

Late Music Concert Series 2024/2025

Unitarian Chapel, St Saviourgate, York

October 5th @ 1pm – 2pm

KATE HARRISON-LEDGER

(PIANO)

PROGRAMME

Matthew Lee Knowles	<i>For Matt Geer</i> (2021)
James Williamson	<i>Fragments to Loop</i> (2023)
Bryn Harrison	<i>Piano Set (Six miniatures)</i> (2005)
Philip Glass	<i>Music in Contrary Motion</i> (1969)
Karen Tanaka	<i>Blue Crystal</i> (2014)
David Lang	<i>Cage</i> (1992)
Matthew Lee Knowles	<i>For AE on their 30th Birthday</i> (2020)
David Lang	<i>Grind</i> (1999)

Please note there will be no interval in this performance.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Matthew Lee Knowles *For Matt Geer (2021)*

James Williamson *Fragments to Loop (2023)*

I heard a performance of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 4 in E-Flat Major, Op.7 in this very auditorium, exquisitely performed by Clare Hammond. I was taken with the heart wrenching opening few bars of the second movement, *Largo con gran espressione*, which has stuck with me to this day. As a starting point for this piece, I began extracting fragments from the first few bars of music from the Beethoven and re-wrote these in new ways to create eighteen new fragments. Three of these fragments are primitively recorded live into megaphones (with a basic record function), which are then looped to form a homogenous backwash. It is then left up to the performer to improvise 'in-the-moment' with the other 15 fragments, which can be played in any order and repeated as many times as desired. The performer can also choose to stop and play the fragments recorded on the megaphones at any time.

- James Williamson

Bryn Harrison *Piano Set (Six miniatures) (2005)*

Piano Set (six miniatures) began as a single-page study entitled 'Flowers Fall' which was given its first performance by Clive Williamson at the Guildford Festival in March 2005. The piece was subsequently extended to six miniatures and the first complete performance of the Piano Set was given by Mary Dullea at the Warehouse, London on the 15th November, 2005. Like much of my music, the piece makes extensive use of repetition and aims to put into question notions of sameness and difference. It is dedicated to Annette Morreau.

- Bryn Harrison

Philip Glass *Music in Contrary Motion (1969)*

Music in Contrary Motion was originally written for organ. It is an uncompromisingly hypnotic piece made up of two lines of counterpoint in continuous quavers, with expanding and contracting permuted patterns between the notes A and E in each hand. It was written in what Glass dubbed as "open-form", meaning the music never really ends, it just stops. In theory, it could go on infinitely or at least for many hours.

- James Williamson

Karen Tanaka

Blue Crystal (2014)

Blue Crystal is a part of the series: Crystalline (1988), Hommage en cristal (1991), Metallic Crystal (1994-95), Crystalline II and III (1995-96, 2000). The titles suggest cold sonic sculptures, and my intention was to project images of crystals in sound and space. In Blue Crystal, a blue tint and haze were added to the texture.

- Karen Tanaka

David Lang

Cage – in memory of John Cage (1992)

Cage is one of eight pieces from Lang's *Memory Pieces*. Lang writes:

"One of the horrifying things about growing older is that your friends don't all grow older with you. People grow sick and then they die. You watch, you try to comfort them, and then you try to comfort yourself. The true horror is that after a while your memories begin to fade. How long can you hold on to the sound of a voice, the memory of a strange event, a bittersweet feeling, a silly story?

I was friends with all the dedicatees of the enclosed set of pieces—some were closer friends than others—and I have very personal memories of my dealings with them that I don't want to fade. Each of these little pieces highlights some aspect of my relationship with each friend. I hope this will help me hold on to these memories just a little while longer.

There are a few ways to approach these pieces. In one respect they are inventions, each an intellectual and philosophical exploration of one distinct, mechanical way to make music. They are also little etudes, as each one highlights a different technical concern, such as overlapping arpeggios (spartan arcs), polyrhythmic counterpoint (wed) or strange cross-hands (cello). The way I choose to look at them is as laboratories for larger works. If I can incorporate the music or the ideas or the techniques of these little pieces into other works then I am in some way keeping something of my friendship alive.

These pieces were composed chronologically in the order in which they are here printed, and this order makes a certain amount of musical sense. It is not necessary to follow this order, however, and these pieces may be played singly or in other groupings. The duration of the entire set should be about 30 minutes.

