

**Orkney**  
**CoMA Contemporary Music Summer School**  
**with Allcomers Strings**

## **1: Summer School options - sessions A: B: C: D:**

### **Fundamentals**

#### **B: Mindfulness and Music Making**

**Rolf Hind**

These sessions focus on fundamental aspects of musical creativity, the practice of physical embodiment, dealing with nervousness and addressing the function & place of music in our modern society. The course touches on aspects of yoga, meditation & mindfulness and considers how these can be used to benefit people in their musical practice. Suitable for all.

### **Contemporary Ensembles**

(all instruments: wind, brass, strings, piano and percussion, except session D)

#### **A: Open Score Pilgrimage Workshop**

**William Conway**

These sessions will serve as a workshop ensemble for pieces submitted for Alasdair Nicolson's Pilgrimage composition course. It will also rehearse a new Open Score work by William Sweeney commissioned for the Orkney Summer School. All instrumentalists welcome.

#### **B: Stone Sounds**

**James Weeks**

This course is suitable for all instruments and voices and, drawing on recent developments in archaeoacoustics, will concentrate on making sounds with voices and other sound sources at one or more of Orkney's Neolithic sites. The aim is to develop these into an original work to be performed as part of a location-based concert towards the end of the course. In addition to the workshop sessions there will be two site visits, on Sunday on Tuesday morning, each leaving immediately after session A. Note that you will miss options C and D on Sunday.

#### **B: The Physicality of Sound**

**Hollie Harding**

All performed sounds require sounding objects (instruments), actions (a physical movement that makes the object sound), agents (a performer carrying out a physical action), a localisation (a position in space and an environment to exist within) and an observer (audience). In this course, we will explore physical aspects of sound making – sound performance as a choreography of noise making physical actions applied to specific sounding objects in fixed or moving localisations, within space. Exploration will incorporate improvisation, score reading and creating sound environments.

### **C: Playing Around the Edges**

**James Weeks**

A course focused on music that involves co-operation, cueing and game-playing between performers. The course will look at pieces by James Saunders (including *everybody do this*), Christian Wolff (including *edges*) and Charlie Sdraulig, all of which are as fun to put together as they are ear-opening to listen to. Suitable for players of all instruments.

### **C: Visual Musicality**

**Sarah McWhinney:** See details under Composition strand

### **D: Open Score Wind** (all instruments except strings)

**William Conway**

In addition to new Open Score works Glasgow-based composer Drew Hammond specially commissioned for the Orkney Summer School, these sessions will rehearse William Sweeney's *A'Bhirlinn Taibhseil*, CoMA's 1993 commission for wind ensemble, that imagines the longship of the Lord of the Isles entering the shelter of Islay's Lagavulin bay. These sessions are for wind instruments, piano and percussion only.

## **Voices**

### **A: Sing Start**

**Janet Oates**

A gentle introduction to contemporary ensemble singing, for anyone who wants a practical, informal group-singing session. Singers of all abilities welcome: the class level and pace will be tailored to the participants. We'll look at good breathing, posture and voice production; explore different noises we can produce, and have a go at some simple pieces: these might include non-conventional notation, text scores and improvisation (no experience necessary), as well as some straightforward pieces, including using the 13th-century Hymn to St. Magnus (*Nobilis Humilis*) as a starting point for the group singing and improvisation

### **B: Mapping Voices**

**Loré Lixenberg**

As a vocalist Loré has always been fascinated by the idea of graphic scores and the process of interpreting them and, equally, by the amazing stratas of rock that inspired her 'ROCK OPERA' based on the geological map and sounds of the Italian Alps. This option, inspired by the Debordian Situationist fascination with maps, invites participants, working solo or in groups, to connect their imagination and voice (or instrument) with the Orkneys islands by creating and interpreting vocal scores derived from the imagery and symbols of the maps and charts of the islands and their surrounding seas. Suitable for all levels of singer from those who have never vocalised in their lives to very experienced singers who would like the opportunity to develop their voices much further. This option is also suitable for instrumentalists and composers.

### **B: Stone Sounds**

**James Weeks:** See details under the Contemporary Ensembles strand.

### **C: Refugee Chorus**

**Loré Lixenberg**

Using Niels Ronsholdt's *Exile*, settings of Brecht poems (in English translation) interspersed with Brecht texts (translated into Syrian) written whilst in exile in Denmark (1933-1939), this vocal and film driven project aims to capture the plight of contemporary refugees using the impressive Orkney surroundings and sea to highlight the fragility of their circumstances. The songs, being totally unison, are suitable for everyone and anyone yet at the same time are great for more experienced singers who want to broaden their repertoire with works that can also be sung as solos. Participants will be asked to bring some simple bits of costume with them. This project is for all who are interested in making a film (in part on location on a ferry) and creating a powerful, memorable communal experience.

