



Image: Ebru Yidiz

**Laurie Anderson**

# **Here Comes the Ocean & The Calling**

**2020 Teachers Resource**

**New Zealand  
Festival OF THE ARTS**

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Your guide to make the most of the festival experience.

# CAST AND CREATIVES

**Laurie Anderson** (United States) [laurieanderson.com](http://laurieanderson.com)

**Greg Cohen** – double bass (United States)

**Eyvind Kang** – violin (Canada, United States)

**Rubin Kodheli** – violin, cello (Albania) [rubinkodheli.com](http://rubinkodheli.com)

**Horomona Horo** – taonga pūoro (Aotearoa / New Zealand) [horomonahoro.com](http://horomonahoro.com)

**Shahzad Ismaily** – percussion (Pakistan)

**Megan Collins, Jo Hilder, Budi Putra** and **Gregory Street** members of **Gamelan Wellington**  
[gamelan.org.nz](http://gamelan.org.nz)

Lou Reed Drones is performed by **Stewart Hurwood** (United States)

## Laurie Anderson

Laurie Anderson is one of America's most renowned – and daring – creative pioneers. Known primarily for her multimedia presentations, she has cast herself in roles as varied as visual artist, composer, poet, photographer, filmmaker, electronics whiz, vocalist and instrumentalist. Initially trained in violin and sculpting, Laurie pursued a variety of performance art projects in New York during the 1970s, focusing particularly on language, technology and visual imagery. She became more widely known outside the art world when her single *O Superman* reached number two on the UK singles chart in 1981.

Laurie has toured the United States and internationally numerous times with shows ranging from simple spoken word performances to elaborate multimedia events. She has published six books and has written the entry for New York for the Encyclopedia Britannica. Her visual work has been presented in major museums throughout the United States and Europe.

As a composer, Laurie has contributed music to films by Wim Wenders and Jonathan Demme; dance pieces by Bill T. Jones and Trisha Brown, and a score for Robert Lepage's theatre production, *The Far Side of the Moon*. In 1997 she curated the two-week Meltdown Festival at Royal Festival Hall in London and she was Guest Director of Brighton Festival in 2016.

Recognised worldwide as a ground-breaking leader in the use of technology in the arts, Laurie is a pioneer in electronic music and has invented several devices that she has used in her recordings and performance art shows. In 2002, Laurie was appointed the first and only artist-in-residence of NASA, which culminated in her 2004 touring solo performance *The End of the Moon*.

Her film *Heart of a Dog* was chosen as an official selection of the 2015 Venice and Toronto Film Festivals. In the same year, her exhibition *Habeas Corpus* opened at the Park Avenue Armory to wide critical acclaim and in 2016 she received Yoko Ono's Courage Award for the Arts for that project.

In February 2019, Laurie won her first ever Grammy Award after four nominations, for the album *Landfall*, which was a collaboration with Kronos Quartet. A haunting cycle of songs observing the devastating wake of Hurricane Sandy, the album reflects on how human memory can be stronger than catastrophe, as well as on her own loss of many items of personal significance.

She lives in New York City.

# Here Comes the Ocean

Here comes the ocean and the waves  
Down by the sea  
Here comes the ocean and the waves  
Crashing in

- The Velvet Underground

Violinist Laurie Anderson and her string ensemble – bassist Greg Cohen, violist Eyvind Kang, cellist Rubin Kodheli and percussionist Shahzad Ismaily – present a concert featuring the songs and texts of Laurie and her late husband and collaborator Lou Reed of The Velvet Underground.

Joining the international ensemble is taonga pūoro composer and musician Horomona Horo and Megan Collins and Budi Putra from Gamelan Wellington. Backed by the drones – the majestic and strangely harmonic guitar feedback soundscape performed by Stewart Hurwood – let the music wash over you. Both Laurie and Lou wrote many songs about the ocean and these are interpreted, arranged and merged by the musicians into an entirely new symphonic work.

## The Calling

Improvisational and incantatory, this immersive performance will feature Laurie Anderson and her string ensemble, Greg Cohen, Eyvind Kang and Rubin Kodheli, and percussionist Shahzad Ismaily, alongside New Zealand musicians, including Horomona Horo and Megan Collins, Jo Hilder, Budi Putra and Gregory Street Gamelan Wellington.

As well as Laurie's own writing, *The Calling* takes text from *Rebel in the Soul: An Ancient Egyptian Dialogue Between a Man and His Destiny* – a translation of a 4000-year-old discourse between a person and their soul, which speaks to us with intriguing relevance for today. *The Calling* is dedicated to the spirit of Laurie's niece Thea Anderson, who taught dance in New Zealand and lost her life here in a car accident on her 25th birthday.

