UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS
INTERNATIONAL CONCERT SERIES
October - December 2015

Steve Beresford, Phil Minton, Aleks Kolkowski and Sean Williams perform pieces by Hugh Davies plus solo and group improvisations

Sunday 18 October

4:00pm

Programme £1

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

PROGRAMME

Hugh Davies – *The Birth of Live Electronic Music* (1971)

Hugh Davies – *Voice* (1969) [vocalist: Phil Minton]

Hugh Davies – *Not to be Loaded with Fish* (1968-9) [Phil Minton]

Steve Beresford – *Voice* (1974)

Hugh Davies – *Not to be Loaded with Fish* (1968-9) [Steve Beresford]

Steve Beresford – improvised set

Steve Beresford & Phil Minton – improvised set

Steve Beresford, Phil Minton, Aleks Kolkowski & Sean Williams – improvised set

Hugh Davies – *The Birth of Live Electronic Music* (1971) [second performance]

PROGRAMME NOTES

Hugh Davies – *The Birth of Live Electronic Music* (1971)
for Stroh violin, two noise-makers, and acoustic mixer

Phil Minton - Voice; Steve Beresford - Objects; Sean Williams - Mixing &
Aleks Kolkowski - Stroh Violin. Realisation by Aleks Kolkowski.

This is a music theatre piece in which four performers imitate the sounds of a
recording on 78-rpm disc being played back on a wind-up gramophone—
including the scratches and crackles, and various other idiosyncrasies that
are characteristic of this kind of playback medium. The following are extracts
from Davies's own performance instructions:

> This work is a performance that involves a pre-electric equivalent of a live electronic
> amplification system, using as its principal sound source an early 20th century
> 'violin with horn.' It reverses the normal practice of making a special studio
> recording following a live performance.
>
> The specially-constructed stage installation is as follows: the violinist is seated
> stage right, with a length of flexible tubing taped to the fitting for the instrument's
> 'horn' (ideally, on a two-horn instrument, to the fitting for the larger horn). To the left
> of the violinist stand two sound-producers, who vocally or otherwise make typical
> sounds from 78 rpm records into the microphone-like funnels that are mounted on
> stands in front of them: hissing, clicks, scratches etc. The three lengths of tubing
> from these three sound sources are each connected to one end of three long
> lengths of white plastic water pipes […] which stretch right across the stage or
> performance space... At stage left these three pipes are connected into an acoustic
> mixer on a low stand, which consists of brass piping and a large stopcock or tap for
> each input, mixing the three channels into a single output… Further plastic piping
> leads to an acoustic folded-horn loudspeaker...
>
> Additional props, which are operated by the mixing person, are a (silent) 78 rpm
> turntable placed on a small table, and one 78 rpm disc, which is mounted vertically
> on a stand. To start the performance visually, the turntable is wound up and the
> disc is then spun manually, to emphasize the connection with 78 rpm discs. The
> violinist plays a personal improvised collage of tunes that were popular in the
> 1930s…

Hugh Davies – *Voice* (1969)
for solo vocalist and disc-cutting machine

Phil Minton – Voice; Aleks Kolkowski – Disc-Cutting

In this piece, the performer is instructed to make a gramophone recording in a public recording booth. Such booths were, at one time, reasonably common, for example in train stations; one would insert a coin, record sounds for three minutes or so, and a gramophone record would drop out. Such public recording booths are, however, no longer common nowadays. In this performance, a disc-cutting lathe will be used to etch the sounds produced by the vocalist directly to disc.

In Davies's performance notes, the solo vocalist is instructed as follows:

> The record is to be made vocally, with as much variety as possible (e.g. breathing, growling, murmuring, whistling, intoning, etc.) but excluding conventional singing. No intelligible words are to be used, though some passages may sound as if they are in a foreign language. In particular vary the speed of articulation and the use of pauses.

Davies did not intend this to be a piece for concert performance—since the disc would have been recorded in a public recording booth. Rather, he intended the resulting recording to be used in other performances, such as in his own piece *Not to be Loaded with Fish*, which is also on tonight's programme.

