

Alexandra Hallén
Jounce



Simon Løffler (b. 1981)
Juliana Hodkinson (b. 1971)
Jesper Holmen (b. 1971)
Christian Winther Christensen (b. 1977)
Alexandra Hallén (b. 1988)

Jounce

	Simon Løffler	
1	Graduale (2009)	7:06
	Juliana Hodkinson	
2	Jounce (2016)	5:54
	Jesper Holmen	
3	G.T.S.C. (2018)	5:13
	Christian Winther Christensen	
4	Cadenza (2013)	4:37
	Jesper Holmen	
5	Vespa Crabro (2004)	1:09
	Alexandra Hallén	
6	Childhood Tapestry Seen During Fever Hallucinations (2018)	11:09

Total 35:10

Alexandra Hallén, *cello, voice & live electronics*

World premiere recordings^{2, 3, 4, 6}



Alexandra Hallén (PR)

Fever Dream

By Tim Rutherford-Johnson

'May the lilled throng of radiant Confessors encompass thee ...': the text for Simon Løffler's *Graduale* (2009) comes from the Catholic Ordo Commendationis Animae, the Rite for the Commending of a Departing Soul. Typically, these words are said as part of the Last Rites given to the dying. They inhabit a semi-public role: part private intercession, part public mourning. In James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus recalls them being spoken around his mother's deathbed. The twist in Løffler's setting is that the singer sings with hands clasped tightly over her ears: this gives, first, a certain instability to the sound, which cannot be checked or adjusted against its presence outside the body; and second, a sense that the singer is praying not for the soul of someone else, but for their own: that the prayer is an act not of commendation, but of self-soothing, perhaps even an urgent one.

Placed among the other works on this release, Løffler's fragile melody acts as a delicate, if fleeting, oasis of calm. The wider landscape is established by Alexandra Hallén's partly improvised re-enactment of a fever dream, *Childhood Tapestry Seen During Fever Hallucinations* (2018). Hallén has a photo of the wallpaper: its white, stippled surface broken by a series of apparently random cracks. The largest pierces right through the surface, revealing behind it an ominous, black void. In her playing, Hallén places her body at the centre of this troubling memory. Against a churning metallic sound, like the turning of a demonic machine, she beats against her cello, as if trying to control and exorcise her fever. But as the fever grows, the sound passes to her

voice – first in groans, then in screams, then in sobs. In that way that fever dreams do, mind, body and external reality meld into one, a single, thrashing nightmare.

The music is uniquely frightening, but its gestures provide a basis that Hallén abstracts and explores further across her recital. On the page, Jexper Holmen's *G.T.S.C.* (2018) appears an intricate study in double- and triple-stopped chords, but in practice (the title is an abbreviation for 'gennemgribende tungt strukturskabende cellosonate', or 'radical, heavily textured cello sonata'), intense bow pressure transmutes those harmonies into stabs of coloured noise, out of which solitary notes or battered allusions to musical motif occasionally break free. In the same composer's *Vespa Crabro* (2004), similar gestures are turned towards an evocation of the European hornet – an alien creature, grotesque and fascinating. Encountering a hornet up close is to bump into a fever-like distortion field: the same shape and colour as a wasp, but somehow made at the wrong scale. Holman's brief portrait captures that distortion of scale, the insect's buzzing and skittering magnified out of all proportion by the resonance of the cello and the ferocity of Hallén's movements.

Christian Winther Christensen takes similar materials a step further into abstraction. A cadenza is typically a moment of light relief within a concerto; a moment outside the wider musical argument for the performer to briefly let their hair down, show off a little. Christensen's *Cadenza* (2013) is certainly virtuoso territory, an endlessly changing landscape of extended techniques for bow and hands. (Every sound, even the strange rising sine-tone effect, is produced acoustically.) But their compilation seems to fracture rather than assert the dominance of the soloist. Her instrument is pulled apart

into its constituent units, each one held up for inspection; her own body is barely ever allowed to enter that seamless flow that marks the truly virtuoso performance. Paradoxically, the only time it is – and this is the piece’s dominant motif – is to make the flattest, emptiest sound possible: rows of middle A quavers with banal up-down bow-strokes. Stuck in a series of broken loops, Christensen’s *Cadenza* recalls a character from a Samuel Beckett play, struggling to build past glories from shattered, ruined fragments.

