

**Lisa Ullén (b. 1964)**

pianist, composer and improviser living in Stockholm, Sweden

Lisa Ullén is a graduate of the Royal Musical Academy in Stockholm, Sweden, where she studied classical piano in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since the late 1990s, she has devoted herself entirely to improvised music, in the form of free jazz as well as avant garde and contemporary classical and experimental music. Her work is characterized by a combination of virtuosity and simplicity, that rubs off on every musical situation she is involved in.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Ullén grew up in a quiet small town in northern Sweden. Somehow these oppositions seem reflected in her music, which fuses energetic improvisation with an understated melodic sensibility, creating aural landscapes that transcend easy categorization. Ullén studied jazz piano at the University of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, before releasing her first album as a band leader in 2006. A tour de force of free jazz ensemble playing, *Big Bang* demonstrated Ullén's ability to bring out the best in her collaborators while never straying from her own unsentimental vision of concrete music.

Since her debut, Ullén has recorded more than a dozen records, amongst the most critically acclaimed of which are her first solo-album, *Catachresis*, released on American label Nuscope Recordings in 2011, and the double-CD *Carve*, a collaboration with double-bassist Nina de Heney. In 2014, the disc *Look Right*, with de Heney and Korean cello player Okkyung Lee, received the Swedish Art Music Award.

A versatile player with a singular musical vision, Ullén has repeatedly proven her ability to imprint her absolute sense for tonal texture on whatever musical context she appears in. Open-minded and adventurous, Ullén to date has collaborated with scores of artists, musicians, and composers, including John Edwards, Nina de Heney, Charlotte Hug, Okkyung Lee, Mariam Wallentin, Maggie Nicols, Torsten Muller, Lina Nyberg, Joe Williamson, Mishiyo Yagi, Angharad Davis, Lisa Dillan, Sofia Jernberg, Anna Lindal, Lotte Anker, Gavin Bryars, Michael Zerang, Mark Sanders, John Russell, Dave Smith, Phil Minton, Dominic Lash, Tisha Mukarji, and many more. She has performed and toured in Europe, Japan, Canada, Usa,

In addition to her recording career, Ullén has been a vital presence on the European experimental music scene, playing concerts all over Europe. She has arranged several impro-music festivals in Stockholm, and co-curated the internationally acclaimed New Perspectives festival in 2012. Always open to boulder-crossings, Ullén's inter-arts collaborations include numerous dance performances, as well as writing the score for several dramatic productions, including the theatre production of a set of poems by Swedish Academy poet Kristina Lugn.

*"Extraordinary is all I can say as I dive in to her unique approach. /.../Amazing piano, some of it prepared, which should appeals to fans of John Cage as well as of Cecil Taylor".*

Bruce Lee Gallanter, Downtown Music Gallery

**Academic Studies**

Royal Academy of Music, Stockholm, Sweden, 1986-91

Improvisation, The University of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA, 1999-2000

Electro Acoustic Music, EMS, Stockholm, Sweden, 2003-2004

Performative Criticism, Royal Institute of Arts, Stockholm, Sweden, 2014-2015

**Selected festival appearance (2012-**

Köpenhamns jazzfestival 2018

Taktlos festival, Zurich, 2017

Willisau jazzfestival 2017

Fred Van Hove at 80 - Celebrating Free Music and Minds, Antwerpen 2017

Kerala jazzfestival, Kerava Finland 2017

Molde Jazzfestival 2016

L'Alarme festival , Berlin Deutschland 2016

Ljubljana Jazzfestival, 2016

Cornelius Cardew, *Great Learning*, Trondheim 2016

Brighton Alternative Jazzfestival, UK 2016

Stockholm jazzfestival 2009, 2013, 2014, 2016

Kamouflage, dance, Tur teatern, Kärntorp 2016

Tokyo International Jazzfestival, 2015

Konfrontationen, Austria, 2015

Sound of Stockholm, 2010, 2015

Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, UK 2013

Music Unlimited, Wels, 2013, 2015

Fanö folk festival, Denmark 2015  
Vancouver international festival , Canada 2014  
Blånagla, dance opera , Orrvikens Dance palace Sweden 2014  
Blurre Edges festival, Hamburg 2013  
Århus jazzfestival, Denmark 2012  
New Perspective Festival , Västerås 2012  
Umeå jazzfestival 2008, 2009, 2011, 2017

