

Announcements?

This Week's Events:

A Sharp Arrangement Service Auction

Monday-Friday, October 6th-10th, 10am-2pm

ACDA Lab Choir

Monday, October 6th, 3pm, C101

ASTA Weekly Meeting

Monday, October 6th, 6pm, C107

Faculty Recital: Lauren Becker, Horn

Monday, October 6th, 7:30pm, Snell

NAfME: NYSSMA Conference Interest Meeting

Wednesday, October 8th, 6:30pm, C143

Faculty Chamber Recital, Mozart's Gran Partita (1781)

Wednesday, October 8th, 7:30pm, Snell

NYSBDA Lab Band

Thursday, October 9th, 7pm, C123

Student Composers Forum

Thursday, October 9th, 7:30pm, Snell



Evening Concert Series	2025 – 2026 Season
Sara Snell Music Theater	Wednesday, October 8 th at 7:30 p.m.

Crane Harmonie

Anna Hendrickson & Molly Murphy, oboe

Carol Lowe & Max Grube, bassoon

Julianne Kirk Doyle & Michael Ducorsky, clarinet

Christine Hoerning & McKenna Hickey, basset horn

Lauren Becker, David Nesbitt, Kate Ritzau & Mackenzie Sweeney, horn

John Geggie, double bass

Brian K. Doyle, conductor

Gran Partita

Serenade No. 10 in B-flat KV 361 (370a)

Largo-Molto allegro

Menuetto-Trio I-Trio II

Adagio

Menuetto-Trio I-Trio II

Romance

Tema Con Variazioni

Finale

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(1756-1791)

INTERSPECIES MUSIC #3



Music, Sound, and
the Environment
Tue 7, 2025

VOX BALANAE

- While certain moments within the piece are clear efforts to artistically represent whale songs, the composition as a whole is rife with symbolism relating to the cycles of creation and destruction, timelessness, and the life-giving force of the ocean.
- In his performance directions, Crumb indicates that the performers are to wear masks throughout the performance, which, “by effacing a sense of human projection, will symbolize the powerful forces of nature dehumanized” (Vox Balaenae 3).
- He also notes that the piece can be performed under a “deep-blue” stage lighting in order to enhance the desired effect. While Crumb has received criticism for these and other similar theatrics for their eccentricity and connection to mysticism, they also speak to his commitment to creating a holistic experience for the listener—in this case a sense of immersion in the primordial waters.

[illegible]

0:00 Vocalise (... for the beginning of time)
3:50 Variations on Sea Time [Sea Time]
5:30 Archeozoic Variation I
6:44 Prototerzoic Variation II
8:40 Paleozoic Variation III
9:40 Mesozoic Variation IV
11:09 Cenozoic Variation V
13:10 Sea Nocturne (... for the end of time)

VOX BALANAE, MOVEMENT 1

- The final movement of the work, entitled “Sea Nocturne (...for the end of time)” begins with a haunting whistling melody reminiscent of whale song, the slow and contemplative temporality evoked by this movement standing in contrast with the, at times, frenetic sounds of the variations. At the end of the movement, the clock motif returns, but rather than leading into frenzied activity it is followed by a reprise of the opening whale song. The piece ends with the gradual decay of a motive reminiscent of the waves of the ocean, each repetition fading into longer and longer silences, gradually decaying dynamically into nothing. This effect creates for the listener a perception of time progressively slowing until it dissolves completely, dying away into silence.
- Indeed, the experience of timelessness was an aesthetic goal of the composer, who notes “in composing the Sea-Nocturne I wanted to suggest a ‘larger rhythm of nature’ and a sense of suspension in time”.
- The final movement, peaceful and majestic though it may be, also carries with it a darker warning of the precarious future of the whales, and by extension, all forms of natural life. The gradual dissolution of the music into nothing at the end of the piece can be read as the gradual disappearing of species as they become extinct, wiped from the surface of the earth and the passage of time.



