

# CV

## Marcus Fjellström

CV updated 04-04-2011

### bio.

Born in Sweden in 1979, **Marcus Fjellström** is a composer and multimedia artist. His work ranges from the purely orchestral through electronic music and audiovisual work. He has worked with the **Swedish Royal Ballet** and the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** as well as numerous ensembles and soloists, independent record labels, artists and film-makers including “Salad Fingers” creator **David Firth**.

Fjellström studied composition and orchestration at the School of Music in Piteå, Sweden, graduating with honors in 2005. One month after graduation his debut full-length album “**Exercises in Estrangement**” was released by **Lampse Audiovisual Recordings** to enthusiastic reviews. The following year his second album “**Gebrauchsmusik**” was released by the same label, after which he focused on orchestral and chamber music for two years. In 2008 he completed his first major audiovisual work, the experimental cartoon / electronic music piece “**Odboy & Erordog, episode 1**”. Since then he has written several audiovisual works involving classical instrumentation, including “**Lichtspiel Mutation 1**” for **Sinfonietta Cracovia** and “**Odboy & Erordog, episode 2**” for **The Pearls Before Swine Experience**. 2010 saw the release of “**Schattenspieler**”, his first album on Erik K. Skodvin’s **Miasmah** label.

In his works, Fjellström often aims to combine opposites so that they do not contradict each other, but rather fuse into a natural, third element. There is often a challenging of the gap between “high” and “low” culture, of the naïve and the sophisticated, of good and bad taste. Musical influences range from electronica such as **Aphex Twin** and **Autechre**, to 20th century composers such as **György Ligeti** and **John Cage**. Further influences include impressionist composers **Maurice Ravel** and **Claude Debussy**, and film music composers **Bernard Herrmann**, **Angelo Badalamenti** and **Zdenek Liska**.

Upcoming projects include a new audiovisual work for the **Norrbotten NEO** ensemble, two new album releases, and **Boris Christ**, an opera in progress composed in collaboration with writer Daniel Pedersen.

## ■ Marcus Fjellström ; selected merits

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### **GEBRAUCHSMUSIK** (CD album, Lampse Audiovisual Recordings / LAMP006, 2006)

Released in late 2006, “Gebrauchsmusik” is a semi-conceptual album work, challenging the dogma of “high” and “low” culture within contemporary music. More specifically, it criticizes the barriers between “absolute” and “functional” music. The thirteen tracks present various perspectives on the theme of music written for a specific purpose, but with titles such as “Death Music”, “Reanimation Music” and “Art Music”, the exact intended application of the music is left deliberately vague and ambiguous.



As with the previous Lampse release “Exercises in Estrangement” (2005), “Gebrauchsmusik” enjoyed enthusiastic reviews from international publications, as well as airplay on radio stations around the world. In the article “Neo Klassik: Das Soundfreie Jahr 2007” from issue 112 of the influential De:Bug magazine, journalist Christian von Borries singles out “Gebrauchsmusik” as a remarkably successful example of the fusion between electronica and contemporary classical music.

Read more about the work and listen to music examples at <http://www.kafkagarden.com/works/gebrauchsmusik.html>

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### **EXERCISES IN ESTRANGEMENT** (CD album, Lampse Audiovisual Recordings / LAMP002, 2005)

Released in 2005, “Exercises in Estrangement” consists of nine pieces composed and produced between 1998 and 2001, blending contemporary classical music with experimental electronica. As the title suggests, the nine tracks on the album represent the composer’s early experiments in combining the two already marginalized traditions into a new, even more estranged musical realm.

The album met with enthusiastic reviews from various publications such as *The Wire*, *Textura*, *Nutida Musik* and *Warp Records’ Warpmart* section, who dubbed it “**Top Album Recommendation of the Week**” upon its release. It has since enjoyed extensive airplay from radio stations worldwide.

