

Martin Harris Centre for Music and Drama

Cosmo Rodewald Concert Hall

Walter Carroll Lunchtime Concert Series

Thursday 2nd May 2024, 13.10

Trio Atem presents “Atem x Atem”



Nina Whiteman – Voice
Gavin Osborn – Flutes
Alice Purton – Cello

Although Lunchtime Concerts and Recitals are free, you are invited to make a voluntary donation towards their running costs.

Making donations to support our free concerts at the Martin Harris Centre

If you wish to support our free concerts, we are using JustGiving as an alternative to collecting cash donations at events.

Voluntary donations can be made by scanning the QR code or visiting Just Giving page: <https://www.justgiving.com/page/mhc-donate>



Photography and/or recording of this performance are strictly prohibited.

Would patrons please ensure that mobile phones are switched off. Please stifle coughing as much as possible and ensure that watch alarms and any other electronic devices which may become audible are switched off.

Today's Performances

Four Pictures of the Wind (for piccolo, voice, cello and tapes; 2024)

Alice Purton

1. *Birch tree*
2. *Cats Tor, 22nd December, 8.21 AM*
3. *The Machine*
4. *East Quantoxhead, 27 years ago, just after midday*

With love and thanks to Gavin and Nina.

AP

play / [ground] 6 (for flute, voice, and cello; 2024)

Gavin Osborn

play / [ground] 6 is the latest in a series of explorations for the trio that, although retaining a certain sense of the composer's voice, take the form of text-based games that are initially more like propositions or frameworks - requiring the trio to mine their creative ensemble skills to bring the material to performance.

GO

Incandescent (for trio, multimedia, and audience; 2022-24)

Nina Whiteman

'Incandescent' is the final part of *The Cybird Trilogy*, a collection of multimedia works with live performers that engages with machine learning, artificial intelligence, and the natural world. The trilogy charts the

‘adventures’ of a cybird character that is inhabited and portrayed differently in each work (I. Fuming, II. cybird cybird, III. Incandescent).

Fuming grew from my feelings about crossing a busy ‘arterial’ city road to reach my local park every day. I recorded this soundwalk dozens of times, capturing the impact of the traffic on the acoustic environment, as well as the sounds of birds jostling to live alongside this anthropogenic noise. This ‘data’ was then fed to the Sample RNN computer by Dr Christopher Melen at the RNCM, who sent me a range of results. The machine had learned a variety of sonic features of my daily walk. Unsurprisingly, though, it couldn’t make qualitative judgements between ‘bird’ and ‘car’, and some interesting sonic hybrids emerged. These, along with ‘uncanny’ machine-learned environments form the basis for much of the loudspeaker audio you will hear.

Research tells us that birds find it harder to learn their songs against a backdrop of traffic noise, and that their songs tend to occupy a narrower and higher bandwidth as a result of these stresses (e.g. Drooling and Popper, 2007 and Moseley et al, 2019).

I began to imagine birds as hybrids of technology, flesh, feather, and their imposing chaotic environment. The *Birds Aren’t Real* conspiracy claims (satirically) that all birds have been replaced by robot drones. I wondered what it would be like if they had.

The Cybird Trilogy emerges from collaboration with two research centres: Zubin Kanga’s UKRI-funded *Cyborg Soloists* project (Royal Holloway, University of London), and PRiSM (Practice and Research in Science and Music, Royal Northern College of Music).

The following technologies all make an appearance:

- **PRiSM Oscillator** is an app designed and developed by Christopher Melen from an original concept by Nina Whiteman. The app generates random frequencies within a set range.
- **Sample RNN (PRiSM)** was used to create machine-generated responses to environmental field recording data. These uncanny soundscapes are audible in all three works.
- **Holonic Systems (via the Holonist app)** enables the Movesense motion sensor to communicate with various software. The motion sensors are used to convert bird-like performer wing movements into

audible phenomena, through control of playback speed (MaxMSP) and of a modular synthesiser app (MiRack).

- **Holly+** <https://holly.plus/> Holly Herndon's voice model (deep neural network) was used to process real birdsong recordings. These feature in the in-ear soundtrack of *Fuming* and in the audio of *cybird cybird* and *Incandescent*.
- **AI images** of birds were created for the videos using DALL-E mini, and later Craiyon.
- **AI videos** were created using online generators such as Synthesia and Movio.

