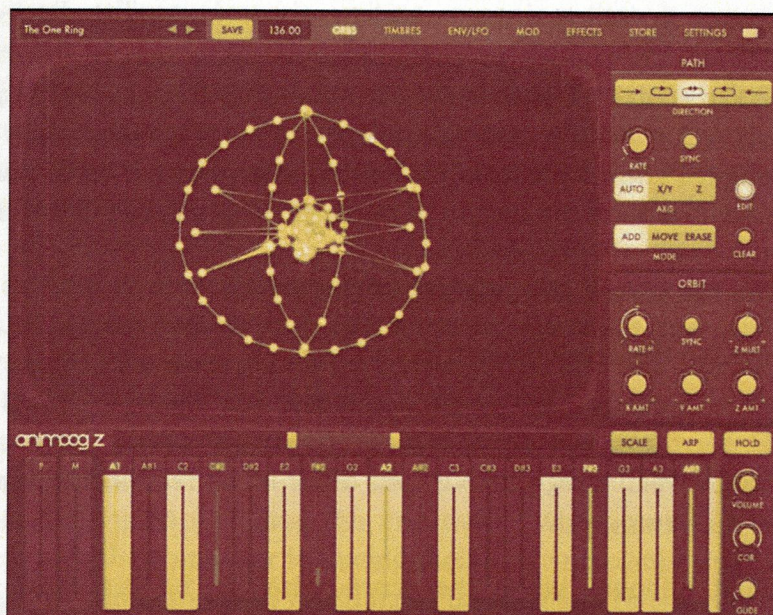


# CONCERTS AT THE UNIVERSITY

## Spring-Summer 2023

Tuesday 14 March 2023, 1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall



George Kypridemos · improviser

Nora Marazaitė · composer

Concerto for improviser, synthesiser  
and chamber ensemble.



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH  
*Edinburgh College of Art*

In its post-Romantic form, the concerto features an orchestra, or ensemble, that is counter-positioned against the soloist. The soloist is seen as the virtuosic 'protagonist' of the work. Simultaneously, the musical output executed by the two parties is subject to the composer's artistic decisions — meaning that, traditionally, it is the composer who is seen as the overall creator, or curator, of the work.

At its core, this arrangement represents a matrix of discreet and entangled modes of hierarchisation that are inherent to Western Art Music spaces. These we view as professionally coercive and limiting of the ways in which artists with diverse intentions, backgrounds and practices may choose to collaborate in these spaces. Therefore, our desire to re-examine the concerto form is co-extensive with our efforts to seek sustainable and unique practices of collaboration with our colleagues and co-creators. Our exploration has led us to pose various questions around the nature of music-making and collaboration:

- Who can claim full ownership of this work?
- How can this work be distributed?
- Who is the soloist of this concerto?
- How can technology encourage a different understanding of materiality in relation to sound?
- What happens when the score ceases to be the main vehicle of communication between involved parties?
- What is the role taken up by the composer when their authority over the work comes into question?
- Whose perspectives in sound and in collaboration may be allowed to shine when power is distributed differently within the performance space?
- What do we learn about the nature of music-making and composition, when improvisation takes a central role in the determining the production of musical outputs?

*The concerto presented today* was collaboratively conceptualised by an improviser (George Kypridemos) and a composer (Nora Marazaité). The performance involves the use of a 40 minute long improvised audio-visual set, which was created by George Kypridemos on the synthesiser software Animoog-Z. While this set is projected and sounded into the performance space, the instrumentalists are tasked with delegating and delivering their response; in this, they are aided and guided by a score composed by Nora Marazaité in accordance with the improvisation. The score itself utilises aleatoric writing, meaning that it involves the deployment of elements that are undetermined, improvisational and spatially situated, rather than pre-determined and stratified. Because of this, creative decisions around the delivery of the score rest with individual players, who are in direct communication with each other, and are not being led by a conductor.

