

# WIGMORE HALL

Friday 17 January 2025  
7.30pm

## Ensemble Klang

Erik-Jan de With baritone saxophone

Anton van Houten trombone

Joey Marijs percussion

## The Orchestra of Futurist Noise Intoners

Phoebe Apfel

Evie Atkin

CJ Brooke

Alexander Cann

Laoise Corrigan

Yianni Frantzeskakis

Genia Isachenko

Michał Kawecki

Greg May

Jon Mayse

Darius Paymai

Georgie West

Julian Woods

Angel Wong

Efe Yüksel

Zhuoer Zhou

Luciano Chessa conductor

Jennifer Walshe voice

Neil Luck instrumentalist

Margareth Kammerer voice

Pauline Oliveros (1932-2016)

Paolo Buzzi (1874-1956)

Brian Sheridan & Toshiro Sawa

Jennifer Walshe (b.1974) & Tony Conrad (1940-2016)

Chris Newman (b.1958)

Margareth Kammerer (b.1966)

Pablo Ortiz (b.1956)

Dermot O'Reilly

Teho Teardo (b.1966)

Peter Ablinger (b.1959)

Luigi Russolo (1885-1947)

Waking the Noise Intoners (2009)

*UK première*

Pioggia nel pineto antidannunziana (1916)

*realised by Luciano Chessa, UK première*

BHAIDHLUGAENG (1921)

Fancy Palaces (2009) *UK première*

People (2025) *world première*

Blues or Woman in the Mind at Night  
(2010) *UK première*

Tango Futurista (2009) *UK première*

Foldada Dorchada (c.1921)

An Péist (c.1922)

Oh! (2010) *UK première*

WEISS WEISSLICH 17s Intonarumori und  
Rauschen (2024) *UK première*

Fragment from *Risveglio di una città*  
(1913) *realised by Luciano Chessa*

*Interval*

OCCAM DELTA XXIII *world première*

Éliane Radigue (b.1932) & Carol Robinson (b.1956)

W

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'Would you allow your daughter to marry a Futurist?' asked the *Daily Express* on 13 June 1914. When the Futurists Luigi Russolo and F.T. Marinetti arrived in London – that same month – primed to unleash noise music onto the British public, the country was in the grip of a Futurist mania. You could buy Futurist socks, Futurist pyjamas, Futurist pillowcases, Futurist cat figurines.

Much of this was down to Marinetti himself, a shamelessly great publicist. He had introduced the bracing tenets of Futurism to a rapt, packed Wigmore Hall in 1912, and denounced 'the worm-eaten traditions' of England – a lecture he delivered in French. The press lapped it up. Just as they did Russolo's 1913 manifesto *The Art of Noises*, where many of the ideas that would become foundational to post-war experimental music and sound art were all laid out for the first time.

That same year the *Pall Mall Gazette* ran a vivid report of a private concert in Milan. Russolo's orchestra of *intonarumori* (or 'noise intoners') – a bizarre set of homemade instruments that could conjure up 'all the noises of the street and factory' in a 'gigantic roar' – had entered the world.

The ensemble was made up of 16 large boxes, each of which had a duck-like megaphone on the front and a unique method of sound generation. The *ululatori* ('howlers'), *rombatori* ('rumblers'), *crepicatori* ('cracklers') and *stropicciatori* ('scrapers') all had discs of various materials/shapes that bowed strings attached to drumskins. The *ronatore* ('buzzers'), *gorgogliatore* ('gurglers') and *scoppiatori* ('combusters'), meanwhile, contained electric motors that excited strings/drumskins. The *sibilatore* (whistlers) combined the two approaches.

Russolo and Marinetti set up camp with these beasts at the London Coliseum for over a week in June 1914. It was their third public outing – after scandalising Milan and Genoa. That they were debuting at Britain's foremost music hall would have thrilled Marinetti, who had written an article for the *Daily Mail* the year before extolling the genius of the variety theatre. In seeking to destroy 'all that is solemn, sacred, earnest, and pure in Art', the music hall was Futurism's greatest ally.

