

23–25 Oct

**Always,
Already
There**

barbican



The City of London
Corporation is the founder
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**The Afro-diasporic
avant-garde, past
and present. Curated
by Elaine Mitchener**

**GUILD
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Always, Already There: Tremulous Frequencies

Future Sounds of the Black Atlantic

Sat 24 Oct–Sun 25 Oct, Rehearsal Room 3, Milton Court

A pulse. A rupture. A breath held between worlds. *Always, Already There* gathers sound artists Jessica Ekomane, Yara Mekawei, Ahmed Essyad, Shamica Ruddock, Cedrik Fermont and KMRU in a restless field of sound – where frequencies tremble, signals fracture and new forms emerge.

Ahmed Essyad *Sultrane pt 2*

Ahmed Essyad *Toubkai pt 1*

Jessica Ekomane *Manifolds*

Yara Mekawei *The Shrine*

Shamica Ruddock *Event A*

Shamica Ruddock *Event D*

KMRU *Slowed Cities*

Cedrik Fermont *Submerged signals*

Installation runs from 1pm to 7:15pm
each day.

A new 75-minute loop commences at
the following times:

1pm

2.15pm

3.30pm

4.45pm

6pm

Last entry is at 7pm, with installation
ending at 7:15pm

Always, Already There is the first UK edition of George Lewis's Afrodiasporic Incubator project. Curated by vocalist and composer Elaine Mitchener, in partnership with Guildhall School of Music & Drama. It explores the radical, varied and richly experimental work of Afrodiasporic composers, past and present.

Produced by the Barbican in partnership with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

Part of *Always, Already There* Weekender.

Always, Already There has received generous support from SHM Foundation, Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation, Reece Ewing and Trevor Fenwick & Jane Hindley

Barbican Classical Music Programme receives major support from Marcus Margulies and additional support In Memory of John Murray

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The City of London
Corporation is the founder
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of the Barbican Centre

Programme produced by Harriet Smith

All information correct at time of printing

Always, Already There

Going Beyond

Fri 23 Oct 7.30pm, St Giles Cripplegate

Time Echoes

Sat 24 Oct 2.30pm, Silk Street Music Hall

Black Art Notes

Sat 24 Oct 5pm, Silk Street Music Hall

Always, Already There Ensemble and Pamela Z

Sat 24 Oct 7.30pm, Milton Court Concert Hall

Basquiat & Cage: Late Night with NikNak

Sat 24 Oct 10pm, Rehearsal Room 3, Milton Court

Apartment House: Not in Between

Sun 25 Oct 2pm, Silk Street Music Hall

Society of Black Composers and Beyond: Dr Harald Kisiedu

Sun 25 Oct 3.30pm, Lecture Recital Room

Words like Freedom: Gweneth Ann Rand and Allyson Devenish

Sun 25 Oct 4.30pm, Silk Street Music Hall

building a burning house

Sun 25 Oct 7.30pm, Milton Court Concert Hall



Elaine Mitchener © D Djuric

Always, Already There

Always.
Already.
There.

Always.
Already.
There.

Not arriving.
Not emerging from nowhere.
Not newly discovered.
There.

Before the archive opened its doors.
Before the canon drew its borders.
Before somebody decided what
experimental contemporary new music was
supposed to sound like.

There.
In the breath.
In the body.
In the score.
In the improvisation.
In the refusal.
between the noise the silence.
There.

Always, Already There.

This phrase troubles
It troubles the idea of arrival – the
language of discovery – the well-worn story
that tells us that the western musical avant-
garde happened somewhere else, and that
Afrodiaporic composers appeared later –
as interruption, as exception.

No-o-o-o-o-o
We were not an interruption.
We were not an exception.
We were not waiting to be invited.
We were making.
We are making.
We will make

The first UK edition of George Lewis's
Afrodiaporic In-cu-ba-tor
it as a space for encounter: between gen-
er-ations, between his-to-ries, between
practices; between the remembered and
the imagined; between what has been
documented and what has been carried in
the body.

Because an archive is never neutral.
What is kept.
What is lost.
What is named.
What is unnamed.

What is taught.
What is forgotten.
And what happens when we place those
things beside one another and listen again?
Listen.

Again.

Listen.

The artists gathered refuse a single
definition of Afrodiasporic music.

There is no single sound.

No single history.

No single Black avant-garde.

There are many.

Many routes & ROOTS.

Many crossings/languages/technologies/
memories /futures.

The music moves between them.

And

so

must we.

incubator matters. It is active – it is a place
of heat. Of nourishment. Of protection. Of
possibility.

It is not a mausoleum. It is not a monument.
It is a place where something is becoming.

And becoming requires proximity.

Artists beside artists.

Intergenerational learning

The living beside the remembered.

The score beside the body.

The body beside the sound.

Knowledge is not only something handed
down. It travels across. It leaks. It mutates.
It finds another body. Another ear. Another
voice.

I invite you to enter this programme not as a
visitor to somebody else's history.

Enter as a listener, with your WHOLE body

Listen for what is hidden.

Listen for **what refuses to be hidden.**

– the ancestral.

– the FUTURISTIC

– the wound.

– the JOY

Listen for the world that is being made
inside the music.

Because this is not simply about putting

missing names back into a story.

It is about asking whether **that** story was
ever telling the truth.

Always.

Already.

There.

The music was there.

The artists were there.

The ideas were there.

The futures were there.

And perhaps the work before us is not to
announce their arrival –

but to recognise their presence.

To hear.

At last.

What has been sounding all along.

© Elaine Mitchener

Introduction

***Always, Already There:* History and Prospects**

George E Lewis



George E Lewis

The prehistory of *Always, Already There* goes back to 2017, when I attended a concert of the music of the queer African American composer Julius Eastman (1940–90) at Berlin's Maerzmusik Festival für Zeitfragen. While listening, it suddenly occurred to me that most of the people in attendance had probably never heard the work of any other Afrodiasporic composer.

That wasn't their fault; European classical new music culture has long been marked by a radical absence of Blackness, or what Fred Moten has called in his 2003 book *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*: 'a vast interdisciplinary text representative not only of a problematically positivist conclusion that the avant-garde has been exclusively Euro-American, but of a deeper, perhaps unconscious, formulation of the avant-garde as necessarily not black.' However, at the Eastman concert it was clear that the Berlin audience was hungry for radical diversification, while perhaps not suspecting that there were lots of composers out there who the curators,

historians, journalists, and academicians did not know about.

By 2018, in the wake of Black Lives Matter, some influential figures in the field of contemporary music admitted publicly that they could do better. The Darmstadt Ferienkurse produced the conference 'Defragmentation: Curating Contemporary Music,' involving four major European contemporary music festivals, for which I served as adviser and curator. The German new music group Ensemble Modern's November 2020 COVID-livestreamed Afro-modernism concert at Philharmonie Essen, which I curated with works by Alvin Singleton, Jessie Cox, Daniel Kidane, Hannah Kendall, Andile Khumalo and Tania León, conducted by Vimbayi Kaziboni, was one of the first full programmes devoted to the work of Afrodiasporic contemporary composers to be presented in Europe in many years. Just two weeks later Elaine Mitchener and I co-curated the London Sinfonietta's livestreamed concert 'Yet Unheard: Music by Emerging and Established Black Composers'.

Ensemble Modern's November 2020 live-streamed Afro-Modernism Symposium included Björn Gottstein, then artistic director of Donaueschinger Musiktage, the oldest contemporary music festival in the world, who admitted that the festival's contemporary music component (which was then separated from its jazz component) had never programmed a Black composer – until 2020, when Gottstein commissioned Mitchener to curate 'On Being Human as Praxis', a set of works for her voice and diverse ensemble formulations that included new pieces by three Afrodiasporic composers: Yarde, Matana Roberts and myself.

**'The composers of
specifically African descent
were the missing ones.'**

George E Lewis

One misunderstanding that emerged early on with the ensembles and institutions I was working with was that 'Black' contemporary composers meant African American composers, even though the Essen concert included composers from the USA, Cuba and South Africa, as well as from Switzerland and the UK.

At the same time, I felt the need for a discourse that would offer greater precision in describing this complex cultural provenance. Phrases such as 'composers of colour' were far too vague, and moreover, some 'composers of colour' had long been included on European stages; the composers of specifically African descent were the missing ones. So in 2023 I began using the term 'Afrodiasporic', which is meant to replace essentialist/nativist notions of home and away ('Africa and the diaspora') with a mobile subjectivity of flows in all directions that moves beyond race toward an Afrodiasporic experimentalism that could embrace one of its signal figures, the Egyptian Halim El-Dabh.

Composing While Black: Afrodiasporic New Music Today/Afrodiasporische Neue Musik Heute (Wolke Verlag, 2023), the bilingual German/English volume co-edited by myself and Harald Kisiedu, became a natural accompanist to the first *Always, Already There*, mounted in 2024 at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin by director and chief curator Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, who contributed the memorable phrase 'An Incubator for Afrodiasporic New Music'. The International Contemporary Ensemble, for which I served as Artistic Director, was in residence; since that time, the Ensemble has presented 'Composing While Black' programmes in several European and North American venues. I borrowed the expression 'Always, Already There' from literary theorist James A. Snead's ironic critique of Hegel's interpretation of African culture: 'Having no self-consciousness, he is 'immediate' – i.e., always there – in any given moment. Here we can see that, being there, the African is also always already there, or perhaps always there before, whereas the European is headed there or, better, not yet there.'

Both the original Berlin residency and the current series of concerts and events at the Barbican aim to nurture new modes of expertise on contemporary Afrodiasporic sonic experimentalism, as well as presenting perspectives that have been largely ignored in academic research, concert programmes and journalistic coverage, especially in Europe. While Afrodiasporic music is a huge and highly diverse field, both my earlier curation of the Berlin events and Elaine Mitchener's curation at the Barbican concentrate on new music. At the same time, we should maintain our awareness that new music is not so much a genre as an achievement. In that light, I offer my heartfelt thanks to Helen Wallace and the Barbican Centre for their belief in this project and what could develop from it.

