

Severnside
Composers
Alliance

in collaboration with

CoMA Bristol

present:

Clarinet in Close-up

Wednesday 4 June 2014 8.00pm
The Lantern, Colston Hall,
Bristol



Programme: price £1

Clarinet in Close-up

Wednesday 4 June 8.00pm The Lantern, Colston Hall, BRISTOL BS1 5AR

Mary Barrett – clarinet and bass clarinet
Jolyon Laycock – conductor

The CoMA Bristol Ensemble
Violins – Diana Van Loock, Sharon Wells
Cellos – Heather Gibbard, John Sadler
Guitar – John Bowyer
Flutes – Sarah Felton, Isabel Jones
Clarinet – Bennet Jones
Piano – Ann Claxton
Percussion – Katherine Martin

Programme:

Yvonna Magda – Held Wait
Blair Boyd – Tracing Outside of the Lines
Milena Zhivotovskaya – Three pieces for clarinet and piano
Eleanor Alberga – Glacier
John Sadler – Out of the Wintery Mist is born...Spring

Interval

John Cage – Atlas Eclipticalis
Caitlin Woods – The Ear (for bass clarinet and electronics)
Justo Tripiér – Thoughts from the Kitchen of a Busy Coffee Shop
Sulyen Caradon – Radium 228
Natalie Bleicher – Thalassa
Jolyon Laycock – Clarion Call

Part of Music on the Edge



LOTTERY FUNDED

Supported using public funding by

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Supported by the Hinrichsen Foundation.

We acknowledge the support of the Paragon Concert Society.

CoMA and SCA wish to thank the University of Bristol Department of Music for the free use of rehearsal space during the preparation of Clarinet in Focus.

Held Wait

Yvonna Magda

Held Wait was written for the Bennet-Cole Orchestra, an improvising big band based in Leeds consisting of string quartet, wind quartet, brass quartet, piano, double bass and two drummers. Written in the later stages of pregnancy, it was in some part an exercise in playing with the contrasting speeds which occur simultaneously throughout the process of gestation. From the constant frenetic activity of cell division (1 million cells per second at 4 weeks) to the slow encumbered weightiness of the final few weeks: and through it all the mystery of waiting for, but moving towards, something known yet unknown. (YM)

Tracing Outside of the Lines

Blair Boyd

The concept and structure of Tracing Outside of the Lines explore the utilisation of improvisation on isolated musical elements. The piece begins with a duet in which two performers govern the speed and duration of the section but are given guidelines for the melodic shape of improvised solos. Each section thereafter isolates a different musical element (e.g. choices of rhythm or pitch) to be improvised by the performers within standard musical notation. These improvisational elements represent the uncertainties that make life interesting. (BB)

Three Pieces for Clarinet and Piano

Milena Zhitovskaya

Prelude

Toccata

Romanza

UK Premiere

Three Pieces for Clarinet and Piano were commissioned by clarinetist Larry Guy for his graduation at the Manhattan School of Music. The pieces were written in 2005 and were shortly premiered at the Manhattan School of Music, New York. In 2008 some revisions were made. I often perform these pieces with my duo partner, clarinetist Amy Glover, and often include them in chamber music concerts around New York City. The cycle consists of Prelude, Toccata, and Romanza. The Prelude starts with a lyrical theme, then changes to a grotesque mood in the middle, and comes back the original theme at the end. Toccata is a highly energetic and a little jazzy and fast movement with a piano solo in the middle. I see Romanza as a dark-coloured piece. It is a slow movement built on rich chord progressions. It culminates with a clarinet cadenza over a piano cluster. I was influenced by the chamber music of Stravinsky and Berg when writing these pieces. (MZ)

Glacier

Eleanor Alberga

Glacier was first performed as part of the London CoMA “Natural World” programme in October 2012 conducted by Gregory Rose. The composer has provided the following descriptive text:

Monumental, strata, perceived solid, static, immovable.

Shifting, cutting, gouging, shaping earth.

Metamorphosis to liquid, ether, flowing molecules.

Volatile, explosive erosion, waning, floating sunken depths.