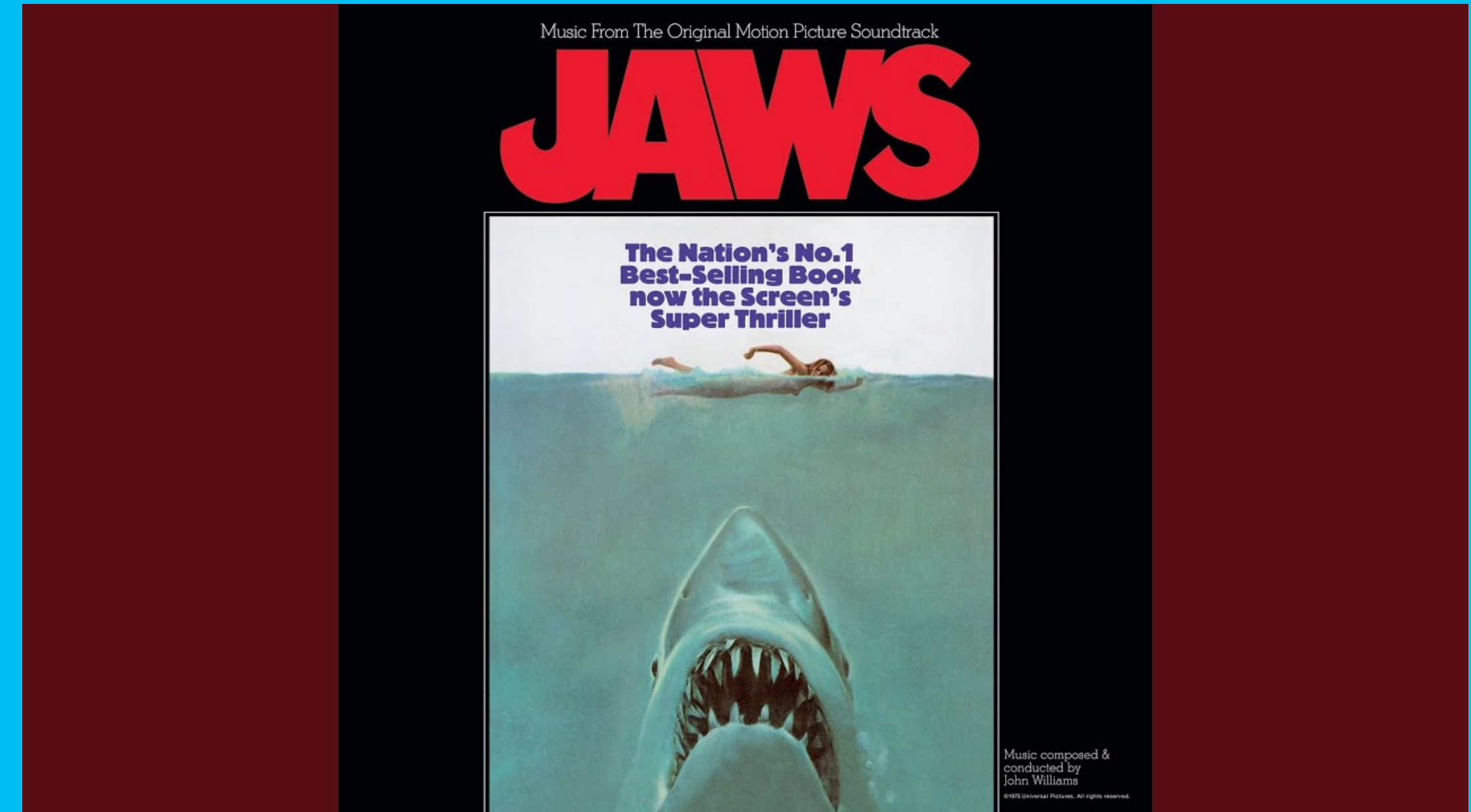
WHALE SONGS

- Sometimes a whale just wants to change its tune.
- That's one of the things researchers have learned recently by eavesdropping on whales in several parts of the world and listening for changes in their pattern and pitch. Together, the new studies suggest that whales are not just whistling in the water, but constantly evolving a form of communication that we are only beginning to understand.
- Most whales and dolphins vocalize, but dolphins and toothed whales mostly make clicking and whistling sounds. Humpbacks, and possibly bowheads, sing complex songs with repeated patterns, said Michael Noad, an associate professor in the Cetacean Ecology and Acoustics Laboratory at the University of Queensland in Australia.
- Birds may broadcast their social hierarchy among song-sharing populations by allowing the dominant bird to pick the playlist and patterns. But how and why whales pass song fragments across hundreds of miles, and to thousands of animals, is far more mysterious.
- The biggest question is why whales sing at all.
- “The thing that always gets me out of bed in the morning is the function of the song,” Dr. Noad said. “I find humpback song fascinating from the point of view of how it's evolved.”
- “Most animals don't have a lot of control over what sounds they make. Dogs bark a certain way, and they usually bark that same way their whole life,” said Mercado. “But in the case of humans, we can learn new languages, we can learn to sing new songs, and we're not stuck with whatever sounds kind of come out of us. Humpback whales keep on making new sounds their whole lives. They never stopped changing them. So it's us and them, basically, that are able to do it.”



A DIFFERENT SOUND FROM THE DEEP

- ostinato with the ascending minor second in the low strings plays a vital role in the overall composition of the film by being directly connected with the presence of the shark.
- John Williams: “One could alter the speed of this ostinato, it could be: note, note, note, note, any kind of alteration of the speed to very slow, very fast, very soft, very loud. All these things could manipulate the moment to illustrate that the shark was at the highest pitch of frenzy or something lower. And this simple dramatic device seemed to be what we needed.”
- Simple, predatory, not melodic....”mindless,”
- And we (as listeners) get to listen in on the shark’s mind
- Lots of other associations with a similar ostinato that relate to death, violence, aggression—so Williams was tapping into a quite stable & longlived set of musical meanings here