## Lou Reed Drones

*Lou Reed Drones* is a standalone installation of Lou Reed's guitars, is also part of the performance *Here Comes the Ocean*.

Expect to be mesmerised by this "visceral, emotional and spiritual installation" (New York Live Arts) in a provocative sound experience featuring electric guitars belonging to the late guitarist and frontman of legendary The Velvet Underground, Lou Reed.

The sonic range produced by the feedback loop installation has been described as both a "beautiful siren-song and ... ugly, as the guitars scream and growl" (The Argus UK).

Presented by Reed's partner and fellow artist Laurie Anderson and performed by his guitar technician Stewart Hurwood, *Lou Reed Drones* is both a tribute to Reed's exploratory genius and an invitation to audiences to commune with the unique sounds in whatever way that works best for them. Hurwood says: "Sit, lay, listen, meditate, sleep, cry, dance, chant, perform Tai Chi – whatever they get emotionally from the sounds they can react to."



Image: Da Ping Luo

# GENRE

In the musical field, improvisation is the art of composing and performing at the same time; in other words, it is inventing in the moment. Many people call improvisation music for musicians, as the experience of playing the work becomes equally important as the performance itself. Improvisation has played a major role in the development of 20<sup>th</sup> century music genres such as blues, jazz, and jazz fusion where performers improvise solos, melodies and accompaniments.

Good improvisors –

- Know the basics – scales and chord progression
- Embrace mistakes and take risks
- Start with a seed or point of inspiration
- Put their own identity into the songs

Read and watch the Guardian's series on underground music: [The Guardian: Free improvisation](#)

## QUOTES FROM LAURIE ANDERSON

"It's about giving people the opportunity to live in the present. I had to really pay attention to the people playing: I was floating on a kind of crazy cloud, and I kept trying to slow it down more—you have to stop your mind to listen to this stuff. I just tried to focus on the meaning of the words, and that made me even slower...You realize this is a study on the nature of mind. It is quite an amazing thing to learn." On improvisation, [van-us.atavist.com/the-nature-of-the-mind](http://van-us.atavist.com/the-nature-of-the-mind)

"As soon as the concert started, I was overcome by a sense of freedom, and since then I've loved to improvise. It feels as if we were building a big ship that floats above us in the sky, a vessel that we can turn this way and that as we please, on which we can sail away." ON *Here Comes the Ocean*, from the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg performance programme, [elbphilharmonie.de/en/whats-on/here-comes-the-ocean/11626](http://elbphilharmonie.de/en/whats-on/here-comes-the-ocean/11626)

"You know playing for dogs, they're an ideal audience. It's also just wonderful playing for another species. I think that's a great future of music" speaking with New Zealand Festival of the Arts about *Concert for Dogs*.

"Both Lou [Reed] and I wrote a lot about the ocean. Not just the physical ocean but also metaphorical ocean and the things it represents. I wanted to make something that featured the drone feedback from Lou's guitars, which provide the big wave musicians are all surfing on. It will be both improv work and songs we both wrote and will feature my string quartet who are just extraordinary, and we're collaborating with musicians from New Zealand as well so it will be an amazing evening." On *Here Comes the Ocean*, from the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg performance programme <https://www.elbphilharmonie.de/en/whats-on/here-comes-the-ocean/11626>

"I've always been attached to the drones. Lou also worked with them very much. They are earbleedingly loud; it's music you can walk into. It's a little bit like meditation for me with the microtones." On *Lou Reed Drones*, [van-us.atavist.com/the-nature-of-the-mind](http://van-us.atavist.com/the-nature-of-the-mind)

# FURTHER RESOURCES AND READINGS

## WATCH

An interview with Laurie Anderson talking about her role at the New Zealand Festival of the Arts as Guest Curator: [youtu.be/yaeGmRlxHGQ](https://youtu.be/yaeGmRlxHGQ)

Laurie Anderson, a life of storytelling: [youtube.com/watch?v=dUo-dqMriY8](https://youtube.com/watch?v=dUo-dqMriY8)

Watch Horomona Horo, Taonga Pūoro (traditional Māori instruments) Composer and Practitioner demonstrate the pūtātara, kōauau and pūrerehua: [horomonahoro.com/watch--listen.html](https://horomonahoro.com/watch--listen.html)

Watch the trailer for *Heart of a Dog*: [youtu.be/8PLWVXICQyM](https://youtu.be/8PLWVXICQyM)