Read more about the work and listen to music examples at <http://www.kafkagarden.com/works/exercises.html>

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### **DEGENERATOR** (ballet / orchestral, Royal Ballet in Stockholm, 2007)

“Degenerator” is a ballet work by Icelandic choreographer Gunnlaugur Egilsson, with orchestral music by Marcus Fjellström. Based not only on the music but also the premise of Fjellström’s 2006 orchestral piece of the same name, the ballet is a meditation on deterioration, deformation and distortion of conventional, romantic aesthetics. The resulting work, a choreography for six female dancers, strives to capture the tension between perfection and imperfection, classical and contemporary, harmony and dissonance.

The ballet was performed nine times in november and december 2007, by six female dancers and the **Royal Court Orchestra** (conducted by Benjamin Pope), at the **Royal Opera House** in Stockholm, Sweden.

Read more about the work and listen to music examples at [http://www.kafkagarden.com/works/degenerator\\_ballet.html](http://www.kafkagarden.com/works/degenerator_ballet.html)

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## HOUSE OF FALSE THINGS (chamber ensemble & electronics, Norrbotten NEO, 2008)



Commissioned by conductor **Petter Sundkvist** for the **Norrbotten NEO** ensemble in 2007, **House of False Things** is a three movement work for chamber ensemble and electronic music.

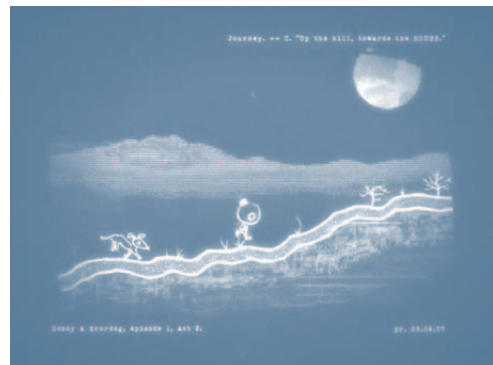
The underlying idea of the piece is to evoke a sense of a child's fascination for the strange and unfamiliar; playful and naive, but at the same time not without fear or danger. The title is a variation on the direct translation of the Irish word for "toy store", suggesting a building filled with strange artificial objects, both delightful and frightening.

As in the previous work "**Marionettes**" (2001), **House of False Things** is to a certain extent constructed around the metaphor of a multi-movement work as a building, in which the individual movements function as different rooms with distinct characteristics.

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## ODBOY & ERORDOG, EPISODE 1 (electronic music and animation, 2008)

An exploration of a new kind of music drama intending to bridge low-brow and high-brow culture, "**Odboy & Erordog, episode 1**" is the first in a series of experimental cartoons with new music. The work is based on childhood references such as cartoons, early 1980's computer games, and nightmares. These three elements, coupled with vintage black & white film aesthetics and electronic music, form a framework for the resulting piece. The animation and video was created by the composer and treated as yet another musical part in the composition process.



The work was premiered at **Fylkingen**, Stockholm, as a part live-electronic music performance with video projection, and has later been performed or screened as a self-contained video work at various venues in a number of European countries.

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## ODBOY & ERORDOG, EPISODE 2 (chamber ensemble, electronics and animation, Pärlor för Svin / The Peärls Before Swine Experience, 2009)



Part two of the experimental animated music drama "**Odboy & Erordog**", picking up where episode 1 left off, this time adding the dimension of a classical quartet to the animation and electronic music. Commissioned by the esteemed Swedish new music ensemble "**The Peärls Before Swine Experience**" ("**Pärlor för Svin**"), the piece was premiered in Sweden in late 2009 and has since been included in the ensemble's international repertoire, including performances in Berlin, Washington and Copenhagen.

The "**Odboy & Erordog**" series explores a new kind of music drama, trying to bridge low-brow and high-brow culture, utilizing animation and video art created by the composer.

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## HOUSE WITHOUT A DOOR (w. artist Bernd Behr, electronic music & film, 2006)

A specially commissioned soundtrack for the film installation "**House Without a Door**" by London-based artist **Bernd Behr**, through **Film London** and the **Chisenhale Gallery**. Behr's work fictionalises the now inaccessible interior of a military bombing test site from the 2nd world war through a set of references to 1920s German expressionist films, including **Faust** (**F.W. Murnau**, 1926) and **Dr. Mabuse** (**F. Lang**, 1922).

