

GBSR Duo

Softcore

Thu 17 Jun

Hall One | 8pm

KINGS PLACE

Programme

Joanna Bailie

Roll Call

Graham Fitkin

Chain of Command

Pauline Oliveros

Bye Bye Butterfly

CHAINES

so smol (hewwo)

Oliver Sellwood

Alias States

Nicole Lizée

Softcore (European premiere)

This performance will last approx. 70 mins with no interval.
Members of the audience are kindly invited to refrain from
applauding until the end of concert.

GBSR Duo

Siwan Rhys piano, keyboard, voice

George Barton percussion, drums

with **Ian Dearden (Sound Intermedia)**

video, sound projection

Programme Notes

It is a reassuring fiction that our personalities and identities are our inviolate cores, perhaps influenced by outside events, but fundamentally unified entities. In this programme, made up of music typified by dislocations, disorientation, elision, genre-collisions and ambiguity, various threats to the sanctity of identity are considered, from the influence of technology to the sweep of history; from the infliction of psychological torture to the depersonalising effects of fame.

Joanna Bailie *Roll Call*

Roll Call is constructed around the reassuring nostalgic presence of a black-and-white school photograph, an unexpected find in the drawer of a bureau. But the beginning of the piece, a digitally-grained image that is so zoomed-in as to be incomprehensible, acts as a signal of what is to come, as we are gradually brought further into a world of increasing uncertainty and elision. The long (true) biography that the pianist reads for the first schoolboy gives way to shorter (fictional) biographies, brief statements, names, and finally piano notes. Bailie has called the piece 'an acknowledgement of the idea of history trickling through our fingers' – we lose our clear sense of the subjects' identities both as the piece continues and as a broader sweep of time metaphorically passes. As we move forward towards our own era, perhaps not only are the past and the individuals in it being forgotten, but our firm and grounded sense of personal identity is itself slipping away.

Graham Fitkin *Chain of Command*

Chain of Command is a bold and brutal work for percussion sampler loaded with snatches of the speeches of George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld. A response to prisoner abuses at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay, the piece attempts to emulate the music torture used at the latter, in which recorded music (favourites included Metallica, Eminem and Barney the Dinosaur) would be played at ear-splitting volume, 24 hours a day, to inmates, in order to induce sleep deprivation and erode the sense of self by 'drowning out' inner thoughts.

A few of the speech samples are reversed or slowed, but the vast majority are not acoustically treated in any way. As fragments of voice seem to combine into words and phrases, fragments of meaning form, shimmer and disintegrate, like half-formed thoughts.

It is difficult to resist the parallel with the disorientation of the news-consuming public, bludgeoned with political mantras by those in power, co-opted into the chain of command.

Pauline Oliveros *Bye Bye Butterfly*

Realised as a virtuosic improvisation recorded live to stereo, *Bye Bye Butterfly* opens with oscillators and tape delays, the sounds of 1960s modernity. But at 3'20" the musical texture changes entirely, with the sudden (and acoustically shocking) introduction of a long excerpt from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* – the record was apparently lying around in the recording studio at the time and was 'spontaneously incorporated into the ongoing compositional mix'. Oliveros stated that with the inclusion of this work of typical operatic female mortality, *Bye Bye Butterfly* 'bids farewell not only to the music of the 19th century but also to the system of polite morality of that age and its attendant institutionalized oppression of the female sex'.

The balancing of the rich textures of Puccini's orchestration with the clean tones of the oscillators is masterfully handled as the musical argument proceeds intuitively but inexorably, synthesisers augmenting but perhaps also ironically commenting on Puccini's orchestrated hysteria as it becomes dreamier, murkier and more distant. Eventually the atavistic memory passes, leaving us with the high oscillator note with which we began, a rather different female performer's shrill soprano tone.

