

Oscar van Dillen



# DRONE SCAPE 6.0

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# Dronescape 6.0

**Dronescape 6.0** is the sixth in a series of albums, containing new Digital Symphonies by Oscar van Dillen. The work on this album was composed January-April 2021.

Music, cover art, art and booklet of this album were created by Oscar van Dillen.

Similar to the earlier Dronescape releases, this work can be considered to be an **Electronic or Digital Symphony**. This one-part work is called **Oneirology**, and it is the sixth Dronescape by Oscar van Dillen.

Dronescape 6.0 is the first in a subseries, the solo version of the work, establishing a kind of dreaming space; the following releases will contain extended collaborative versions with additional musicians, adding new original layers of music and meaning to this work.

## 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 *Drones* 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.

## Oneirology

In our current times of SARS-Covid pandemic, art in general, more specifically exhibitions, concerts and music performances and other events where an audience can meet creative artists, have in general been cancelled and made practically impossible in most places, mostly by government regulations that have so far proven to be as ineffective against the virus as they have been effective at disconnecting people. *Divide et rege* in action?

In our days, the world seems to be coming apart, coming apart again, we may be tempted to think, as humanity seems to have dealt with this before in the past. Indeed, there have been many past ages in which prophets of a kind have proclaimed the end of the world, with solutions offered within the context of their beliefs, mostly irrational solutions to irrational problems. Apocalyptic visions have thus helped establish many a tyrant in history. People that do not distinguish between belief and knowledge are tempted to believe that the current crises modern

Science describes are no different from similar historical situations. There are vital differences however, among which the rational nature of the problem descriptions. Most importantly, this time we can objectively observe the crises in progress: today we are facing real and planetary existential threats, not just to ourselves, but to most life.

To name three of these existential threats:

1. *Human Waste* (do we recall the plastics we see everywhere outdoors, are we aware that part of it is making us sterile in the next decades to come, which means possibly no more babies can be conceived and no more will be born?),
2. *Planetary Climate Change* (have we noticed the weather patterns change everywhere, and lack or overabundance of rainfalls in places, as well as some rivers ceasing to flow and others starting to regularly overflow, beginning to make large areas uninhabitable in the foreseeable future, are we aware that safe access to clean sweet water is fundamentally needed for all life, have we noticed

the unusual heat and cold waves accompanying the changing patterns of precipitation?),

3. *Artificial Intelligence* (merely the next technology it seems, but what is it used for -and it certainly is used globally already- how does it affect every aspect of daily life, not just human, and most importantly: who will decide on how to regulate its use, whom will we elect to defend us from the existential threats, which politicians, often said to be notoriously analphabetic where websites, online multinationals, automated systems, digital technologies and computers in general are concerned, who will have the courage to act upon what is fact, science, knowledge?).

Such huge existential threats, getting worse every day, seem to generally not get the attention they need and deserve, sometimes to the point of facing censorship or litigation. Small beginnings need to be made and long-term nurtured, starting with reconnecting real people, not just online aliases, in a rational and realistic context.

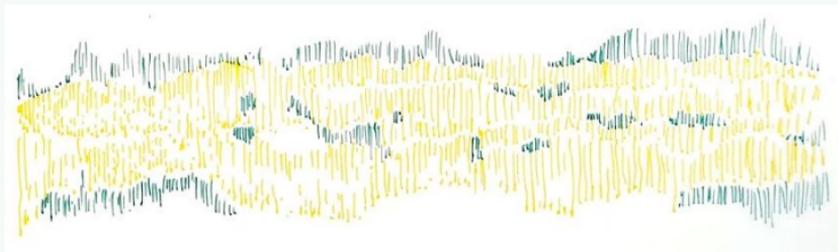
The composer decided with this work to create such a *small beginning*, a common space to listen and dream together. To create, within the scope of his expertise, a dedicated work of music: a dark dreaming space, inviting other professionals to dream together, to dream music together, closely collaborating in a Covid-proof manner, remotely connecting in a joint effort, creating fresh beginnings for what can become a musical alphabet for Babel\*, connecting and working together with specialists from various musical traditions.

In thus connecting, people enlarge their world yet make it come closer and seem smaller, more comprehensible, at a stroke. This is the major benefit of modern technology, without which the creation of this album would have been near impossible. You too are invited to connect, and listen or dream along, to face and escape reality and its daily nightmares, to imagine freely what to do, what to add, what to create: to imagine in the spirit of John Lennon.

\* See also the Babel Alphabet paintings by Oscar van Dillen (1993)

## Oneirology 6.0

The origins of the composing of Oneirology are thoughts on *Silence* and *Sound*. How silence is a relative reality just as sound, and how the interpenetration of both is needed for music. In an analogous way colour can be considered to exist in the interaction and relativity between light and darkness.