The work opened at the **Chisenhale Gallery** in London in november 2006 to an enthusiastic review in **Time Out London**, and has since been screened in Cologne, Germany (**e-raum**), California, USA (**High Desert Test Sites**) and Geneva, Switzerland (**Blancpain Art Contemporain**).



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## LICHTSPIEL MUTATION 1: WHITECHAPEL

(string orchestra, electronic music and video, Sinfonietta Cracovia, 2010)

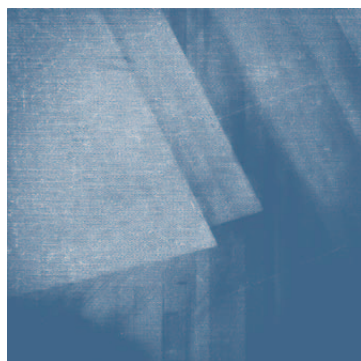
Commissioned for the **Unsound Festival 2010**, **Lichtspiel Mutation 1** is the first part of a planned series of audiovisual music drama pieces, closely resembling the silent film performances of cinema's infancy.

The underlying idea behind the Lichtspiel Mutation series is to use old films in the 'public domain' as raw material, to be de- and reconstructed into new pieces of experimental music drama. The original film constitutes the seed of its own rebirth; themes, arch and narrative from the film are kept intact, as well as actual moving image material, but 'remixed' into a completely new form; a poetic visual/musical work that conceptually shares similarities with opera and/or ballet, but becomes something completely different altogether.

This first work in the series is based on Hugo Fregonese's 1953 film "Man in the Attic", a Jack the Ripper narrative.



**Lichtspiel Mutation 1** opened the **Unsound Festival** in Kraków, Poland in October 2010, featuring an expanded 45-piece **Sinfonietta Cracovia** and a guest appearance by fellow Miasmah artist **Elegi** (Tommy Jansen) on live electronics.



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## SCHATTENSPIELER

(CD/LP album, Miasmah Recordings / MIACD013/MIALP013, 2010)

Fjellström's first album since the 2006 **Lampse** release **Gebrauchsmusik**, **Schattenspieler** is a meditation on themes such as noir / expressionist cinema, vintage experimental music and the deterioration of old recordings. Darker in tone, more cinematic and somewhat more accessible than Fjellström's previous two releases, **Schattenspieler** found its way, through the **Miasmah** label, to a new and wider audience. It also marks Fjellström's first full length vinyl release.

Read more about the work and listen to music examples at <http://www.kafkagarden.com/works/schattenspieler.html>

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## DOLOROSO (16-part mixed choir, Erik Westbergs Vokalensemble, 2007)

Commissioned by the **Erik Westberg Vocal Ensemble** in 2006, **Doloroso** is a nine minute piece for 16-part mixed chorus, based upon texts by **Edgar Allan Poe**, **Charles Baudelaire** and **William Burroughs**.

Fragments of these three authors, sharing similar themes but spanning two centuries, are being intertwined in a miasmatic choral texture, as if the authors were all dreaming the same dream, but in different times.

The piece is structurally centered around techniques of de- and re-construction, as texts by the three writers are cut up and categorized into different timbre classes depending on their phonetic/vowel qualities, resulting in a very controlled homogenous texture of evenly flowing colours. This "cut-up" idea is also reflected musically and structurally, in part as an homage to **William Burroughs** himself, one of the pioneers of the cut-up technique.

Read more about the work and listen to music examples at <http://www.kafkagarden.com/works/doloroso.html>



## ■ Marcus Fjellström ; CV (tabular)

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### Education

1998-2001	( <b>Bachelor of Arts</b> ) Arranging & Composition, School of Music, Piteå, Sweden
2000-2001	Private lessons & masterclasses: <b>Bent Sørensen</b>
2003	Private lessons & masterclasses: <b>Brian Ferneyhough</b>
	Private lessons & masterclasses: <b>Anders Nilsson</b>
2004	Private lessons & masterclasses: <b>Bernd Franke</b>
2002-2005	( <b>Master of Fine Arts</b> ) Composition Diploma, School of Music, Piteå, Sweden