In engineering terms, a jounce, or snap, is the fourth derivative of position or, to put it another way, a measurement of how quickly the acceleration of a body in motion changes. (If jerk – the third derivative of position – is what you feel when your car starts to accelerate, jounce is what occurs when it begins to jerk.) Juliana Hodkinson uses ‘jounce’ in the more common sense of a combination of ‘bounce’ and ‘jolt’. The main rhythmic gesture of her piece *Jounce* (2016) is a *col legno battuto*, or the ricochet effect produced by bouncing the wood of the bow on a string. Using two bows in contrary motion, Hallén can turn a basic physical phenomenon into a range of colours and effects. And, in a nod to the nested forces at work in the scientific sense of jounce, each bow is fitted with a small cat-collar bell, which jangles to its own rhythm in response to the rhythms of the bouncing bow (which itself bounces according to the movements of the player’s arms and hands).

By focusing calmly and assuredly on just one thing, it is as if the fever breaks, and we are jolted back into reality.

© Tim Rutherford-Johnson, 2026

Tim Rutherford-Johnson is a writer with a focus on new music. He is the author of the widely praised Music after the Fall (University of California Press) and The Music of Liza Lim (Wildbird), and has co-authored Twentieth-Century Music in the West (Cambridge University Press).

One never quite knows what to expect from an encounter with **Alexandra Hallén** (b. 1988), but her work is consistently grounded in a strong sense of presence, materiality and physicality. The Swedish-born artist, who is based in Denmark, works at the intersection of composition, performance and sound art, investigating the relationships between body, material, sound and perception.

By incorporating physical actions and concrete objects, Hallén brings lived, embodied experience directly into the artistic process. Rather than acting as a neutral mediator of a composer's intentions, the performer in her works must inhabit real physical and emotional states, allowing resistance, effort and vulnerability to shape the musical outcome.

As a cellist, Hallén is known for a precise and uncompromising approach to sound, with a strong focus on physicality, detail and extended techniques. Her practice has led to close collaborations with numerous contemporary composers, both as a composer and as a performer.

She studied composition at the Royal Academy of Music Aarhus (Advanced Postgraduate Diploma) and holds a Master's degree in Composition and Creative Practice from the Hochschule der Künste Bern. Furthermore, she completed an Advanced Postgraduate Diploma in performance at the Danish National Academy of Music and holds a Master's degree in performance from the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen, with additional studies in Stockholm and Örebro.

Hallén has composed works for ensembles such as Scenatet, Ensemble Mosaik, Distractfold Ensemble, Klart, Transduct Ensemble and Current Resonance. As a cellist, she has performed with Curious Chamber Players.

Her work has been presented, and she has also performed, at festivals and venues including SPOR Festival, KLANG Festival (Copenhagen), Unerhörte Musik (Berlin), Frequenze Festival (Kiel) and Cairo Contemporary Music Days. She teaches composition at the Rhythmic Music Conservatory in Copenhagen and was awarded the Danish Composers' Society's Music Prize in 2019, as well as the Nye Veje scholarship.

Feberdrøm

Af Tim Rutherford-Johnson

“Må de liljehvide skarer af lysende bekendere omringe dig ...”: Teksten til Simon Löfflers *Graduale* (2009) stammer fra den katolske Ordo Commendationis Animae, ritualen for overgivelsen af en bortdragende sjæl. Normalt fremsiges disse ord som en del af den sidste olie til den døende. De indtager en semioffentlig rolle: halvt privat forbøn, halvt offentlig sorg. I James Joyces *Ulysses* mindes Stephen Dedalus ordene blive talt ved sin mors dødsleje. Grebet i Löfflers værk er dog, at sangeren synger med hænderne presset tæt mod sine ører: Dette skaber for det første en vis ustabilitet i lyden, som ikke kan kontrolleres eller justeres i forhold til dens tilstedeværelse uden for kroppen; og for det andet en følelse af, at sangeren ikke beder for en andens sjæl, men for sin egen – at bønnen ikke er en handling af overgivelse, men snarere en form for selvberoligelse, måske endda af presserende karakter.