### **C: Visual Musicality**

**Sarah McWhinney:** See details under Composition strand

### **D: Spells and Charms**

**Loré Lixenberg**

Using Peter Maxwell Davies' 'The Fader of Heaven' as a starting point, these sessions will explore the vocal possibilities of Orcadian, Gaelic and other ancient languages as sound poetry. Participants will be encouraged to create their own spells and tongue twisters out of material found in these languages, and encouraged to explore these texts in a lyrical way and in other vocalisations.

## **Composition**

### **A: Pilgrimage**

**Alasdair Nicolson (with Jennifer Martin)**

As part of CoMA's ongoing project to build a library of artistically ambitious works that can be performed by amateur musicians, participants are required to submit Open Score works in advance of Summer School on the subject of pilgrimage and/or the life and martyrdom of St Magnus. Extended techniques are welcome. Full guidelines are available at <http://www.coma.org/wp-content/uploads/Open-Score-guidelines-2016-v1.2.pdf>. Works will be workshopped and recorded with the Summer School's Open Score ensemble. You will be scheduled for at least one 1:1 tutorial during session B and you could consider leaving sessions B free to work on your composition.

### **A: Orkney and the Natural World**

**Rolf Hind:** See details under the Piano strand.

### **B: Mapping Voices**

**Loré Lixenberg:** See details under the Voices strand.

### **C: Visual Musicality**

**Sarah McWhinney**

Rhythm occurs in all things; imagery, sound, people and nature. Inspired by the concept of a 'total artwork', 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde artists and musicians created literal and metaphysical rhythm in abstract films, designed to test perceptions and embody music. This workshop will

use a new painted visual music film by Sarah based on links between erosive water movement, musical movement and Orkney's geological landscape as a starting point. We will work collectively to respond to this through improvisation, using the film as a base structure. Participants will experiment with responding to imagery musically, exercises in drawing to music, and the ebb and flow of rhythm in sound, film and land. This option is suitable for instrumentalists and vocalists of any ability.

#### **D: Spells & Charms**

**Loré Lixenberg:** See details under the voices strand.

#### **D: Ancient Sites of Orkney**

**Alasdair Nicolson (with Jennifer Martin)**

Participants are required to write works in advance for string trio based on the theme Orkney's Ancient sites. We are looking for artistically ambitious/adventurous works that nevertheless can be performed by amateur musicians (sight reading ability grades 5/6). Extended techniques are welcome. Works will be workshopped and recorded with our resident professional string trio, Sara Wolstenholme, Ruth Gibson and Robin Michael. Guidelines will be issued in advance to those selecting this option. You will be scheduled for at least one 1:1 tutorial during session C and you could consider leaving sessions C free to work on your composition.

#### **Evening One-to-One Tutorials**

**Alasdair Nicolson (with Jennifer Martin)**

We expect to schedule additional tutorials in the evenings for those taking the Pilgrimage and Ancient Sites composition options.

## **Composing with soundscapes I and II**

#### **Post-production: sessions B: and C:**

**Chris Watson**

These post-production group sessions, based on playback and critical analysis of field recordings, will help students develop their ideas both artistically and technically. The aim is to create a number of short soundscapes for inclusion in the Summer School's final concert. To get the most out of these sessions it is recommended you bring your own headphones and a computer, have downloaded and familiarised yourself with Reaper software (free from <http://www.reaper.fm>) and also be prepared to put in time outside of Chris's tutored post-production sessions.

## **Piano**

#### **A: Orkney and the Natural world**

**Rolf Hind**

The group will explore ways of creating piano music, which reflects the natural world. Open to all levels, and it will be useful if composers come with ideas/sketches. There will be time to explore the island and discuss how to work on this project. There is an optional organised site visit on the afternoon of Friday 21<sup>st</sup> for those taking this option.

### C: Performance Masterclasses

#### Rolf Hind

Students of all levels are invited to bring recent or new pieces to work on. These can be of the player's choice, but two themes are suggested: the easier piano works of Peter Maxwell Davies and music on a theme of nature/landscape. Please do not bring pieces which involve prepared piano.

### String Ensemble

The 'gamechanger' sessions present music of some of the greatest composers in western music, 'trailblazers' who have contributed to paradigm shifts in its structure and harmony, changes that range from the music of the 'adventurous, avant garde' Carl Philip Emmanuel Bach (1714-1788) with 'its constant shifts that wrong-foot the listener with wild changes of direction and colour' to the slow and meditative tempo and minimalist approach to both notation and performance of 'tintinnabuli' invented by the 81 year old Estonian Arvo Pärt (b.1935), a composer who, according to Björk, has 'in a very sensitive way, got the whole battle of the 20th century inside him.' A broad platform from which, together with James Weeks' new work for strings *Bee Haven*, one can only guess at the prospects for the coming century.

