

Nonclassical: listening to place

Start time: 7.30pm

Approximate running time: 130 mins including a 20-minute interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change

Programme

Langham Research Centre x Photolanguage *A Return to Spatial Futures*

Gabriel Prokofiev Field recording of **Lili Boulanger's** environs

Lili Boulanger II. 'D'un Jardin clair' from *Trois Morceaux pour Piano*

Ian Rawes Field recording of Kew Gardens Conservatory

Kaikhosru Sorabji I. 'In the Hothouse' from *Two Piano Pieces*

Kate Carr *Bricklayers Arms roundabout, Bermondsey*

Nabil Benabdelljalil Recordings of Nabil Benabdelljalil singing

Nabil Benabdelljalil Nocturne No 6, *Imssfrane Cathedral in the Middle Atlas*

Silas Eziehi/Fourchiefs Media Field recordings from Igboland (Enugu, Delta)

Christian Onyeji *Ufie, Igbo dance (III)*

Cedrik Fermont x Ligeti Quartet *Ersatz* (world premiere)

Cassandra Miller 'Swainson's Thrush' from *Warblework*

John Luther Adams 'Maclaren Summit' and 'Looking Toward Hope' from *The Wind in High Places*

Li Yilei *Boundary Conditions*

I: 流沙/ sandstorm

II: 花鸟/ bird song

III: 山石/ mountain and rock

Reconnect with a world of sound through performances that explore the noises of the environment around us.

In our busy lives it's easy to subconsciously block out the sounds that surround us. This concert is an opportunity to tune back into our environment, through found sounds, field recordings and more, from artists across the globe. We'll go on a journey that explores ideas of how culture can influence the way people listen to the world.

Opening the concert, Langham Research Centre will perform *A Return to Spatial Futures*, which explores one of the group's favourite themes: brutalist architecture. This 2019 work features an acoustic piano that morphs into electronic tones, while clanging footsteps and snippets of sung or spoken vocals mix with the sounds of concrete, sharp lines, corners and curves and the rough echoes of smooth, hard surfaces. Accompanied by visuals from Photolanguage (a collaboration between artists Nigel Green and Robin Wilson that uses an experimental use of photography, text and found objects), it promises to be particularly fitting for this setting.

Founder of Nonclassical Gabriel Prokofiev's field recordings will set the scene for London based Nigerian-Romanian pianist Rebeca Omordia's performances. Prokofiev's recordings will be played in tandem with French composer Lili Boulanger's *D'un Jardin Clair* and queer 20th-century English composer Kaikhosru Sorabji's 'In the Hothouse' from his *Two Piano Pieces* (composed at the time he lived on the fringe of Regent's Park), immersing us in each composer's sense of place.

Sound artist Kate Carr has been investigating the intersections between sound, place, and emotionality since 2010. Making recordings in places as disparate as tiny fishing villages in northern Iceland, a nuclear power plant town, and wildlife in South Africa, she works across composition, installation and live performance.

For *listening to place*, Carr is sharing a work she'll make with recordings made at the huge Bricklayers Arms roundabout near her home in Bermondsey, southeast London. 'I've been recording lots of vibrations the roundabout has caused using a geophone [a device that converts ground movement into sound], whether that's in the structures of buildings nearby or vibrations within trees. I made an album that explored the idea of the rhythms of the roundabout: who's using it, when, why, and how it connects different parts of London. This set will be derived from

barbican

those recordings, exploring a sense of this specific roundabout and then expanding from that to look at how we make urban spaces together through the rhythms of activity, which I'm really interested in.

'The set will use the materials of my trade in a live setting. I'll have a geophone, which picks up the vibrations from a turntable, plus I have some toy cars that zoom around and vibrate, various instrumental things, drums and so on. I'm trying to bring the tools or field recordings into a live setting in a way that can be transparent to the audience.'

We then take a trip to Morocco, as Omordia plays Nabil Benabdeljalil's *Nocturne No 6*, written after the composer's visit to Imsfrane Cathedral in the Atlas Mountains. Prokofiev again sets the context for us through recordings of Benabdeljalil singing his thanks at being able to trek to the Atlas Mountains after months of lockdown.

Omordia closes the first half with a work by Christian Onyeji inspired by percussion ensembles in the southeast of his native Nigeria, introduced by field recordings from Ogbete Main Market and the Nsukka Roadside in Enugu.

For the second part of the concert, the Ligeti Quartet will join classically-trained musician, DJ, composer and drummer Cedrik Fermont to perform a new work, *Ersatz*, based on non-European sonic art and sound recordings. The Berlin-based musician says he gets his field recordings from various sources. 'I travel a lot on tour and always carry my equipment with me in case there's something that catches my ear. But when I'm in Berlin, I know where to go, for example if I want the sound of a river.'

Fermont used to work in a sound library in his home nation of Belgium, which collected all sorts of music from classical to traditional music from the Solomon Islands. 'I've been exposed to all these types of music that weren't from the West, and that opens my mind,' he says. 'The more I travelled, the more I was exposed to different sounds and instruments. So now I frequently use gongs, and the khaen – which is a mouth organ from northern Thailand and Laos.'

The Ligeti Quartet will also be sharing sounds of the natural world through a variety of works, including 'Swainson's Thrush' from Canadian composer Cassandra Miller's *Warblework*. In order to raise money to study composition in Europe, Miller sold unwritten bars of music. *Warblework* was the result: a huge commission from over 60 friends, family, and community members, and help from string quartet Quatuor Bozzini. Each movement is based on a birdsong, revealing incredibly human-like melodies when slowed down. *Warblework* therefore puts forth something of a poem of the regional sounds from Miller's home and its forests.

Living in northern Alaska for almost 40 years, John Luther Adams discovered a unique musical world grounded in space, stillness, and elemental forces. Having worked as an environmental activist, the composer made the choice to turn entirely to music in the belief that it can do more than politics to change the world. Adams's works bring the sense of wonder that we feel outdoors into the concert hall. *The Wind in High Places* uses harmonies based in the overtone series, slowly changing polyrhythmic textures, and arch forms played extremely quietly to create a still, pastoral ambience.

Finally, Li Yilei will perform a special live set showcasing their unique approach to electronic and found sound. Some of their set is inspired by the ritualistic aspect of tea ceremonies rooted in the Tang Dynasty, using sounds generated from image scanning, live theremin, Claravox, hand-made sound objects, and field recordings from China and the UK. They'll also perform tracks from their recent lockdown-inspired album *之 / OF*.

Ahead of the fascinating performances there's an opportunity to explore these ideas further through a [programme of talks and performances](#) taking over the Barbican foyers, so get ready to tune back into the world of sound that surrounds us.

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Performers

Langham Research Centre
Photolanguage
Gabriel Prokofiev
Rebecca Omordia
Kate Carr
Ligeti Quartet
Cedrik Fermont
Li Yilei

Co-produced by the Barbican and Nonclassical

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