In the end the concerts were a disaster. For all the fanfare, the one thing these noise intoners couldn't do in this impossibly vast space was make a decent racket. 'It could have been drowned easily by a good tympanist,' noted *Musical Opinion*. Hecklers forced the venue to cut short the first performance. The next night the Italians wheeled out a gramophone to play Elgar to deal with the haters.

It didn't put off Stravinsky, however, who visited **Russolo** in Milan to assess the viability of composing for them. Or Ravel, who considered including the croakers in his opera *Les Enfants et les sortilèges*. Mondrian, meanwhile, wrote about how he saw in the *intonarumori* the very future of music. And for Cage it all began with Russolo. With the advent of electronic instruments in the

1920s, however, the ambitions of the *intonarumori* were soon overtaken and the instruments abandoned. Then during the Second World War they completely disappeared.

In 2009, to mark the 100th anniversary of Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto, and under the auspices of artist and noise aficionado Mike Kelley, Performa invited the composer **Luciano Chessa** to recreate these fabled instruments. Tonight, in their reconstructed form – in association with Performa, Wigmore Hall and Thaddaeus Ropac Gallery – they receive their British debut.

The nine works on tonight's programme – all conducted by Chessa, and performed by the New Music Society of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama – show the range of what these instruments can do.

The full menagerie slowly reveals itself in the opening work, **Pauline Oliveros's** *Waking the Noise Intoners* – 'dedicated to the next Futurists' – in which we hear each creature creeping in and unfurling its plumage one by one. We hear them dance in **Pablo Ortiz's** *Tango Futurista* and drunkenly march and chant in **Chris Newman's** *People* – and perhaps dream in **Jennifer Walshe** and **Tony Conrad's** *Fancy Palaces* (performed by Walshe and Neil Luck). The inspiration for Russolo's orchestra came from the noises of the city, from the gurglings of 'water, air and gas inside metallic pipes, the rumblings and rattlings of engines breathing with obvious animal spirits, the rising and falling of pistons, the stridency of mechanical saws.' But imitation was not his aim; sonic liberation was. What might a piston fantasise about if it were freed from toil? Walshe and Conrad offer one answer.

In **Margareth Kammerer's** *Blues or Woman in the Mind at Night*, we get an impression of what a piston's nightmares might be like, the work climaxing on wave upon unnerving *glissandi* wave. Around this swirling industrial subconscious, Kammerer sings her own unsettling visions:

'In the fog there runs the six-legged dog  
with a bone in his mouth  
and he looks back to me'

So vivid are the sounds – and names – of the *intonarumori* it's hard not to enlist them to the cause of illustration. Chessa brings to life the scents, sounds and drizzle of **Paolo Buzzi's** 1916 word-image *Pioggia nel pineto antidannunziana*, a multimedia riff on Gabriele D'Annunzio's poem *La pioggia nel pineto* ('The rain in the pinegrove'), in which a score – for gurglers, cracklers and howlers – runs up one side of the page. And don't miss the only remaining fragment from Russolo's *Risveglio di una città* ('Awakening of a city'), which elicited such precise images in the mind of the writer from the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1913. Here we get a glimpse of the kind of petrol-and-steam symphony that greeted those first listeners.

From **Teho Teardo** and **Peter Ablinger**, on the other hand, we get noise not as metaphor or musique concrète but as stark abstraction. Limiting himself to the scrapers alone, Ablinger sets the specific against the general, white against whitish, scratching unruly lines into snowy beds of electronic white noise in *WEISS WEISSLICH 17s Intonarumori und Rauschen*, an intense lesson in listening. In *Oh*, meanwhile, Teardo immerses us in fields of noise-colour, an exercise in block composition.