Hugh Davies – *Not to be Loaded with Fish* (1968-9)
for solo performer, record player, 2-channel pulsing unit and electronic equipment

Realisation and recreation of electronic equipment by Sean Willians
In this piece, the performer uses a record player to play back a gramophone recording of a voice—specifically, the recording made by following the instructions for Davies's piece *Voice* (see above). The piece requires a record player that has been specially modified, so that the record can be played both forwards and backwards, at the flick of a switch. In performance, the performer plays the record, ad lib, forwards and backwards, such that the performance lasts approximately twice as long as the record itself, that is, about 5 to 7 minutes.

The performer also modifies the sounds played back from the record using a two-channel pulsing unit, in this case specially designed and built for the

performance by Sean Williams. The pulsing unit 'chops up' the sound, so that repetitive silences—gaps—are introduced. It is operated via two dials culled from old-style dial-operated telephones. The performer also has additional controls that influence the left/right balance of the sound, via two loudspeakers.

In Davies's instructions, the performer is directed to 'Vary the frequency of reversal of the turntable and the operation of each set of controls and their different combinations as much as possible.' A further indication is that 'The title has no relevance in making the recording or in a performance.'

Steve Beresford – *Voice* (1974)
Re-cut on disc by Aleks Kolkowski

This recording by Steve Beresford was made in a public sound-recording booth in York station, on 21 April 1974. However, it is not directly related to Davies's piece with the same title, and the use of sound-recording booths in both instances is purely coincidental.

In this performance we will hear Beresford's recording 'as is.' It will then be used in a performance of Davies's *Not to be Loaded with Fish*, and in solo and group improvisations.

Beresford describes the disc itself and the process of recording it (and another recording made a year later) as follows:

> Because Calibre Auto Recording 45s are only 6 inches in diameter, they often get lost—sometimes for years—in my large collection of 7-inch singles. They periodically come to light, usually in the middle of a frantic search for a Lee Perry B-side.
>
> I recorded one in 1974 and one in 1975, both in 'Record Your Own Voice' machines set next to photo booths on, respectively, York and London Charing Cross station platforms. I think that the idea of these booths was to record a greeting to a loved one. But the sheer novelty of being able to produce a proper record, albeit one-sided and the wrong size, was the main attraction, I'm sure.
>
> The booths closely resembled photo booths, and one could record around 2 minutes of music. I think there was a clock which counted down the time. Maybe the machine played it back before dispensing it. I don't remember which year Gavin Bryars devised his version of Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting In A Room*, involving recording something in a booth and then re-recording over and over. I think that my main attraction to the machine was that it produced an artificially aged artifact, like a Joseph Cornell, although I doubt I knew that name in 1974.

I envisaged showing up with an acoustic guitar and recording a pseudo-blues that I could pass off, because of the inevitable scratches and low fidelity, as an undiscovered 1930s blues classic. (Years later, a colleague called Danny Adler sold an archival blues record company a whole album of ersatz early blues, but without—as far as I know—using a station recording booth.)

Even in 1974, the records looked very old-style with the legend 'Calibre' in joined-up writing. I never attempted the blues, but I did record a solo voice piece. That surprises me now, but reminds me that the first improvisation group I was in— Bread and Cheese with Neil Lamb and Dave Herzfeld—used a lot of what we would call 'extended vocal techniques.' I think we listened to Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia* a lot. So my voice is on the first disc recorded, as my 24-year-old self noted for posterity on a label on the back, on the 21st of April at 11:45 P.M.: 'After first gig at Leeman Hotel . . . next compartment white flashes.'

The Museum of Communication in Den Haag has the most beautiful "record-your-own-voice" machine. It is in the shape of an art deco skyscraper. Two vertical metal plates can be pulled out to shield you from ambient noise whilst recording your message. A tiny record player is set into the side so that you can check the result. And a slot in the other side dispenses cardboard sleeves.