Placeret blandt de øvrige værker på denne udgivelse fungerer Löfflers skrøbelige melodi som en delikat, omend flygtig, oase af ro. Det bredere landskab etableres af Alexandra Halléns delvist improviserede iscenesættelse af en feberdrøm, *Childhood Tapestry Seen During Fever Hallucinations* (2018). Hallén ejer et fotografi af tapetet: en hvid, nupret overflade, der brydes af en række tilsyneladende tilfældige revner. Den største af dem gennemborer overfladen og afslører et varslende, sort tomrum bag sig. I sit spil placerer Hallén sin krop i centrum af dette foruroligende minde. Akkompagneret af en kvænnende metallisk lyd, der leder tanker hen på en dæmonisk maskine, slår hun mod sin cello, som forsøgte hun at kontrollere og uddrive sin feber.

Men efterhånden som feberen stiger, overgår lyden til hendes stemme – først som støn, så skrig og siden hulken. Som det sker i feberdrømme, smelter sind, krop og den ydre virkelighed sammen til ét enkelt, kæmpende mareridt.

Musikken er usædvanligt skræmmende, men dens gestik danner et fundament, som Hallén abstraherer og udforsker videre i resten af sit program. På papiret fremstår Jexper Holmens *G.T.S.C.* (2018) som et indviklet studie i dobbelt- og tredobbeltgreb, men i praksis (titlen er en forkortelse for “gennemgribende tungt strukturskabende cellosonate”) forvandler et intenst buepres disse harmonier til stød af farvet støj, hvorfra ensomme toner eller hærgede antydninger af musikalske motiver lejlighedsvis bryder fri. I samme komponists *Vespa Crabro* (2004) vendes lignende greb mod en fremmaning af den europæiske stor-gedehams – et fremmedartet væsen, på én gang grotesk og fascinerende. At møde en gedehams på tæt hold er som at træde ind i et feberagtigt forvrængningsfelt: Den har samme form og farve som en hveps, men er på en eller anden måde skabt i den forkerte skala. Holmens korte portræt indfanger denne skalaforskydning; insektets summen og piler bliver forstørret ud af alle proportioner af celloens resonans og vildskaben i Halléns bevægelser.

Christian Winther Christensen tager et lignende materiale et skridt videre ind i abstraktionen. En kadence er typisk et øjeblik lettere afbræk i en koncert; et øjeblik uden for den overordnede musikalske argumentation, hvor solisten kortvarigt kan slå gækken løs og brillere. Christensens *Cadenza* (2013) er i høj grad virtuost territorium – et uendeligt skiftende landskab af udvidede teknikker for bue og hænder. (Enhver lyd, selv den mærkelige, stigende sinustone-effekt, er skabt akustisk). Men deres sammensætning synes sna-

rere at fragmentere end at bekræfte solistens dominans. Hendes instrument bliver skilt ad i sine enkelte bestanddele, der hver især holdes op til eftersyn; hendes egen krop får sjældent lov til at indgå i det sømløse flow, der kendetegner den ægte virtuose præstation. Paradoksalt nok er det eneste tidspunkt, det sker – og dette er værkets dominerende motiv – for at skabe den fladeste, mest tomme lyd overhovedet: rækker af ottendedelsnoder på et enstrenget A med banale op- og nedstrøg. Fastlåst i en række brudte loops leder Christensens *Cadenza* tankerne hen på en karakter fra et Samuel Beckett-skuespil, der kæmper for at bygge fortidens storhed op fra knuste, ruinerede fragmenter.

Inden for fysikken beskriver begrebet 'jounce' (eller 'snap') en ekstremt pludselig ændring i bevægelse. Hvor acceleration er farten, der øges, og 'jerk' (ryk) er følelsen af at blive presset tilbage i sædet, når bilen speeder op, så er 'jounce' det næste niveau: selve det hurtige ryk i accelerationen. Juliana Hodkinson bruger dog titlen *Jounce* (2018) i en mere jordnær betydning – som en legende sammentrækning af ordene 'bounce' (hop) og 'jolt' (stød).

