

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire – Postgraduate Study Days, 5<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> June 2018

**Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

3.30pm–5pm (Workshop 2)

Hands-on workshop with Helen Roberts (RBC) and Catherine Motuz (McGill University / Schola Cantorum, Basel)

**Durham Cathedral in the 1620s and 1630s: A liturgical context for historical improvisation?**

Durham Cathedral employed two cornettists and two sackbut players from the early 1620s until the late 1690s. During the 1630s, their presence was considered so important that they were threatened with fines of 12d for absence on a Sunday and 6d for absence on a weekday. Contemporary accounts suggest that these instrumentalists had a significant role in the performance of liturgical music, not only playing during the canticles and psalms, but also throughout Holy Communion and baptism services. My PhD research focusses on how the role of these instrumentalists manifested itself in practice, particularly in relation to instrumental contributions to service music, but this workshop will consider some solutions to the problem of what else the cathedral instrumentalists may have played during the course of their duties. No music that can be directly associated with cathedral cornett and sackbut players survives at Durham (or elsewhere, for that matter) and so a conundrum remains: when the puritan prebendary Peter Smart describes how the Dean 'will not suffer so much as the holy Communion to be administered without an hydeous noyse of vocall and instrumentall Musicke', what can he mean? I will introduce this workshop with a short paper on the liturgical and educational context of Durham Cathedral and Choir School during the early seventeenth century, and discuss contemporary accounts of the services there in detail. My guest Catherine Motuz will then lead a practical workshop (with live demonstrations and audience participation (singing)) exploring some of the improvised practices that may have found a place in the cathedral soundscape around this time.

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2018 (Workshop 2)**

09.45 : Shi Ling Chin

**Chaconne, Reimagined**

This is an on-going exploration and re-examination of gesture and phrasing in the interpretation and performance of modern solo violin chaconnes. Focusing on the Reger and Bartok chaconnes, I aim to examine the harmonic rhythm by employing a reflexive methodology that involves interacting processes. The two chaconnes are taken through an intersection of two creative processes to uncover questions and answers relating to gesture and phrasing. With dance as the key to unlocking their harmonic-rhythmic complexities, I immerse myself in a layered exchange of sound and movement to trace a route to a new harmonic and rhythmic landscape.

10.15 : Hannah Roberts

**Clara Schumann as Pedagogue**

Clara Wieck Schumann (1819-1896), teacher, pianist, wife and mother, played a key role in the musical culture of the nineteenth century. However, as the wife of Robert Schumann, a highly regarded composer of the era, and daughter of renowned pedagogue Friedrich Wieck, Clara's musical attributes and achievements were often overlooked. [PTO]

Much research has been conducted from a biographical standpoint, although exploration of Clara's teaching philosophies, methods and techniques as the principal motivation are lacking. Using the recordings of her students, in particular Adelina de Lara, Fanny Davies and Carl Friedberg, combined with the exploration of Clara's piano scores, editorial workings, and first-hand accounts of Clara's teaching provides scope for a methodical and systematic investigation into Clara Schumann's pedagogy.

10.45 : Andrew Toovey

### **Setting text to music: A practical demonstration**

Over the last three years I have been setting many poems (by both living and dead writers), newspaper extracts and a libretto for my third opera *Narrow Rooms* based on a novel by American writer James Purdy. The libretto was written in collaboration with fellow composer Michael Finnissy. I have always enjoyed setting various texts to music, and thought today might be a good moment to demonstrate the many ways there are for composers to approach this task.

Paul Taylor

### **Interpreting an orchestral landscape**

*Road Trip* is a new work for Symphony Orchestra, which draws inspiration from the dramatic rural landscapes of Nevada. I will discuss how the experience of travelling through a landscape has been translated into a musical structure through the interaction of multiple compositional systems.

11.30 : BREAK

11.45 : Maya Velaak

### **Hexenhaus - A scrutinising compositional position**

Etymologically<sup>1</sup>, the Dutch word for 'witch', 'Heks', originates from the Germanic 'Hexe' and is related to the word Haga or, in Dutch, 'Haag' or 'Hekken' which means 'hedge' or 'fence'. A 'Hexe' is someone who is needed—but not welcome—in society. They must remain on the margin, by the fence. A 'Hexe'-artist needs to be on that margin in order to reflect and evaluate from a distance.

Taking the position of the 'Hexe' when composing a new piece of music, results in being analytical of all parameters in a given context. I will not only deconstruct and reconstruct but also continuously self-reflect. I will approach everything around me critically: stepping out of society and observing it from the outside, daring to attack its foundations. This process creates a distance from my subject because I am standing near the fence so to speak, observing the situation from the periphery. As a result, these contextual reflections become the subject of a compositional process.