Moormann, Peter. , "Composing with Types and Flexible Modules: John Williams' Two-Note Ostinato for Jaws and its use in Film-Music History," Journal of Film Music 5, no. 1 (2012): 165-168.

A DIFFERENT SOUND FROM THE DEEP

- Despite the ongoing need for shark conservation and management, prevailing negative sentiments marginalize these animals and legitimize permissive exploitation. These negative attitudes arise from an instinctive, yet exaggerated fear, which is validated and reinforced by disproportionate and sensationalistic news coverage of shark ‘attacks’ and by highlighting shark-on-human violence in popular movies and documentaries.
- In this study, we investigate another subtler, yet powerful factor that contributes to this fear: the ominous background music that often accompanies shark footage in documentaries.
- In particular, we predicted that when footage of swimming sharks is set to ominous music, viewers would perceive sharks as scarier, more dangerous, and more vicious than when the same footage is set to uplifting music. Results from three experiments support our predictions: viewers perceive sharks more negatively (and less positively) after watching shark footage accompanied by ominous background music, versus uplifting background music or silence. This study is the first to investigate the impact of background music in shark documentary footage on viewers’ perceptions of sharks and, by extension, on their willingness to support related conservation efforts.



Nosal, Andrew P., Elizabeth A. Keenan, Philip A. Hastings, and Ayelet Gneezy. ,
"The Effect of Background Music in Shark Documentaries on Viewers' Perceptions
of Sharks," PLoS One 11, no. 8 (2016),



RIVER SOUNDS

Tuesday, October 7, 2025

IS A RIVER ALIVE?

- Rivers: muscular, wilful, worshipped, and mistreated, rivers have long existed in the threshold space between geology and theology.
- Rivers: movement
- we should understand a river as comprising its metaphysical as well as its physical elements.
- Rivers run through us. They are memory keepers, they are storytellers. We think with them. Very logistically, we have built almost all of our cities upon them. We could say the entire urban infrastructure of the planet has been organized by/around/with flowing fresh water.
- Loren Eiseley say? "If there is magic in the world, it is surely contained in water."

IS A RIVER ALIVE?

Robert
Macfarlane

Best-selling author of **UNDERLAND**

“How can I translate—not in words but in belief—that a river is a body, as alive as you or I, that there can be no life without it?”