Interspersed between the works for *intonarumori*, **Walshe** also presents several sound poems (a form invented by Marinetti in 1912) by **Brian Sheridan**, **Toshiro Sawa** and **Dermot O'Reilly**, three pioneering, if rather mysterious Irish 'Guinness' Dadaists – so-called because the most active members of the group worked at the Guinness brewery:

'The Guinness Dadaists' sound poetry is notable because it is written mostly using the Irish alphabet, following Irish rules of pronunciation. The group used Irish as a medium rather than a symbol, seemingly seeking to weaponise it against the political turmoil of the times they lived in, Dermot O'Reilly writing in one manifesto how

"the Irish language is a material which can be broken into fragments which can be mobilised against all sense and meaning".'

The presiding spirit of this year's London Contemporary Music Festival, *LET'S CREATE*, is the figure of the trickster, one of whose main mythic roles – if we think of Hermes or Coyote or Èṣù – is to open the door to what is forbidden. Just as Russolo opened us up to the world of noise, **Éliane Radigue** turned our attention to the riches that lie within long sustained tones. Both changed music forever.

Chris Newman's *People* (2025)

I always feel very moved  
When looking online at Sky News  
People live as if in tribes  
Which gives our world such bad vibes

It's true also of Berlin  
It's as tribal as hell this town we're in  
It means that nothing is thought through  
The consequences of what they do

People might have bold ideas  
But the contextual side does not appear  
It's certainly true of my neighbours  
And their limited behaviours

It's certainly true of the Middle East  
Where the bosses don't want in the least  
A situation which could transcend  
So this war could have an end

But this war will have no end

What would come to be called 'drone music' came to Radigue while she was sunbathing on a beach in Nice in 1954, her mind prompted by watching the planes coming in to land at the nearby airport or – depending on which story you believe – from playing a Lettrist game with artist Yves Klein.

Radigue's way of composing in the closest collaboration with performers and transmitting scores orally – 'heart to heart' – opened up another locked door within music. To end the final night of LCMF 2024 we present a new collaborative work by Radigue, **Carol Robinson** and **Ensemble Klang**, *OCCAM DELTA XXIII*. Like so many of Radigue's works, the piece began with an image gathered by the musicians – and by co-composer Robinson – looking out to the North Sea: 'observing wave formations, cycles, currents and colour shifts'.

From this, sounds were explored and a verbal 'memory score' emerged: 'Unlike sections in classical music, there are no clear beginnings or endings, rather, qualities of sonic interaction that gently emerge and evolve. The images communicate expressive states to the musicians and are not meant to be decipherable or descriptive' (Robinson).

As with all Radigue and Robinson's work together, the interest is as much in the secondary resonances as the primary sounding tones – as much about the smoke that rises up from the fire as the fire itself. Which means, in the end, yet another collaboration: 'The result is music that takes its time, is demanding on the listener, and will not forgive only one thing: that you do not listen to it!' (Radigue). © **Igor Toronyi-Lalic** 2025  
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Margareth Kammerer's *Blues or Woman in the Mind at Night* (2010)

In the rain  
I've seen a plane  
It was up side down  
Hidden behind a wall  
Hidden behind a wall  
Hidden behind a wall

In the dark  
Lonesome walk  
In the middle of the sleeping town  
And nothing on the stove  
And nothing on the stove  
And nothing on the stove  
In the thunder  
I've seen desert and plunder  
People pushing their life in front of them  
Eyes shut eyes open  
Eyes shut eyes open

In the fog  
there runs the six-legged dog  
with a bone in his mouth  
and he looks back to me  
and he looks back to me  
and he looks back to me

# LCMF 2024

30 Nov 2024 – 17 Jan 2025

Camden Art Centre, Hackney Church, Wigmore Hall

The London Contemporary Music Festival (LCMF) was founded in 2013 to provide a home for the promiscuous music lover.

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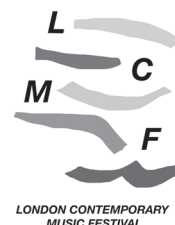
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