

Music for the Arts Tower

Next year sees the 60th anniversary of the completion of one of Sheffield's most iconic modernist landmarks, the mighty Arts Tower. In anticipation, Platform 4 together with Lorenzo Prati have aptly created and curated a programme of music designed specifically to take advantage of the wonderful spaces and acoustics offered up by the building. Although each composer has contributed individual pieces to the programme, the concert has been conceived as a whole, with pieces overlapping and echoing each other.

The event is the outcome of a Knowledge Exchange project which explores unconventional spaces as venues for music events.

With thanks to The University of Sheffield's AHKE, EFM, WRoCAH and the Delphi Trust for making this unique happening possible.

All programme notes are written by the composers.

Lower Ground Transmission

Lorenzo Prati

[Paternoster, on arrival]

As the audience arrives at the Arts Tower and takes position on the floors, the movements of the fast lifts are used as a live score for a solo improvisation which takes place on the Lower Ground floor. The audience is not able to see or hear the performance directly, instead this is transmitted in real time to a cabin of the paternoster with walkie talkies, circulating past each floor several times. An idea for this piece was drawn up as part of a series of transmission studies which combine rhythm analysis with narrowcasting as a way to sonify the vertical movements that take place within the building. Tonight the score is performed by the wonderful John Jasnoch on tenor banjo.

Paternoster Loop

Lorenzo Prati

[Various locations, throughout the evening]

Inspired by Heinrich Böll's short story "Murke's Collected Silences", this 9-channel electroacoustic environment reimagines the paternoster as a sound-on-sound tape loop. 8'37" was chosen as a duration for the loop as it is the average time that the lift takes to complete one cycle up and down the building. As they are performed in the space, recordings of Platform 4's compositions are overlaid on top of field recordings of the Arts Tower and other site-related

sounds which I have gathered over the course of my PhD. The sound material assembled onto the loop keeps reappearing at regular intervals throughout the concert, providing an extended meter specific to the building. This repetitive and cumulative process is central to the piece and draws on the notion of “thick time” – described by Jeremy Till as a temporality of architecture where time does not pass but rather it accumulates, gathering the past, present as well as projecting the future all at once. The result is a cyclical composition which combines the everyday life and rhythms of the Arts Tower with this specific performance setting and which, like the building, is in a constant state of change.

Arts Tower Nightingales

Jenny Jackson

[Various locations, throughout the evening]

Arts Tower Nightingales is a site-specific piece, designed to work in the unique spaces offered by the Arts Tower. It takes influence from the ancient Anglo-Saxon riddle ‘Nightingale’ - one of the Exeter Book bird riddles (No. 8, author unknown) - which is like a musical score in itself. The idea of a songbird which ‘speaks out in many tongues’, with skill, variation and a lofty voice, lends itself very well to musical interpretation, especially in the setting of the Arts Tower where there is plenty of space for performers to spread out and move around, and different levels to perform from (as if they were birds themselves!).

(Add riddle text here if space)

.....*Cut here for paper programme*.....

(further text for online programme):

The piece is scored for piccolos, clarinets and voices; instruments that can easily mimic the sounds of a nightingale’s song (trills, screeches, croaks, tweets, whistles, scratches, babbling and gurgling). The musical gestures are transcriptions I made of the nightingale song but the piece also celebrates ‘birds’ in a more generic sense, opening up more possibilities in the visual performance and allowing the performers more freedom as they move around the building. The group effect is often alarming, which is a bird’s natural response to a perceived threat, and therefore fitting!

The structure of *Arts Tower Nightingales* mirrors Lorenzo Prati’s overall concept for the Music in the Arts Tower event and is closely aligned with the paternoster lift loop. Nightingale ‘iterations’ occur every 8 minutes 37 seconds (the duration of a complete paternoster lift loop), throughout the evening. These are triggered by audio cues heard on the tape loop, which have been engineered by Lorenzo using pre-recorded material.

