

Oscar van Dillen

DRONE  
SCAPE 3

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# Dronescape 3

**Dronescape 3** is the third in a series of albums, containing new, digitally created, compositions by Oscar van Dillen. The works on this album were composed July-August 2020.

All works and cover art of this album were created by Oscar van Dillen.

## **Dronescape**

The title Dronescape suggests the contraction of the terms *Drone* and *Soundscape*, inferring a music which might at first sight be mistaken for ambient only. But not at a hearing: there is mostly a friendly and pleasant surface character to most compositions, but careful listening will reveal less obvious details and sounds, sometimes surprising, at other times perhaps disturbing.

In music, a *drone* (or *bourdon*) is understood to be a continuous sound, interval or chord, usually an accompaniment to a modal structure (melodic music based on a particular scale). Special instruments exist, dedicated to playing the drone only, such as the *tanpura* and the *swar peti* from India. Instruments are found all over the world that include drones within the melodic instruments themselves, such as the *taraf* strings on many Asian string instruments, but also the drone pipes next to the *chanter* in bagpipes, or the hurdy gurdy, and its predecessor the *organistrum* with their drone strings. Aboriginal didgeridoo music can be considered to consist purely of a rhythmized drone. Traditionally, drones with their sustained pitches are used as a harmonic support to the melodic music performed. In the Dronescares by van Dillen the music itself has become rhythmized drone and soundscape at the same time, foregoing the traditional compositional hierarchies of theme and accompaniment, by using the following musical elements, in order of prominence: 1. sound 2. harmony 3. rhythm 4. melody. This non-prominence of melody stresses the absence of a traditional theme and accompaniment-oriented music, instead the work moves towards a more inclusive

approach. This does not mean there are no developing linear structures, but rather that in a way the album can perhaps be regarded as being semipermeable to outside additions, whether coincidental and random (such as happening when listening outdoor or with windows opened), or improvised, or composed, or even as a large *minus one recording*, open to be supplemented by the listener, whether in imagined or performed future additional music.

### **Dronescape 3**

The third Dronescape album by Oscar van Dillen contains a single long composition, divided in 3 tracks:

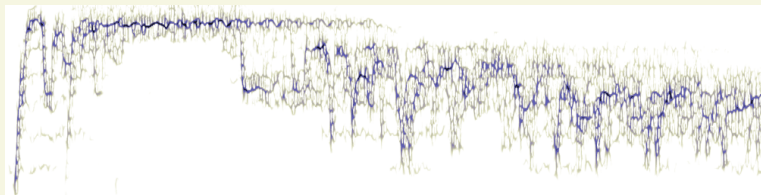
- Infinity – Pantonal Dronescape  
(duration 2 hours 56 minutes)

1 - Infinity - Pantonal Dronescape (section 1) 1:00:46  
2 - Infinity - Pantonal Dronescape (section 2) 0:40:57  
3 - Infinity - Pantonal Dronescape (section 3) 1:14:17

Listening to this music by van Dillen resembles entering a sound exhibition, the composition presents itself to the listener as a kind of sculpture, but not to be viewed from the outside, but to be heard and experienced from the inside. A sculpture maybe, but not in the sense of presenting itself as an object to a subjective listener to be viewed while moving around it, but as a subject moving around the listener thus turning the listener into an object, even an object of scrutiny too perhaps. One finds oneself in a large musical form, a large timespan, surrounded by slow changes of and within a many layered sounding substance. Sound objects and substance float by, partly in a predictable (slow transitions) and partly in an unpredictable (sudden events) manner. The sounds, the polychromatic, also microtonal, elements chosen, are mostly subtle and generally varied, but at the same time strictly limited to the precisely chosen palette of timbres. The silences embedded are integral part of the work and not to be seen as mere breaks between sections: in the silences, the music continues unbroken.

A musical composition, but in a way the work is arguably a sound sculpture as well. Part of the process of its *the making of* may perhaps be compared to the baking of bread. In the end result of the baking of bread, its ingredients, wheat or rye, salt and water, are no longer recognizable at all, they are completely transformed. These ingredients have undergone fundamental and substantial transformations, eventually stabilized by the chemically changing process of baking. In a like manner, the original ingredients of *Infinity*, a collection of Dhrupad style Alap melodies in a number of ragas performed by the composer on a digitally recreated ARP2600, have been transformed through a process of composing, of course mixing but transforming the tracks in ways at times resembling kneading, and at times resembling the development of photographs, spectrally manipulating and forming the "sound dough". The original ingredients then, are not so apparent in the end result, just as in bread they are not. This process of creation demanded the utmost from the hardware and sound systems, and it required also the composer's stamina and vision, as the work in progress was often sounding awful and disheartening in its many unfinished versions, yet the gold

was heard to be hidden in there, meanwhile taking also a lot of time (days of rendering) in the many sound processing operations needed for all components and layers. It was the vision of what can be made out of all this that drove the process of creation. And still in the end, some elements of the Asian aesthetics used at the beginning can be recognized here and there by the knowledgeable and attentive listener. This long and complicated process also sometimes yielded unexpected side effects and beautiful unintended sounds, which deserved preservation in the final result.