NW

AUDIENCE APP PARTICIPATION (for 'Incandescent')

There is an opportunity to audience members to contribute to today's performance through the PRiSM Oscillator app. The app launches as a webpage on any type of handset. To open it, please scan this QR code using your phone's camera:



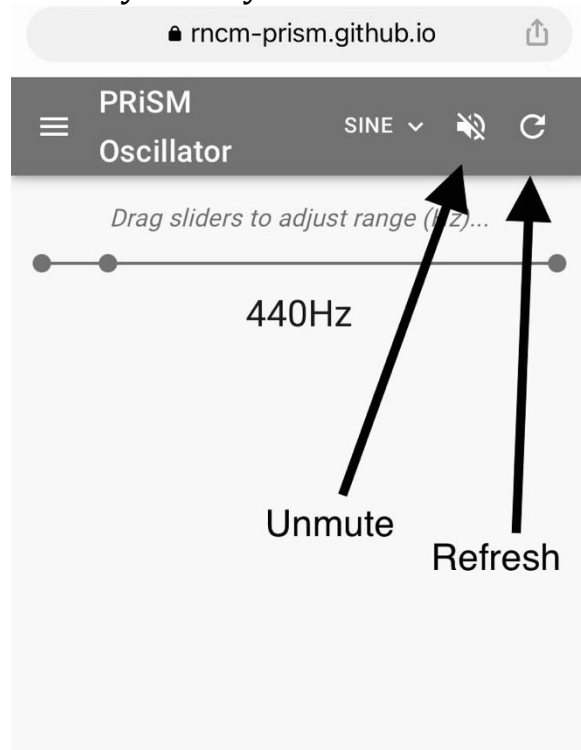
Or you can type the website address into your browser:

<https://rncm-prism.github.io/prism-oscillator/>

- The app looks like the image below, and you can tap on the loudspeaker icon to unmute and hear a sine tone. You may need to unmute your phone as well.

- Tapping on refresh will play a new pitch at random.
- Please do not adjust any other settings during the performance.
- Instructions will be provided to you on-screen.

Thank you for your contribution!



The Performers

Gavin Osborn is a flautist, composer, interdisciplinary artist & teacher based in the Northwest UK.

Active for over 20 years as a performer, Gavin specialises in new music, whether acoustic or electroacoustic, through-composed, open-form, graphic or improvised. As a flautist he predominantly works with composers, commissioning & performing new works. Collaboration is at the heart of his work, whether with composers, other performing musicians, or across disciplines with dancers (Charlotte Spencer, Jennifer-Lyn Crawford), visual & performance artists (Michael Mayhew, Clare Wardman, Lisa Gorton, Karen McLeod) & others. As a composer, he creates works for the concert hall & elsewhere, often combining musical notation with text & visual image.

Gavin is a flute tutor at the University of Manchester, where he also coaches chamber ensembles & gives classes/workshops. He has also taught flute for the Universities of York & Huddersfield as a special consultant, & for Manchester Metropolitan University. He also teaches flute for primary & secondary school children.

Nina Whiteman is a composer, vocalist and multimedia artist based in Manchester, UK.

Her current work, BELOW GROUND, engages with the environment, ecology, and ideas of the subterranean. She works across media and disciplines and is interested in the gamification of musical experiences as well as innovative uses of technologies and novel approaches to notation. Nina has been commissioned and performed by the BBC Philharmonic (BBC Radio 3), Distractfold, Psappha, and the Royal Opera House. Nina is also Artistic Director Manchester Contemporary Youth Opera (creating opportunities for young and emerging artists to make opera). She is Reader in Composition at Royal Holloway, University of London as well as teaching at the Royal Northern College of Music.

Alice Purton is a cellist, vocalist and improviser living in London. She specialises in contemporary chamber music, performing regularly with her ensembles Distractfold, Plus Minus and Trio Atem. Alice has performed at festivals and venues including Bludenzer Tage Zeitgemasse Musik, Austria; Maerzmusik, Berlin; Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival;

Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt, Germany; Rainy Days, Luxembourg; ESS, Chicago; No Hay Banda, Montreal. Alice regularly performs cello and vocals for recording sessions and pop performances. She has recently collaborated with singers including Jamie Cullum, Alice Zawadzki and Ana Silvera; she has recorded for composers including Mica Levi, Bobby Krlic, Jon Opstad, Chris Roe and Daniel Hart. She can regularly be heard on both radio and television. Recent television and film credits include 'Trigger Point' (ITV1, 2022); 'The Green Knight'; After Love (2020); 'Midsommar' (2019).

As an educator Alice is invited to give masterclasses and has held residencies in both cello performance and composition, at institutions including Harvard University, Oxford University, Stanford University, Columbia University, McGill University, Durham University, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Royal Northern College of Music and Manchester University.

Coming up at the Martin Harris Centre

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www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/martinharriscentre

Walter Carrol Lunchtime Concert: Artur Pereira - "(Re)discovering the music of Mozart and Luiz Costa"

Date: Thursday 9 May 2024

Venue: Cosmo Rodewald Concert Hall

Time: 13:10

Price: FREE

Gamelan Music from West Java

Date: Friday 10 May 2024

Venue: Cosmo Rodewald Concert Hall

Time: 13:10

Price: FREE

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