Out of the Wintery Mist is born...Spring John Sadler

The opening section of this CoMA composition evolved when I thought of spring and the clarinet. The central darker section is built around a pitch class set, a detailed mathematical set theory approach, primarily to atonal music. We return to the original theme with a short coda to conclude. With the CoMA style of composition, four staves of pitched music unallocated to instruments, as a composer one is never sure what the end result will sound like. With that degree of aleatoricism, the input from both musicians and conductor is vital to the performance. Many thanks to all for your interpretation. (JS)

Atlas Eclipticalis

John Cage

Atlas Eclipticalis was originally used as music for a choreographed piece by **Merce Cunningham** entitled *Aeon*, with stage decor and costume design by **Robert Rauschenberg**. It was later used for **Cunningham's** first “Events” performance, *Museum Event #1*. *Atlas Eclipticalis* was commissioned by the Montreal Festival Society and first performed in Montreal in August 1961. It consists of a series of sonic events each containing from one to ten notes, divided randomly into two groups. In his introduction to the score **Cage** writes: “The composing means involved I-Ching operations together with the placing of transparent templates on the pages of an astronomical atlas and inscribing the positions of stars.” The composer used the *Atlas Eclipticalis 1950.0*, a star atlas published in 1958 by the Czech astronomer, **Antonín Bečvář** (1901-1965). In performance the passage of time is determined by the conductor whose arms act somewhat like the hands of a clock. The work may be played in whole or in part by any number of players, up to the full 86 specified. Tonight we will perform the first page only using parts for flutes, clarinets, violins, cellos and percussion. (JL adapted from 4’33” at johncage.org/)

The Ear

Caitlin Woods

The aim of this piece was to explore the musical songlike nature of the narrator's voice in a short documentary film from 1940 entitled "How the Ear Functions". I wanted to explore the inherent musicality of the voice by selecting particularly melodic passages and notating them from speech into sound. I also wanted to further explore the concept by juxtaposing fragments of the original voice and the corresponding bass clarinet segments. My goal was to create new meaning and music from the narration by selecting and rearranging specific words and segments. *The Ear* was written in 2013. This is the second performance and national premiere of the work. The first performance took place on the 18th March 2014 and was performed by Phil Everall at the Western Australian Academy of Music in Perth, Western Australia. (CW)

Thoughts from the Kitchen of a Busy Coffee Shop

Justo Tripier

Thoughts from the Kitchen of a Busy Coffee Shop is an open-score piece that explores a variety of sound textures. The piece is performed in an unconventional manner using groups of players as individual units of performance. These units are triggered with flashcards shown by the conductor which point to instructions in the score. (JT)

Radium 228

Sulyen Caradon

Radium 228 is part 2 of an 11-part "Thorium Decay Series". The principal natural radioactive elements of the Periodic Table are Thorium and Uranium, which decay to produce other unstable elements, such as Radon (gas) and Radium (metal), which was discovered by Mme Curie in 1898. Some of the decays take thousands of years, while others under a minute. Radium 228 has a half-life of 6 years, so is in the middle; and decays into Actinium. All radioactivity is harmful to life, and legal releases of it have been greatly reduced in the past century, though nuclear power stations emit it regularly into our air and sea. I have been thinking about this idea for several years, but this is the 1st part to be realised. The basic theme is that the four COMA parts represent Radium, which, as an unusual element, has an unnatural scale; while the soloist represents the unstable radioactive catalyst which transforms the radium into a new element by disturbing the atoms, using a different scale and rhythms. The longer movements represent geological time-periods, so need a feeling of calm stability; so the whole piece will have something in common with the lengthy pieces of Cardew & Messiaen. (SC)

Thalassa

Natalie Bleicher

Thalassa is the second innermost moon of Neptune and the seventh largest. It orbits Neptune every seven and a half hours. It is irregularly shaped and roughly 80km in diameter. It was discovered in September 1989 from images taken by the Voyager 2 space probe. It is named after Thalassa, the primordial Greek goddess of the sea and daughter of Aether and Hemera. According to the mythographer Hesiod, Thalassa gave birth to Aphrodite when Cronus castrated Uranus and his genitalia fell into the sea. Natalie Bleicher's piece is in the form of a passacaglia with a short coda. It was written for a workshop at the CoMA Midwinter Composers' course in January 2013. It was originally scored for string quartet but was later arranged for open score ensemble. (JL/NB)

Clarion Call

Jolyon Laycock

Clarion Call was written in 2014 especially for Mary Barrett and the CoMA Bristol ensemble. The title comes from the old form of the name of the clarinet. In ancient times the clarion was a bell-shaped war trumpet. Clarion Call exploits the full range of the bass clarinet from the thin, strained sound of its highest notes down, through bright mid-range incisiveness, to the rich earthy sound of its lowest register. Although it is a bass instrument, the bass clarinet has the almost as much agility as the higher pitched concert instrument. Like all of my recent music, Clarion Call makes use of the all-interval fractal sets that I have begun to develop in the last four years. All its melodic and harmonic material derives from interlocking 6-note cells which also provide a structural framework at the macrocosmic levels of phrase, sentence and paragraph. The piece is therefore consistently fractal in conception. One of these 6-note cells is picked out as a melody in long notes by the soloist in the opening bars of the piece. Later the soloist transforms these 6-note cells into rapid melismas and virtuoso embellishments. (JL)

Clarinet in Close-up

Clarinet in Close-up is a collaborative project between CoMA Bristol and Severnside Composers Alliance. Composers responded to a nation-wide call for pieces in January 2014. Works were selected by a committee consisting of members of CoMA Bristol and conductor Jolyon Laycock with Mary Barrett acting in an advisory role. Performances were prepared by the CoMA Bristol Ensemble during a series of weekly evening workshops which began in March. Mary Barrett joined the ensemble for the two final workshops.