Anglo-Saxon riddle (Nightingale) - Translation by Richard Hamer

I speak out through my mouth in many tongues,
I sing with skill and vary constantly
My lofty voice, with a resounding noise,
I hold my tune, do not conceal my sound.
An ancient night-time singer, I bring joy
To dwellers in the towns when I sing loud,
With modulated tones; quiet in their homes
They listen with bent heads. Say what I'm called,
Who loudly emulate the story-songs
Of minstrels, and foretell to humankind
Many glad tidings with my tuneful song.

OVER-TRAVEL IS NOT DANGEROUS...

Chris Noble

[Paternoster lift / Mezzanine and Atrium]

Written for 9 or more glockenspiels, OVER-TRAVEL IS NOT DANGEROUS... is a reference to the vaguely threatening message that greets travellers on the famous paternoster lift, which says that whilst not being dangerous to stay on the lift and travel over the top of the mechanism, it's also 'not recommended'. Thus, the piece contains slightly sinister motifs and dark harmonies, but given that it's being played on a load of primary school glockenspiels, never feels at all threatening. There's a second surround-sound rendition in the second half. Thanks to Bob and Dawn for lending the instruments.

Ascenseur Pour Les Sheffoes

Tom Owen

[Paternoster Lift]

When I was very young, I *presumed* that hospitals were all laid out as single corridors, with the diseases getting "worse", whatever that meant, as you travelled through the building. Similarly, I was disappointed to find out that the Arts Tower was not arranged with one subject on each floor, with the most brain-meltingly abstract pursuits at the top. Nevertheless, being back in the building to plan this concert did recall the many dizzying transformations that come along with *Being At University*.

The piece playfully references ascents to the scaffold (Berlioz's, and some cherry-picked words from the guillotining scene and closing prophecy at the end of Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*), Elijah's ascent into heaven, and Psalm 121 ("I will *lift* my eyes unto the hills, whence cometh my help"). We hear the flickering of both embers and fireflies. A passage from Dante's *Inferno* – a work that shares my younger self's architectural vision for incrementally more troublesome zones – ties together a number of these references. Players can "cry out" to each other for help,

but more effectively through the shared vertical chamber of the shaft than across the landings, as their co-travellers in the opposite direction are only heard fleetingly.

Artistically, I don't find vertical travel in either direction to be a particularly useful metaphor; both aid and retribution can come from above or below, and in any case, the paternoster always ascends as much as it descends, fun though it would be to arrive one morning and find all the lift cars bunched together at the top. For me, the lift is more of an icon of the machinations of the University itself, which transforms people on so many different vectors.

The different chunks of musical material correspond to ascents and descents, so the amount that you hear of each overlap will be determined by the landing to which you have been assigned.

Stairs // Pairs

Tom Owen

[Lower Ground-to-Ground Floor Stairway]

This piece is a response to the way sounds seemed to *ping* around the atrium when we met there to plan tonight's concert. I hesitate to call it "site-specific", however, as I would like to try it in other spaces, and with other combinations of instruments.

It is also a microcosm of what Lorenzo is doing on a grand scale by constantly writing new sounds into the tape loop. The players "write" material on the first playing, then add more material the second time round.

Two Parades

Tom James

[Lower Ground Floor]

I am bringing all the performers together to roam the lower ground floor atrium in two pied-piper-style contrasting pieces. The audience experience will vary depending on performer decisions and our exact route.

*With **very** special thanks to our dedicated team of musical volunteers:*

Lindsay Aitkenhead

Janet Alton

Jenni Brooks

Lyn Hodnett

Val Huzzard

John Jasnoch

Steve Jouanny

Rupert Kahn

Stephanie Leather

Johanna Leung

Zhongping Lu

Laura Mella

Ruth Nicholson

Jess Jevon-Owen

Tim Plant

Julia Schauerman

Martin Spence

Elizabeth Stephenson

John Sumner

Jill Vincent

Louise Vincent

...and also to all the staff and volunteers that have worked tirelessly to make this night happen in the first place, notably Nick Potter. Thanks Nick!