### **Selected Discography**

*Unfolding Trio Generations w Maggie Nicols, Matilda Rolfsson (Particular Recordings) 2018*  
*Piano Works triple solo piano box (Disorder) 2018*  
*Sekvenser och Lager Ep vinyl (Disorder) 2018*  
*Allt åt Alla Vilhelm Bromanders Initiativ (Signal and Sound) 2017*  
*Quartrsilumi Ullén de Heney duo feat Charlotte Hug (Lamour Records) 2016*  
*Festen Festen (Cleanfeed) 2016*  
*Anna Högbergs Attack (Omlott) 2016*  
*Borderlands Lisa Ullén Quartet (Disorder) 2016*  
*Into the Staring Town with Torsten Muller (Creative Source) 2015*  
*Ballads of Now and When Nuiversum (Repeat Until Death) 2015*  
*More Lisa Ullén & Nina de Heney, feat Mariam Wallentin (Disorder) 2013*  
*Look Right Lisa Ullén & Nina de Heney, feat Okkyung Lee (LJ Records) 2013*  
*Lissboa with Ernesto Rodrigues, Guilherme Rodrigues, Cyril Bond (Creative Source) 2012*  
*Catachresis Lisa Ullén (Nuscope) 2011*  
*Carve Ullén de Heney duo (LJ Records) 2009*  
*Revolution Rock Lisa Ullén Quartet (Disorder) 2009*  
*Big Bang Lisa Ullén Quartet (Disorder) 2006*

### **Selected dance/theatrical productions**

**Camouflage** - choreography Katja Seijtajoki (commissioned work w. Sofia Jernberg) 2016  
**Sakti** - choreography K Borgkrans 2015  
**Blånagla** - Dance opera in the north part of Sweden (commissioned work) 2014  
**Sequenza-** a choreographed composition (commisioned by Marie Fahlin) 2012  
**Nu väntar tiden** – Musical drama, directed by Tora von Platen and Johan Petri, Teater Brunngatan 4, 2011 (commissioned by Tora von Platen)  
**Stilla stig**-film av konstären Helena Byström, soundinstallation Lisa Ullén, Sundsvalls Art Museum  
**New Music Incubator Saltö**-2010, London Cafe OTO-Nätverksläger med komponister, musiker, koreografer med Martin Q Larsson och Jan Hendricks  
**Ninjutus-Short opera** with Ingrid Falk, Lars Bröndum, My Eklund, Lisa Ullén - Sound of Stockholm, Fyllkingen, nov 2010  
**Kyrillien**-Intermedia föreställning , Ylva Q Arkvik, konstnären Helena Byström, kostymör Ulrika Wedin dansaren Caroline Östberg, Kulturhuset i Stockholm, mars 2010 (commissioned by Caroline Östberg)

### **Selected Awards, Grants and Residencies**

received jazz composer of the year from Radio P2 Jazzkatten 2018  
!Step Up a Second ! Projekt funding, Swedish Arts Grants Committee 2018  
Two year Working Grant, Swedish Arts Grants Committee, 2016-2017  
International Exchange Grant, Swedish Arts Grants Committee, 2017, 2016, 2014, 2013, 2010, 2008  
STIM 2015, 2013, 2010, 2005  
Composer in Residence Vancouver, Canada, Coastal Jazz/Arts Grants Committee, 2014  
Respace-residence Project in Västerås, 2013  
Working Grant Swedish Arts Grants Committee 2012, 2010, 2008, 2006, 2005  
(Re)Thinking Improvisation- residence (curated by Stefan Östersjö), Inter Arts Center in Malmö, 2012  
The Society of Swedish Composers, 2011 & 2009

### **Teaching**

tjänstställning på KMH 2015-2018  
Seminarium, improvisation , KMH 2016, 2017  
Group lecture - Improvisation as an epistemological act –Stockholm University of Arts 2014  
Panel talkt about improvisation-moderator Joakim Milder-Royal Academy of music 2013

Panel talk -Gender-på Sound of Stockholm -nov 2012  
Panel talk-vad har hänt sen sist? arr. Nya Perspektiv i Västerås 2011  
Panel talk at Culture house (Sthlm)-arts and audience2013  
paneltalk MUSIKENS VÄRDE;-moderator Tuomo Haapala, ABF sthlm 2006  
piano and theory teacher Rytmus 1996-2006  
piano teacher SMI 1995-1996  
piano and theory teacher Kulturama 1994-1996  
piano teacher Täby kommunala musikskolan 1990-1991

### **Curatorial**

*Disorder Residence #1 Fylkingen Tisha Mukarji 2018*  
*solosoloduoduo* Fylkingen, Stockholm Sweden, June 2017  
*DISORDER FEST #1* Stockholm Sweden June, March 2017  
*Hear Here* Project, music and film project, touring London, Tokyo, New York, Washington, 2015-2016  
*Perspectives Festival, for Creative music* in Västerås, Sweden April 2012.  
*FRIM jubilee 30+1*, Foaje 3, Kulturhuset i Stockholm, 2008  
*Stafettkonsert URUK*, Foaje 3 i Stockholm 2010,  
*Residensprogram Re-Spaces* Nya Perspektiv, Västerås 2012-2013  
*Momentfestival*, Fylkingen, Stockholm Sweden 2006