### Discography

2004	" <b>Untitled EP</b> ", WN005 (White Noise Records, SE)
2005	" <b>Exercises in Estrangement</b> ", LAMP002 (Lampse Audiovisual Recordings, UK)
2006	" <b>Gebrauchsmusik</b> ", LAMP006 (Lampse Audiovisual Recordings, UK)
2010	" <b>Schattenspieler</b> ", MIACD013 (Miasmah, DE)

### Selected concerts and installations

2003-04	" <b>Silver Mansion Trauma</b> " (percussion, electronics) in San Diego, Chicago, Oslo, Melbourne
2004	" <b>Infallible</b> ", <b>Swedish Chamber Orchestra</b> , Örebro, Sweden
	" <b>Campane morti e acqua crescente</b> ", 4-ch EAM, <b>UNM Festival</b> , Norrköping, Sweden
	" <b>Giger Conceptions</b> ", <b>Östersunds Orkesterförening</b> , Östersund, Sweden
2005	" <b>Infallible</b> ", <b>Scottish Chamber Orchestra</b> , Edinburgh & Glasgow, Scotland
2006	" <b>Degenerator</b> ", <b>Nordic Chamber Orchestra</b> , Sundsvall, Sweden
	" <b>House Without a Door</b> ", collaboration with <b>Bernd Behr</b> , <b>Chisenhale Gallery</b> , London, England – also later in Cologne, Germany (e-raum), California, USA (High Desert Test Sites) and Geneva, Switzerland (Blancpain Art Contemporain).
2007	" <b>Doloroso</b> ", <b>Erik Westberg's Vocal Ensemble</b> , Swedish tour
	" <b>Degenerator</b> ", <b>Swedish Royal Ballet / Royal Court Orchestra</b> (9 performances), Stockholm, Sweden
2008	" <b>House of False Things</b> ", <b>Norbotten NEO</b> + electronics, Swedish tour
	" <b>Odboy &amp; Erordog, episode 1</b> ", EAM and video, Fylkingen, Stockholm, Sweden – also later screened in Gothenburg & Umeå (Sweden), Berlin (Germany), Hreindýraland (Iceland)
2009-10	" <b>Odboy &amp; Erordog, episode 2</b> ", ensemble, EAM, video; <b>The Peärils Before Swine Experience</b> , Swedish tour, Copenhagen (Denmark), Washington (USA), Berlin (Germany)
2010	" <b>Deanimator</b> ", horn + EAM, <b>Sören Hermansson</b> (various performances)
	" <b>Lichtspiel Mutation 1</b> ", string orchestra, EAM, video; <b>Sinfonietta Cracovia</b> , Kraków (Poland)

### Selected collaborations

2003	Dutch film director <b>Baris Azman</b> , " <b>Efendi</b> "
2004	Swedish film director <b>Hanna-Olivia Knuutila</b> , " <b>Annas Kråka</b> "
2006	German/British artist <b>Bernd Behr</b> , " <b>House Without a Door</b> "
	British video artist <b>Liam Frankland</b> , " <b>3 collaborations</b> "
2007	Icelandic choreographer <b>Gunnlaugur Egilsson</b> , " <b>Degenerator</b> " ( <b>Swedish Royal Ballet</b> )
	Swedish writer <b>Daniel Pedersen</b> , " <b>Boris Christ</b> " (opera, in progress)
2008	British animator <b>David Firth</b> , " <b>Crooked (Orcus) Rot</b> "

(cont.)

## Selected collaborations (cont.)

- 2009 Swedish filmmaker **Johan Planefeldt**, "Incubus"
- 2009-11 Dutch artist/designer **Bas Mantel** (audiovisual project in progress)  
German artist **Jenny Michel** (audiovisual project in progress)  
German artist **Steffen Osvath** (audiovisual project in progress)
- 2011 British animator **David Firth**, "Salad Fingers part 9"

## Publications

- 2001 "Plastic composition: on the phonogram as an inherent artistic medium in contemporary classical music" (**BA thesis**, School of Music, Piteå, Sweden)