I would like to thank the different pianists who have either premiered one or more of these works or who have offered advice about how to edit or present these pieces—David Arden, Carlo Boccadoro, Anthony de Mare, Moritz Eggert, Lisa Moore. Most of all I want to thank Yvar Mikhashoff—I was writing *Yvar* a piece when John Cage died (12 August 1992). I put that piece aside and wrote *cage*, which Yvar then played several times. Yvar was already ill then and it was his idea that I write a series of memorial pieces. If there is any one person to whom this entire set should be dedicated it is Yvar."

- David Lang (davidlangmusic.com)

Matthew Lee Knowles

For AE on their 30th Birthday (2020)

David Lang

Grind - in memory of Jacob Druckman (1999)

Grind is one of eight pieces from Lang's *Memory Pieces*.

PERFORMER BIOGRAPHY

Kate Ledger

Kate Ledger is a pianist, collaborator and educator specialising in embodiment, spirituality and authenticity via experimental artistic practice. More recently, she collaborates with composers to examine how notation directly affects her movement. Here, with the help of Feldenkrais methodology and spiritual practice, she is playing either with or against her habitual performing movements. This is revealing many ways in which to write for the body, enhanced by the uniqueness of each composer.

She studied at the University of Huddersfield with Philip Thomas between 2003-2009 and has since studied with Ian Pace. She has played across Europe and the UK as a soloist or with a number of ensembles, including Heather Roche, Peyee Chen, Distractfold and Dark Inventions. In 2014, she premiered Steven Takasugi's *The Man Who Couldn't Stop Laughing* (2009) with Distractfold and won the Kranichstein Music Prize for Interpretation at the International Summer Course for New Music Darmstadt.

In more recent years, Kate has settled in York where she teaches and carried out her PhD. She focussed on locally-based projects whilst bringing up her two children, which involved collaborating with composers at the University of York and York St. John's. Projects have included working with composer Morag Galloway on *What Does This Moment Require*; a piece about the transition to motherhood. She also facilitated the York hub of the Mothers Who Make creative network.

Other notable collaborations include her work with Ray Evanoff and Ben Isaacs, with whom she began to develop her understanding of touch and sound using composed, constraining notational systems. She continues to develop this today through a wider awareness of the performing body, its links with meditation and yoga, and its effective contribution to sound production.

www.kateledgerpiano.com

COMPOSER BIOGRAPHIES

James Williamson

James Williamson's works have been performed by various ensembles including: Psappha, Aurora Orchestra, Hebrides Ensemble, London Sinfonietta, CoMA London, Hebrides Ensemble, Lunar Saxophone Quartet, Delta Saxophone Quartet, Österreichischen Symphoniker, Nuova Orchestra Da Camera Ferruccio Busoni, Croatian Philharmonic Orchestra, Pula Symphony Orchestra Chimera Ensemble, SCAW Duo; Quatuor Diotima, Ligeti String Quartet, University of York Symphony Orchestra, Royal Academy of Music Symphony Orchestra, Barry Webb (trombone), Rhodri Davis (harp), Kate Harrison-Ledger (piano), Anna Snow (voice), Ian Pace (piano), Jonathan Sage (clarinet), Franko Bozac and Stephen Altoft (19-division trumpet). James' music has been performed across UK and Europe including Croatia, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and Turkey and has been broadcast on BBC Radio 3's Late Junction and New Music show, on Radio 3 Belgrade, Serbia and Beethoven FM (Chile). James won the inaugural Lunar Saxophone Quartet New Music Award with his piece *In Memoriam* which was subsequently recorded for the LSQ's album 'Flux' released by Signum Classics.

Recent projects include a collaboration with visual artist Romey T. Brough and accordionist Franko Bozac whereby he has written a set of five pieces responding to Romey's collages, called *Romey collages*, which was premiered in October 2023 at York Late Music.

