



Image by Nika Kuk (2023): first ceramic series of the Alien Kin, Berlin.

Diane Barbé
dianediane@gmx.net
www.dianebarbe.com

The Alien Kin

The Alien Kin is an ongoing research and performance project facilitated by composer, field recordist and sound artist Diane Barbé.

Using simple handmade instruments (whistles, flutes, ocarinas, percussions), it proposes to collectively develop synchronicity, to explore nonverbal communication, to play around with other, non-human voices, deeply practicing our ability to listen, to imitate, and to respond. Some of the oldest “music” instruments we know may in fact be imitation devices, made to call birds and deer and become invisible in the great forests. Most rhythms that structure ancient and current music have their roots in the syncopated stridulations of insects and amphibians, whose voices manifest diurnal and seasonal cycles.

The Alien Kin proposes to explore these themes – collective music, nonverbal communication, DIY instruments, biomimicry, synchronicity– through group workshops and performances. The workshops usually last about three hours and cover a range of vocal and breathing activities, listening exercises, and collective composition practices. We engage with wind and percussion instruments made of ceramics, river cane, bamboo, logs, copper, brass, and other reclaimed materials. Workshops can lead to short performances amplified with 3-5 microphones, for radio broadcasts or live settings. Ideal group size is between 7-17 participants.



Five Components

Listening

The first phase tunes in to the Deep Listening Movement developed by Pauline Oliveros and calls for slow, attentive, non-extractive ways of doing research “with”, of embodied space.

Recording and analysing

The second phase focuses on understanding spectral and timbral qualities of the biophony as an ecology of selves: working with all the sonic agents like large music ensemble.

Crafting instruments

Experiments are made in collaboration with artisans to develop whistles, flutes, percussions from local materials. We also explore alternative, savage, rural, or non-standard lutherie. The key is develop an ensemble of devices that are easy to play and that mimick some of the qualities heard in the environment, giving voices that can *fit* into this ecology without oppressing others.

Playing collectively

Then, workshops are facilitated with groups of all ages and all backgrounds, ideally outdoors. The workshops usually last about three hours and cover a range of vocal and breathing activities, listening exercises, and collective composition practices. Ideally, the workshops have at least 7 participants and can be held as a series of 2 or 3.

Recording again

Using light multi-channel setups that give a sense of space and movement, recording sessions are held with the groups in specific locations, chosen for their acoustics.

Image by Evandro Teixeira (2024): in the ceramic workshops of Zé Reis, Maragogipinho, Bahía, Brasil.

Listening Links

Diane Barbé. “Les Hululées” in *Musiques Tourbes*. forms of minutiae, Berlin (2024). FOM13 (vinyl & digital).

Alien Kin. *The Avian Kin*. First Terrace Records, London/Berlin (2023). FTCASS08 (cassette & digital).

Alien Kin. “Processions Estivales” in *L’Art de l’Écoute*. Podcast by JB Imbert. Radio Grenouille (2023).

Alien Kin. *Excerpts from 2022-2023*. Live recordings (unreleased).

Writing

Barbé, Diane. “I call, you respond? Game Calls, Hunting and Sound Mimicry in the Black Forest”, in *Pulse: the Journal of Science and Culture*, Vol. 9 (2022)

Previous Iterations

2025

Research and instrument building residency at AADK, Blanca, Spain

2024

Research and instrument building residency at Instituto Sacatar, Bahía, Brasil
Workshops and group performance at Ilha das Crianças, Itaparica, Bahía, Brasil
Workshop and group performance at Seanaps Festival, Leipzig, Germany

2023

Research and instrument building residency at 90mil Berlin, Germany
Group performance at VESSEL, 90mil Berlin, Germany
Research and instrument building residency at Grabowsee, Brandenburg, Germany
Research and instrument building residency at Euphonia, Marseille, France
Group performance on Archipel Community Radio, 90mil Berlin, Germany

2022

Research and instrument building residency at Global Forest Kunstverein e.V., Schwarzwald, Germany
Group performance at Vogelklang festival, Schwarzwald, Germany
Workshops and group performance at Climate Care Festival, Floating University, Berlin, Germany
Recording sessions and group performance at Morphine Raum, Berlin, Germany