© George E Lewis

Going Beyond Always, Already There

Fri 23 Oct 7.30pm, St Giles Cripplegate

Aaron Azunda Akugbo trumpet
Lara Aisha Ali flute
Chris Clarke harp
Laura M Beer Kumwenda viola
Anthony R Green music director
GSMD New Music Society

Chiron Choir dir **H C Jones**
Seyi Adelekun
Buki Bayode
Abigail Busenze
Keekz Campbell-Coker
Hannah Catherine Jones
Chibueze Crouch-Anyarogbu
Munesu Mukombe
Zviki Mutyambizi
Fazah Raha
Lalah-Simone Springer
Gesiye Souza-Okpofabri

Ben Patterson *Penny for your thoughts*
Hannah Kendall *Tuxedo: Dust Bowl #3*

Regina Harris Baiocchi *Miles per Hour*
Spiritual *I'm Troubled in Mind*
Lijadu Sisters *Life's Gone Down Low*

Anthony R Green *Hover*
Marcos Balter *Ut*
Pamela Z *Pop Titles 'You'*

Njabulo Phungula *Playground, Postcard*
Ayanna Witter-Johnson *OM Rising*
Michael Frazier *Time is an impatient thing*
Yaz Lancaster *Prime*

Alice Coltrane, arr H C Jones *Journey (into the Unknown)*

Post-show talk

Following this hour-long concert join Curator Elaine Mitchener and the Barbican Head of Music, Helen Wallace, to hear about why the project has been created and the manifold experiences offered throughout the weekend.

Going Beyond: Heartfelt Words for the Past, Present and Future

After 'Always, Already There' made its debut as an Afrodiasporic Incubator in 2024, the energy that I and the other creative musicians and artists felt was practically tangible. What happened in Berlin that week may have never been done before. Here we had an intense gathering of the minds and spirits of Black creators and performers, with music performed by an internationally cherished ensemble in community with guest performers, combined with public sessions for broad discussion and dissection, as well as safe-space private sessions for the Black artists in attendance. We laughed, cried, had disagreements, held space for each other, lent each other support – we acknowledged the family-ness of this diasporic artist family, a sensation that the connection we felt and strengthened had always existed. It was always already there. This 'spiritual reunion' simply could not be a one-off.

When the stars aligned for *Always, Already There* to be presented in London – in collaboration with the beloved Barbican Centre and the prestigious Guildhall School of Music & Drama, with the mighty Elaine Mitchener at the helm as curator – the forces who made this event possible seemed to be realising, in concert form, the foundations laid in Berlin (with the illustrious George E Lewis at the helm). What also must be acknowledged is that this foundation was constructed out of the hundreds of years of creativity, oppression, toil, survival, ingenuity, musicianship and artistry of thousands of Black creatives around the world, as well as everyone who supported them.

The weekend's opening night is a continuation of the building of this foundation, the realisation of this powerful

event and the first step towards *Going Beyond* the historical injustices that have necessitated such initiatives. Going beyond these atrocities will create community, family, healing, justice – not just for a niche group of music practitioners, but for all music creators, listeners and lovers.

The works on tonight's programme – in common with the works across this entire weekend – represent diverse approaches to composition, genre, politics and experience-crafting.

The transcendental meditations of jazz harpist Alice Coltrane blend with interactive exchanges devised by the Fluxus creator and contrabassist Ben Patterson. The jazz-influenced, meditative voice of Michael Frazier collides with a young, fresh graphic score by Njabulo Phungula. Hannah Kendall's meditation on nothingness and despair will subtly enter your metaphorical veins, while Green's sonification of the physical and emotional experience of riding a hot air balloon will move your bones through time and space. The performers span various backgrounds, degrees of experience, expertise and praxis. The acclaimed soloists Aaron Azunda Akugbo, Lara Aisha Ali, Chris Clarke and Laura M Beer Kumwenda share the stage with the students of the GSMD New Music Society, who have selected some of the works that will be presented this evening. Also featured will be the Chiron Choir, established and led by Hannah Catherine Jones. This choir centres around queer women of colour, empowering community-led music-making in supportive, alternative environments, with love and trust ever present.

Now is the moment to pause, breathe, open your mind and your heart to a terrible newness – a newness that is not new at all, for it has been always, already there.

© Anthony Green

Time Echoes

Always, Already There

Sat 24 Oct 2.30pm, Silk Street Music Hall

Elliott Bailey cello

Laura M Beer Kumwenda viola

Heather Roche clarinet

Lara Aisha Ali flute

Ivan Liuzzo *Tikur* for cello and electronics

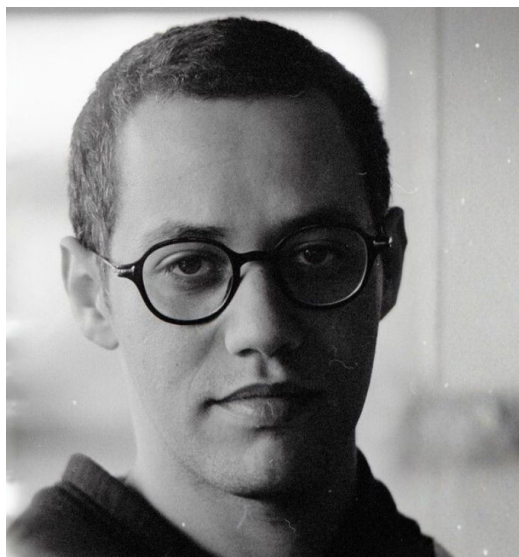
Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman *The Girl, the Turtle and the Earthquake*

Olly Wilson *Echoes* for clarinet and tape

Ahmed Essyad *Asselman* for amplified bass
flute

Pamela Z *Four Movements* for cello and delay
electronics

Allison Loggins-Hull *Say Can You* for piccolo
and electronics



Ivan Liuzzo

Tikur **by Ivan Liuzzo**

Tikur is a composition in which I try to extend the space, including the outside of the hall: microphones, placed outside the concert hall, return and 'install' the outside space within. The unpredictable environment enters into dialogue with the cellist without necessarily influencing the score, but rather their perception, their emotional state.

The text projected during the performance is taken from the notes of Tesfalidet Tesfom, an Eritrean poet also known as Segen, found in his pocket after he landed in Italy, where he died at the age of 22 in 2018.

According to Carmelo Bene, mystic ecstasy is a suspension of thought, of intentions, of projects. It is to this suspension that I bring listening closer in *Tikur*: the importance of perception, for both the audience and the performer, becomes central.

© Ivan Liuzzo

The Girl, the Turtle and the Earthquake **by Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman**

The Girl, the Turtle and the Earthquake is an abstracted interpretation that I made in 2014 of the story of Lay Sion, a survivor of the 2011 Fukushima disaster. Here, the speaking voice is embedded within an electronic maze that gradually transforms into the voice's very soil. From this fertile sonic material, it begins to sprout like an 'ecology of the voice' – unyielding to destruction, yet acutely aware of radioactivity.

Conceived as a piece of sonic land art, the composition is ideally experienced away from traditional concert halls or radio broadcasts. It is best performed at night, deep within nature and adjacent to a vast body of water, allowing the piece to seamlessly intertwine with the wind, the water, and the unpredictable acoustic events of the environment. In it, live viola (played by Laura M Beer Kumwenda) combines with taped performances featuring Maya Felixbrot (viola), A N Lierman (electronics) and Toshie Takeuchi (voice).

© Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman

Echoes by Olly Wilson

Echoes was commissioned in 1974 by clarinetist Phillip Rehfeldt and composer Barney Childs as part of their 'clarinet and friends' project, which paired the clarinet with a partner, be that piano or electronic tape. Rehfeldt gave the premiere of *Echoes* at Redlands in January 1975. He is a singularly important clarinetist for contemporary music, and one with whom many composers and clarinetists will be familiar from his seminal text on clarinet extended techniques *New Directions for Clarinet* (1977).

The tape is less an accompaniment than a second voice: a friend (although since the tape is a fixed part and not responsive, it's definitely of those friends who talks at rather than to you). The clarinet and electronics share pitches, timbres and gestures, answering, transforming and crucially 'echoing' one another as the piece unfolds through three connected sections in a single continuous span. The clarinet writing is decidedly conversational, making dramatic use of register leaps, fast flourishes and dynamics to mimic and chatter with the electronics. There are no extended techniques bar some air sounds at the very end, and only once does he write a performance direction, asking the player to improvise briefly *à la Coltrane*. Wilson's notation of the electronics part, which the clarinetist follows throughout the work, brilliantly describes the music in both pitches and in shapes, evocative and yet simple to follow, full of the personality of Wilson's beautiful handwriting and poetically conveying his understanding of the sounds.

© Heather Roche

Asselman for amplified bass flute by Ahmed Essyad

Asselman forms the final piece in Ahmed Essyad's *Le Cycle de L'eau* (The water cycle), composed between 1980 and 1993. *Asselman* evokes the close of the cycle with the deep tones and liquid sound of the bass flute. Full of dark sounds and swirling motion, it asks the bass flute player to amplify the flute through four speakers placed around the audience to embed them in the tumultuous liquid evocation itself.

© Courtesy Carolyn Naussbaum Flute Company

Four Movements for cello and delay electronics by Pamela Z

Four Movements (2007) was commissioned by the Orchestra of St Lukes for their 'Second Helpings' series at the DIA Center in New York. It was composed for cello and electronics (three long delay lines and granular synthesis executed in MAX MSP Software). Each movement focuses one of the live-processing approaches that I often use in my solo voice and electronics repertoire. The first movement uses out-of-phase loops of varying lengths, the second gradually builds a one-minute harmonic structure one layer at a time, the third features a melody played over a brisk, rhythmic looping accompaniment and the fourth movement employs granulation and pitch-shifting.

The work was premiered by the orchestra's principal cellist, Myron Lutzke, with me on electronics, at the Dia Center. It has subsequently been played by cellist Mimi Yu at the Juilliard School in New York, and a violin transcription has been performed by Lina Bahn at CNMAT (Center for New Music and Technology) in Berkeley. The violin version also appears on Lina Bahn's *Axolotl*, and a version for saxophone and delays appears on Drew Whiting's *All In* (both released on the Neuma label in 2024.)

© Pamela Z

Say Can You for piccolo and electronics by Allison Loggins-Hull

Say Can You (2020) is a nod to American fife and drum music. The piccolo's opening melody represents the question: What does it mean to be patriotic in the 21st century, while the accompanying electronic drum sounds suggest a mood of organised chaos. Soon, the piccolo wails through a series of glissandos, conveying a sense of desperation or angst, until it's finally restored to its virtuosic strength and ability.

Say Can You is a companion piece to *Homeland* (for solo flute), a work that explores the concepts of home and country.