*segment of one of the Dhrupad Alap melodies, performed with gamak diminutions and upper horizon tones*

*Infinity* goes back to the composers' childhood inner aural memories, already encountered in *Emanations* (from *Dronescape 2*), to explore them in exhaustive depth. This work is called *pantonal* in the original philosophical sense of the word as intended by Arnold Schoenberg: to include all tones and possible modalities or keys. Unfortunately popular use changed his term to the more superficial and above all negative *atonal* which literally means rather the opposite: to exclude all tones and possible modalities and keys, much to the dismay of Schoenberg. *Infinity's* subtitle attempts to remind us of the original intentions of one of the pioneers to venture *in an inclusive manner* beyond the gravity of those traditional tone systems, still taught as a main theory body in professional music education until today. The pantonality of this music encompasses several stable tone centres or *horizons*, which are often layered, so not quite as discrete nor predictable as basses (lower horizon tones) are in a Notre Dame *organum*. Instead, the many allusions to an imaginary polymodal music, performed in what Oscar van Dillen usually names *the acoustics of the cave*, which has been the musical historical norm for a likely 80,000 years (cathedrals are not exempt from this notion), the suggestions of overtone



techniques, in combination with microtonal inflections, but also the transitions into triads, all add up to the overall pantonal character of the work. Register, timbre, stereo width and dynamical depth have been used to keep every layer optimally distinctly audible, even when blending occurs.

In many ways, *Infinity – Pantonal Dronescape* bridges and connects literally dozens of millennia of human art, using up to date technology while including possibly paleolithic sound aesthetics, such as microtones and the focus on natural harmonics. The title can therefore be considered to be referring to two complementary meanings blending into one: on the one hand the exploration of infinite space-time – such as can be found in the works of astronomer Carl Sagan, but also to the exploration and imaginative reconstruction of paleolithic cave art and its rituals – such as can be found in the works of archaeologist Jean Clottes. Both have been major sources of inspiration to van Dillen for decades.

It has been the composer's wish to produce seriously long works for years. This so far longest of his works could be exhibited, featured in a temple or monastery, or even a cave, but it could also be performed in a concert hall, and would suit radio broadcasting, best at night. Ideally maybe it is heard in a semi open but quiet, empty or deserted, place, alone together, where each can choose to stand, to move around or to sit at will, rather than in a setting with only chairs and no space to really move around.

It turned out that current technology did not allow this work to be published as a single track, and even when cut in two it was too large. It is therefore found as technically split into three tracks, but musically these form an uninterrupted and contingent single body of sound.

## **Dronescaapes**

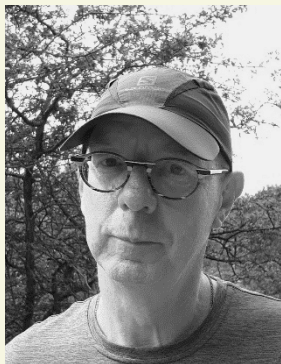
More Dronescaapes will be released on OIJ Records when completed. A word of warning: after careful listening, the world around you may not sound the same any longer.

## Oscar van Dillen

Oscar Ignatius Joannes van Dillen

('s-Hertogenbosch 1958) is composer and performer of music, professor of music at Codarts University for the Arts in Rotterdam, as well as visual artist. A polyglot and an erudite world citizen, he is also one of the pioneers from the early years of Wikipedia, having been founding president of Wikimedia

Nederland and serving as a trustee of the Wikimedia Foundation. Van Dillen has studied a wide variety of musical traditions with many renowned teachers. His music education having started at the age of 7, and performing both classical and rock music in his youth, van Dillen first studied North-Indian classical music (sitar, tabla, vocal) with Jamaluddin Bhartiya at the Tritantri School in Amsterdam and bansuri with Gurbachan Singh Sachdev at the Bansuri School of Music in Berkeley, California. Next, he studied classical and jazz flute at the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam. He took composition lessons from Misha Mengelberg. As a flutist, he was taught by Lens Derogée and Dieks Visser, and followed masterclasses from Pierre-Yves Artaud, Geoffrey Gilbert and Barthold Kuijken.



After his following postgraduate studies of medieval and Renaissance music with Paul Van Nevel in Leuven (Belgium), he studied classical and contemporary composition with, among others, Dick Raaymakers, Diderik Wagenaar and Gilius van Bergeijk at the Koninklijk Conservatory in The Hague, with Klaas de Vries, Peter-Jan Wagemans and René Uijlenhoet at the Rotterdam Conservatory and with Manfred Trojahn at the Robert Schumann College in Düsseldorf, where he also received lessons in conducting from Lutz Herbig. As a composer he furthermore followed masterclasses from, among others, Isang Yun, George Crumb, Jan van Vlijmen, Marek Stachowski, Zbigniew Bojarski and Gerard Brophy.

A founding member of the Rotterdam School of composers and the author of its manifesto, he currently works as professor of music at the Codarts University of the Arts Rotterdam since 1997, teaching composing, arranging, world music composition, music history and music theory in the Jazz-, the Pop-, the World music, the Classical music and the Music Education Academies of Codarts.

Oscar van Dillen is the inventor of *original world music composition*, combining strictly composed with improvised classical and folk traditions, and their techniques and mentalities for creating music: a new and contemporary form of art music.

He is also founder, composer, and artistic director of the Olduvai Ensemble for which he especially creates original world music compositions.

Van Dillen is a member of Nieuw Geneco and the Dutch-Flemish Society for Music Theory. As of 2020 his scores are published by Donemus. He collaborates with Donemus in publishing his recordings on OIJ Records.

Next to his fulltime work as composer, musician and pedagogue, van Dillen is also a visual artist. As composer, he has been a regular member of various juries, among which the yearly composition prize juries, in the Val Tidone Festival Competitions, since 2013.

Oscar van Dillen's personal website can be found at [www.oscarvandillen.com](http://www.oscarvandillen.com)

OIJRECORDS can be found at [www.oij-records.com](http://www.oij-records.com)

Donemus and Donemus Records can be found at [donemus.nl](http://donemus.nl)

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