CHAINES *so smol (hewwo)*

so smol (hewwo) opens with the cutesy gurgling of a toddler embedded in the primary-colour artificiality of synthesiser chords. The tone is sweet to the point of lightly ironic saccharinity, a vision of 'domestic bliss', or maybe its highly packaged Instagram simulacrum. With the start of a fugue-like counterpoint based on the mewling of cats and the thumping of heavily side-chained kick drums and vocal percussion, the tone builds in intensity, sweetness and irony simultaneously, bizarrely but finely balanced.

As the rhythmic canons and acoustic treatments escalate with incongruous vehemence, the music increasingly threatens to derail, eventually locking into a grinding trance that gradually exhausts itself. Finally we arrive at a highly ambiguous musical plateau; the toddler recurs, closing the piece with a cry.

This piece was commissioned by GBSR in 2019 with generous assistance from the RVW Trust.

Oliver Sellwood *Alias States*

Aliasing, in audio processing, is an effect that causes different frequencies to become indistinguishable (or 'aliases' of one another) when sampled at a particular rate (rather like the audio equivalent of the phenomenon

of a helicopter's rotor blades appearing stationary when filmed at a frame rate that aligns with their speed). It is also, of course, a word for a false or assumed identity.

In *Alias States*, an electronic drum kit loaded with processed piano samples attempts to mimic the more venerable instrument, stealing its identity using sampling. The interaction is complicated – the pianist also operates two arpeggiator pedals that drift in and out of phase with the piano samples triggered by the drums, creating additional psycho-acoustic effects, difference tones and resultant rhythms. Increasingly the battle for supremacy is not merely acoustic but stylistic, with the suppressed 'soul' of the drums' typical patterns gradually exerting more and more influence over the music.

Nicole Lizée *Softcore* (European premiere)

Softcore makes dislocation a central principle of its musical texture, riffing on the reproduction of Prince's music and image in all their many distortions and imitations. *Softcore*'s instantly-recognisable opening will be the first and only time in the piece we feel entirely moored. Fragments of Prince's music appear and reappear, in 'original' form and in karaoke tapes, in and out of tune and in irrationally-related tempi, against piano and drumkit textures deliberately designed to emulate technological glitching, or in close, disorientating canon. Proceeding episodically and punctuated by one particularly odd intervention, as though tiring of being composed and switching to watching a YouTube video instead, the music's melancholic ending nonetheless gives a sense of ambiguous closure.

Biographies

GBSR Duo

GBSR Duo, comprising George Barton (percussion) and Siwan Rhys (piano), is acquiring a national reputation for exceptional interpretations of the existing piano-percussion repertoire, well-chosen commissions, committed performances of new works, and inventive collaborations.

With a keen emphasis on commissioning and repertoire-building complemented by the respect and trust of composers, recent world premieres include works from Nicholas Moroz, Cee Haines (CHAINES), Arne Gieshoff, Oliver Sellwood and many others, while their interest in cross-disciplinary and experimental work has led to ongoing collaborations with Angharad Davies, Dejan Mrdja and Cameron Graham.

Their recording of Oliver Leith's *good day good day bad day bad day*, a 45-minute piece premiered in 2018 after long collaboration with the composer,

was released in August 2020 by Another Timbre to general critical acclaim, including being a 'Highlight of 2020' on BBC Radio 3's *New Music Show*. Their recording of Stockhausen's *KONTAKTE* was released by all that dust in 2019. Album of the Week in *The Guardian*, it was called a 'landmark performance' by Tom Service on BBC Radio 3.

Their most recent recording is a collection of the piano and percussion works of Barbara Monk Feldman, released May 2021 on Another Timbre.

Recent performances include hcmf//, Presteigne Festival and Music at Oxford. They were also Featured Artists at the 2019 Hartley Residency, University of Southampton, and Artists in Residence at the Vale of Glamorgan Festival 2020. They have featured on BBC's *Artsnight*, *Night Tracks*, *Freak Zone*, *New Music Show*, *Open Ear* and *In Tune*, RTÉ's *Sounds Out*, Radio Regent Toronto's *The Moderns*, and PBS Australia's *The Sound Barrier*.

