

Oscar van Dillen



# DRONE SCAPE 2

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# Dronescape 2

**Dronescape 2** is the second 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 2**

This second Dronescape album as a whole is of practically identical duration as its predecessor, yet in contrast to Dronescape 1 the works on this second album each have a cyclical or circular form, and each is of a rather longer duration. Moreover, the character of these works is more abstract and also more hypnotizing, mesmerizing, perhaps trance-like, but certainly dream-like.

There are 2 works on this album:

- Genomes – Dronescape on B flat  
(duration 40 minutes 33 seconds)
- Emanations – Dronescape on G  
(duration 27 minutes 30 seconds)

*Genomes* takes the idea behind *Pulsations* (from Dronescape 1) to a next level, distilling a far greater variety of sounds from the very same core samples which resembled heartbeats. It is solely composed of rhythmically used elements. The listener enters a hypnotic timescape, possibly evoking the inner sounds of some primeval soup containing amino acids, rhythmically bubbling, but then again a scraping breath is heard, and later some mechanical sounds, the latter probably referring to a less distant time. The overall ABCBDBA form can be said to have three “chorus” sections, in which 4 layers of prime number bpm tempi (239, 281, 313 and 359 bpm, but these are the resolutions of slower 5 part beats, each divided in 2-3) intersect and overlap, and 4 “verses”

in which each of the 4 tempo layers is heard more to the foreground. Although the music never becomes a simple beat, nor uses a single tempo, and certainly no time signatures, it conceivably implies some dance as well. The choice for prime number bpm's was made, because once starting off at slightly different points, they will completely coincide perhaps once only, if at all; therewith a rhythmically virtually endless development with ever new interferences is made possible. The beats and the 4 prime number bpm's act like primal amino acids forming longer strains. The overall form is nevertheless composed as cyclical, despite the non-cyclical tempi.

Although the "chorus" sections each last for about 4 minutes, a certain modest *hook* in the middle of them is in fact easiest to be recognized in the swarm of half familiar structures: at 10'00"-10'30", then again at 21'30"-22'00" and finally at 31'00"-31'30". This moment appears three times, though differing in sound and volume, but these most clearly feature short solos of the 4 prime number bpm tempi. The final "verse" connects back to the

beginning, although it has been given a short acoustic ending for the purpose of this release.

*Emanations* is composed from a set of 9 chords recorded on a Yamaha CFX concert grand piano, with various tunings, playing techniques, and recording positions. As to the latter, some chords were recorded with microphones close (close miked) and others distant with a more room sound, with more distant microphones. The full set of chords was recorded both *una corda* and *tre corde*. The latter is the normal grand piano sound, but to achieve *una corda* a grand piano offers the left pedal, shifting the keyboard and complete hammer mechanism, so only 1 string instead of the usual 3 are played at each tone; a softer, but more particularly, a much thinner sound. With a careful left-right panorama setting to each of the instruments thus created, a very wide stereo image of sounds is the result. Filtering and resampling modulations were added, as well as a minimum of transpositions, to create even more texture and depth, so the overall result has a wide perspective and a deep relief, developing over time. Briefly after the opening section, the piano

transforms into what sounds like a muted string ensemble, later further transformations will follow.



*the 9 basic chords used in Emanations, each adding 2 tones in the middle of a perfect 15th*

Each of the chords was recorded in the following unusual microtonal piano tunings:

- A4 = 380 Hz – meantone tuning
- A4 = 415 Hz – Pythagorean tuning
- A4 = 445 Hz – just intonation tuning

These three tone unconventional non-triadic chords allow for the intended mixtures of the unequal tuning temperaments, because they are at the same time



characteristic and open to other harmonies, so they allow for a wide range of harmonic and sound mixtures, so much so that at around 20 minutes, organ sounds (a wind instrument) were created from the sustain tails of the long sounding piano strings. In the complex microtonal mixtures sometimes traditional triads emerge. Such mixtures also transform into gong-, and gamelan-like sounds, quite remote from the original piano, but there has been no cheating: everything one hears has been meticulously created from the 9 microtonal piano chords only. Listening, we enter a rich introvert and microscopic world full of details revealed within piano sounds, that are normally hidden behind extravert musical gestures.

Like *Genomes*, *Emanations* also has a “chorus” (here at the beginning and ending, although references to this are heard along the way as well) and the resulting overall ABA form is composed cyclical. Between these choruses using an intimate piano sound, wider sound spaces are explored, and the piano transforms completely. What we hear is a close approximation of the sounds the composer heard as a young child every day, not knowing where

they came from, a close approximation, intimate internal emanations. In his youth usually heard as loud as a radio playing somewhere, but when looking for the sound source it was never found, and the strange music simply faded out again, a personal *Harmony of the Spheres* perhaps. Reminiscences of similar worlds can perhaps be found in György Ligeti's organ work *Harmonies* and in the slow part of Klaas de Vries' *Piano concerto*.

## **Dronescales**

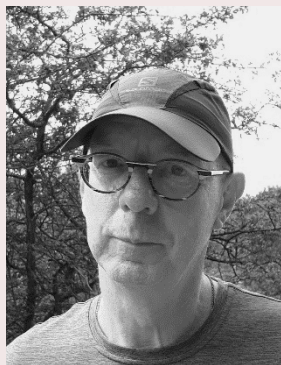
More Dronescales will be released on OIJ Records when completed. A word of warning: after careful listening, the world around you may not sound the same any longer.

## 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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