By applying the 'Hexenhaus' as methodological tool and catalyst for new work, a scrutinising approach emerges. This scrutinising process is continuously applied, in the compositional process, as well as during the rehearsal processes. This has a number of results: it generates a compositional attitude of continuous reflection in which nothing is taken for granted; it often results in a new kind

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<sup>1</sup> Etymologiebank.nl. (2010). etymologiebank.nl. [online] Available at: <http://www.etymologiebank.nl/trefwoord/heks> [Accessed 29 Jan. 2018].

of relationship with the performers and/or collaborators; and it necessitates an alternative performance practice.

As for this research study day, I will be elaborating on the *alternative performance practice*. How to create complete insight into the contextual reflections to consequently create full understanding into the compositional material to the performer?

Through performing, the performers on stage or an engaging audience, become fully committed to the compositional processes. However, the score instructions can be very detailed and leave little space for the performer to add any compositional or performance related decisions. The score instructions only requests the performer(s) to endure the same compositional steps the composer has taken to arrive at the same point of view.

12.15–1.00 : Andy Ingamells and Paul Norman

**Round table discussion focussing on opportunities for post-doctoral career development.**

LUNCH

2.00 : Daniel Tong

***On the Road to Heiligenstadt: Kurt Schwertsik and Redemption on the Path to Beethoven's Late Style.***

According to Julia Kristeva (1967: 36) an artistic work is 'a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another.' This paper, presented as a lecture–recital, examines the relationship between a pair of works written more than two centuries apart. Kurt Schwertsik's *Unterwegs Nach Heiligenstadt* was commissioned in 2014 as part of the 'Beethoven Plus' project, which has paired all ten Beethoven Sonatas for Piano and Violin with a new partner work for the same combination; Schwertsik chose to respond to the A Major Sonata, Op. 30 No. 1 (1802). Questions of intertextuality, both intentional and 'aleatoric... roaming freely across time' (Michael Klein, 1995) inform an understanding of both scores. Schwertsik's 'interpretation' of Op. 30 No. 1 -- a work that, considering its author, has received relatively scant critical attention -- helps us to build a partial picture of the twenty-first century Beethoven who emerges via this coupling process. A latter-day brand of Harold Bloom's (1973) theory of deliberate *misreading* is revealed, as Schwertsik re-tells the story of the work to which he is responding, not in order to escape the 'anxiety of influence' (from which safety has surely been reached at two centuries' distance) but to create a new drama with new meanings. And how is a perception and understanding of the active intertextuality and musical narrative revealed through the act of performance?

2.30 : Luca Bationi

**Enforced sounds: dubbing in an Italian Fascist context**

In Italy, after the arrival of sound cinema, dubbing gradually became the only way through which films were screened. Scholars have noted that very often in this operation the music was partly or completely superseded, and sometimes even new music was added. Martine Danan (Dubbing as an expression of nationalism, 1991) has argued that a strong nationalistic system underlies such dubbing processes, and that "dubbing is an attempt to hide the foreign nature of a film by creating the illusion that actors are speaking the viewer's language". She continues by claiming that "dubbed movies become, in a way, local productions (p. 612)". Following this argument, this paper intends to

look at moments of musical replacement as part of a wider appropriation of foreign films that, particularly in the 1930s, represented the vast majority of productions screened in Italian cinemas. Using Danan's framework and a review of original archival materials, alongside technical and economic perspectives, I shall analyse the dubbing procedures adopted by one of the main distribution companies. The Italian version of *It happened one night* (Frank Capra, 1934) will be considered as an evidence of this Italian practice, providing a new artistic product and a cross section of the Italian culture of that time.

3.00 : Niccolò Granieri

### **Reach System: how practice led research can inform the design and development of an instrument.**

The Reach System for acoustic piano, developed by Niccolò Granieri through his research, aims to take advantage of existing expressive gestures embedded in the pianistic technique and enable pianists to control sound effects, broadening the sound possibilities of the acoustic piano. Being almost at the end of his second year of research, Niccolò is aiming to finalise the idea for his system. Having conducted two rounds of user testing, one of which comparing his system to existing and commercial keyboard systems, this talk aims to reflect on how research through design informed the development of a user centred system to make electronic music more accessible to classically trained pianists. With a hint at future plans, this talk also aims to discuss the broad field of accessibility towards new instruments.