The description above demonstrates how our desire to fairly re-distribute agency within our collaborative dynamics required us to subvert normative ways of relating to each other and to the work. This is seen, firstly, through our departure from the expected timeline of collaboration, where the composer would be required to deliver the building blocks of a musical work prior to the construction of individual parts. In this instance, it was the improviser who provided the initial impetus, with the composer following their lead and composing 'around' the improvisation, and with no changes being made to the recording in the process. Similarly, our commitment to exploring alternative modes of embodying materiality on stage can be observed through the ensemble's relationship with the aleatoric score. By limiting the degree to which musical outputs are predetermined by the score and by the actions of a conductor, we have deliberately installed creative 'gaps' that provide the necessary space for emergent perspectives to appear in the space. In addition, each player was involved in the construction of their part by providing feedback during individual workshop-rehearsals. As the composer cogently stated during the preparatory stages of this project, this is a score "for people who are artists, and not simply for instruments we are using".

**The audio-visual improvisation** seen in this performance explores two separate, yet interconnected, threads: 1) the rejection of virtuosic playing, as a feminist practice of free improvisation and 2) Deleuze and Guattari's theory of 'becoming with', found in their thesis 'A Thousand Plateaus' (1987). Together, these theories have allowed us to re-examine the role of the soloist in the context of the concerto, and the extent to which our current technologies might aid us in staging several interventions on the concerto form.

As the free improviser and researcher Tina Krekels explains, any instance of performance requires us to connect in pre-meditated, as well as situated ways, with various entities that exist within the performance space; this includes the space itself, other performers in the space, the instruments we are playing with, the audience, and more. The idea of virtuosity, as a trope that is synchronous with the Romantic concerto form, is viewed as a determining force, which limits the actions and roles available to the soloist. What is lost, in such cases, is the opportunity for performers to connect with their instruments in situated, improvisational ways that allow them to explore and exhibit diverse perspectives of artistic expression that can only arise through recognition of the fact that the relationship between performer and instrument unfolds within a space of interiority, through which both entities emerge, in some way, changed. (Krekels, 2019) In this way, a feminist rejection of virtuosity as a pre-requisite to music-making reflects Deleuze and Guattari's theory of 'becoming-with' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). This theory is central to their thesis, and forms the basis of the post-modern articulation that we all come to present different versions of ourselves as we navigate our various relationships with entities and spaces.

Entangled within these perspectives, the improviser-synth constellation found in this piece emerges as the meeting point of two co-extensively altered forces (one human, one machinic), rather than a relationship dependent on mastery and domination. The delivery of this improvisation on Animoog-Z is heavily concerned with a displacement of priorities, where the value system underpinning the relationship between improviser/soloist and synthesiser becomes, not the pursuit of virtuosity, but rather the exploration of an alternative materiality found

in experiencing sound as movement within a virtual space. This idea subsequently bleeds into the overall soundscape, disrupting the oppositional matrix of soloist vs. orchestral body, and allowing us to ponder the question of how our relationship with the technologies available to us can help inhabit space in new, potentially fairer ways.

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**The concerto is structured in** three separate movements, each exploring a different aspect of our relationship with technology and the rise of post-humanism.

### 1. 'Mechanosphere'

In the world we live in, we are perpetually implicated within systems of relation; these systems are simultaneously organic (e.g. contingent on the relations between humans, or of humans with other animals) and synthetic (e.g. as is evident in the relations between animals and artificial technologies), and are always seen to overlap with each other. Taking the human body as an example, we can observe how, on one hand, the body is externally involved with other bodies (human bodies, techno-bodies, governing bodies), whilst also being a host to a myriad of other systems of relation that are found within its interior, such as that of gut microbiota, which are the microorganisms interacting with each other within the digestive tract. Expanding our awareness of this systemic tension, or multi-directional pull, we can acknowledge that the stability and longevity of a given system depends on the stability and longevity of both its interior as well as exterior relations; in other words, the world is both fluid and machinic.

Machine (noun): *an apparatus consisting of interrelated parts with separate functions.* (Collins English Dictionary)

Mechanosphere thus operates as a sonic arrangement of machinic systems which unfold simultaneously and in an interpolative fashion. What is brought into question is the 'humanness' of experience, and the tension that arises through our acknowledgement of systemic co-multiplicity.