## LISTEN

Lou Reed and Laurie Anderson, two songs about the ocean:

The Velvet Underground - Ocean: [youtu.be/uuWncuGRmoo](https://youtu.be/uuWncuGRmoo)

Laurie Anderson - Do All Oceans Have Walls?: [youtu.be/tbMj\\_1POyiQ](https://youtu.be/tbMj_1POyiQ)

Listen to an RNZ radio interview with Horomona Horo:

[rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/teahikaa/audio/201799747/horomona-horo-taonga-puoro](https://rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/teahikaa/audio/201799747/horomona-horo-taonga-puoro)

Hear Laurie Anderson talk to RNZ about the performances she has chosen for the New Zealand Festival of the Arts: [rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/standing-room-only/audio/2018718501/co-curator-of-the-nz-festival-of-the-arts-laurie-anderson](https://rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/standing-room-only/audio/2018718501/co-curator-of-the-nz-festival-of-the-arts-laurie-anderson)

## READ

"What do you think are good principals for young musicians? For musicians it is very important to know that you are not just expressing yourself. You are communicating to another person." Read an interview with Laurie Anderson: [van-us.atavist.com/the-nature-of-the-mind](https://van-us.atavist.com/the-nature-of-the-mind)

"I'm beginning to trust it [improvisation] more. It used to feel incredibly risky, but it can be thrilling. Like building a big ship in the air that you can move around." Read a profile on Laurie in the Listener Magazine here: [noted.co.nz/currently/currently-profiles/laurie-anderson-nz-festival-bringing-dog-songs-lou-reeds-guitars](https://noted.co.nz/currently/currently-profiles/laurie-anderson-nz-festival-bringing-dog-songs-lou-reeds-guitars)

"Lou would hate his instruments gathering dust, he was about moving forward and creating".

Stewart Hurwood on Drones:

[brightonfestival.org/news/interview\\_stewart\\_hurwood\\_on\\_lou\\_reed\\_drones/](https://brightonfestival.org/news/interview_stewart_hurwood_on_lou_reed_drones/)

## GO FURTHER

Take a look at a history of Laurie Anderson's career on The Art Story:

[theartstory.org/artist/anderson-laurie](https://theartstory.org/artist/anderson-laurie)

Explore performances and songs from Laurie Anderson through the decades:

1980s - O Superman: [youtu.be/Vkfpi2H8tOE](https://youtu.be/Vkfpi2H8tOE)

1990s - The Ugly One With the Jewels: [youtu.be/ZmY5MVrXJZ4](https://youtu.be/ZmY5MVrXJZ4)

2000s - Transitory Life: [youtu.be/FKEQ1NUyiwY](https://youtu.be/FKEQ1NUyiwY)

2010s - The Water Rises (with Kronos Quartet): [youtu.be/MIVXBxAuDGw](https://youtu.be/MIVXBxAuDGw)

# PROVOCATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

## PRE-FESTIVAL

Listen to a piece of music from each of the performers. You can find videos of them performing on YouTube. Discuss the differences and similarities in the musical ideas and composition.

Discuss improvisation. What is the history of improvisation e.g. Jazz in the 20<sup>th</sup> century? What does it mean to improvise in music? What does it sound like? What skills do you need to improvise both individually and collaboratively?

Read the information about the performance, what are you expecting to see and hear? What style of music do you think this will be?

## AT THE FESTIVAL

How does the exterior of the theatre capture your attention? Who else is attending the performance?

What do you notice about the stage before the performance starts? What sort of energy is there in the theatre?

What or who captures your attention during the performance? What questions do you have about the piece? How are the performers interacting with each other?

## AFTER THE FESTIVAL

What were some of the thoughts you had as you listened to the performance?

How did the collaborative format create something new?

Did you enjoy the style of music? Why?

Did you see any instruments you didn't recognise or haven't heard before?

How did the performers interact with each other and how did this effect the overall performance?

How do you feel knowing that this was all improvised, that the performers didn't have a set piece to play?

Would it feel different to listen to this performance on your phone or speakers at home? Why?

## IN THE MUSIC CLASS

Call and Response

This technique involves one person playing one bar of music. Start out with something very basic, such as one pitch played with a rhythmic variation. The other students repeat the measure, matching the dynamics and style as closely as possible.

You can alter this exercise by playing an incomplete phrase, and having another student complete it. However, make sure that each student who follows continues the call using the same number of beats in the measure.

From UK based resource, Open Your Mouth and Sing. [Click through for more improvisational games in this ever growing resource.](#)

**Need something more? Contact your SchoolFest team with any questions about the performance.**

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