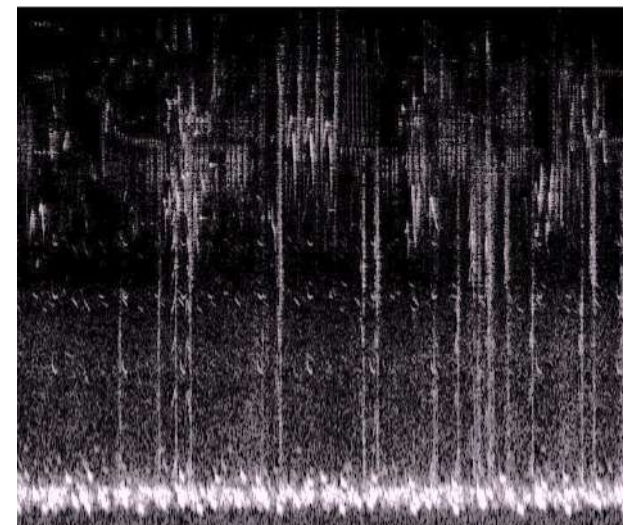
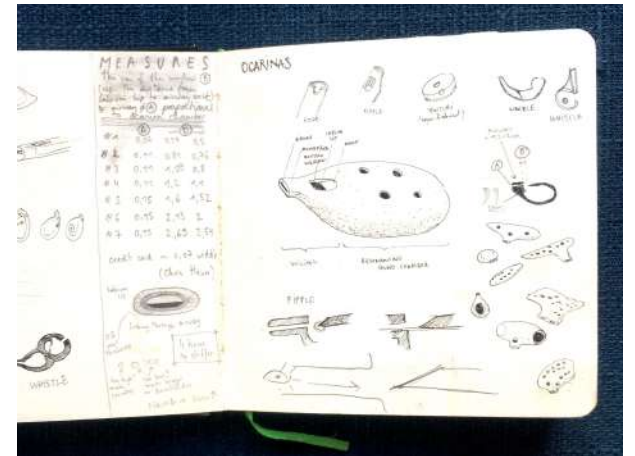
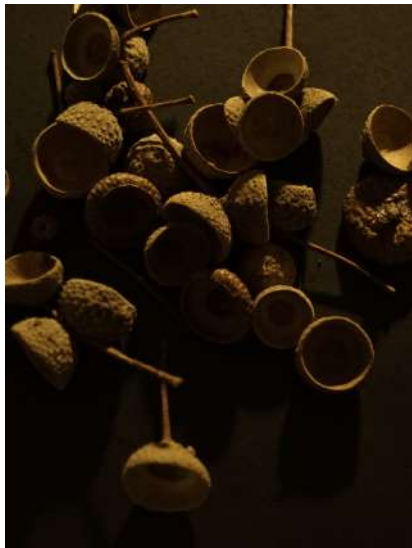


Image by Pablo Diserens (2020): recording in Lusatia.
Spectrogram by Diane Barbé using Izotope RX9.



Images by Anita Lindskog & Diane Barbé (2023): workshops in Marseille with river cane *Arundo Donax*.



Images by Diane Barbé (2023): making of ceramic globular flutes (top), whistles from acorn, river cane, plumbing pipes and reclaimed materials.



Image by Evandro Teixeira (2024): workshop with Ilha das Crianças, Itaparica, Bahia, Brasil.



Image by Zach Hart (2022): recording session at Morphine Raum, Berlin.

Reflections

وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمٰنٌ دَاوٓدَ وَقَالَ
يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ عَلَّمْنَا مَنطِقَ الطَّيْرِ وَاَوْفَيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَهٗوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيْرُ ۝۱۶

And David was succeeded by Solomon, who said, “O people! We have been taught the language of birds, and been given everything we need. This is indeed a great privilege.”

Qur’an, [27:16](#)

Hunting among hominids preceded language by millions of years. If stone tools were employed more than three million years ago, at what point did imitative calls of other species assist our ancestors in hunting? ... Within the span of those millions of years, were there great imitators of birds and beasts whose abilities to hear and vocally reproduce their prey influence their companions and allow their group to survive in greater numbers? When exactly was it that a person was so adept at producing a call during a hunt that he was asked to do it again for the entertainment of others or taught it to his children as a life-skill? How many of those phonemes entered into the repertoire of vocalizations that became language? ...

Ian Nagoski, *Ecstatic & Wingless: Bird-Imitation on Four Continents*, ca. 1910-44, October 2016, Canary Records, digital release.

Diane Barbé
dianediane@gmx.net
www.dianebarbe.com