Den primære rytmiske gestik i hendes stykke er *col legno battuto*, eller den ricochet-effekt, der opstår, når man lader buen hoppe med træet mod strengen. Ved at bruge to buer i modbevægelse kan Hallén forvandle et grundlæggende fysisk fænomen til en vifte af farver og effekter. Og som et nik til de indlejrede kræfter i ordets videnskabelige betydning er hver bue udstyret med en lille klokke fra et kattehalsbånd, som rangler i sin egen rytme som svar på den hoppende bues bevægelser (som i sig selv hopper alt efter musikerens arme og hænder).

Ved at fokusere roligt og sikkert på blot én ting er det,

som om feberens slipper sit tag, og vi rykkes tilbage til virkeligheden.

© Tim Rutherford-Johnson, 2026

Tim Rutherford-Johnson er forfatter med speciale i ny musik. Han har skrevet den anerkendte Music after the Fall (University of California Press) og The Music of Liza Lim (Wildbird). Han er desuden medforfatter til Twentieth-Century Music in the West (Cambridge University Press).

Man ved aldrig helt, hvad man kan forvente af et møde med **Alexandra Hallén** (f. 1988), men hendes arbejde er konsekvent forankret i en stærk sans for nærvær, materialitet og kropslighed. Den svenskfødte kunstner, der er bosat i Danmark, arbejder i krydsfeltet mellem komposition, performance og lydkunst og undersøger relationerne mellem krop, materiale, lyd og perception.

Ved at inddrage fysiske handlinger og konkrete objekter bringer Hallén levede, kropslige erfaringer direkte ind i den kunstneriske proces. Performeren i hendes værker fungerer ikke som en neutral formidler af en komponists intentioner, men må selv gennemleve reelle fysiske og emotionelle tilstande, hvor modstand, anstrengelse og sårbarhed er med til at forme det musikalske resultat.

Som cellist er Alexandra Hallén kendt for en præcis og kompromisløs tilgang til lyd med stor opmærksomhed på detalje, fysikalitet og udvidede spilleteknikker. Hendes praksis har ført til tætte samarbejder med en række samtidige komponister – både som komponist og som udøvende musiker.

Hun er uddannet i komposition fra Det Jyske Musikkonservatoriums solistklasse og har en kandidatgrad i Composition and Creative Practice fra Hochschule der Künste Bern. Derudover er hun uddannet fra solistklassen i performance ved Syddansk Musikkonservatorium og har en kandidatgrad i performance fra Det Kongelige Danske Musikkonservatorium i København, med yderligere studier i Stockholm og Örebro.

Hallén har komponeret værker for ensembler som Scenatet, Ensemble Mosaik, Distractfold Ensemble, Klart, Transduct Ensemble og Current Resonance. Som cellist har hun optrådt med Curious Chamber Players.

Hendes værker er blevet præsenteret, og hun har selv optrådt, på festivaler og spillesteder som SPOR Festival, KLANG Festival, Unerhörte Musik (Berlin), Frequenze Festival (Kiel) og Cairo Contemporary Music Days. Hun underviser i komposition ved Rytmask Musikkonservatorium og modtog i 2019 Dansk Komponistforenings Musikpris samt Nye Veje-legatet.

Recorded at HME Studio & Production, Copenhagen, May 2025

Recording producers and engineering: Alexandra Hallén & Lasse
Schwanenflügel Piasecki

Editing: Alexandra Hallén & Peter Barnow

Mixing and mastering: Peter Barnow

© & © 2026 Dacapo Records, Copenhagen. All rights
reserved.

Publisher: Edition·S, www.edition-s.dk

With support from Augustinus Fonden, Koda Kultur
and Solistforeningen af 1921



DAC-DA2063 www.dacapo-records.dk

**DANMARKS NATIONALE
MUSIKANTOLOGI**

Dacapo Records, Denmark's national record label, was founded in 1989 with the purpose of releasing the best of Danish music past and present. The majority of our recordings are world premieres, and we are dedicated to producing music of the highest international standards.