© Allison Loggins-Hull

Black Art Notes

Always, Already There

Sat 24 Oct 5pm, Silk Street Music Hall

Xhosa Cole saxophone, flute,
musical director

Caius Williams bass

Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman
voice, shruti box

Corey Mwamba vibraphone

Laura M Beer Kumwenda viola

Rosie Bergonzi percussion

Jack Murray saxophone

Pat Thomas piano

Corey Mwamba *the line, the line*

Fay Victor *Graphic Octet*

Pat Thomas *Madad*



Corey Mwamba

In 1964 the American composer Earle Brown gave a lecture about notation in modern music in America and Europe. Brown argued that the contemporary approaches to new notation have analogues to the many methods and ideas before 1600 – and that new notation has to have some measure of representing that which cannot be done using standard notation, or at least releases the performer from a usual practice. To a lesser or greater extent, all notation relies on the performer to make choices about how it is interpreted. This is usually framed in terms of ambiguity: Brown observes this as a contemporary indication, but argues that the matter is not quite settled and requires more musicological analysis. He then speaks of the necessity of clarity from the notation in order to allow the performer to make musical choices or to have agency.

In reading the scores from Pat Thomas and Fay Victor, those elements of clarity and agency are in full effect. Pat's *Madad* has a

text-based system that gives the musicians modes of playing, but opens up the possibilities in other dimensions. There is a sense of connection through shared action and freedom in variability.

Fay's *Graphic Octet* layers lines, shapes and numbers in a series of images. It uses density of colour and numbers to suggest energy and emotion. Each image gives a sense of the direction to take, but allows the musicians to shape the path as they consider the image. Additionally, the musicians can individually choose which image to work with during the performance. This expands the amount of agency for the ensemble.

My piece *the line, the line* was devised after a conversation with an audience member about jazz in late 2011. It was part of a series of 'map pieces' for my improvising trio: these scores mix text, calligraphic markings and pencil-and-ink drawings. I intended to create 'islands' on the page: combining rhythmic, melodic and harmonic information for an improviser to use. But I make no suggestion as to the order or path that should be taken; instead, the musician's eye can scan the page and find something of interest to work with before moving to another island.

What is striking about all three pieces is the variety of approaches that the three of us have employed, from Fay's vivid colour work to the stark presentation of Pat's piece. Our ways of communicating to the musicians are broad and centred in different practices. But for each, the intention is to release the musicians from their usual practice – to play, to listen and to choose separately yet together. These qualities are woven into each work and the music practice itself.

© Corey Mwamba

Always, Already There Ensemble and Pamela Z

Always, Already There

Sat 24 Oct 7.30pm, Milton Court Concert Hall

Pamela Z vocals

Chris Clarke harp

Jack Sheen conductor

Always, Already There Ensemble

Marisse Cato *ELASTIC*(mother) (UK premiere)

Charles Uzor *Qualia II* for harp and ensemble
(world premiere)

Corie Rose Soumah *Tossed Parachutes of
Lilacs and Lungs* (UK premiere)

interval

Solo set by Pamela Z *Other Rooms* works for
solo voice, electronics and video:

Quatre Couches

Flare Stains

Typewriter

Declaratives

Badagada

Syrinx

Sixteen Actions

La Vapeur / Le Corps

Unknown Person (from Baggage Allowance)

Other Rooms

Scared Song

The UK premiere of Corie Rose Soumah's *Tossed Parachutes of Lilacs and Lungs* has received additional support from the High Commission of Canada in the United Kingdom



Marisse Cato

ELASTIC(mother) by Marisse Cato

ELASTIC(mother) is a live musical event that opens a series of possibilities concerning practicing loving and being loved.

The event undergoes a continual and effortful self-transformation.

There is an uncompromising commitment to becoming together.

I hope this live musical event offers a space to consider the resistance necessary to loving in our shared environment that we experience differently.

© Marisse Cato

Qualia II by Charles Uzor

What is it like to be a bat?

'Qualia' (singular 'quale') is often used to refer to the introspectively accessible, phenomenal aspects of our mental lives (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1997, rev 2025).

Stumbling upon Nagel's question I first attempted an approach with qualia happening as moving sounds. The players constantly move around, forming ever-changing constellations of sustained notes resulting in an unwanted restless back and forth.

In 2025, still haunted by the idea of qualia, I decided to approach it directly through sound: not only harp and ensemble would be empathic like communicating vessels, but also ensemble and tape.

As the philosopher Derek Parfit rejects the concept of personality, *Qualia II* is an attempt to overcome self-indulgence by transferring our intimate feelings to the other. We'll never know who this other is, as we don't know where to grasp that fluid thing called self – yet we may know how it feels to feel like the other, to feel the world from the other side, to sense it as if there were something like a self on the other side – on our side.

Qualia II is in three movements and is scored for 15 players and tape.

© Charles Uzor



Corie Rose Soumah

Tossed Parachutes of Lilacs and Lungs by Corie Rose Soumah

Tossed Parachutes of Lilacs and Lungs emerged in a period of my life where I sought moments of spirituality, in the bell hooks sense of it. Each word from the title is presented in their own way, collected in five distinctive tableaux, showcasing moments of personal wonders, either through vivid images or simply through a resonance that stirs something inside me. I have always had an inclination towards multiplicity,

which this piece doesn't stray away from. The multiples here came to me in the day-to-day small wonders. I leave here a few of them:

the poetry of Nicky Beer
the taste of clementines on the tongue
the strings of the Kora
the tip of an icy mountain
the faded light on green leaves

The piece is dedicated to George Lewis and the International Contemporary Ensemble.

© Corie Rose Soumah



Pamela Z

Other Rooms: an evening of works for solo voice, electronics and video by Pamela Z (all works by Pamela Z except *Scared Song* by Meredith Monk)

Quatre Couches (2015) is a sonic trifle, tiramisu, or mille-feuille – juxtaposing four contrasting layers and toying with them – mixing them and moving them around on the plate until they all melt away. *Flare Stains* (2010) is a sonic poem on the residue left by emergency flares. *Typewriter* (1995) uses voice, processing and typewriter samples (triggered with a gesture controller). *Declaratives* (2005) combines live and sampled text fragments, which are further fragmented and layered through delay and granulation processes. The text samples were originally created for a six-

channel sound installation in an exhibition called *The Art of Artist Statement*.

In *Badagada* (1988) – one of my early digital delay pieces – the syllables 'ba-da-ga-da-ga-da-ga-da-ga' are layered in multiple delay lines to form a harmonic, rhythmic accompaniment to a melody sung in English. *Syrinx* (2003) is named for the avian vocal organ. In this little extract from my longer 2004 sound work, a birdsong is pitch-shifted and consequently stretched until its individual notes are slow enough and low enough to be accurately produced by a human voice.

Sixteen Actions (2013) is a work involving live video capture and gesture-controlled audio and video samples. *La Vapeur* (2019) is a bit of sonic and visual exploration inspired by a flume of steam from a pipe seen through the window of a gallery at MoMA in New York, and *Le Corps* (2019) is woven from layered samples of French choreographer Christine Bonansea's speaking voice, which are played using a gesture-controlled MIDI instrument.

Unknown Person is an excerpt from *Baggage Allowance* (2010), an intermedia work that scans and inventories the belongings (and memories) we all cart around. *Other Rooms* (2018) is constructed from samples of the speaking voice of American playwright Paul David Young, taken from an interview I recorded for my performance work, *Memory Trace*. *Scared Song* is a work by Meredith Monk from her 1987 album *Do You Be*. Tonight's performance is my live version of the studio arrangement I made for my track on her 2012 tribute CD *Monk Mix*.

© Pamela Z

Basquiat & Cage: Late Night with NikNak

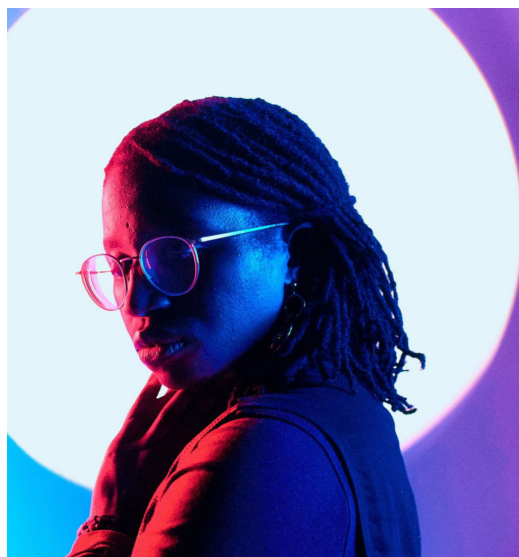
Always, Already There

Sat 24 Oct 10pm, Rehearsal Room 3, Milton Court

NikNak Turntablist

NikNak reunites Jean-Michel Basquiat and John Cage through the turntables with a DJ set that is reminiscent of an improvised conversation in this relaxed late-night event.

In 2024 Elaine Mitchener invited award-winning turntablist NikNak to respond to the idea of an imagined conversation between Jean-Michel Basquiat and John Cage. This meeting was set in Edinburgh's Fruitmarket Gallery where Cage exhibited works on paper in the upstairs gallery, while downstairs, Basquiat displayed his visionary paintings. This historical event is reimaged as a cultural intervention that reshapes and reimagines future possibilities.



NikNak

Essay

Abstraction and Composing While Black; or, Music and the Question of Representation

Jessie Cox



Jessie Cox © Adrien H Tillmann

The question that prompted this essay is: What is the possible meaning of fighting for Black musicians, composers and Black (experimental) sounds – for representation and more? This question is on the order of the enforcement of the borders of representation. Blackness seems to present a problem for an ‘antiblack’ world and its control over representation, claiming absolute knowledge, authority, and sovereignty.¹ Why are Black lives’ musical activities strongly policed by way of genres, historical narratives, systemic exclusion and by what they may say or sound like?

It was my encounter with Charles Uzor’s 8’46” *George Floyd in Memoriam* (2020) that brought me to confront the question of abstraction and representation, and why for me, as a Black Swiss person, this troubling of the distinction between the two is both a musical and an extramusical concern. Uzor’s work brings us back to John Cage’s 4’33” (1952) – due to the title and musical material

– but it does so with a difference. 8’46” *George Floyd in Memoriam* presents two different types of silences: mere breathing sounds, for seven minutes and 46 seconds, and absolute silence, for another minute. The piece lasts the duration of Floyd’s murder on 25 May 2020, which became a symbol for protests. In my forthcoming monograph, *Sounds of Black Switzerland*, I contextualise these works in relation to the genre of black square paintings and abstract visual art, since Cage’s 4’33” is seen as a musical corollary to such paintings.

