

## *Goossens 2*

Laura Altman/Monika Brooks  
/Magda Mayas ('Great Waitress')



The trio “Great Waitress” focuses on instrumental combination, microtonality and investigations in sound colour as an integral part of its musical vocabulary. They embrace a spectral approach to music and improvising, exploring the overtones and timbre of sounds played with the particular instrumentation of piano, clarinet and accordion. Like all improvised music, their music is, in essence, site specific. Their musical decisions and the projection of their sounds are affected by the acoustics of a room and the temporal development of sounds in that space.

In “Goossens 2” the playing starts with faint utterances of sound. As the music unfolds in the space and the sounds slowly and fluidly grow and morph. The music takes form through attention in the moment - listening and responding.

The work is characterised by long durations, static durational playing and listening, contrasted by a strong sense of movement and pulse that, over time, leads to textures. One can often hear two or three simultaneous streams, interjecting, and creating new nodes. There is an overall sense of natural pacing and phrasing, aligned with the breath, and a gradual and subtle evolution of the material.

Exploring new extended playing techniques is part of the trio’s approach. Their individual instrumental techniques are personalised and specific, and have been developed through years of improvising and experimenting/research. (More detailed notes on these are provided on the following page.)

**Goossens 2** was created for a special studio live broadcast on the New Music Up Late program on ABC Classic FM.

**Goossens 2** by Laura Altman, Monika Brooks and Magda Mayas.

Created in 2014. Duration: 14’36

Performed by Great Waitress (Laura Altman, Monika Brooks and Magda Mayas).

Recorded 27/02/2014, Eugene Goossnes Hall (Studio 200), Sydney

Recording Producer: Andre Shrimski; Recording Engineer: Andrew Dixon.

Copies of the recording available from: Stephen Adams, ABC Classic FM

GPO Box 9994, Sydney NSW 2001, Australia. Email: [adams.stephen@abc.net.au](mailto:adams.stephen@abc.net.au)

## **Some specific notes about the instruments and techniques:**

### **Piano:**

In this piece Magda Mayas uses different preparations and inside piano playing with various movable objects (in order of appearance):

- plasticine on middle register strings to create a dampened percussive sound
- glissandos with rosined fingers on strings
- fishing line over multiple strings to create sustained sounds
- different sized magnets placed on various strings to create overtones and then played on the keyboard, combined with multiple mallets hitting strings in the same register
- a short bent bow, creating a tremolo in the upper register
- a slate plate "bowed" across the strings in middle and bass register - "singing" of different frequencies and overtones
- bowing a single bass string with fishing line
- stone and metal balls on tuning pegs to produce resonating "distorted noise"

### **Clarinet**

Laura Altman plays a lot with natural harmonics/overtones of the instrument. She has developed a personalised clarinet vocabulary involving explorations with embouchure, articulation, finger placement, levels of moisture, and air pressure.

In this piece you hear the results of a combination of these techniques ranging from very clean pure tones, to more gritty textured sounds. There are no preparations or modifications, however, occasionally Laura deconstructs the clarinet to play just the top half (heard for example in the beginning of the piece). She also uses her leg on the bell of the clarinet as a 'mute', or her hand at the end of the 'half clarinet'.

### **Accordion:**

Monica Brook's accordion is also not prepared or modified, however she uses various personalised techniques to create a unique palate of sounds, often resembling an electronic sound source.

She employs the keys, buttons and stops of the accordion to create pure clean tones, clusters and timbral shifts through changing reeds, as well as more percussive and textural sounds, created, for example, by strumming the bellows of the accordion or sliding fingers across the casing to create high pitched sounds. She explores pushing varied quantities and velocities of air through the reeds, creating toneless breath sounds as well as rumbling tremoli.

## **Great Waitress**

From 2008 Laura Altman and Monika Brooks' duo excited the Sydney experimental scene, (of which they were important contributors), with quiet, ambiguous, ephemeral music - they treated duration as if it were precious. Altman's clarinet and Brook's accordion fused, not with lines, but with pools of sound, coexisting in an ecology that had no clear beginning or end - a calmly focussed, infinite field.