### A: Baroque Game-changers

#### String team

CPE Bach      *String Symphony*  
Biber          *Battalia à 10 in D major, C. 61*

### B: Classical Game-changers

#### William Conway

Beethoven      *Allegro con brio* from *Quartet Op 18 No.1 in F major*  
Mozart          *Adagio and Fugue in C minor, K.546*

### C: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Game-changers

#### String team

Webern          *Langsamer Satz*  
Arvo Pärt      *Trisagion*

### D: Contemporary (*Bee Haven*)

#### James Weeks

These sessions feature *Bee Haven*, a new work by James Weeks and the third of a trilogy written for the CoMA Allcomers string ensemble. Part of one or two of these sessions will rehearse with William Conway the string section that accompanies William Sweeney's wind piece *A'Bhirlinn Taibhseil* (The Ghost Longship).

## 2: Recording soundscapes

These are all additional, on-location visits and will take place regardless of weather conditions. It is important to come prepared to use layered clothing to keep warm, stout walking boots and fully waterproof wet weather gear (including cover for head and hands). Of course, it could be beautiful weather...

**Turn of the Tide 1** (Sunday afternoon)

**Turn of the Tide 2** (Wednesday morning)

[Chris Watson](#)

The gravitational force of the moon controls much in our lives and on the islands of Orkney these powerful tidal pulses are significant. The ebb and flow through the Firths and Sounds acting upon these island shores create areas of a no man's land, a unique space between the tides within which to explore the sounds of these ancient rhythms.

**Below Sea Level 1** (Tuesday afternoon)

**Below Sea Level 2** (Wednesday afternoon)

[Chris Watson](#)

We sometimes think we live on planet earth wherein of course we are actually on planet ocean. More than 70% of this planet is occupied by the seas and oceans. Sound travels almost five times faster through the oceans than through air making this seawater not only the largest but the most sound rich environment on the planet. Using hydrophones offshore we shall explore and reveal something of the songs and signals, which occur under the surface.

**Recording Stone Sounds 1** (Sunday morning)

**Recording Stone Sounds 2** (Tuesday morning)

[Chris Watson](#)

Drawing on recent developments in archaeoacoustics, participants will explore the sounds of neolithic Orkney by sounding out and recording one or more of its ancient sites. Those taking part in this option will make recordings of sounds made with various sound sources including voices, created by an accompanying group led by James Weeks.

### **3: Choral and orchestral evening sessions**

Rehearsals will take place in both St Magnus Cathedral and in Kirkwall Grammar School. The schedule will be posted at Summer School. These sessions aim to provide a link with local players and singers.

**Plain Songs and Intricate Weaves**

[James Weeks](#)

This choral workshop takes the medieval wonders of St Magnus Cathedral as inspiration for an exploration of space, acoustic and vocal sound. We will focus on plainsong and works based on it, including music by Hildegard, Peter Maxwell Davies and selections from Michael Finnissy's *Seven Sacred Motets*, as well as creating our own intricate weaves of chant lines throughout the cathedral space. All singers welcome.

**Symphony Orchestra**

[William Conway](#)

The orchestra will play through a range of music associated with Orkney, Alasdair Nicolson's *Stone Rituals* (inspired by the Ring of Brodgar), Peter Maxwell Davies' *Five Klee pictures*

and a new Open Score commission by Samantha Fernando. The aim is to play one (possibly two) of these pieces in the final concert in St Magnus Cathedral.

## 4: Wednesday 'Free Day' sessions

**Deep listening 1** (morning)

**Deep listening 2** (afternoon)

**Laurence Rose**

Ornithologist Laurence Rose, and creator and editor of <http://www.naturemusicpoetry.com>, invites participants on a nature walk through Orkney's unique landscape to practice the art of listening, sharing each other's responses to what has been heard using words, drawing, music or any other means response.

**Orkney's history, traditions, literature and art**

**Professor Donna Heddle**

The day starts at 09:15 in the Centre for Nordic Studies, Kiln Corner with Professor Donna Heddle introducing Orkney's Norse and Scottish heritage and Orkney's traditional life, customs and beliefs. whose work has a distinctly [Orkadian](#) character, followed by a mid-morning minibus to Stromness to focus on the life and work of George Mackay Brown, considered one of the great Scottish poets of the 20th century and whose work has a distinctly Orcadian character. The visit to Stromness takes in a visit to the Pier Arts Centre and allows time for roaming and lunch. The afternoon takes in a tour via the Ring of Brodgar to Kirbuster Farm Museum and continues via Evie and Rendall back to Kirkwall. The overall charge is £600; thus the fee for a part of six (minimum number) is £100 per person, for a party of 12 (maximum) is £50 per person.