Source: Notes accompanying the CD *Not Necessarily "English Music"*, curated by David Toop

With thanks to David Toop for his help in recreating these recordings.

BIOGRAPHIES

Aleks Kolkowski

Aleks Kolkowski is a composer and violinist who uses historical sound recording and reproduction apparatus and obsolete media to make contemporary mechanical-acoustic music. His work invites us to listen to the present through the audio technologies of the past, through recordings, installations and live historical re-enactments. His numerous international projects in this field have combined wax cylinder phonographs, wind-up gramophones and antique disc recording machines together with live musicians and even singing canaries. A major project to date has been his Phonographies archive of contemporary musicians, artists and writers recorded exclusively on wax cylinders. His practice-led doctoral research centred upon the creative uses of antiquated audio technologies and led to the award in of a PhD from Brunel University, London, in 2012. That year he was appointed as the first sound artist-in-residence at the Science Museum, London, were he worked closely with collections and curators, producing a series of performances, recordings and installation work. He has since held research associateships at the Science Museum and the Royal College of Music. Aleks Kolkowski's large-scale installation, The Exponential Horn: In Search of Perfect Sound, featured a giant, newly reconstructed horn loudspeaker from the 1930s in an exhibition and event series at the Science Museum's Media Space in 2014. He is currently a composer-in-residence at the British Library Sound Archive, working with its early sound collections.

Steve Beresford

Internationally known as a free improviser on piano and electronics, Steve Beresford has also scored feature films and music for TV and commercials. Steve has worked with hundreds of musicians, including The Slits, Han Bennink, Christine Tobin, Ivor Cutler, Prince Far-I, Alan Hacker, Ray Davies, Ilan Volkov, David Toop, Najma Akhtar, Evan Parker, Adrian Sherwood, The Flying Lizards, Otomo Yoshihide and John Zorn and has an extensive discography.

He was born in Wellington, Shropshire in 1950. In 1974 he moved to London, playing piano with improvisers like Derek Bailey and also trumpet with the notorious Portsmouth Sinfonia, which included Brian Eno and Gavin Bryars.

He has had a long association with Swiss artist/musician Christian Marclay, performing realisations of Marclay's 'Screen Play', 'Ephemera', 'Graffiti Composition', 'Shuffle', 'Pianorama' and 'Everyday', sometimes solo and sometimes with groups.

2014 sees the third tour of 'Indeterminacy', in which comedian Stewart Lee reads one-minute stories by John Cage whilst Beresford and fellow pianist Tania Chen play music.

Beresford plays with and conducts the London Improvisers Orchestra every month. He also regularly collaborates with musicians such as Elaine Mitchener, Blanca Regina, John Butcher, Satoko Fukuda and Shabaka Hutchings, playing at venues like Café Oto in Dalston, London.

Steve was awarded a Paul Hamlyn award for composers in 2012.

http://www.westminster.ac.uk/about-us/our-people/directory/beresford-steve

Phil Minton
Phil Minton comes from Torquay. He played trumpet and sang with the Mike Westbrook Band in the early 60s- Then in dance and rock bands in Europe for the later of part of the decade. He returned to England in 1971, rejoining Westbrook and was involved in many of his projects until the mid 1980's.

For most of the last forty years, Minton has been working as a improvising singer in lots of groups, orchestras, and situations, all over the place.

Numerous composers have written music especially for his extended vocal techniques. He has a quartet with Veryan Weston, Roger Turner and John Butcher, and ongoing duos, trios and quartets with above and many other musicians.

Since the eighties, His Feral Choir, where he voice-conducts workshops and concerts for anyone who wants to sing, has performed in over twenty countries.

Sean Williams
Sean Williams is a practice-led researcher based at the University of Edinburgh, focusing on the performance practice of electronic music. He balances research into historic practices at the WDR Studio for Electronic Music in Cologne in the 1950s with building new hybrid analogue/digital instruments for live electronics and sound projection. Co-founder of LLEAPP, the Monosynth Orchestra, and the ensemble Grey Area, he performs his own compositions and electronic and structured improvisation repertoire internationally.