Biographies:

The composers:

Eleanor Alberga enjoys an international reputation as a composer. Her music has been performed by many leading British orchestras. Worldwide performances include San Francisco, Australia, South America, Canada, Europe and China. She was the first composer to be commissioned for the inaugural Festival of Women in Music. She was also invited to participate in the prestigious Composer to Composer Festival in Colorado, USA, and was a featured composer at the Vale of Glamorgan Festival. 2001 was a turning point when she chose to give up her career as concert pianist and concentrate full-time on composition. She completed her violin concerto and was awarded a NESTA Fellowship. Alberga's route to composition has not been an orthodox one. Born in 1949, in Kingston, Jamaica, she decided, at the age of five, to be a concert pianist and also started composing short pieces. In 1970 she won the biennial Associated Board Scholarship allowing her to study at the Royal Academy of Music, London. At various times a member of the Jamaican Folk Singers, an African dance company and later pianist and Music Director of London Contemporary Dance Theatre, she draws from a richly diverse musical background.

Natalie Bleicher is a classical pianist and composer living in London. She has a particular passion for contemporary music and performs new works regularly both in solo recitals and as pianist in the CoMA London Ensemble and the contemporary music collective Wolf Pack. Recent performances include recitals at the Schott recital room in September 2011 and March 2012 where she performed works by leading British contemporary composers as well as classical and romantic works. Other recent performances include the premiere of Fabricio Brachetta's Mass for Soprano, Piano and Strings with the London Arte Chamber Orchestra in 2010 and Shostakovich Symphony no. 5 with the European Doctors Orchestra at The Sage Gateshead in 2011. As a composer she has written examination pieces for piano, electronic keyboard and harp published by Trinity Guildhall and Beartramka. She was an spnm shortlisted composer from 2003-2005. In 2010 she set up Graphite, a group of five composers performing their own works and other contemporary repertoire, which gave its inaugural concert at The Forge in Camden in 2010. Natalie studied at Junior Trinity, New College, Oxford and King's College London. She is currently studying piano with Thalia Myers and has taken part in masterclasses with Mary Dullea and Tasmin Little. She works part time for BASCA (British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors) as Judging Co-ordinator for the British Composer Awards and Classical & Jazz Liaison Officer. From 2007 to 2011 she was Manager of CoMA.

Blair Boyd was born in 1990 and is a native of Athens, Tennessee in the USA. She graduated with a Bachelor of Music degree in Music Theory and Composition in December 2012 from the University of Tennessee. She is currently enrolled in the MA Music Composition programme at the University of Bristol and is working on her dissertation, which incorporates choral and orchestral mediums. Her compositions have been performed by many different groups across the United States and in Bristol.

John Cage (1912–1992) was an American composer, music theorist, writer, philosopher and artist. He was a pioneer of indeterminacy in music and of electro-acoustic music and experimented with unconventional performance techniques leading to the invention of the prepared piano. He was one of the leading figures of the post-war avant-garde and one of the most influential American composers of the 20th century. He was also influential in the development of modern dance through his work with choreographer **Merce Cunningham**. His teachers included **Henry Cowell** and **Arnold Schoenberg**. His studies of Indian philosophy and Zen Buddhism were major influences. The *I Ching*, the ancient Chinese Book of Changes, became Cage's standard composition tool. His influence spread to Britain through the work of **Cornelius Cardew** and other composers associated with the **Scratch Orchestra**.