After their 2019 performance at Huddersfield they were invited to join the hcmf// Fielding Talent mentoring programme. Through this programme hcmf// is working with them to develop, showcase and promote their work.

Individually they perform as soloists and chamber musicians, and work with ensembles including the Colin Currie Group, London Sinfonietta, Apartment House, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, CBSO, Nash Ensemble, Britten Sinfonia, OAE, London Contemporary Orchestra, Aurora Orchestra and many others. gbsr.co.uk

Joanna Bailie

British composer **Joanna Bailie** (b. 1973, London) is currently based in Berlin. Bailie studied composition with Richard Barrett, electronic music at the Koninklijk Conservatorium (The Netherlands), and in 1999 won a fellowship to study at Columbia University. She completed her PhD at City, University of London in 2018.

Her music has been performed by groups such as Klangforum Wien, L'instant Donné, EXAUDI, Ensemble



Mosaik, Ictus Ensemble, Ensemble Musikfabrik, Ensemble Nadar, KNM Berlin, Zwerm, Asamisimasa, Neue Vocalsolisten Stuttgart, The London Sinfonietta, The BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, The SWR Vokalensemble and the Ives Ensemble. She has written solo pieces for Mark Knoop, Francesco Dillon, Heloisa Amaral and Gunnhildur Einarsdóttir.

Bailie has been programmed at events such as the Donaueschinger Musiktage, ECLAT, Venice Biennale, Huddersfield, SPOR Festival, MaerzMusik, Musica Strasbourg, Rainy Days Festival Luxembourg, Darmstadt, Borealis Festival, and Ultima.

Bailie's recent work includes chamber music and installation, and is characterised by the use of manipulated field recordings and other sound media together with acoustic instruments. She is also interested in the interplay between the audio and visual as evidenced by her works incorporating camera obscura, and film.

Graham Fitkin

Graham Fitkin composes for live performance, recordings, dance, media and installations. He works with acoustic instruments, electronic instruments and audio recordings. He also directs the Fitkin Band nine-piece group and works with harpist Ruth Wall as FitkinWall.

Orchestral commissions have included the Hallé, Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and the BBC Symphony, Philharmonic and Concert Orchestras and BBC National Orchestra of Wales. He has written chamber and solo works for Yo-Yo Ma, The Sacconi Quartet, Kathryn Stott, Will Gregory, Nederlands Blazersensemble, Powerplant, Ensemble Bash, Piano Circus and Simon Haram among others.

Cross-Art projects include those with Tate St Ives, Minack Theatre, a VR collaboration with Shezad Dawood, the Geography music app for HFC and the tree-planting Birch project. His extensive work with dance has included collaborations with Shobana



Jeyasingh, Wayne McGregor's Random Dance, Pacific Northwest Ballet, New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Bi-Ma, Sidonie Rochon, Munich Ballet and Portugal National Ballet.

Education and community work has taken in three UK PRS Composer residencies and many regional community projects, alongside university seminars, masterclasses and workshops in the UK, Japan, Italy and Soweto. Awards include three BASCA Composer Awards, an International Grand Prix Dance Music Award 2000, and a RPS Composer Award 2015.

Pauline Oliveros

Pauline Oliveros' (1932–2016) life as a composer, performer and humanitarian was about opening her own and others' sensibilities to the universe and facets of sounds. Her career spanned 50 years of boundary dissolving music making. In the 1950s, she was part of a circle of iconoclastic composers, artists, poets gathered together in San Francisco. In the '60s she influenced American music profoundly through her work with improvisation, meditation, electronic music, myth and ritual.

She was the recipient of four Honorary Doctorates and among her many recent awards were the William Schuman Award for Lifetime Achievement, Columbia University, New York, NY, The Giga-Hertz-Award for Lifetime Achievement in Electronic Music from ZKM, Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, Germany and The John Cage award from from the Foundation of Contemporary Arts.