*Figure 1- mutual colourings of distinct qualities and quantities*

Created with a new set of so-called *chaotic oscillators*, then filtered and modulated using “artificially intelligent” modules using the latest algorithms, the listener hears both odd and familiar sounds, often frayed at their edges,

appearing at and dancing between various places in the stereo field: silences colouring sounds and sounds colouring silences.

Music traditionally uses two distinct sound types: tones and noise. Out of the former, melodies and harmonies are created, the latter are used for creating rhythms and sound effects. The word *noise* means a lot of things in different contexts, in music it is used to denote unpitched sounds, that is, sounds that consist of a complex of frequencies which are not experienced as a complex of tones. The word *tone* is equal to the word *pitch*, which means a single performed frequency. However, when a tone, a certain pitch, a so-called single frequency, is performed, automatically accompanying frequencies will be produced as well, related tones, the so-called harmonics, producing always a timbre, a tone colour or tone quality, and never a physical single pitch.

A tone type of sound has pitch (and pitch change), colour (and timbre development), but also loudness

(including loudness changes). To complete a description of a particular sound, its duration and change or evolution over time, as well as its location and pattern of movement through space, need to be included. Any more or less stable harmonic complex of tones can be called a drone. In this broad sense, there are not only the traditional drones in the music of Asia, ranging from the tanpura and swarpeti in classical traditions of India to the overtone singing in for example Tuva, Central Asia, to any music employing a bagpipe or a hurdy gurdy, but certainly the 12 tone serialist compositions of the 1950-1970 Avant-Garde composers could also qualify as contemporary drones of a kind, harping on in ever recycled 12 tone patterns, depending on how one listens to them, for example many of the *Klavierstücke* by Stockhausen, most explicitly his IX.

Silence is the background bed on which music tacitly rests, lest it should compete with sounds outside of it. For this reason, concert venues are acoustically isolated from the outside world, and in our time, when mobile listening

has become standard practice, modern earphones are equipped with advanced silencing technology for silencing outside noise. Silence differs from place to place however, just as sound does, just as an instrument or orchestra will sound different in different venues and circumstances, so their respective accompanying silences will differ. Silence is not merely relative, although the anatomy of the ear appears to be able to make it so. Just like there are muscles in the eye, the iris, that can regulate the amount of light let in, there are muscles in the ear that regulate the amount of sound passed through. These are the muscles that operate on the tympanic membrane and the muscles that operate on the ossicles. Our ears naturally adapt to a listening environment by adjusting to its general and maximum sound level, thus modelling the silence we perceive or can perceive.

When entering a silent venue, we need time to fully appreciate its character, similar to entering a low light environment. Only with patience, a rare and valuable contemporary commodity, can we start to enjoy silence.

The daily world and its goings on are known to be both impatient and noisy, practically in every time of history they must have been, even though today we have evolved to new heights of impatience and noise levels, by-products of the Romantic ideal of Progress, so the silent venues are like sacred places, placed inside but also outside of, or next to, the daily world. When listening with silencing earphones on the road, we experience a kind of mobile temple-like personal bubble, letting us move in the world without being or feeling part of it. A thousand years ago, retreats and meditations served a similar purpose which can be achieved with technological means in an instant today, but by foregoing the traditional mental and physical preparations. Silence has a quality of disconnecting us from the world around us. A silence in seclusion seems to confirm the feeling that there are inner and outer worlds that can actually be disconnected, if only for a particular duration, that the body and the spirit are separate entities, even though today, thanks to science, we know both are different aspects of one and the same human being.

John Cage made this disconnection-reconnection a topic in his work, in that he advocated the windows of his New York apartment to be opened during concerts, so that the outside world and its noises could enter and join the music, thus bridging the traditional gap, and joining, merging, uniting, the supposedly separated inside and outside human worlds. Mind becomes Body and Body becomes Mind, Sound becomes Silence and Silence becomes Sound, everything can be reconnected.



*Figure 2 - intrusions of sound and silence*

Oneirology was created in this spirit, to listen to it while allowing the sounds of the world around you to enter and intrude into, to join, its musical flow, acquiring and giving new sounds, silences and meanings to both worlds.

The science of Quantum mechanics has demonstrated that no particle event can be observed without somehow changing its character and specifics, this makes one wonder about the active component in perception of music: can the listener become part of the creative process?

Finally, the composer invited professional friends to enter this music with their own original contributions, carefully recorded remotely (at the moment of creating this work the SARS-Covid pandemic that started in 2019 is still largely unchecked in its spread) to be filtered, modulated, mixed together by van Dillen, to create results that carry both contributing artists' approval.

## **Tracks**

1. Oneirology – duration 53:20

Total duration: 53:20

## **Dronescapes**

The collaborative versions of Dronescape 6.\* will be released on OIJ Records when completed.

New Dronescapes are in the making, you can follow Oscar van Dillen and Donemus Records publications by their websites but also e.g. on Twitter.

*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, 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.

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

He 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 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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