## Awards, grants and prizes

- 2005 Recipient of **Kungliga Skytteanska Samfundet's** award for the "most deserving graduate student of the School of Music in Piteå"
- 2006 Grant; **Swedish Royal Musical Academy**  
Grant; **Stiftelsen Långmanska Kulturfonden**  
Recipient of the **Rosenborg-Gehrmans Composition Prize**  
Grant, **Swedish Performing Rights Society (STIM)**
- 2007 Grant, the **Swedish Church Culture Grant**
- 2008 Grant, **Swedish Performing Rights Society (STIM)**  
Grant, **Swedish Arts Grants Committee (Konstnärsnämnden)**
- 2010 Grant, **Society of Swedish Composers (FST)**  
Grant, **The Dag Wirén Foundation**  
Grant, **Swedish Arts Grants Committee (Konstnärsnämnden)**

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## Contact Information

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## ■ Marcus Fjellström ; selected press quotes

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### On “EXERCISES IN ESTRANGEMENT” (2005), Lampse Audiovisual Records (LAMP002):

#### THE WIRE # 258, August 2005 (reviewed by Chris Sharp)

“This stark, etiolated and deliberately capricious music ghosts along the shadowy divide between electronica and modernist contemporary classical... (...) ...showcasing in the process a variety of approaches without ever quite laying claim to a signature style. (...) This is sonorous and haunting music whose deep, dark crevices yield plenty of textural surprises.”

#### WARP RECORDS / WARPMART, July 2005

“TOP ALBUM RECOMMENDATION OF THE WEEK. Outstanding new album from the Lampse label. (...) There is a strong narrative quality throughout that is communicated through changing timbres and textures that never become boringly comfortable or unbearably extreme. This is an engaging and enjoyable listen, one of the most exciting releases we’ve heard in a long time!”

#### GAFFA.dk, August 2005 (reviewed by Jakob Rosenbak)

(Translated from Danish:) “RATING: 5/6. This Swedish composer’s take on contemporary classical music with electronic streaks is marked by a dark vision, often downright disquieting. (...) This is an original, atypical and thoroughly excellent work.”

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### On “GEBRAUCHSMUSIK” (2006), Lampse Audiovisual Records (LAMP006):

#### WARP RECORDS / WARPMART, November 2006

“WARPMART RECOMMENDS. Far grander in scale and reach than last years excellent and rightfully bigged up here ‘Exercises in Estrangement’, this album uses the neo classical richness and imagination of that album as a place to jump off into other directions of spiky baroque strangeness. (...) ...a great album where Fjellstrom seems to overturn every given idea of normality, deconstructing every detail and pulling the floor away just as you feel you are getting comfortable...”

#### THE WIRE #275, January 2007 (reviewed by Jim Haynes)

“An intertwining jigsaw puzzle of orchestral composition cohabitating with digitally mottled electronics... (...) an exquisite alchemist in transforming the electronic into the symphonic and vice versa... (...) Fjellström’s structures are baroque musical ellipses that complicate rather than illuminate.”

#### TEXTURA, January 2007

“Fjellström’s provocative second sojourn into post-classical electro-acoustic composition is uncompromising but in no way displeasing; if anything, it signifies a radical move forward for the Swedish composer. (...) Though hints of other music surface (...) Gebrauchsmusik transcends such derivative moments due to its remarkable stylistic reach.”

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### On “SCHATTENSPIELER” (2010), Miasmah Recordings (MIACD013 / MIALP013):

#### THE WIRE #319, September 2010 (reviewed by Mike Barnes)

The fantastically evocative “The Disjointed” is typical of Fjellström’s work. (...) Like the rest of the album, it takes listeners on a journey towards some kind of musical resolution, but ultimately leaves them abandoned by the side of the road.

#### DE:BUG #145, September 2010 (reviewed by Martin Raabenstein)

Gerade die ebenfalls von Fjellström genannten elektronischen Einflüsse von Aphex Twin und Autechre erlauben es dem Meister elegant zwischen und über den Stühlen zu turnen. Grosser Respekt und Applaus.

#### HEADPHONE COMMUTE, October 2010

Schattenspieler is an incredible achievement that grows on you with every listen. (...) Perfectly fitting on Miasmah, Schattenspieler is a great addition to the catalog of our favorite releases on the label. Highly recommended!

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