James studied composition at the University of Huddersfield with Patrick Stanford. Since completing his degree in 2005, James studied privately for a year with Bryn Harrison before heading to the Royal Academy of Music to study a Masters (with a contribution grant from the Lawrence Atwell's Charity) with Philip Cashian alongside Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Simon Bainbridge, Bent Sørensen and Hans Abrahamsen. In 2019, James was awarded a PhD in Composition with from the University of York in 2019, supervised by Martin Suckling and with thanks to receiving the Terry Holmes Composition Scholarship from 2013 to 2017.

www.jameswilliamsoncomposer.com

Bryn Harrison

Bryn Harrison is a composer and Professor in Composition at the University of Huddersfield. He has developed a close working relationship with ensembles such as Plus Minus, Asamisimasa, ELISION, Exaudi, Apartment House, Bozzini Quartet, Wet Ink as well as with soloists such as Philip Thomas, Mark Knoop, Aisha Orazbayeva and Sarah Saviet. In addition, his pieces have been performed by many other established ensembles such as Ensemble Recherche, Klangforum Wien, London Sinfonietta, London Symphony Orchestra and BCMG, with notable performances and radio broadcasts from international festivals across the world. He has three solo discs on *another timbre* as well as works released on HCR and NMC. He is a recipient of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award for Composers.

Matthew Lee Knowles

Matthew Lee Knowles is a prolific composer, poet, pianist, performer and teacher based in London, who had the honour and pleasure of teaching alongside Michael Finnissy at a CoMA Summer Course a few years ago. Looking back over recent compositions, it seems they could have been written by several people, as they cover some ground, from highly conceptual instructional music, quizzical and direct to complex and virtuosic work, specific and scattered, with graphic notation along the way, through durations of a few minutes to several hours, for solo instruments and large ensembles.

His works have been heard in concert halls, on TV and radio. Matthew wrote and performed live, the music for a video by Brandon Labelle, (Cloudy, Wilton's Music Hall, 2009), which incorporated both classical and rock for solo piano. He has written several theatre scores and has engineered small and large-scale happenings the most prominent featuring over a hundred performers lasting three hours (The Nothing and the Nothingness, Louise T. Blouin Institute, 2008). Other happening locations have included; a cemetery, a field, a library, a street and a concert hall stage. Ejected Material (Jerwood Room, Oxford University, 2010), was a collaboration with George Chambers, leading to an exhibition featuring instructions tied to balloons, thousands of chads (leftovers from hole-punchers), fans and burnt scores in jars.

Matthew has written two opera libretti including the libretto for squib-box's first opera, Shadow Prophets, which was premièred in Sardinia in 2011. He has written several hundred poems ranging from single sentences to forty-thousand word epics and alongside these works, there are also several hundred instructional scores, straddling the gamut of possibilities from the absurd to the mundane. Several pieces have been published in part and in full in magazines and Matthew regularly reads at poetry events. Improving The Remarkable (2009) was written specifically for a public art development in central London and the text has been permanently installed on huge vanes attached to a new building. Other creations include a play (Kidnapped, 2010), a Beginners Guide To Music (2011), more than five hundred paintings and small sculptures and several limited edition booklets. At the end of 2009, INTO Magazine published an article entitled Making Things Happen, in which Matthew discussed how he works and gave advice to other composers/artists. Spokenwordmusic was released on the Squib-Box label in 2012. In 2015 Matthew wrote a 2,000 word joke and recited it from memory (Weisslich, curated by Louis d'Heudieres)

In November 2014, after nearly three years of writing, Matthew completed his 140 Spectacles for clarinet, piano and silent orchestra, a five and a half hour work, with an accompanying 3000 word essay. A few months later, an opera, A Catatonic Romance, with a libretto by Lucy Hutchinson, was completed, after almost a decade in the planning. Around fifty pieces have been written for specific people with their names in the title and many others carry dedications. Matthew has also made hundreds of electronic works, especially exploring the idea of phasing. At the start of 2021 Matthew finished a four year project, turning a novel into music resulting in a final single-movement work lasting 26 hours over

more than a thousand pages called For Clive Barker – this work now stands as the longest single-movement non-repeating piano composition ever written. A collection of thirty songs was written in April, which will be recorded this year. In February the incomparable pianist Kate Ledger premiered For Alan Turing playing for seven hours without a break and the success of this was commented on by many prominent composers and performers leading to the release of an album of solo piano music in 2021.

Kate Ledger and Matthew released an album of Matthew's piano music after running a successful Kickstarter campaign in September 2021, the album is called FOR and is in two parts; ACCRETION and DEBRIS. Jude Cowan Montague interviewed Matthew about this in April 2022 and the recording can be heard [here](#). Matthew was also interviewed live on Radio Humberside in March 2022.

In January 2021 Matthew took a break from composing to write a novel. As of January 2024 he is about to start work on the 4th draft and when completed it will be a breath-taking compendium of violence and cruelty. The title is 36.

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