

Sámi Rhythm, Sounds of Nature, Yoik: Contemporary Research in Acoustic Ecology

Symposium

November 3-4, 2025. Tromsø



Jakop Janssønn. Sámi Ritmmat. Copyright: Inga-Wiktoria Påve

Organized by the Research Group SAMFORSK and in collaboration with the Dissemination Project DIGIJOIK, and the Research Project SHARING OUR KNOWLEDGE. The Arctic University of Norway Museum and UiT.

November, 3. Museum Auditorium. Starts at 12.15

Opening: Rossella Ragazzi presents the program of the symposium

A collective exercise in *deep listening*.
We begin the symposium with the complete listening of:

Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, Áillohaš : Beaivi, áhčážan (1988)

CD, Published by DAT. Length: 1 h 02 minutes

*Introduction to the work of Valkeapää by **Katri Somby**, Associate Professor in History, Sámi College.*

The listening is followed by insights: **Harald Gaski**, Professor in Literature and Valkeapää's translator; **Ol Johan Gaup** current Director at DAT, **Katri Somby**, Sámi media Expert and Historian, **Jakop Janssønn**, Musician and PhD Research Fellow, Conservatory of Music, UMAK.

The conversation after the listening would take the form of a live podcast, reflecting on the listening itself, the work, and Nils-Aslak Valkeapää's understanding of Sámi ritmmat.

Session total time: 2 hours

Coffee pause: 15 min. (Coffee for sale at the Museum Rotunda)

Museum Auditorium:

Andreas Kühne PhD Fellow, UMAK Conservatory of Music

Lecture: «Sounding Rávdnjevággi: In between currents and the overgrown árran. Unfolding the audiovisual collage of the Rávdnji exhibition».

Session total time: 30 minutes



Andreas Kühne sounding sea urchins and shells alongside the Rystraumen. Copyright Medvedeva & Kühne.

Pause: 10 min.

In the space at the 2d floor of the Museum, inside the Exhibition “**Rávdnj: The Turbulent Stream**”:

Presentation of a new album from the museum’s luohiti collections. Digijoik Project in collaboration with Sharing our Knowledge. Ol Johan Gaup, Harald Gaski. Chair Camilla Brattland.

Project Leader “Sharing our Knowledge” Camilla Brattland presents a newly composed Déatnu luohiti on the topic of climate change.

Dajahusat: Harald Gaski

Luohiti: Jalvvi Niillas Holmberg

Session total time : 25 minutes

(includes also listening to the track)

Closing the first day

Second Day:

4th of November

Árdna, Campus Breivika, starts at 12.30

Introduction: Rossella Ragazzi

Acoustic Performance:

“Yoikabile in Practice: Transferring Yoik from Voice to Bow”

(A musical language exploration with Jakop Janssønn, Ol Johan Gaup, and cellist Mildrid Taklo)

This event will also be recorded for the *Sámi ritmmat* podcast.

Session length: 45 min

Jakop Janssønn, PhD Fellow, UMAK

Lecture: «Reflections on what Sámi ritmmat is as a toolset for performative work from and with Sápmi»

(Presentation in **North Sámi**, with **English subtitles**)

Follows Q&A from the audience.

Session length: 30 min

Pause: 15 minutes



Still from the video "Advocate of Yoik" with Ande Somby. Copyright Nicola Renzi

Nicola Renzi, Researcher in Anthropology and Ecology of Sound, University Bologna and Turin.

Lecture: Towards biocultural sustainability in soundscape conservation. Shared listenings from Sápmi

Session length: 30 minutes

Camilla Brattland, Associate Professor (Project leader, Digijoik), **Trude Fonneland**, Professor, **Rossella Ragazzi** Associate Professor, **Ol Johan Gaup**, DAT Director, **Harald Gaski**, Professor, **Risten Anine Gaup**, Artist and Digijoik Research Assistant.

Panel

DIGIJOIK, in retrospect. Bikko Nillás biography and the problem of translating dajahusat.

Session length: 25 min

(Including listening to some sound tracks)

Luohtevuorkkás



Coffee Pause: 15 minutes

Ellen Marie Steen PhD Fellow, UMAK : Summing up the two days and then the floor opens for the participants and the audience to comment in a circle around the árran at Árdna.

End of the symposium

ABSTRACTS

Andreas Kühne:

Sounding Rávdnjevággi: In between currents and the overgrown árran. Unfolding the audiovisual collage of the Rávdnji exhibition.