Of importance is the encounter between abstraction and representation as a question of Blackness and its relation to Black lives. 8’46” *George Floyd in Memoriam* problematises a kind of absoluteness of the border between abstraction and representation, or the real – an absoluteness built on anti-Blackness. We might open our line of enquiry by way of a remark about the black square painting genre: Kazimir Malevich’s *Black Square* (1915), which is credited as the beginning of modern abstract painting, was revealed by way of an X-ray analysis to make reference to Alphonse Allais’s black square painting from 1884, *Combat de Negres dans une cave pendant la nuit* – a racist joke.²

Antiblackness emerges as a claim over the border of abstraction, as control over representation – over meaning and sense. This becomes evident when investigating the emergence of national identity and modern sovereignty. A poignant example, connected to Uzor, is the matter of Swiss national identity. Among the methods employed to define and declare a national identity, so as to claim sovereign authority in relation to other emerging nation states in the 19th century, were national exhibitions. The first one in Switzerland took place in 1883. But it is the second one, of 1896, that may aid us in unpacking the question of representation and blackness. That particular national exhibition had a fake Swiss village, with inhabitants living there for the duration of the exhibition, demonstrating idealised Swiss life. There was also a Black village, called *village noir*. These kinds of Black villages were quite common at the time throughout Europe and toured outside the national exhibition as well. This village portrayed an

imagined and stereotyped Blackness with real Senegalese people. Even the clothes had to remain 'authentically Black' – an authenticity determined by whiteness. As a newspaper ad in the *Neue Zürcher Nachrichten* from 12 September 1925 reveals, the Senegalese people had to wear local clothes over their 'African costumes' because of the cold temperatures. This fact was highlighted, possibly in hopes of getting more visitors, and advertised as somewhat of an oddity. It is not clear whether the two deaths that occurred (as well as numerous illnesses that, in the same ad, were claimed to have been cured) were related to the less-than-adequate clothing provided for the season. Even when the inhabitants of the village noir begged for money, they were vilified, because to remain authentic they could not reveal the ways in which they suffered, or how their containedness as others was a policed and fabulated border. But they, those Black people, did not remain in their place. In fact, they received and wore clothes of, and even had relations with, got married to, and had children with, the 'locals'.

Blackness is levied as an abstracted other by anti-blackness to control the right over representation, or speech – the right to have a political, social and intelligible voice. The border between abstraction and representable truth is policed by the white gaze, to use Frantz Fanon's term. Uzor's *8'46" George Floyd in Memoriam* asks us to think about this border between abstraction and representation (or truth and reality). In this blurring and troubling of the border, the work points out that the enforcement of proper representation rests on control over the relations between abstraction and representation, and that this is a musical question. Blackness as abstraction cannot suddenly be real, cannot suddenly represent something – a voice, a life, a story – or have meaning. Inaudibility and audibility become blurred and the distinction between silence and sound troubled by *8'46" George Floyd in Memoriam*.

Thus, why music? Why unthinkable music, or, as some call it, new music? This question moves alongside the question of unauthorised relations between and among abstraction and representation. Why are Black composers, Black sounds, deemed inadequate when they challenge listening?

For the same reason why, around the 1900s, US newspaper articles documented how white society became appalled at 'the Negro', the 'Muslim' and 'the Native' for showing sounds of lynching, and not the people who did the lynching or the society that allowed this to take place (whether this showing actually took place or not is not verifiable). Black Lives Matter bespeaks unauthorised movement, speech, mattering, meaning, and so forth, thus troubling representation's self-proclaimed wholeness and absolute veracity and authority.

Composing while Black is a 'strategic abstraction' to borrow a term that Margo N Crawford develops in relation to the Black Arts Movement in her book *Black Post-Blackness*³. It is a way to change the world in unthinkable and unforeseeable ways. Black representation shifts the coordinates of this world because it unleashes the possibility of imagining new ways of sounding together as a refusal of the policing of what can be said/sounded, or even of what can be a life/alive. This is the dare that Music presents to me, to make new meanings in excess of a final word and an anti-Black world.

© Jessie Cox

This text was first published in *Always, Already There – An Incubator for Afrodiasporic New Music* (Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2024)

¹ I use uppercase 'Black' when referring directly to Black people and culture. Lowercase 'blackness' denotes the concept of blackness in excess of any particular historical or geographic instantiation of it as a people.

² Allais also painted other one-colour square joke paintings and is credited with the first absolutely silent piece of music: 'Marche funèbre composée pour les funérailles d'un grand homme sourd' (Funeral March for the Obsequies of a Great Deaf Man, 1884). Hannah Black elaborates in more detail on this case in 'Fractal Freedoms', *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* (2016)

³ Margo Natalie Crawford *Black Post-Blackness: The Black Arts Movement and Twenty-First-Century Aesthetics* (Champaign; Univ of Illinois Press, 2017)

Apartment House: Not in Between

Always, Already There

Sun 25 Oct 2pm, Silk Street Music Hall

Apartment House:
Gordon MacKay violin
Mira Benjamin violin
Bridget Carey viola
Anton Lukoszevieve cello, director

Jessie Cox String Quartet, *Not in between* (UK premiere)

Alvin Singleton String Quartet No 2, *secret desire to be black*

Dorothy Rudd Moore *Modes* (UK premiere)

Ben Patterson *String Music* (UK premiere)

Anthony Braxton 8KN-(J-6)-R10
(Composition No 17) (UK premiere)

Allan Gilbert Balon *Uru*, String Quartet No 1
(world premiere)

Che Ali *i like you* (UK premiere)



Dorothy Rudd Moore

This programme of music by Afro-diasporic composers is an action-packed survey straddling 66 years of intense compositional activity. Stylistically it refuses to adhere to genres and typifies a search for artistic identities and a freedom of expression.

The earliest work is *String Music* (1960) by Ben Patterson, an early member of the ramshackle art movement Fluxus. Patterson constructs a visually beautiful score which is a suppository of sound-making methods and pitch materials which can be constructed by the performers, resulting in an indeterminate universe of music in a state of flux.

8KN-(J-6)-R10 (Composition No 17) by Anthony Braxton inhabits similar territory; a notated graphic score, it delineates sound actions and pitch areas with variable durations creating an intense sonic landscape of quasi-improvisatory eruptions and collisions. This is music that is by turns slippery, jostling and ecstatic.

Dorothy Rudd Moore's *Modes* (1968) is a three-movement work, *Moderato*, *Adagio*, *Allegro*, in a more conventional mode of expression. Born in 1940, Rudd Moore grew up immersed in harmony and theory; she also studied with Nadia Boulanger and these factors can be felt in her music, whereby expression is embedded in the formal melodic and harmonic aspects of composition, with aspects of fugal and contrapuntal writing.

Alvin Singleton's music is informed by a plethora of influences – J S Bach, Theolonius Monk, Charlie Parker and Prince, to name a few. He composed his *String Quartet No 2, secret desire to be black* in 1988 and it's an intense, muscular and strident work. In one movement, it begins quietly and gradually intensifies with angular looped phrases that become frenetic and timbrally unstable, leading to a decisive climax before dissolving into an enigmatic and soulful extended coda.

Three composers from a younger generation make up the rest of the programme. Jessie Cox is from Switzerland with roots in Trinidad and Tobago. His *String Quartet Not in Between* (2020) is a concise work that compresses microscopic sounds and fractures them, splintering into utopic shards of futuristic sonic hope and desire.

Allan Gilbert Balon was born in Guadelope and is based in Paris and his practice covers diverse areas of sculpture, experimental composition, improvisation and sound art. His *Uru, String Quartet No 1* (2026) has music of an intense and static intimacy, with sounds floating along within a highly private space of music.

The final work in the programme, *i like you* (2023) is by a young composer from New York City, Che Ali (aka Che Buford). He was asked by Shelter Music, Boston, to create a work responding to songs significant to him. He discovered *Velha Infância* by the Brazilian supergroup Tribalistas. 'On first listening – even before understanding the lyrics – I felt the track epitomised much of what I associate around love, infatuation, tenderness: passion and intensity, interwoven with nostalgia and melancholy. The melody and the words of the chorus, 'Eu gosto de você' (I like you), stayed with me. Deciding to title my piece *I like you*, I began exploring the musical dimensions of that phrase. I focused on specific timbres and sonorities that maximise resonance and highlight the natural 'singing' qualities of the instruments, driven by an unrelenting energy. Fragments of the original song are also interspersed in varying contexts, reinterpreting their familiar melodies to unveil new emotional depths.'

© Anton Lukoszevieze

Society of Black Composers and beyond

Dr Harald Kisiedu

Always, Already There

Sun 25 Oct 3.30pm, Lecture Recital Room

Keynote lecture with Dr Harald Kisiedu

This keynote lecture by musicologist and author Dr Harald Kisiedu explores the birth and legacy of the Society of Black Composers, founded in 1968 by figures including Dorothy Rudd Moore and Talib Rasul Hakim. Drawing on his work as co-author of *Composing While Black* with George E Lewis, Kisiedu considers the avant-garde ideals and ambitions that shaped the movement and its lasting influence. He also explores Alvin Singleton's long artistic engagement with Europe and Olly Wilson's significance as both composer and music theorist, tracing how their ideas and legacies continue to resonate in music today.

Words like Freedom: Gweneth Ann Rand and Allyson Devenish

Always, Already There

Sun 25 Oct 4.30pm, Silk Street Music Hall

Gweneth Ann Rand soprano
Allyson Devenish piano

Nkeiru Okoye *Songs of Harriet Tubman – 'My Name is Araminta'*

Clement Ishmael *Spiritual*

Anthony R Green *Three Andrika Songs*

Mikhail Johnson *Praise to the Jamaican Mother Romance*

Dorothy Rudd Moore *Some things are very dear to me*

Shawn E Okpebholo *Words Like Freedom – 'Today', 'Spirituals'*

Bittney Elizabeth Boykin *Maya Angelou Songs*

Hannah Kendall *Incident*

Nailah Nombeko *Nobody Knows*

We wanted to create a themed recital of contemporary Black composers who strongly represent the African diaspora. The art of storytelling is not dead and, in fact, is a major characteristic of our heritage. It is important to note that the title of the festival – *Always, Already There* – is self-explanatory and the perfect jumping-off point for our offering. We have been here, forever. We have always been telling stories, reflecting our history, heritage, culture and being.

