

Why don't you just write an article?

- composing with a complex musical language and difficult texts

Abstract:

For many years I have been interested in the fact that we, as individuals in different collectives, have to look at new ways of being together, rather than cultivating an individualism that has long since been exhausted. The question I want to ask in different ways in my works, is how we function together. What strategies do we have for interaction in a time the sociologist Richard Sennet believes is characterized by a late capitalism that, rather than building character, reduces our ability to solve things together. Whether this is correct or not can be debated, but in any case, Sennett's books *Corrosion of character* (1999) and *Together* (2013) are interesting analyses of the influence of the great social machine right down to the individual's ability to see and be with others. Richard Sennett asks if not the market and cultural commerce's false representation of us as sovereign, individual consumers and "experiencers" of the world only confuses people and makes us believe that we don't have to develop our abilities in interaction and togetherness? And must not our communities, the ways of being together, change in step with the enormous pressure from the market place in our "flexible late capitalism".

This is the background, represented by texts from Richard Sennett, Jean de Salzmann and René Girard in the three works; *Together*, *Public Behaviour* and *Social Behaviour*. All three pieces are the result of compositional processes where the semantic meaning and the musical material is brought together by mélange, contradiction, polyphony, mimesis and instrumentation. The musical expression and the reflections on the lack of attention, togetherness, cooperation, listening, the rise in aggression, mimetic envy and other topics are composed together in both musical forms and theatrical outcries

But does this really work? Is the content and concepts of the sociological and philosophical texts possible to perceive when brought into a musical works with complex instrumental structures and vocal expressions? Does it communicate, and if it does, what does it communicate? Is there a possibility of a unique mélange of musical expression/emotion and rational/analytic semantic meaning, or will the layers of semantic and musical meaning become too dense to make any sense? The questions will be raised through presenting the three works as audio recordings and videos.

AEC European Platform for Artistic Research in Music (EPARM) 2026
Norwegian Academy of Music (Oslo, Norway)

Research Presentations



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Henrik Hellstenius (born 1963), a Norwegian composer, studied composition at the Norwegian Academy of Music and with Gérard Grisey at Conservatoire Supérieur.

Hellstenius's output encompasses a large range of works: chamber music, orchestral works, opera, electro-acoustic music and music for theatre and dance. His music has been performed frequently at concerts and festivals around the world. He has received the Norwegian Edvard Award in 2000 and in 2022 he received a Spellemann Award (Norway's Grammy) as 'Composer of the Year' for the release *Past & Presence*. Hellstenius has been composer in residence with the Bergen International Festival 2011, Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra 2013/2014, and the June in Buffalo Festival 2017.

Hellstenius is also a professor of composition at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo and has been a guest teacher of composition at festivals, conservatories and universities in Germany, USA, Austria, France and the Nordic countries. His artistic research constitutes of three major projects: **Extended Composition** (2018-21), **Music With the Real** (2014-17) and **Towards and expanding field of art music** (2008-11)