Jolyon Laycock became SCA Chairman in May 2011. He was born in Bath in 1946 and studied for B.Mus and M.Phil in composition at the University of Nottingham. His composition teachers included Henri Pousseur and Cornelius Cardew. During the 1970s he pursued a freelance career as an experimental sound artist based at the Birmingham Arts Laboratory, and Spectro Arts Workshop, Newcastle. In 1979 he took up the post of Music and Dance Co-ordinator at the Arnolfini in Bristol, running a programme of contemporary music and dance regarded as one of the most innovative outside London. In 1990 he took up the post of Concert Director at the University of Bath and at the newly opened Michael Tippett Centre at Bath Spa University College where he founded the award-winning concert series “Rainbow over Bath”. He left the University of Bath in 2000 to concentrate on the completion of his book “A Changing Role for the Composer in Society”. In 2004 he was appointed Senior Lecturer in Arts Management at Oxford Brookes University until 2010. In 2012 he won the EPSS Composers’ Competition with his setting of Philip Larkin’s poem *The North Ship*. This song later became the final movement of the song cycle *Dark Seas* which received its world premiere on 22 May at Colston Hall sung by Sarah Leonard with Stephen Gutman and Mary Barrett.

Yvonna Magda is a composer, improviser and violinist based in Bristol and Leeds. Her compositions have been featured on Radio 3 and Channel 4 and she performs in several ensembles including the contemporary jazz/classical trio 7 Hertz, Madame Laycock and Her Dabeno Pleasures, the Bennett/Cole Orchestra and Strati Project, a creative collaboration between dance artists and musicians. <http://yvonnamagda.wordpress.com/>

John Sadler started playing the cello at school, only to give it up while he rode motorbikes. Since then he has played in four different orchestras, a rock band and a world music group. He has played cello with CoMA for about ten years. He studied composition with the Open College and later graduated from the Open University.

Justo Tripier was born in Caracas Venezuela. He has a Jazz background having studied his harmony and theory with jazz pianist and composer Gerry Weil. At the age of 21 after studying in a conservatoire in Caracas, and a technology and performance course in Boston's Berklee College of Music, he was accepted to study towards a BA at the London College of Music in the UK. In London, Justo studied performance and composition with a minor in music technology. In September 2013 he moved to Bristol where he is currently undertaking a masters in composition under the tutelage of John Pickard and Michael Ellison at *The University of Bristol*.

Caitlin Woods is a composer, arranger, producer, dj, and vocalist. Originally from Western Australia, Caitlin is interested in vocal writing, electronic music production, interactive composition, sound design and performance technologies, as well as the methods and approaches to the integration of orchestral writing with electronic sounds. She holds a Bachelor of Music in Composition (Hons) from the University of Western Australia, a Graduate Diploma of Music Technology from WAAPA - the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts and a Masters of Science in Music Technology from the University of Limerick. Caitlin works on a wide range of composition and production projects and commissions in Norfolk. She is currently working on a sound design project for the Natural History Museum in London and is also working on the design of a new interface for vocal performance.

Milena Zhivotovskaya is a Ukrainian-American pianist and composer. Since immigrating to the United States in 2001 she has been a prize winner at the American Fine Arts Festival, The Young Artist Piano and Composers' Competition, the ASCAP Young Composers' Competition, and the Composition

in the Arts Program. She performed one of her compositions on the radio program “From the Top” on National Public Radio. She has performed at Carnegie Hall, the United Nations, Merkin Concert Hall, Yamaha Piano Salon, Roerich Museum, and Steinway Hall among others. She appeared as a soloist with Lucy Moses Chamber Orchestra playing *Four Temperaments* by Hindemith and Mozart’s Concerto no.23, and with Mannes Chamber Orchestra playing Mozart’s Concerto no.20. As a founding member of the Akian Quartet, Ms. Zhivotovskaya won the Concert Festival Chamber Competition in March 2010 and performed Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time* at Weill Recital Hall in Carnegie Hall. A member of Duo Ephelia, Milena has performed classical and modern pieces for clarinet and piano. She has participated in International Keyboard Institute and Festival, Round Top International Festival Institute, and NYU Piano Intensive. Since 2013 she has been based both in New York and Bristol and joined Severnside Composers Alliance in 2013. She recently gave solo piano and vocal recitals with Jessica Hemley, soprano, around Bristol in 2013. She appeared on the Jerry Cowhig Show on BCFM Radio Bristol performing her compositions. She holds Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from Mannes College where she studied with Pavlina Dokovska and Jerome Rose. She works closely with Eteri Andjaparidze. Her composition mentors were Leonid Hrabovsky and Robert Cuckson. She has studied chamber music with Todd Phillips, Victor Rosenbaum, Lewis Kaplan, Charles Neidich, and David Krakauer.