The works included in this programme were chosen and ordered with the intention of telling a story that interests us greatly: the female voice – its strength, presence, struggle, power and the recognition of these qualities

© Allyson Devenish

Essay

Deciphering a Broken Syntax

Shamica Ruddock



Shamica Ruddock

What does it mean to be marooned temporally?

To be marooned: outside of, some distance from, in stasis without means for escape. It is a peculiar state to arrive not of your own accord.

To be marooned *temporally*.

This added specificity is intended, although the intention remains ambiguous. Opaque.

In some ways this feeling, because a feeling it is, signals a transgenerational disembodiment. A state which speaks to the experience of existing with a history of forced removal, dispossession and enslavement. It is to inherit, without reconciliation, a past that has been violently interrupted. A scattering. Anxious in limbo. Indeterminate, we find ourselves.

Languages, practices and systems of knowledge have been fractured, dispersed and transformed through this. Yet what is lost is not necessarily gone. It persists as trace, rhythm, gesture, intonation; carried,

altered, reassembled elsewhere.

Despite the violence of cultural erasure emblematic of the colonial project that produces this state of maroonage, sound offers compelling evidence of retention. African sonic idioms persist throughout the Black diaspora, with rhythms, structures and approaches to communication providing foundations for innumerable contemporary Black sonic expressions.

And so it is, these sounds you encounter here each have an implicit sense of journeying: towards, away from, through, within. Their titles suggest similar.

Event A: Inwards Lurking 5m 1s

Event D: Recurrent Thoroughfare 4m 54s

Taken together, they form *Deciphering a Broken Syntax*. Across them, textures accumulate, fracture and recede, approaching coherence only to fragment.

I am interested in genres – techno, mento, kawina, kuduro, etc – as vernaculars: distinct yet interconnected dialects, linguistic systems shaped through shifting geographies, movements of peoples, disjunctures and convergence.

The notion of technocreolisation resonates here, technology itself becoming both subject to and a catalyst for unanticipated processes of adaptation and cultural transformation, producing an unstable circuit of syncretic cultural modalities in flux.

I have also been thinking about sound culture as semiotics, and as poetics. Here I refer to the various components that contribute to producing a sound culture beyond the immediacy of the sound itself – posters, record sleeves, booklet notes, track titles, labels, artist monikers and other

'I am interested in genres – techno, mento, kawina, kuduro, etc – as vernaculars: distinct yet interconnected dialects, linguistic systems shaped through shifting geographies ...'

Shamica Ruddock

visual and textual residues participate in producing meaning.

I am interested in what these elements might signify. They can inform, narrate, misdirect or offer a schema through which a sound might be interpreted. They become forms of wayfaring, wayfinding. An important process in this state of maroonage. If maroonage describes a condition of dislocation, then these describe the act of locating coordinates for anchoring.

Within the music, I experiment with the potential of audio effects and techniques as metaphors. For example, considering ideas around traces and echoes, delay and returns, abstraction and the presence of absence, the Hauntological idiosyncrasies of Jamaican Dub music have provided an underlying methodology shaping processes of making, while simultaneously operating as phenomenological descriptors of Black existence in the wake of slavery.

When there is a lack of language readily available to capture this, these FX become appropriate translations of 'affect'. Ideas on antiphony – call and response – are also present. In the process of bringing these thoughts together in order to produce a sound, I feel as if I'm *Deciphering a Broken Syntax*. One that is interrupted, scattered, in a perpetual state of reassemblage. But I am equally interested in what remains undeciphered. How much of this thought, this speculation, is embedded within the sound without becoming immediately available to the listener?

In a written exchange with David Company, Stanley Wolukau-Wanambwa notes: 'Black aesthetic strategies of refusal, Black practices of fugitivity manage to effect this extraordinarily complex act of giving and at the same time taking away'.¹ I wonder if something of this simultaneous giving and withholding is at work here.

There is a particular power in sound retaining its opacity. In encoding rather than explaining. Perhaps what appears opaque to one listener is precisely what remains legible to another.

© Shamica Ruddock

¹ David Company and Stanley Wolukau-Wanambwa, *Indeterminacy: Thoughts on Time, the Image, and Race(ism)* (MACK, 2022)

building a burning house

Always, Already There

Sun 25 Oct 7.30pm, Milton Court Concert Hall

Always Already There Ensemble

Jack Sheen conductor

Sarah Jane Lewis soprano

Tom Randle tenor

Yannis François baritone

Ben Patterson *Paper Piece*

Hannah Kendall *building a burning house*
(Barbican co-commission: UK premiere)

Jessie Cox *Sound of Music*

George Lewis *... and other spirits*

Olly Wilson *Of Visions and Truth*

Pre-concert panel talk:

Join us for a pre-concert panel talk commencing at 6.30pm in the Milton Court Concert Hall, where scholar & dramaturg Dr Dr Daniele G Daude will moderate a discussion between composers featured in the concert Hannah Kendall and Jessie Cox alongside curator Elaine Mitchener.

Paper Piece by Ben Patterson

'[O]ne of the nice things about being a Fluxus artist, [is] that you can do more or less anything you want and nobody says, "Oh, but you are a visual artist; why are you doing music?"'

– Ben Patterson

On December 22, 1960, during a stay in Cologne, Ben Patterson wrote a letter to his parents in Pittsburgh containing the score for his recent composition *Paper Piece*. A radically new direction for the young, classically trained double bassist, the work instructed five performers to 'shake, break, tear, crumple, rumple, bumble, rub, scrub, twist, poof, and pop' various sheets of paper. Unable to return home for Christmas, Patterson hoped his family would find joy and amusement in performing the piece in his absence with wrapping paper from opened gifts. This early iteration of *Paper Piece*, which would become a standard at Fluxus festivals in the 1960s and 1970s, encapsulates the spirit of generosity, and the pursuit of easily accessible materials and processes, that would guide Patterson's performance and visual art that followed.

© MoMa



Hannah Kendall © Emily Denny

building a burning house by Hannah Kendall

'I am about to set fire to you, and it will consume all your trees, both green and dry. The blazing flame will not be quenched, and every face from south to north will be scorched by it.' Ezekiel 20:47 (NIV)

In the summer of 2023, the skies of New York turned a hazy amber as the city became engulfed by smoke from wildfires in Canada. I was in the throes of completing my doctoral dissertation on resisting the Plantation Machine, which is the term that Cuban writer Antonio Benítez-Rojo uses to describe the complex, repetitious workings of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. As part of my research, I had watched Professor Dale Tomich's lecture entitled *The Slave Plantation: Environment, History and Cycles of Capital Accumulation*. The presentation was hosted as part of the John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute at Duke University's Entanglement Project, which says, 'Climate catastrophe cannot be thought outside of the context of empire and the forms of racialisation central to global capitalism, including the degradation of peoples, ecosystems and lands facilitated by states in the global North.'

Benítez-Rojo asserts that the Plantation Machine is a system, first formed during

the establishment of the plantations, which continues to repeat in renewed, yet interconnected, ways as part of an extensive framework. Indeed, as I sat in my apartment, unable to leave due to the acrid smog outside, I considered how the plantation system produced local climate changes through their fuel-intensive processes, effects now replicated on a much larger scale. However, I also wondered about the inevitability of our current global climate predicament. In other words, despite attempts to obstruct the Machine, has it always been primed, from the very beginning, to overpower such acts of resistance and to repeat continuously until it causes total collapse and combustion? After all, the plantation system was driven by meticulous planning, layout and assembly designed to ensure optimal processing conditions and maximum output for a competitive market. This is why the phrase 'building a burning house' stood out to me when reading Ocean Vuong's poem *Homewrecker*.

My recent string quartet *hounded earth* (2025), inspired by Wangechi Mutu's video *The End of carrying All*, aims to conjure an imagined soundscape of the Earth following its combustion, as explored in Mutu's work. The strings of the violins, viola and cello are bound with dreadlock cuffs, which are small metallic Afro hair accessories. The cuffs are used in a similar way in *building a burning house*, including the double bass. The sounds range from brittle and fragile – such as when the bows are drawn over the cuffs placed behind the bridge – to warm, throaty multiphonics when the cuffs placed over the fingerboard are played. Harsher timbral qualities are produced when the strings themselves are bowed. This sound world evokes the sense of heightened danger of the present, and what I imagine to be the

sounds of a possible desolate future. The past creolised situation of the plantations is also represented: the blending together of the Euro and the Afro (the instruments and cuffs, respectively, in this case). Indeed, I aim to conjure the past, present and future at the same time through this method, in the same way that Benítez-Rojo describes the interconnected nature of the Plantation Machine across time and space.

Echoes of the plantations are brought to the piece through tiny bells. Those enslaved and working the land might very well have been wearing an iron collar with bells attached to deter escape. In *building a burning house*, some players wear wrist-bells that ring in a hauntingly distant, intermittent way in quieter moments, which becomes more feverish and agitated as the players work harder during fast-paced passages.

Also, five performers play whistling kettles. Consider the sound of five stove-top kettles collectively wailing at boiling point. The players recreate this sound by exhaling into and inhaling out of the kettles' chambers, creating an urgent sense of alarm. However, it also symbolises an act of hope and invocation. According to John Minton's book chapter 'Turning the Pot Down' from *Folk Music and Song in the WPA Ex-Slave Narratives*, enslaved people 'sang and prayed in pots' on the plantations, 'they had to take a kettle and turn it down bottom upward and then old master couldn't hear the singing and prayin'. The sound of the kettles simultaneously represents despair and faith, and indeed, faith in spite of despair. In other words, even with the relentlessness of the Machine's repetitions, or the inevitable collapse of the house from its very construction, it cannot and will not suppress the human need to sing and pray.

© Hannah Kendall

Sound of Music by Jessie Cox

The *Sound of Music* lies in the interstitial of what can be heard; there where our ears change, where we don't know how to listen, in the underground of the border-zone – that non-place in excess of a between.

This piece plays with foreground and background, with presence and absence. Beyond that which happens in front of our ears – a shadow of sound, some kind of noisy silence – makes music. Our ears shift and what was in front of our ears becomes another shadow, another unthought sound. It's a continually shifting and expanding 'shadow-play' we might say, where there is never a reduction to a flatness of space, or sound, or music.