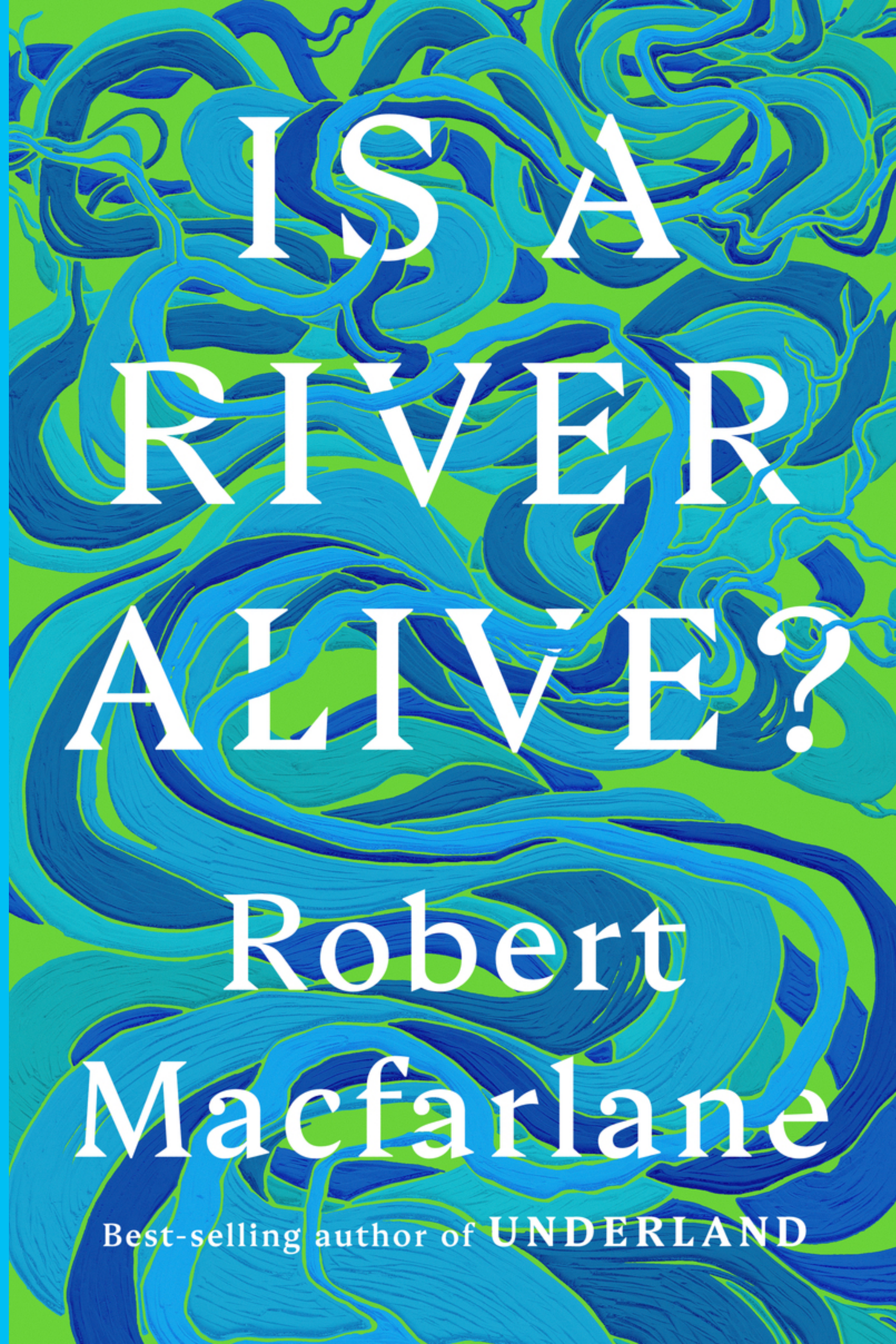
NATALIE DIAZ (2020)

“One way to stop seeing trees or rivers or hills only as “natural resource” is to class them as fellow beings—kinfolk. I guess I’m trying to subjectify the universe, because look where objectifying it has gotten us. To subjectify is not necessarily to co-opt, colonize, exploit. Rather it may involve a great reach outward of the mind and imagination.”

