing a new book on Messiaen. Van Maas is former Chairman of the Dutch Association of Aesthetics and founding editor of *Esthetica: Tijdschrift voor Kunst en Filosofie*.

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Australian pianist **Anne Veinberg** (1986) is one of the most versatile pianists of her generation currently based in the Netherlands. Her repertoire encompasses a wide range of stylistic influences, from classical repertoire to electro-acoustic and interdisciplinary works.

Anne has been soloist with The Queensland Orchestra and National Capital Orchestra among others. She has performed in Australia, The Netherlands and abroad including venues such as 'de Doelen' (NL), the Spiegelzaal of the Concertgebouw (NL), Feliz Meritis (NL), Wigmore Hall (UK), Banff Arts Centre (CAN) and the Sydney Opera House (AUS). She has also been broadcasted on radio and television on various occasions.

In 2010, Anne gave the premiere of Jos Zwaanenburg's *oo* (010) for piano, voice (with Lore Binon) and live electronics. She has also worked with Jorrit Tamminga and Michael Young on their works for piano and live electronics, *Subito Piano* and *Piano-Prosthesis* respectively. In 2011, through the 'klanktheater', Anne commissioned and premiered *as i hear it*, a music theatre piece by Anthony Dunstan. Other premieres include *Whisper I & II* (2006/7) by Charlie Sdraulig and *Eight Minatures* (2008) by Lorenzo Alvaro.

Anne was the winner of the Grachten Festival Conservatory Concours 2009, keyboard finalist in the ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) Young Performers Award 2008 and semi-finalist in the 2011 Gaudeamus Interpreters Prize, amongst others. She has been supported by the Australian Music Foundation, the Donovan Johnson Scholarship, FW Homeward Memorial Scholarship and held a full fee faculty merit scholarship for the duration of her undergraduate studies at the Melbourne Conservatorium, University of Melbourne. Anne is a former student of Daniel Herskovitch and Ronald Farren

Price, and is currently in the final stage of her Masters at the Conservatorium of Amsterdam working with David Kuyken.

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**Rachel Jeremiah-Foulds**

(Goldsmiths College, University of London)

***An Esoteric Iconography: Orthodoxy and Devotion in the World of Galina Ustvolskaya***

For the Orthodox faithful the icon is not a mere artistic impression or a sentimentally religious entity, but it functions as a window between this world and the heavenly realm. Iconography bestows a route through which human frailty can bear witness before God, and enables a focus on, and consequent entrance into, the heavenly sphere. The concept of ‘the icon’ can thus be transferred and superimposed upon the role of music in a liturgical context.

This has deep resonance when considering the Orthodox backdrop from which Ustvolskaya’s music was unleashed. Although Ustvolskaya’s music does not function liturgically – even the description of her music as ‘religious’ was vehemently rejected by the composer during her lifetime - this paper presents her profoundly spiritual compositions as ‘sonic-icons’: essentially Ustvolskaya’s own interpretation of this method of providing a ‘window’ to God.

This paper will explore the possible motivations behind Ustvolskaya’s inclusion of elements of iconography and Orthodoxy by examining the reverberations of liturgical practice in her deployed musical material and – more widely - in twentieth-century Russian culture. An examination of Ustvolskaya’s contemporaries shows a lengthy and widespread preoccupation with this approach, validating this secret code as a major factor in the analysis of all twentieth-century Russian composers, far from the watchful eye of the Soviet cultural ministry. This partiality not only possessed the ability to communicate clandestine spiritual messages, but also was consumed by a sense of national identity as a return to Byzantine roots.

**Rachel Jeremiah-Foulds** attained BMus Music (Hons) from City University, London where she graduated the recipient of the Worshipful Company of Carmen Prize. She was then awarded MMus with distinction in Russian Music Studies, having pursued postgraduate studies at Goldsmiths College, University of London, where her avid interest in the life and music of Galina Ustvolskaya was nurtured. She has furthered this interest in Ustvolskaya’s oeuvre by working towards her PhD at the same institution under the supervision of Professor Alexander Ivashkin, seeing her work presented and published internationally. Rachel has spent a significant amount of time researching in Ustvolskaya’s home city of St Petersburg, and has been a recipient of a residency scholarship to work in the Ustvolskaya Collection at

the Paul Sacher Archive, Basel. Rachel has taught Russian Music Studies to both undergraduates and postgraduates in various universities in her hometown of London, contributed to events at the Centre for Russian Music (Goldsmiths) and took over as Editor of the online journal British Postgraduate Musicology in 2008.

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### **Rokus de Groot**

(University of Amsterdam, Dept. of Musicology)

#### ***Ustvolskaya's work in the context of the Turn to religion in 20<sup>th</sup> century new music***

Composers of the twentieth century have explored possibilities of music to engender religious and spiritual experiences and insights, assessing different approaches, e.g. by reference to alleged revelation, by presenting excess, by offering cognitive riddles, and by mimesis. To give some examples, John Tavener's endeavour has been to model his work after sources which he believes to be authoritative divine revelations (musical 'icons' like Byzantine chant). Jonathan Harvey has devised degrees of musical complexity in order to stun an analytic approach in listening; and he created compositions with cognitive 'riddles', emphatically employing cross-transformations of forms in the context of duality, so as to suggest the evanesce of 'identity' as well as a fundamental 'unity' in (musical) forms. Ton de Leeuw has been engaged in offering a musical mimesis of his concept of the cosmos ('immanence and transcendence of a spiritual source').

This presentation will explore the work of Ustvolskaya in this context. Some of the subtitles of her compositions refer to Christian sources. She has once characterized her works as 'infused with a religious spirit'. Her work has been widely received in this perspective.

Questions to be discussed are: How is her music to be understood in relation to these references and characterizations? Do concepts of revelation, excess, cognitive riddle or mimesis play a role here? How to conceive of the frequent occurrence in her music of both extreme singularities and obstinate repetition? What are the motivation and justification to apply the term 'religious' to her work? Is there any necessity to do so? Is her work a proposal of a music 'beyond' or 'before' religion as we know it?

**Rokus de Groot**, musicologist and composer, conducts research on music of the 20th and 21st centuries, especially about the systematics and aesthetics of composition, about the interaction between different cultural traditions, as well as about (re)conceptualizations in music of past and present religious and spiritual ideas. He also has published about musical concepts as a metaphor (polyphony, counterpoint), especially as developed in the writings of Edward Said. He holds the chair of musicology at the University of Amsterdam, after occupying a personal chair 'Music in the Netherlands since 1600', at the University of Utrecht (1994-2000).

Recently he edited together with Albert van der Schoot, *Redefining Musical Identities: Reorientations at the Waning of Modernism* (Zwolle 2007), and published 'Edward Said and Polyphony', in A. Iskandar and H. Rustom (eds.), *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, Berkeley: UCP, 2010). In 2009 he was invited to deliver the Edward Said Memorial Lecture at the American University in Cairo.

He composes danced music theatre, such as *Song of songs: The Love of Mirabai* (New Delhi 2005, 6<sup>th</sup> Summit India-EU), *Layla and Majnun: A Composition about the Night* (Amsterdam 2006, Theatre Royal Tropical Institute), and *ShivaShakti* (Chennai, 2009, Park's New Festival). These are examples of intercultural mutual learning and polyphony.

See also: [home.medewerker.uva.nl/r.degroot/](http://home.medewerker.uva.nl/r.degroot/)