Maybe we could think of these visual illusions, where a change in perspective brings about another image (like the famous instance of Rubin's vase where we question whether it's two faces or a vase). But that is still inaccurate, for it again reduces it to a question of two absolutely flat and present views. Maybe Romantic paintings are more telling, with their light source at a distance through which the whole work gains spatial depth. At the same time, I must problematise these works. Particularly, the common depiction of one light-source at the top of the painting, implies an all-encompassing, unobstructed view of the whole scene from above.

We might say that what I am after is how it was never about the light, it was always about how the light makes us aware of the complexity and beauty of darkness. It's a bit like when you look at a nebula, where there are all these different light sources with different colours and there is all this blurring, this depth, and a kind of falling into the artwork, as a changing of our perspective, such requires. This working with depth, as a continual blurring and shifting of perception, is a kind of moving in space, in excess of an individual who controls and is the centre of such movements. This having to enter the artwork is the continual changing of our view, our position, our ears, our sound – it's music.

© Jessie Cox

...and other spirits by George Lewis

The title of this work, *...and other spirits* (German: *und anderen Geisten*; Latin: *et alii extra materiam spiritus*), comes from a Latin *disputatio* by the 18th-century Afro-German philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo (1703–59). Indentured as a child and brought to Germany from a region in present-day Ghana, the noble family that Amo served supported him in completing law school training at the University of Halle in 1729. After completing a *magister* in philosophy from the University of Wittenberg, Amo taught philosophy there, as well as at the universities of Halle and Jena, before returning to Africa in 1747.

I find it fascinating that Amo's basic intimation in the text below is that God can not be all-powerful because he lacks a living and organic body. Even more intriguing for me is Amo's explicit reference to 'other spirits', which in the Christianity of his day would be presumed not even to exist. I find this a cryptic reference to his African roots, as well as an implicit challenge to the primacy of European over African metaphysics:

'Although I do not know how God and other spirits beyond matter understand themselves, their operations, and other things, nevertheless, it does not seem likely to me that they understand by means of ideas ... For God and other spirits that are posited beyond matter lack sensations, sensory organs, and a living and organic body ... in God there is no knowledge of the past and the future and the absent. Rather, in his cognition all things are present ... Therefore it follows from this that God and other spirits understand themselves, their operations, and other things without any ideality or ideas and recollected sensations, whereas our mind both understands and operates through ideas on account of its very tight bond and commerce with the body.'

The English translation is from Stephen Menn and Justin E H Smith: *Anton Wilhelm Amo's Philosophical Dissertations on Mind and Body* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020). The primary text is Antonius Guilielmus Amo, 1734: *Disputatio*

philosophica continens ideam distinctam eorum quae competunt vel menti vel corpori nostro vivo et organico ('Philosophical Disputation Containing a Distinct Idea of Those Things That Pertain Either to the Mind or to Our Living and Organic Body'). I'd like to thank Menn and Smith for deepening my understanding of Amo's work and life. I'd also like to acknowledge Dr Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung for introducing me to Amo with his establishment of the Anton Wilhelm Amo Center at SAVVY Contemporary Gallery in Berlin.

Many thanks to Augusta Read Thomas, Tim Weiss, Phil Pierick, and the wonderful musicians of the Grossman Ensemble, all of whom have accompanied me on my rather belated and still ongoing journey as a still-emerging composer at the age of 72.

© George Lewis

Of Visions and Truth: a song cycle by Olly Wilson

Olly Wilson was one of the most distinguished composers of his generation, a pioneer in electronic and orchestral writing. Elements of jazz, traditional African music and popular forms are merged with contemporary techniques and imaginatively heard orchestrations. A veritable tour de force, his multi-movement song-cycle features three vocal soloists and a chamber ensemble and highlights extensive percussion. He moves from the exhausted anguish of the spiritual 'I've been buked' into a heart-stopping, dream-like Lullaby chiming with the radiant sonorities of carefully placed instrumental timbres. The finale erupts with furious defiance, a coruscating uprising of Black resistance in the face of violence.

Text

I've been buked and I've been scorned

I've been 'buked an' I've been scorned,
I've been 'buked an' I've been scorned,
children;
I've been 'buked an' I've been scorned,
I've been talked about sho's you' born.
Dere is trouble all over dis worl',
Dere is trouble all over dis worl', children;
Dere is trouble all over dis worl',

Dere is trouble all over dis worl'.
Ain' gwine lay my 'ligion down,
Ain' gwine lay my 'ligion down, children;
Ain' gwine lay my 'ligion down,
Ain' gwine lay my 'ligion down.

Intermezzo

Lullaby

Sleep, child, sleep,
Sleep my little brown baby,
Mama's little brown baby,

Sleep, child, sleep
When you gonna see Jesus?
When you gonna see Lord Jesus?
Please tell me
Mama's little brown baby
Mama's little brown baby
Sleep, child, sleep,
Sleep, child, sleep

Intermezzo

If we must die

If we must die—let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry
dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die—oh, let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though
dead!
Oh, Kinsmen! We must meet the common
foe;
Though far outnumbered, let us show us
brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one
deathblow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous,
cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting
back!

Claude McKay (1889–1948)

Composers and Performers

Aaron Azunda Akugbo

Nigerian-Scottish trumpeter Aaron Azunda Akugbo is one of the leading young musicians of his generation. Classically trained as both a trumpeter and singer, he is celebrated for his charismatic performances and engaging stage presence. He has been selected as a 2027/28 ECHO Rising Star and has appeared with major ensembles, including Chineke!, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Aurora Orchestra and Manchester Camerata. Highlights include concerto debuts at the Royal Festival Hall and BBC Proms, performances at leading international festivals and premieres of new works. He is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music and is Principal Trumpet of Aurora Orchestra and a founding member of Connaught Brass.

Lara Aisha Ali

Lara Aisha Ali is a Nigerian-German classical flautist. She was raised in Northampton and is now studying at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Her interest in music sprouted from an upbringing surrounded by jazz/afro jazz as well as classical music. She became very involved in her county's music service, playing with the NCBF platinum award-winning Northamptonshire Youth Concert Band and Big band, and getting the chance to perform in the Royal Albert Hall. She enjoys collaborating with young musicians across the country, having taken part in NYO Inspire, as well as having been selected to play in Birmingham's LEAP Youth ensemble. Her experiences performing locally in flute choir and flute duets sparked an interest in smaller ensemble-playing, but her first year of study at the GSMD has developed her love for chamber music, her ensembles including ones for two flutes and piano, woodwind trio, flute and guitar, and flute and harp. She also writes her own flute studies.

Always, Already There Ensemble

Always Already There Ensemble was formed with the intention of championing efforts to platform Afrodiasporic new music as part of an ever-expanding canon of new music. Being an ensemble that is as diverse as the music it presents it is best placed to promote these works. It seeks to build an ensemble that represents the diversity of London, while being engaged in platforming and uncovering the contemporary music of the diaspora. Such an ensemble has not existed before in the UK; its time has come and the hope is that it will be involved in projects at the Barbican and Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

Apartment House

Apartment House has been captivating audiences with performances of contemporary and experimental music for over 30 years. The modular group, created by Anton Lukoszevieze in 1995, has performed all over the world and is an associate ensemble of Wigmore Hall. The group has released over 50 albums of music by composers such as John Cage, Linda Catlin Smith, Laurence Crane and Julius Eastman. In 2012 it received a Royal Philharmonic Society Award for outstanding contribution to chamber music.

Allan Gilbert Balon

Artist and composer Allan Gilbert Balon was born in Les Abymes, Guadeloupe, and is now based in Créteil, in the Southeastern suburbs of Paris. His practice combines sculpture, composition and sound installations to explore themes of presence and intimacy. He is the co-founder of xyä édition with Uta Guan Hyë. He has released music on Recital Program and Séance Centre and exhibited at New York's MoMA PS1. His debut album, *The Magnesia Suite* (2024), is an assemblage of private histories and memory, flowing lucidly in a

coastal drift of dissolving lines between the outside environment and internal space.

Rosie Bergonzi

Rosie Bergonzi is a classically trained percussionist who graduated from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in 2016 as a Master of Music, before receiving a fellowship the following year. Theatre highlights include *Macbeth*, *The Crucible*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It* and *Richard II* at Shakespeare's Globe; *Pericles* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona* at the RSC; and *Billy and The Beast*, an interactive opera with Britten Sinfonia. She has also undertaken world tours with popstars Neneh Cherry and Celeste and has given solo recitals at the Barbican, Hangout UK, PanMarco and the Canary Islands Handpan Festival. In 2024 she also performed the world's first handpan concerto – by Cassie Kinoshi – with the Chineke! Orchestra.

Marisse Cato

Marisse Cato is a London-born composer, sound artist, pianist and scholar who continues her studies with Vijay Iyer, Chaya Czernowin, Yvette Janine Jackson and Jessie Cox. Her work is concerned with the practice of being human with others, negotiating labour, citizenship and nationhood under racialised capitalism. She is increasingly concerned with composing and analysing the live event of music as a methodology for ideological critique. Her practice is committed to creating nurturing environment for fostering difference both sonically and socially. She composes for acoustic instruments, electronics and multimodal fixed media including metal sculpture.

Chiron Choir

Chiron Choir is led by Hannah Catherine Jones and presents works involving collective vocal improvisations and compositions. The choir is open to diasporic women, femmes and non-binary musicians and non-musicians of all vocal abilities. It amplifies the shared musical vocabularies traversing the UK and the US, through

Black British and Black American female composers, including Alice Coltrane.

Chris Clarke

Chris Clarke is a multi-disciplinary artist and harpist from Windsor, Ontario, Canada. They have worked in Europe and North America with various orchestras including the Windsor Symphony Orchestra, Dorset Opera Festival Orchestra, the Her Ensemble, JM World Orchestra, and Sinfonia Smith Square. They earned a Bachelor of Music with Honours from Wilfrid Laurier University before pursuing a Master of Performance at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, graduating with Distinction in 2023. During their time at GSMD, they had the opportunity to premiere Hannah Kendall's *Tuxedo: Diving Bell 2* at Milton Court Concert Hall. They have since been featured as a soloist at the Lichfield Arts Festival and SXSW London, and have appeared with artists including Billie Marten, Tom Rasmussen, Bishi and Self Esteem.