3.30 : Terezija Stimec

### **Constructive or destructive? Assessing the impact of feedback in instrumental piano lessons**

Musical performance and excellence of students greatly depends on the way that feedback is given or used. Therefore, it is important to understand how students perceive and react to different types of feedback, and what the most efficient type of feedback is. This research project focuses on understanding the influences and impacts of different feedback methods among piano students in one-to-one lessons at the conservatoire. After analysing the existing literature on feedback, specifically on the use of feedback in education and its impacts on students' motivation to practise, together with the process of giving and receiving feedback, and student-teacher interactions in instrumental one-to-one lessons, the researcher is collecting new data through primary research. Some piano teachers from Royal Birmingham Conservatoire are being interviewed, where piano students are required to complete the online research survey questionnaire. It is expected that after evaluating and analysing the researched data, the findings will show the understanding and the amount of awareness of feedback from the teachers' and students' perspectives and they will highlight the areas for improvement. Furthermore, it is hoped that this research will outline the best feedback method for one-to-one instrumental piano lessons at the conservatoire with easy transportable methods to other aspects of music education. The main goal is to find the best way of giving feedback to keep inspiring and motivating students, and to continue the beauty of learning music and music itself.

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2018 (Workshop 2)

10.00 : Melinda Maxwell

### **Preparations for Unlocking**

Part of my research is to delve into distant double reed instruments - cousins of the oboe, if you like - in order to explore their musical materials and absorb them into a modern style designed to enable improvisation and ultimately notate the results into open compositional forms.

One of the most beguiling sounds is that of the Nadaswaram, an Indian oboe from Tamil Nadu in southeast India. Its design, a long ebony wooden tube with a bell, has not changed for decades and is still played today; outside temples as a call to prayer or as part of a dance band. These two examples I experienced directly and its sound and context left a deep impression on me. The instrument has an ancient expressivity that derives from its unchanged design and one aspect of this is the double reed itself that remains basic in the way it functions. Usually these instruments are accompanied by a set of drums and occasional bells or cymbals.

I will demonstrate this instrument and show various examples of how I have extended material from my transcription of a melody taken from a CD recording (NADASWARAM Vol.2 2002) that caught my ear. It is a four bar melodic structure with many embellished variations. The melody is played in unison by two Nadaswarams and contains natural phasing and pitch differences. I will show how I have developed a harmonic structure from this melody using the natural scale of the Nadaswaram and then transposing it and developing it further with the use of extended techniques on to the oboe and in collaboration with a trumpet.

10.30 : Connor Christie

### **Irish rebel music 1969 – 1998: Motives and agendas**

The troubles were a time of great violence and sectarianism on the Isle of Ireland, especially Northern Ireland. Throughout this time, 'rebel music' served as an outlet for musicians to voice their support for factions, express history truly and emotionally and to provoke, whether that be thought or violence. The music itself is filled with nationalist sentiment with the more popular songs becoming anthems for republican movements. The Wolfe Tones were one of the more popular 'rebel bands' and have become synonymous with Republican culture and anti-British sentiment. While it is not possible to definitively prove their motives and agendas, through their music, a lot is inferred. This research seminar will discuss Rebel music and the Wolfe Tones with initial music analysis results.

11.00 : Susie Self

### **Composing music for audiences who don't go to opera**

#### **A lecture recital demonstrating compositional strategies to create *Quilt Song*, a new opera for Birmingham.**

Opera has the potential to be a universal art form reaching audiences across generations and social strata. Current opera commissions often engage with subjects, musical styles and performance practices that make it feel as though opera is delivered by the elite for the elite. In contrast, through

my compositional practice, I explore opera's potential to embrace inclusiveness.

"...the shaman descends to the underworld to find a cure, not just for his or her own psychic wounds but for those of all the community". (Small, 1998: p180)

I have developed *Quilt Song* interactively with community groups such as quilting circles and young music theatre performers, i.e., 'people who don't go to the opera'. These encounters inspired me to compose upbeat melodic music crafted for voice types ranging from belt/pop to operatic. 'In concert' with my own compositional oeuvre, I developed nuanced complexities and poly-tonalities beneath the simplicity. To facilitate 'cross-over' I engaged with cinematic orchestral colour, specifically using strings and guitars. I also embraced 'the eye of the storm' at dramatically violent moments by composing daring music which interfaces with multi-layered abstract soundscapes. *Quilt Song* finally transforms from 'operatic-ness' to looped beats and *Street Fusion*.