URSULA LE GUIN (2017)

IS A RIVER ALIVE?

- This book is a journey into an idea that changes the world—the idea that a river is alive.
- It explores the histories, people, places and futures of that idea and others in its family: that a forest might think, for example, or a mountain remember. It asks what happens if we take seriously the idea of a river's aliveness. What does such a recognition mean for perception, law, and politics? It is an attempt to imagine water otherwise.
- If you find it hard to think of a river as alive, try picturing a dying river or a dead river. This is easier. We know what this looks like. We know how it feels.
- 1972: Christopher Stone, legal paper on "Should Trees Have Standing?"—a concept of nature's rights. This has joined forces with Indigenous legal frameworks in the early 21st century to argue to "the Rights of Nature movement."



IS A RIVER ALIVE?

Robert
Macfarlane

Best-selling author of **UNDERLAND**



- “Daylighting” streams and rivers: the practice of unburying the watercourses over which many cities have been built, and which have been confined to drains and tunnels, flowing invisibly down into darkness. These imprisoned watercourses are sometimes known as “ghost rivers”: their voices are heard at street level, if at all, as whispers drifting from manhole covers or drain grilles.
- “Daylighting” lets the water of buried streams meet the sun again. It is a means of bringing river ghosts back to life in towns and cities, of re-encountering rivers as friends and fellow citizens.



One of two inlets to the village’s crosstown canal, pictured Thursday, is at the southern end of Potsdam High School on Leroy Street. The subterranean canal moves surface and ground water across the village to the Raquette River.
Christopher Lenney/Watertown Daily Times







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1. Baptist Church
2. Methodist
3. Presbyterian
4. Episcopal
5. Roman Catholic
6. Lutheran
7. Dutch Reformed
8. Free Will
9. Protestant

10. Public School
11. City Hall
12. Court House
13. City Jail
14. City Office
15. City Jail
16. City Jail
17. City Jail
18. City Jail

Potsdam, N. Y.

1885.

IS A RIVER ALIVE?

- Miller: What led you to Ecuador?
- Macfarlane: Well, I was led everywhere by rivers that were dying, but were also being reimagined in radical ways, or I should say, under threat of death. I went to Ecuador because the glorious concatenation of rivers that flow from a cloud forest called Los Cedros were all under threat of death. And I mean death here. I mean absolute elimination from gold mining interests, a Canadian mining company, you will be amazed to hear, and the Ecuadorian state mining company and army. And a cloud forest is a river maker. It grows rivers and rivers grow the forest.
- But in 2021, that forest, which was on the brink of destruction, was saved by this remarkable constitutional court ruling that recognized – and here's the radical bit – the rights of the rivers to flow, the rights of the forest to grow, the rights of nature, which are guaranteed in the Ecuadorian Constitution.
- Miller: What is it like inside a cloud forest?
- Macfarlane: It's the place of most life I have ever entered. You walk in your own socket of luminous mist. You're surrounded by life, growing on life, growing on life. And the whole animal orchestra plays on.
- Miller [speaking over field recording]: We can actually hear a little bit of that because you were there with sound artists, among other folks. So what are we listening to right here?
- Macfarlane: The forest is the vocalist here, that's the first thing to say. You'll begin to hear the field recordings that Cosmo Sheldrake, this multi-instrumentalist sound artist, made. That little tapping you can hear, that is bat sonar. Cosmo had a little bat listener, and if you listen carefully, you'll be able to hear it running through your brain.
- Miller: And I should say if you're listening with headphones, I highly recommend it because then you can really hear this.
- OK, so there's bats and birds.
- Macfarlane: Later on, we'll hear toucan barbets, which have this beautiful two tone kind "ooooh-ooh, oooooh-oh," they'll kick in. We have the sound of the wind in the forest starting. And here we have the first human voices joining the voices of the forest.