In January 2009 the Berlin-based pianist Magda Mayas collaborated with them on a memorable performance at Sydney's Now now Festival. Mayas injected not only an array of startling sounds, but insistent motion to contrast the stasis. Multiplicity emerges in Great Waitress through virtuosic collective listening, and creates a unique lucidity. Two years later they reconvened as an ensemble for an intense period of creative development, rehearsals and recordings. They have since released 2 albums, Lucid (2011) and Flock (2014) and have toured Europe and Australia multiple times, playing festivals such as All Ears (NO), Konfrontationen (AT), Music Unlimited (AT), and Densités (FR). **contact: great-waitress.com**

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**Laura Altman: Clarinet** - Laura Altman is a clarinetist, improviser and composer, born and based in Sydney. She has been an important young voice on the Sydney improvised music scene since 2007, playing with groups such as The Splinter Orchestra and Prophets, and collaborating with Australian improvisers including Jim Denley, Dale Gorfinkel, Monica Brooks and Peter Farrar. Laura has toured Australia and Europe with a range of projects including 'Great Waitress'. Laura also plays clarinet in folk/balkan/jazz ensemble Chaika. Laura graduated from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music with a B.Mus Composition (Honours) in 2011, writing both instrumental and electro-acoustic music. She has had works performed by Sydney Antiphony, Ensemble Offspring, Volta Collective and ACRONYM Orchestra, and has also developed exploratory compositions for primary school students. Laura was co-director and co-curator of the NOW now Series and Festival of Exploratory Music from early 2010 until 2013, and continues to organise exploratory music events in Sydney. (<http://lauraaltman.net>)

**Magda Mayas: Piano** - Magda Mayas is a pianist living in Berlin working in the field of contemporary, improvised music. Over the past 15 years she developed a vocabulary utilizing both the inside and exterior parts of the piano, using preparations and objects that become extensions of the instrument. The extended techniques are not so much preparations in the Cagean sense, which involves a fixed set up for specific pieces, but a flexible one where all preparations are instantaneously accessible and movable, thus adaptable to different pianos, the acoustics of different concert spaces and musical requirements. The real-time orchestration of timbre, exploration of instrumental colour and textures, (both in solo and ensemble contexts) have been the main concern of her work to date. Current projects are "Spill", a duo with drummer Tony Buck, a duo with Anthea Caddy (cello), a duo with Christine Abdelnour (sax) and "Great Waitress". Magda Mayas performs internationally solo and in collaboration with a large number of musicians and composers, such as John Butcher, Peter Evans, Annette Krebs, Phill Niblock, Andrea Neumann, Axel Dörner, Thomas Lehn and Tristan Honsinger. ([www.magdamayas.jimdo.com](http://www.magdamayas.jimdo.com))

## **Monika Brooks: accordion, Sydney 10.6.1983**

Monika Brooks forms sound works, compositions, and improvisations from piano, computer, field recordings, glass, radio, and accordion. As a performer she has collaborated with Jim Denley, Dale Gorfinkel, Herminone Johnson, Chris Abrahams, Robbie Avenaim, Kraig Grady, Richard Nuns, Eugene Chadbourne, and Joe Talia among others. Long-term projects have toured nationally and internationally, including Great Waitress (Konfrontationen 2011, Music Unlimited 2012, All Ears 2014); West Head Project, with Dale Gorfinkel, Anthony Magen & Jim Denley (MONA FOMA 2012), and Women's Auxiliary Choir with Sonia Z, Loni Cooper, and Ces Hotbake (Various, King St, NSW 2011-2015).

From one of her first group shows in 2007 onwards, Monika's sound installation works have often been heavily inspired by the technology and usage of radio transmission. Brooks also fronts the eight-piece ensemble, Electronic Resonance Korps, developing works for multiple mono computer performance. Other projects include undertaking an MA (Hons) through the School of Humanities and Communication Arts, UWS (Penrith). Monica is currently recording a solo album for piano for RIP Society, due for release in 2015. ([www.softpotatoes.net](http://www.softpotatoes.net))