### **Selected Compositions**

Piano Works -solo piano

Sekvenser och Lager

*Melting Point alt. Gå Utanpå*  
for contrabass recorder  
urupp, New Directions 2016 (commissioned work)

*Kamouflage-mönster i rörelse*  
(dance performance Mars 2016 (commissioned work))

*Shiv-Shakti*  
(dance performance) 2016 (commissioned work)

*Sekvenser och Lager 2016 (out on Ep Vinyl)*

*Chaconne*  
danceopera Blånagla 2014 “(commissioned work)

*En Annan Chaconne*  
tape and contra bass recorder  
danceopera Blånagla 2014 (commissioned work)

*Det klart, det var en annan tid*  
eam and voice  
danceopera Blånagla 2014 (commissioned work)

*Rytm*  
EAM  
danceopera Blånagla 2014 (commissioned work)

*Box1*  
guitar, recorder, percussion 2012

*You Hero-Heroes*  
recorder, Lute-(commissioned work)

*sequenza*  
danceperformance 2011 (commissioned work)

piano and prep. piano recorded on *Catachresis* (Nuscoper recordings 2011)

*Dig*

*Perifras-GOLD*

*Gulmjulin*

*Granite*

*Fringe*

*Nol-i*

*Adagio-GOLD*

musikdramatik "*NU väntar tiden*" text av Kristina Lugn(*commissioned work*)

**intervju:**

DownBeat sept 2018:

<http://downbeat.com/news/detail/pianist-lisa-ullen-trusts-instincts>

Impra möter

<http://impramoter.se/lisa-ullen/>

Orkesterjournalen #1 mars 2016

Nutida musik 2015

se bilaga

[svd 2013](#)

<https://www.svd.se/improvisation-ar-att-ta-stallning>

**video**

**Resonance -pilot film av Joachim Bergenstråhle**

<https://vimeo.com/308883877>

**Hear Here**

<https://youtu.be/bUrwfgjIVmQ>

**Kamouflage -mönster i rörelse 2016**

“Ett poetiskt och dynamiskt fält skapas där makthierarkier mellan kropparna sätts ur spel och meningsbärande system måste tänkas om “

<https://vimeo.com/160790949>

Blånagla-om dåtid, nutid och kroppens minne 2014

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rcwYZSd6kbE&t=15s>

**selected reviews**

**Piano works:**

**check out**

<http://lisaulen.com/lisa-ullen-piano-works/>

Svd

**Hear Here** konsert i Haga Kyrka

Den fantastiska lyhördheten musikerna emellan , skapar ett övertonsskimmer åt de enskilda klangerna samtidigt som detaljerna i Mårten Nilssons bildflöden träder fram som abstrakta tecken. Det är förbluffande vackert Magnus Haglund, Göteborgsposten

### **Festen**

Korean-born Swedish-raised pianist Lisa Ullen is perhaps the band's key asset. When she plays things happen. She energizes the ensembles with her emphatic Cecil Taylor inspired commentary and jagged comping  
*John Sharpe, All About Jazz*

Ullén spill är ledstjernen, pianot for boltre seg, tidvis hamrende, stundom slingrende  
*Chris Monsen, Klassekampen*

### **Borderlands -Lisa Ullén Quartet**

"Det är explosiv frijazz som betar sig lite hur som helst, men med en superb balans mellan struktur och kaos"  
*PM Jönsson, Göteborgsposten*

"Så runder de av dette settet» med Won't Be Late Again», hvor Ullén igjen er i Aki Takase-land, godt blandet sammen med Cecil Taylor, Alexander von Schlippenbach og alle de andre frittgående pianistene. Her er det hun og hennes piano som tar føringen med ytterst spennende spill, sammen med Axelssons trommer og Ölmedals bass..  
*Jan Granlie, Salt and Peanut*

### **Ballads of Now and When Nuiversum**

"Nuiversum rymmer ett Absolute Avantgarde; stjärnstoftet efter den stora balladsmällen. För att parafrasera Sun Ras gamla slogan "Space is the place": Nuiversum är i stället."  
*Timo Kangas Lira 2015*

### **Look Right** CD-winner of Swedish Art Music Record Award

is a fantastic demonstration of free improvisation that keeps revealing more and more beautiful sounds and sonic interactions with each new listening"

Eyal Hareuveni, All about jazz

"Straight away I declare this record Impro of the Year - or Everything of the Year."  
*-Thomas Millroth 5 /5 Tidningen Kulturen*