"When a piece makes sense to us it appears to reach a point where we would accept anything that happens." (Burrows, 2010: p37)

BREAK

11.45 : Conor Mcelroy

### **Abstract TBC**

12.15 : Bill Hunt

### **In search of the original performing pitch: a worthwhile element of practice-based musicological research or simply a matter of taste?**

New research and greater proficiency in execution over the past few decades have greatly increased familiarity with many historical instruments and voice types, and our understanding of how they were probably used. Despite this, old habits are deeply ingrained. In much of the 'Baroque' repertoire, the application of an all-purpose pitch of A415 is one such habit that dies hard; the convenient but unimaginative resort to 'standard' instrument sizes is another; the deployment of falsettists on historically inappropriate vocal lines is yet another. But do any of them really matter?

Drawing on his experience as a participant in some recent concert and recording projects, William Hunt argues that the performance of a composition at its 'original pitch' (as opposed to the one at which we have become used to hearing it) can have a significant influence upon our appreciation of the music. Orlando Gibbons and J.S.Bach are two relevant composers. Though well separated by borders of geography and time, their practical experiences of the issues of different pitch standards clearly crossed in quite similar ways.

LUNCH

2.00 : Miles Payne

Richard Allison's 'Psalmes of David in Meter' from 1599 provides an extremely interesting picture of late Elizabethan culture. Described as the 'Golden Age' of instrumental music by many scholars such as Matthew Spring, the Elizabethan period was a time of development and creativity, especially within the 'English Consort' or 'Broken-Consort'. Society was forever changing during the Tudor period, with religious views and extreme changes acting as a catalyst for new developments. Recent

research has shown that there are conflicting views when placing the instruments of Allison's psalter, the lute and the cittern especially, in society. This asks the question of why and how these instruments were intended to be used, particularly within a devotional household work.

This presentation is a snapshot of my current research to date; providing a brief introduction to Allison and his interesting choice of instrumentation, with the focus of this presentation on a workshop completed by a semi-professional broken consort and singers, from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, and the importance of performance-practice led research.

2.30 : Daniel Galbreath

### **Choral Complexity: Aleatorism and Nested Decision Making**

My research seeks to answer the question: How do performers undertake and experience choral aleatorism, and how might these processes suggest an emergent practice that can inform the efforts of singers, conductors, and composers? Following the European transformation of Cagean 'indeterminacy' into 'aleatorism' (Feisst 2002), improvisatory textures increasingly appeared in choral composition. Choral aleatorism was sometimes employed to balance textural complexity and idiomatic vocal writing (Bodman 1994) against choral music's general conservatism (Strimple 2002); or, as Pauline Oliveros suggests, to afford a uniquely embodied and liberatory performance experience (2004). The primacy of the performer – whether in terms of entrainment or agency – crucially predicated both rationales. Yet little has been written about these performers' experiences or the processes they undertake in performing works which often employ novel or innovative compositional techniques. The central aim of this paper is to bring the findings of ongoing case studies (June 2015–November 2017) with choirs ranging from amateur to early-career professional-level into dialogue with the field of Complexity Theory (Davis and Sumara 2002, 2006). The former suggest that performers, as individuals and as a performing corpus, construct processes to navigate the performance of aleatorism. These processes are evidently informed by multiple contributory constructions – of composer, concept, localised 'tradition', and other elements. This paper offers an understanding of how these interactions occur within both singers and ensembles, and how they impact and bound each other, highlighting the transphenomenal nature (Davis 2008) of repertoire to which singers bring multiple traditions and physical entrainments, and in which the rehearsal and performance situation itself reifies numerous external phenomena.

3.00 : Corey Mwamba

### **We all have to deal with Gary Burton - confronting personal sound in jazz vibraphone performance.**

Earlier in 2017, Gary Burton retired from public performance, having released just under seventy albums as leader or co-leader and winning seven Grammy awards over a fifty-seven year career. Along with his now deceased contemporary Bobby Hutcherson, Burton is one of the most influential vibraphonists of all time. His eponymous four-mallet grip and pianistic technique used simultaneously as a developmental springboard and a performance standard for generations of vibraphonists and percussion educators; and technical analyses of his many recordings explore the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic choices made in improvisation. Turning away from these elements, there are compelling arguments for a musician's "sound" in jazz performance also displaying individuality on a timbral or spectral level. Yet even though Burton is easily identifiable in almost any context, he has rarely spoken about this aspect of his playing: and he may not even believe it exists. This writing thus asks two questions: when Burton struck the vibraphone, what made Gary Burton sound like Gary Burton? and what does it mean to not sound like Gary Burton?