The performers

Mary Barrett began her professional studies on the clarinet at the Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, graduating in 2000. While a student at the WCMD Mary performed the *Weber Clarinet Concerto No.1* under the direction of Peter Fielding. After leaving Cardiff she studied at the Royal College of Music for two years with Robert Hill. Highlights of this time include orchestral performances with Bernard Haitink and Andrew Litton. After leaving college Mary held a position with the Southbank Sinfonia Orchestra. This led on to a freelance career working with many orchestras including LPO, RPO, English Touring Opera, Birmingham Contemporary Opera, National Chamber Orchestra of Wales and also chamber groups including Marylebone Trio and the Vermilion Ensemble. She now divides her time between looking after her two children and continuing to work on a freelance basis all around the UK.

John Bowyer has been playing since the age of 18 and gained an LGSM guitar teachers’ diploma in 1988 after taking lessons with Michael Lewin and Hector Quine. He now works as an assistant headteacher at a large secondary school but maintains a small private guitar teaching practice.

Ann Claxton has a degree in Music & French & taught music in Bristol University's Continuing Education Dept for 15 years. She has been a member of CoMA since 1997 when the local group was based in Bath and a regular engagement was a concert in the Bath Festival. In 2000 Ann became the CoMA South West (later CoMA Bristol) coordinator & operations were moved to Bristol where the group has participated in many different activities from music for silent films to concerts at the Victoria Rooms. Ann's main interest now is contemporary music & she's extremely grateful to CoMA for being partly responsible!

Sarah Felton has a degree in music and education from the Open University. She is also qualified as an instrumental teacher and combines teaching for the Bath and North East Somerset Music Service with university administration work. Sarah has been a member of CoMA Bristol for over 10 years, participating in numerous national and regional projects. She also gives solo recitals and is an active member of the British Flute Society.

Heather Gibbard was recently inspired to join CoMA after participating in a concert in which CoMA combined with the early music group Rosafresca with whom she plays the renaissance viol.

Bennet Jones studied at the University of Sheffield, graduating first class in music and English literature. It was here he encountered for the first time the musical avant-garde, and also formed a particular attachment to the work of Olivier Messiaen. On completing a postgraduate degree in composition at Manchester University, Bennet now balances a 9-to-5 existence as a librarian with the more important business of composing, playing and occasional conducting. As a clarinettist he is always pleased to take on more performance opportunities.

Isabel Jones has been a member of CoMA Bristol for the past 4 years. She plays flute and piano and studied for a degree in music at Dartington College of Arts, which is also where her interest in contemporary music was formed.

Mark Langford has been playing jazz and improvised music for some 35 years and has broadcast several times on BBC Radio3 Jazz Today. He was a leading member of the Bristol Musicians Cooperative during the 1980s. He retired from music around 1990 and worked in IT, before returning to music in the last few years. He is now back playing the tenor sax and bass clarinet mainly with Fringe Free Music in Bristol. He joined CoMA Bristol a few years ago after a year studying the bass clarinet at Bristol University.

Diana van Loock is a professional artist and qualified art therapist. She has played with CoMA Bristol since it was formed. She is largely self-taught as a violinist and plays with several local ensembles including Bristol Music Club Chamber Group and a Bristol-based improvisation group.

Katherine Martin started playing timpani in a community orchestra in the 1980s. She now plays with Southmead Orchestra, and occasionally with Salford and Keynsham Orchestras. She plays cornet at Hotwells Music Workshop and especially enjoys playing drums with the band at the annual Hotwells Pantomime. She joined CoMA five years ago.

Sharon Wells has a diploma in Art and Design and is a freelance graphic designer and typesetter. She enjoys contemporary music and has played violin with CoMA since the late '90s.

Sevenside Composers Alliance was founded in 2003 under the Chairmanship of Richard Carder by composers based in the Bristol and Bath area to promote performances of their own music, and to stimulate a wider interest in the composition and performance of new music in the region. Dr. Jolyon Laycock is current SCA Chairman. www.sevensidecomposersalliance.co.uk

CoMA Bristol is an enthusiastic group of instrumental players with different backgrounds and levels of experience committed to performing cutting edge works to a high standard. CoMA Bristol is part of the nationwide organisation CoMA (Contemporary Music for All). www.coma.org/bristol

Forthcoming SCA events Spring 2014:

Piano Triets – 3 is the Magic Number

Contemporary music for three pianists at one piano, curated by **John Pitts**
21 June 2014 8.00pm The Lantern, Colston Hall

A stunning programme of virtuoso works by composers from six countries for three pianists at one piano, presented with the added visual fascination of a video display where you can marvel at the dazzling fingerwork. Ten pianists form themselves into various groups of three to perform music by Sulyen Caradon, Simon Cohen, Percy Grainger, Sadie Harrison, Cindi Hsu, Igor Mashukov, John Pitts, Geoffrey Poole, Kostis Tsioulakis and Tim Warren.

All tickets from the Colston Hall box office: 0844 887 1500