Xhosa Cole

Critically acclaimed saxophonist, flautist and composer, Xhosa Cole is an embodiment of the success of numerous community outreach arts programmes in Birmingham. Holding his spirituality at the centre of his creative practice, he has been forging a career across communities in the UK and beyond. Having developed his unique mixed-heritage, black British, queer voice in the jazz tradition, his musical roots lie in collaboration and improvisation. This mix has allowed him to work with a diverse and expansive pool of creatives from different traditions, cultures, backgrounds and practices. Highlights have included receiving the BBC Young Jazz Musician of the Year Award in 2018, appearing at the BBC Proms and Ronnie Scott's, releasing two studio albums and an extensive UK tour with his quartet.

Jessie Cox

Jessie Cox is Assistant Professor of Music at Harvard University and a composer, drummer and scholar. His first monograph,

Sounds of Black Switzerland: Blackness, Music, and Unthought Voices (Duke UP, 2025), explores how experimental musical practices and thinking with Blackness open alternative ways of worlding. His practice spans avant-garde classical music, experimental jazz, and sound art. He has worked with ensembles and institutions such as the Sun Ra Arkestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Klangforum Wien at festivals such as Wien Modern, Lucerne Festival, MaerzMusik, Ultima Festival and Opera Omaha. He has received a Fromm Foundation commission, a Civitella Ranieri Fellowship, MacDowell Fellowship, and the ASCAP Fred Ho Award. Alongside his compositional work, his scholarly writing advances practice-based approaches to music as a form of research.

Allyson Devenish

Allyson Devenish is a Canadian-British collaborative pianist whose has appeared at leading concert venues throughout the UK and internationally. She has performed at Wigmore Hall, the Purcell Room, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Snape Maltings, as well as across Europe, Canada, the United States and the Caribbean. Her work has been broadcast and recorded for the BBC, CBC, Radio France and RTÉ1, and she has appeared regularly as a guest on BBC Radio 3, where she has also presented two Sunday features. Alongside her work as a pianist and coach, she made her stage-directing debut with *The Pocket* and her acting debut in ITV's *Three Little Birds*. She is currently a Senior Staff Coach at the National Opera Studio and a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music.

Jessica Ekomane

Jessica Ekomane is a French-born and Berlin-based electronic musician and sound artist. Her performances, often quadraphonic, are characterised by their physical affect, seeking a cathartic effect through the interplay of rhythmic and tonal perception, and the tension between noise and melody. Her first LP *Multivocal* was released in 2019 and grew out of a project at Ars Electronica curated by Shulea Chang and Matthew Füller. Since then,

her work has been extensively presented internationally at festivals, venues, contemporary art spaces and museums. She released *Manifolds* in 2024 as a split LP with Laurel Halo. She was one of the winners of the Villa Romana Prize 2023 in Florence and the same year received one of the two ZKM Giga-Hertz production prizes. She was a fellow of the Berlin Artistic Research Programme 2024-25.

Ahmed Essyad

Ahmed Essyad is a composer born in 1938 in Salé, Morocco. After studying music at the Rabat Conservatory in Morocco, he moved to Paris in 1962, where he became a pupil and then assistant to Max Deutsch. Trained in the avant-garde processes of Western musical composition, he also claims the Amazigh folk music of Morocco as a fundamental source of inspiration for his work. As early as 1965, he integrated elements of oral tradition to question the contemporary language of the time. In search of new compositional tools, he created a series of electroacoustic pieces in the Centre Américain studio in Paris, between 1972 and 1974. Working in the studio enabled him to become the interpreter of his own music, offering a form of continuity with traditional oral music.

Cedrik Fermont

Born in Lubumbashi, Cedrik Fermont is a Berlin-based Belgian-Congolese composer, musician, mastering engineer, author, radio host, curator and independent researcher. Since 1989 he has worked across the fields of noise, electronic and electroacoustic music, sound art and free improvisation. He runs the label and platform Syrphé, whose main focus is on sound art, electronic music, free improvisation and electroacoustic music from Asia, Africa and Latin America as well as his personal projects. He works as a solo artist and in numerous collaborative projects and bands across several continents. His tours and ongoing research have led him to perform and give talks in 72 countries across Eurasia, Africa and the Americas. He also composes music for sound installations, theatre and choreography.

Yannis François

Born in Guadeloupe, the Franco-Swiss baritone Yannis François began his career as a dancer with Léna Blou before joining the Maurice Béjart company. He then studied voice at the Lausanne Conservatory. Forthcoming highlights include the bass solo in Stravinsky's *Les noces* with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Polyphemus (Handel's *Acis and Galatea*) with the Irish Baroque Orchestra, Coralbo (Handel's *Floridante*) at the Bayreuth Baroque Opera Festival, and Nick Shadow (*The Rake's Progress*) with Fribourg New Opera. His repertoire ranges from early Baroque to contemporary and last season he participated in two world premieres: singing the role of the Field Worker in Ellen Reid's *The Shell Trial* for Dutch National Opera and Shams in Rolf Hind's *Sky in a Small Cage* here at the Barbican and at Copenhagen Opera Festival.

Anthony R Green

The multifaceted practice of Anthony R Green includes music composition, working as a pianist, improviser and performance artist, social justice artistry, teaching, film creation, writing, and more. Behind all of his artistic endeavors are the ideals of equality and freedom, which manifest themselves in diverse ways in a composition, a performance, a collaboration or social justice work. He is the co-founder of Castle of our Skins, a former composer creator with the Louisville Orchestra and currently a visiting professor for the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

GSMD New Music Society

The Guildhall New Music Society is an inclusive and experimental space for new music written and performed by the Guildhall School community, spearheaded by co-curators CJ Brooke, Fred Terry, Frey Lawler, Billie Reason and Bridget Li. The society commissions new works from students and staff and performs them in themed events throughout the year. Past events include *Game Music*, *LA LA LA: new music for untrained voices* and yearly exhibitions of new installations. As

a performance collective, it has performed at Wigmore Hall as a part of the London Contemporary Music Festival in 2025, and appears in this weekend's *Always, Already There* festival.

Hannah Kendall

Hannah Kendall is a British composer who is known for her attentive arrangements and immersive world-building, in music that looks beyond the boundaries of composition. It bridges gaps between different musical cultures, both honouring and questioning the contemporary tradition while telling new stories through it, contrasting fine detail with limitless abandon. She has received commissions from the London Symphony Orchestra, the Lincoln Center, Musikkollegium Winterthur, Miller Theatre, Crash Ensemble, Barbican Centre, Ensemble Musikfabrik and Wigmore Hall. In 2022 she was awarded the Hindemith Prize for outstanding contemporary composers and, in 2023, she received the Best Large Ensemble Composition Ivor Novello Award. Last year her portrait album, released on NMC, was widely acclaimed. Her first opera, *The Knife of Dawn*, received its third staging earlier this year, given by Dutch National Opera.

Harald Kisiedu

Harald Kisiedu is a musicologist, journalist and author. He is a lecturer at the Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences' Institute of Music. His research interests include jazz as a global phenomenon, Afrodiasporic classical and experimental music, improvisation and Wagner. He has written on Peter Brötzmann, Ernst-Ludwig Petrowsky, Muhal Richard Abrams, Roscoe Mitchell and jazz and popular music in the Terezín concentration camp. He received his PhD from Columbia University and also holds graduate degrees from the University of Hamburg. He is a saxophonist and has performed with Branford Marsalis, George Lewis, Henry Grimes, Hannibal Lokumbe and Champion Jack Dupree. He has recorded with the New York-based ensemble Burnt Sugar, the Arkestra Chamber and with composer and improviser Jeff Morris.

Laura M Beer Kumwenda

Laura M Beer Kumwenda is a contemporary performer, violist, hardanger fiddle and viola d'amore player living in Oslo. On these instruments she explores extended techniques through existing solo repertoire, free improvisation and in collaboration with composers. After studying at the Norwegian Academy of Music and Hochschule für Musik Basel, she now works in both the classical and experimental music fields in Norway and internationally. She is a founding member of Ensemble LIME, a group dedicated to the performance of microtonal new music. Personal projects include the sound installation *What do you hear when you fall asleep?* and *I Don't Belong Here*: a programme of Afrodiasporic composers performed in Oslo asking what it means to belong in a musical space.

Sarah-Jane Lewis

British dramatic mezzo-soprano Sarah-Jane Lewis is establishing herself as a compelling interpreter of dramatic repertoire, with a voice distinguished by its richness, power and dramatic intensity. In 2024 she was awarded Second Prize at the New York Wagner Competition. Her current repertoire includes the roles of Eboli (*Don Carlo*), Amneris (*Aida*), Carmen and Dalila. Her developing Wagner repertoire includes Erda and Waltraute. Following an earlier career as a soprano, she has undertaken a considered transition into dramatic mezzo-soprano repertoire. Her vocal weight, range and dramatic presence now point towards the major dramatic mezzo roles of Verdi, the French repertoire and Wagner.

Aurélié Nyirabikali Lierman

Aurélié Nyirabikali Lierman is a composer, radio and vocal artist who is fascinated by the narrative power of abstract sound and music. She integrates dramatic and documentary elements into her compositions, focusing on the (non) human voice and field recordings from East Africa to shape a self-developed hybrid genre she has coined 'Afrique Concrète'. She collaborates widely across disciplines,

recently partnering with Rotterdam Theatre for the documentary chamber opera *Helstone in het Pand der Goden*. She also teaches at the MA Non Linear Narrative programme at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague. Most recently, her work with Studio Nergens took her onto the global stage, participating as a composer and acoustic scenographer in this year's Venice Biennale and the Golden Calf competition at the 2026 Netherlands Film Festival for the acclaimed immersive installation *Nothing to see here*.

Ivan Liuzzo

Ivan Liuzzo is an Italian composer and visual designer of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, based in Basel. His artistic practice moves between musical composition, visual research, the study of Balinese gamelan, and a deep interest in sacred vocal traditions, a personal attraction that leads him to seek direct contact with the places and communities where these traditions are practiced. His musical work is characterised by instrumental ensembles and constellations conceived to allow for long, apparently static stretches of time, in which the non-recognition of the sound source and acoustic hallucination build a state of tension in the listener. In 2025 he received the Global Research Project Grant from Pro Helvetia for a residency in Bali and a Researchbeiträge from the Canton of Basel-Stadt for Tashtego, a project that brings together voice, gamelan, double bass and bassoon.