Oliveros was Distinguished Research Professor of Music at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY, and Darius Milhaud Artist-in-Residence at Mills College. She founded 'Deep Listening[®]', which came from her childhood fascination with sounds and from her works in concert music with composition, improvisation and electro-acoustics. She described Deep Listening as a way of listening in every possible way to everything possible to hear no matter what you are doing. Such intense listening includes the sounds of daily life, of nature, of one's own thoughts as well as musical sounds.



CHAINES

CHAINES (Cee Haines) is a composer and multi-instrumentalist based in Manchester, who writes surreal and fantastical electronica and electro-acoustic music. In June 2019 they won an Oram award from the PRS Foundation and BBC New Radiophonic workshop for innovation in music, sound and related technologies. Their album, *The King*, was received with enthusiastic critical praise; it was ranked in *FACT Magazine's* top 25 albums of 2018's first quarter, as made *Boomkat's* album of the week, and Robert Barry of *The Wire* called it 'vast in scope, rich in execution'. Their live set uses tracks from the record as a springboard for solo semi-improvised electro-acoustic performance, which *The Guardian* has called 'a mesmeric collage of ecclesiastical beauty and creeping dread'.

In addition to their solo electronic work, CHAINES has also worked extensively with the London Contemporary Orchestra. Commissions for the LCO have always been electro-acoustic in nature, using both small and orchestral scale ensembles with electronics, premiering works at venues such as The Royal Albert Hall (BBC Proms, 2018), Tate Modern (Uniqlo's Tate Lates series, 2017) and the Roundhouse (Ron Arad's Curtain Call, 2016). They have been in residency with SAY award winner Anna Meredith, and Grammy Award winner Imogen Heap, improvising, performing and producing audio and video.

Olly Sellwood

Olly Sellwood is an award-winning composer and performer currently studying for a PhD in composition at Southampton University with Matthew Shlomowitz, Drew Crawford and Michael Finnissy.

His approach looks at the act of composing as the construction and subsequent exploration of highly-limited musical situations through the use of acoustic instruments, performers, digital and analogue electronic technologies, lights, and video to explore the relationship between instrument and



instrumentalist. His music has been played across the UK, Europe and the US, working with the London Chamber Orchestra (LCO), Zwerm Electric Guitar Quartet, Olly Coates, Line Upon Line, Mira Benjamin, Ensemble Paramirabo, Ensemble Fractales and Out-Take Ensemble, among others.

He also writes for contemporary dance, film and theatre. Highlights include performances during the Resolution! Festival at The Place, Edinburgh Festival, Shakespeare's Globe and awards at the LA Film Expo.

Nicole Lizée

Called 'a brilliant musical scientist' (*CBC*), 'breathtakingly inventive' (*Sydney Times Herald*, Australia), and lauded for 'creating a stir with listeners for her breathless imagination and ability to capture Gen-X and beyond generation' (*Winnipeg Free Press*), award-winning composer and video artist composer **Nicole Lizée** creates new music from an eclectic



mix of influences including the earliest MTV videos, turntablism, rave culture, Hitchcock, Kubrick, Alexander McQueen, thrash metal, early video game culture, 1960s psychedelia and 1960s modernism. She is fascinated by the glitches made by outmoded and well-worn technology and captures these glitches, notates them and integrates them into live performance.

Nicole's compositions range from works for orchestra and solo turntablist featuring DJ techniques fully notated and integrated into a concert music setting, to other unorthodox instrument combinations that include the Atari 2600 video game console, omnichords, stylophones, Simon™, vintage board games, and karaoke tapes. In the broad scope of her evolving oeuvre she explores such themes as malfunction, reviving the obsolete, and the harnessing of imperfection and glitch to create a new kind of precision.

KINGS PLACE
Manchester Collective
Reich: Double Sextet
TOMORROW | Fri 18 Jun
Hall One | 7pm; 9pm