### **Catachresis-solo**

"What a pleasure to hear someone play with such gusto and vitality, such dexterity and emotional daring."  
*Florence Wetzel, Squids Ear*

"the lyrically sensitive is brought together with brutal noise in a concept of beauty where nothing is given in advance, in a graceful and bewildering catachresis ".  
*5/6 Magnus Eriksson SVD*

"Extraordinary is all I can say as I dive in to her unique approach. Ms. Ullen prepares the piano in her own way coaxing a variety of unique sounds, creating new sounds and textures along the way. Each of the thirteen pieces explore a different approach or terrain. Each piece is fascinating for different reasons, some abrupt, some intense and some twisted into odd shapes. "Low Voice I" is dark and ominous and deals with those sounds from the low end of the piano". Ms. Ullen also works hard to create bizarre sounds inside the piano, taking her time to craft strange sounds, one or two at a time, each one selectively chosen. Each piece is like entering a new world to explore and evoke different spirits".  
*Bruce Lee Gallanter, Downtown Music Gallery*

"It's like being at the heart of the storm, being whirled around in extremely concentrated yet simultaneously dizzying free jazz".  
*PM Jönsson-GP*

### **Carve -cd**

"The result are sound sculptures, as the album's title suggests, with tonal creations carved out of raw sound material, sometimes familiar, often quite new to the ear, yet each full of wonder, full of surprise and fragile beauty",  
*Stef Gijssel.*

"Två fundamentala musiker karvar djupt i tonkonsten. Denna dubbel-cd kommer vara lika viktig för den svenska jazzens historieskrivning som Erik XIV:s ärtsoppa.  
*Johan Redin, Soundofmusic*

### **REVOLUTION ROCK-Lisa Ullén Quartet**

"Ullén demonstrates her absolute sense for tonal values. Treble tones are thrown in like ringing coins into her fellow musicians plump and wide musical hats. There is always precision in the musical explosions. Intelligence in the emotions. "  
*Thomas Millroth Soundofmusic*

"With Revolution rock pianist Lisa Ullén releases an album with few equivalents in Swedish jazz. It's free jazz, but in an extremely concentrated form. Even when the music's flowing, each tone is significant and important."  
*Magnus Nygren SVD 6 out of 6*

### **Big Bang-Lisa Ullén Quartet CD**

"Exhibits a simplicity which demands precision and boundless trust in an enkelhet som kräver precision och gränslös tillit eftersom ingen maktkamp märks och summan är strörre en delarna. Och det finns inga svaga delar."  
*Leif Carlsson, Lira*

### **LUDL-cd**

en oväntad ad hoc-stämning hör vi sanslöst vibrerande och känslig instant composing av pianisten Lisa Ullén ochaltsaxofonisten David Linnros- Med små riktninglösa rörelser flyttar de sig runt i ett egenmöblerat rum av ljud och musikaliska figurer som tättnar alltmer. Jag har aldrig hört något liknande.  
*Thomas Millroth, SoundofMusic*

### **Nu Väntar tiden**

Orden blir leksaker, ibland tonsatta i intensiva melodislingor. Ett jag vill möta ett du, genast; vill att väntan ska ta slut, även om nu inte tiden gör det. Barnet har också en musisk låtsaskompis, som spelas av Lisa Ullén och är nog så verklig. Hon skapar stämningar med pianot: hemlighetsfullt mystisk nattmusik eller droppande regnmusik eller ett rent musicerande; personligt, behagligt och föga insmickrande.  
*Karin Helander SVD*

### **sequenza-koreograferad komposition**

Det är raffinerat i sin enkelhet. Instrumentets kropp och klang tänjs ut i rummet, komprimeras och förvrängs. Marie Fahlin drar ut gummiband från flygeln och släpper dem med ett knäppande ljud. Lisa Ullén svarar med eftertänksamma tangenttryck"  
*Anna Ångström SVD*

"För även om det är tydligt vem som är dansare och vem som är pianist är det desto svårare att se vems som påverkar vem när de till exempel bokstavligen och handgripligen spelar tillsammans direkt på flygelns strängar. När de sedan på ett tydligt men raffinerat sätt svarar på varandras uttryck eller när Lisa Ullén ger Marie Fahlin en blick som verkar säga att nu är det din tur att aktivera rummet eller flygeln blir det tydligt att det handlar om ett möte. Det är också därför det hela tiden är fascinerande att försöka följa den komplexa väv av rörelser och ljud som bildas när dansaren Marie Fahlin och pianisten och kompositören Lisa Ullén möts i Sequenza."  
*Tomas Olsson, Nummer*