This presentation is an extended listening to the practice, thoughts and encounters behind the audiovisual element Polina Medvedeva, Elina Waage Mikalsen and I contributed to Rávdnji - Den strie straumen: on Sámi traces in the Tromsø region, the permanent exhibition at The Arctic University Museum of Norway, which opened in June 2024.

Sat around the árran –a millstone with video projection, a narration by Elin Anna Labba from her book “The Rocks Will Echo Our Sorrow” opens into a multichannel sound and video collage of today’s Rávdnjevággi and Romsavággi recorded in the wake of autumn, when the reindeer would have normally migrated south only return in Giddadálvi — spring winter the next year, swimming across the strong currents of Rávdnji/Rystraumen both ways. Layered within field recordings, an archival recording of the Stuoranjárga yoik and a new yoik by Elina Waage Mikalsen

sounding a birch tree on Rávdnjemuotki evoke the longing for the many yoiks that were forcibly moved towards silence on a journey elsewhere to return, as Labba describes. Meanwhile, intensified global warming –referred to as Arctic amplification–, wind turbines and plans for an all year Arctic ski-resort impact biodiversity, Sámi heritage, reindeer herding and local residents. Elements in Joar Nango's exhibition design and the audiovisual collage bring out these threats and pay tribute to Margrethe Kittí and to the new Sámi renaissance. During the presentation I will share audio, photo, and video material of the making process and expand on our interest in listening with landscapes as living archives.

The contribution is also an important case study within my PhD research at the UiT, Academy of Music. As a sound artist and scholar in electronic music and music technology, the equipment I engage with –made using silicon alloys and copper– are linked to contested mineral prospects in Sápmi. The lacking politics of listening in my own experience of institutionalised music education led to engaging with the ambiguity of my own relations to place through field recording which informs my experiments with the concept of feedback improvisation, sonifying things / objects as a way of sounding relations, histories and imaginaries while questioning the conduct and bias of a visitor. “Feedback improvisation: On reciprocal modes of listening and sounding” is an ongoing artistic research where I aim to carefully look into sound as multisensory modes of sense and place making to face industrialisation and settler entanglements to human and more-than-human landscapes in Sápmi.

Nicola Renzi:

Towards biocultural sustainability in soundscape conservation. Shared listenings from Sápmi

This paper addresses the epistemic and methodological blind spots in the fields that shaped my training as a non-Indigenous scholar in the study of Arctic sonic environments. While conservation bioacoustics has generally treated nature sounds as pristine and acoustically independent objects, Sámi acoustemologies understand sonic environments as living repositories of yoik and oral stories—dimensions often relegated to cultural or music studies in mainstream scholarship. Approaches to environmental sounds in both acoustic humanities and natural sciences remain largely uncommunicative, bound to observational methods that silence local epistemes and reproduce settler dichotomies of “nature” sharply separated from “culture”. As a result, they fall short of satisfactorily engaging with heritages that are not separable in these categories, but rather relationally shared between people and their animate environments.

Yoik—as a heritage inheriting its notes from the voices of the land (Valkeapää 2001; Skaltje 2005)—is exemplary of this relationality. It unsettles disciplinary boundaries and calls academic inquiry toward a different mode of listening and research storytelling: one that hears yoik as *more than music*, and environmental sounds as possible yoik in the land. At a time of accelerating environmental crisis, catastrophic biodiversity loss, and voracious extractivism, what role can heritage-making play in acknowledging and safeguarding the yoik heard in the sound of the wind, in the gurgling of streams, or in the buzzing of mosquitoes?

In this presentation, critical reflections on the theoretical shortcomings outlined above are interwoven with sounds and visuals from two co-designed projects that—developed over a decade of collaborations with juoigít, sound scholars and artists in Sápmi—explore possible

answers to this pivotal question foregrounding biocultural sustainability in soundscape conservation. The first project is the audio-anthology *Muitalusat guldaleami birra. Histories of Listening from Sápmi*—a compilation of field recordings and oral stories shared from all over Sápmi, developed as multimedia output of my recently defended doctoral dissertation. The second is *Advocate of Yoik*, an in-progress film co-authored with Ánde Somby, which explores yoik as both a relational vocal practice shared with the land, and a form of ecological advocacy grounded in the life narrative of the juoigi.