Yara Mekawei

Sonic sculptor, composer and scholar Yara Mekawei creates sonics where urban pulse meets mythic echo, where Holy transcripts and the Book of The Dead converge with algorithmic code and electroacoustics. Ancient texts and scriptures are her music composition source. She transmutes the ambient rhythms of cities, the liturgical whispers of rituals of antiquity and the poetic geometries of esoteric texts into immersive architectures that dissolve borders between history and identity. The auditory alchemy; a synesthetic ritual that turns sound into space, silence

into structure. A chant's glory, a kinetic installation. Breath, mapped as collective memory. This is transubstantiation, not translation. For Mekawei, sound is vessel, voyage, and verb: carrying ancestral wisdom, threading temporal layers, speaking across sensorial divides.

Elaine Mitchener

Elaine Mitchener MBE is a British Afro-Caribbean vocalist, movement artist, composer and curator working between contemporary/experimental new music, free improvisation and visual art. Her debut album *Solo Throat* was released in 2024 on Café Oto's OTORUKO label.

Jack Murray

Jack Murray is a composer, multi-instrumentalist, bandleader and arranger from East London who is currently studying composition at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. His work is shaped by a fascination with the intersection of musical genres, spanning contemporary jazz, post-minimalism exploration, early New Orleans music, folk traditions and electronic groove-based music. After making his professional arranging debut at the Royal Albert Hall, he has established himself as a sophisticated and creative arranger, working with figures such as Guy Barker, Joe Webb, Bill Laurance and members of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. As a performing jazz saxophonist and improviser, he regularly appears at venues and festivals including the Royal Festival Hall, We Out Here Festival, the Jazz Cafe, 91 Living Room and here at the Barbican Centre.

Corey Mwamba

Corey Mwamba is a musician, researcher, presenter, promoter and educator. He predominantly plays vibraphone, but also plays dulcimer and uses audio processing software. His most recent album release, *NTH*, has been critically acclaimed in leading journals. He won a PRSF/Jerwood Foundation Take Five artist development award in 2007; was shortlisted for the Innovation category in the BBC Jazz

Awards in 2008; and received nominations in the Vibraphone category in 2026's DownBeat annual international critics' polls.

NikNak

A trailblazing musical polymath, NikNak has carved a niche for herself in the music industry with her distinctive turntablism, immersive compositions, and captivating improvised performances. Heralded by the likes of DJ Mag, Clash, The Wire and Resident Advisor, her debut album *Bashi* garnered critical acclaim, positioning her as one to watch in the experimental electronic music scene.

Ben Patterson

Ben Patterson (1934–2016) was an African American composer, artist and founding member of Fluxus, the international avant-garde movement that emerged in the early 1960s. Trained as a double bassist, Patterson developed an experimental practice combining sound, performance, found objects, humour and chance. Using simple instructions, unconventional materials and everyday actions, he disrupted distinctions between music and visual art, composition and improvisation, performer and audience. His event scores invited participation and transformed ordinary gestures into unexpected artistic experiences. Alongside figures including George Maciunas, Nam June Paik and Alison Knowles, Patterson helped shape Fluxus's radical, interdisciplinary approach to making and experiencing art.

Gweneth Ann Rand

Soprano Gweneth Ann Rand trained at the University of Exeter, Goldsmith's College and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. A former Vilar Young Artist at the Royal Ballet and Opera and Associate Artist at Wigmore Hall, she represented England at the 2001 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World. Recent highlights include Mrs Grose (*The Turn of the Screw*), Kitty Hart (*Dead Man Walking*), Mother Bailey (*It's a Wonderful Life*) and Serena (*Porgy and Bess*) for ENO; 4.48 Psychosis for the

Royal Ballet and Opera, Prototype Festival, Opéra national du Rhin and Philharmonie de Paris; Rooker (*Giant*) at the Aldeburgh Festival; Tiger Lily (*Peter Pan, the dark side*) for Teatro Comunale in Bolzano; and Judith (*Bluebeard's Castle*) for the Theatre of Sound. She is also widely acclaimed for her interpretations of Messiaen's song-cycles *Harawi* and *Poèmes pour Mi*.

Tom Randle

Tom Randle has sung major roles at opera houses in London, Milan, New York, , Buenos Aires, Berlin, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Strasbourg, Madrid, Tokyo, Paris, Los Angeles, Washington, Geneva and Melbourne. As a composer his music has been performed at the Royal Opera House Linbury Studio, Buxton, Edinburgh International, Hertfordshire, Presteigne and Dartington festivals, the Oxford Song Festival, here at the Barbican and Opéra de Lille, among others. He was twice commissioned by the National Opera Studio to create new arias for its Young Artist programme. Recent seasons also saw the premiere of a two new oratorios – *The Affirming Flame* and *Cromwell*. His operas *A Telephone Call* and *Love Me To Death* were both premiered at the Tête à Tête International Opera Festival.

Shamica Ruddock

Shamica Ruddock is a composer and artist working across film, installation and live performance. She has previously held residencies with Brussels experimental sound lab QO2 and Amant Foundation in New York. Solo shows include *Deciphering a Broken Syntax* at South London Gallery and *Palimpsests & Epithets* held at Skēnē, Malmö. Solo live presentations include Cafe OTO, Hågerstensåsens medborgarhus and ArtHouse Jersey. She has an ongoing sound-based research project with artist Hannan Jones. She has performed at the Silent Green Future Soundscapes Festival, Madeira Dig and Oscillation Festival. She is currently a Sound and Music in Motion composer.

Jack Sheen

Jack Sheen is a Manchester-born conductor and composer known for inventive work across orchestral music, opera and interdisciplinary performance. He regularly conducts leading ensembles, including the BBC and London Symphony orchestras, London Sinfonietta and Klangforum Wien, with forthcoming debuts with the Hamburg Symphony and Luxembourg Philharmonic orchestras. In opera, he has appeared at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and English Touring Opera. As a composer, his work has been commissioned by organisations including the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne and Venice Biennale Musica. He is a Wigmore Hall Associate Artist and Co-Director of the London Contemporary Music Festival.

Corie Rose Soumah

Corie Rose Soumah is a Canadian composer currently based in Chicago. She is interested in shaping fractured and reconstructed sound components through hyper-collages and visceral physical gestures. Her approach is characterised by a keen interest in the interweaving of multiple aesthetic and sonic elements from the perspective of afro-diasporic geologies. She explores these textures through the overlay of different acoustic mediums as well as electronic and analogue technologies. Her works have been performed by an extensive number of ensembles and performers, including the International Contemporary Ensemble, Bozzini Quartet, Ensemble Itinéraire, Longleash, Hypercube, Ekmeles, Paramirabo, Sixtrum, Contemporary Insight, New Music Concerts and Wet Ink. Recent and forthcoming collaborations include a new work for ensemble PHACE, a new saxophone quartet for Quasar as well as a new piece for ensemble Alkali.

Pat Thomas

Pat Thomas is a composer and pianist, widely recognised as a leading figure in contemporary improvised music. He is renowned for his distinctive, percussive style of playing, and for weaving a wide range of influences such as reggae, jungle, and Sufi philosophy into compositions and performances. Over the course of his career he has collaborated with a wide range of jazz and improv luminaries, ranging from Mike Cooper, Derek Bailey, Tony Oxley and Evan Parker to more recent avant-figureheads such as Moor Mother and Matana Roberts. As well as an ongoing solo practice, current group projects include ahmed (with Seymour Wright, Antonin Gerbal and Joel Grip), Black Top (with Orphy Robinson) and duos with Mariam Rezaei, Mark Fell and Tyshawn Sorey.

Charles Uzor

Charles Uzor was born in Nigeria and came to Switzerland during the Biafra War, studying in Bern, Zurich, Rome and London. His output includes opera, dance, orchestral and choral works, but his main interest is in works for small ensembles and voice. Many of these explore the phenomena of identity and deception in connection with electronics. His works have been performed by distinguished ensembles, including London Sinfonietta, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra, the SWR Vocal Ensemble and Bavarian Radio Choir, as well as at festivals including Berne, Rümlingen, Viitasaari, Lucerne, Basel, Huddersfield and Glasgow Tectonics. His most recent album, *Political*, was released on Neos last year and features *The Great Wall: A Labyrinth*. He is a fellow of the Civitella Ranieri Foundation and member of the Akademie der Künste Berlin.

Caius Williams

Caius Williams is a musician from London who plays the double bass, guitar, and bass guitar. Alongside various solo projects, he regularly collaborates with others, often working with improvisation and exploring resonance and perception. He is in the collaborative groups Crosspiece (with Theodora Laird) and Argia (with Tara Cunningham and Theo Guttenplan). He works as guitarist/bassist for feeo, alongside varied work as a supporting musician, both in the studio and on international tours. In 2022 he launched GRAIN, a concert series and label focused on programming new music and nurturing a growing community with cross-scene and cross-generational collaboration.

Olly Wilson

Olly Wilson's richly varied musical background included not only the traditional composition and academic disciplines, but also his professional experience as a jazz and orchestral musician, work in electronic media and studies of African music in West Africa itself. His works were performed by major American orchestras such as the Atlanta, Baltimore, Saint Louis, Detroit and Dallas Symphony orchestras, along with international ensembles such as the Moscow Philharmonic, the Netherlands Philharmonic and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. He was awarded numerous honours, including the Dartmouth Arts Council Prize, commissions from the NEA and Koussevitzky Foundation; an artist residency at the American Academy of Rome; several Guggenheim Fellowships; a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship; membership at the American Academy of Arts and Letters; and the Elise Stoecker Prize awarded by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

Pamela Z

Pamela Z is a San Francisco-based composer/performer and media artist working primarily with voice, live electronics, sampled sound and video. A pioneer of live looping, she processes her voice to create complex sonic layers. Her solo works combine experimental extended vocal techniques, operatic *bel canto*, found objects, text, digital processing, and wireless MIDI controllers that allow her to manipulate sound with physical gestures. In addition to her solo work, she has been commissioned to compose scores for dance, theatre, film, and chamber ensembles. Her interdisciplinary performances have been presented at leading venues internationally. She has toured extensively throughout the US, Europe, and Japan and appeared at numerous festivals. She's a recipient of numerous awards and holds a music degree from the University of Colorado, Boulder.

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*We also want to thank Barbican Members
and the many thousands who made a
donation when purchasing tickets.*

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Already.

There.

The music was there.

The artists were there.

The ideas were there.

The futures were there.

**And perhaps the work before us is
not to announce their arrival –
but to recognise their presence.**

To hear.

At last.

What has been sounding all along.

Elaine Mitchener