Jakop Janssønn:

«Njámmat – njoarostit»

«Reflections on what Sámi ritmmat is as a toolset for performative work from and with Sápmi»

Njámmat – njoarostit (“To gather the lasso and throw it”) is an artistic research project that explores the rhythmic dimensions of Sámi musical traditions from the perspective of an instrumentalist and composer.

The research asks how rhythmic knowledge can emerge through artistic encounters between performer, tradition, and environment, generating authenticity through a holistic understanding of rhythm as movement, dialogue, and collaboration.

Drawing on Indigenous methodologies, rhythm is approached as a living, relational force that exists in language, yoik, the drum, and the land itself.

In this presentation, I reflect on both artistic and academic outcomes of the project, presenting materials from my process, including the podcast series Sámi ritmmat, performances such as Juovssaheadji and Luohteárdna, and reflective perspectives that approach rhythm as embodied knowledge and presence.

The project contributes to the understanding of rhythm as an Indigenous mode of knowing within contemporary artistic research.

Camilla Brattland, Harald Gaski, Ol Johan Gaup:

Digijoik/Sharing our Knowledge

Luohtevuorkkás - Deanuluodit 1952

The album *Luohtevuorkkás - Deanuluodit 1952* as part of the series «Luohtevuorkkás» is the fourth publication from the University Museum’s collection of northern Norwegian folk music and luohiti. This album consists of 37 unique tracks and are performed by the juoigat Ole Aslaksen, Nils Olav Utsi, Samuel Ante and Astrid Eriksen all recorded in the Deatnu valley by Arnt Bakke in 1952. The publication is the result of a collaboration between DAT, DeanuInstituhtta and the University Museum with funding from the Sami Parliament.

Deatnu luohiti

The «Deatnu luohiti» was commissioned as part of the “Sharing Our Knowledge” project (in Sámi: “Juogadit min máhtu”) to conceptualize the close ties between people and the Deatnu river, and to communicate its significance as well as the sorrow and loss following from the decline in river ice and flows, the disappearing river boat culture, and the invasion of the pink salmon. The dajahusat have been crafted by professor Harald Gaski and the luohiti by Niilas Holmberg. In this presentation, Gaski will explain the meaning of the dajahusat and we will listen to the tune given by Holmberg.

Camilla Brattland, Ol Johan Gaup, Risten Anine Gaup, Trude Fonneland, Rossella Ragazzi, Harald Gaski:

DIGIJOIK, in retrospect. Bikko Nillás biography and the problem of translating dajahusat.

Our presentation focuses on some of Bikko Nillás's *luodit*¹. He was from Šuoššjávri, near Karasjokha, born in 1906.

Bikko Nillás, in his unique style, created nuanced and very vocal *luodit*, whose *dajahusat* (lyrics) are poetic, evoke places, stories of persons and situations that were meaningful to the performer and the audience of the time.

Some of Bikko Nillás's *dajahusat* were only recently translated from Northern Sámi to Norwegian and English, revealing layered interpretations and opening for a fruitful discussion about the possibility to translate them, and how, without impinging on confidentiality for the communities where the *luodit* belong. Some of the lyrics address ethical questions, especially those related to persons and biographical facts that still resonate in the present for the family members, or the communities who know about aspects that should perhaps remain confidential. Notably, it is challenging to translate *dajahusat* created in the 1940-50s. Among several reasons, the language is inevitably connected to a way of life, an epoch, some cultural codes now changed. Moreover, the terminology specific to its context: the landscape narrated and a jargon connected to reindeer herding.

Recorded in 1952 by a teacher and collector, Arnt Bakke, who legated the recordings to the university museum, and conserved and mediated by Professor Ola Graff over time, Nillás's collection circulates now via digital platforms thanks to the project Digijoik curated by publishing house DAT. This digital dissemination has prompted a re-evaluation about how musical heritage previously held in museum collections and accessible mostly to researchers and musicians is now acquiring new meanings, thanks to digital dissemination, renewed interest from the side of artists and younger generations and suggesting new research to come.

¹ In Sámi areas, *luohti/leu'dd/livde/vuolle/vuelie* are Sámi forms of *juoigat*. Sámi music is when *luohti/leu'dd/livde/vuolle/vuelie* are combined with instruments, and/or Sámi lyrics and song texts, and/or modern Sámi music, if the performer/composer is a Sámi person and that he or she acknowledges the music as Sámi music. (Sámediggi 2019, 3; authors' translation).