## 2. 'Let's talk'

'Let's talk' focuses specifically on our relationship with the technologies we create. Through the process of inventing new technologies and improving on pre-existing ones, humans re-invent themselves. With each new generation of tools, our own capabilities, desires and needs are expanded. Thus, our relationship with technology is a cyclical one, where the invention of technologies leads to techno-human interactions that ultimately re-invent the modes in which humans experience life and articulate themselves to perpetuity. Reflecting this idea, the second movement of the concerto unfolds as a techno-human confrontation between the audio-visual synthesiser and the humans present within the concert space. As each of the performers enters their own 'soloist' interactions with the synth, the fourth wall is broken by the introduction of the synthetic 'eye', which pulsates and convulses, hypnotising the viewer-listener in order to ask: who really is the protagonist?

## 3. 'The War Machine'

'The War Machine' does not make reference to 'war' as a discrete incidence of friction and violence, but rather to Deleuze in Guattari's synonymous concept, as it is found in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). As was argued earlier, the world is infinitely caught at the intersections between systems, or machinic arrangements, which contain and influence each other as they unfold. Within these systems, and in order to ensure their stability, behavioural modes become stratified and determined. Yet, through diversifying our interactions and awareness of multiple elements in the mechanosphere, we become able to intervene on the ways in which we experience ourselves in order to re-invent our own modes of existence. When we do this, we become a 'war machine', or rather an arrangement of processes that breaks down the domain of our life and practice, only to expand it outwardly. Thus, 'The War Machine' presents a quick-paced and volatile climactic journey, built around the development of material that is continuously broken down into white noise, in order to then re-emerge in irrevocably altered forms.

## ***A Note on Instrumentation***

We recognise the history of colonialism and orientalism which surrounds the use of non Western instruments as means of conjuring up 'the Other' in Western Art Music spaces. We bring attention to the use of the gong in this piece, which we have enlisted in order to achieve a smooth, 'metallic' sound, taking care not to replicate or seek cultural significations to which we have no claim.

Programme notes by George Kyridemos

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## Contributors

**George Kyridemos** · Improvisation, Conceptualisation & Project Management

George Kyridemos (BMus, MA in Performance, PhD in Creative Practice) is an improviser, pianist and researcher. Their research-practice revolves around the study of free improvisation as a domain of de-colonial work. Influenced by noise music and feminist practices in free improvisation, they regard the art-form as a fertile space for examining spatial power relations and awakening embodied modes of 'knowing' that have become silenced by and within the systems of capitalism and colonialism. They are particularly invested in improvisation as a mode of community-building amongst marginalised communities; to that end, they are involved in multiple spaces which operate with that aim, including the queer-led improvisation collective 'GACO' (Glasgow Autonomous Community Orchestra). Their most recent body of work, 'Qualia', a collection of improvisations made on Animoog-Z, can be found on Bandcamp by searching 'George Kyridemos'. Audio-visual versions of the pieces in this collection can be found on the artist's YouTube page (@georgekyridemos).

**Nora Marazaitė** · Composition, Conceptualisation & Project Management

Nora Marazaitė is a Lithuanian composer based in Glasgow. She graduated from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland with a Master's degree under the tutelage of Stuart MacRae in 2020, and with a Bachelor's degree, under the tutelage of David Fennessy, in 2017. During her time in RCS she was awarded Sibelius Essay Prize 2016, Craig Armstrong Prize 2017 and Dinah Wolfe Memorial Prize 2019 (runner-up); she has also worked with various ensembles and performers, including the Brodick Quartet, Glasgow New Music Expedition, Garth Knox and performers from the Glasgow Improviser Orchestra. In 2019 she also won the Royal Northern Sinfonia Young Composers Competition with a resulting orchestral commission. Nora is also very much interested in collaborations with professionals of any background and translating complex contexts into music.

**Baichuan Hui** · Piano

Baichuan Hui completed her BMus in Performance at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) under the tutelage of Aaron Shorr, whilst on a full ABRSM scholarship. As an undergraduate, she performed as a soloist in concerts in Scotland, and collaborated with numerous musicians. She also developed vital performance skills by participating in masterclasses with Steven Osborne, Roy Howat, Ashley Wass, Dina Yoffe and Cristina Ortiz.

As a post-graduate student Baichuan was awarded a full scholarship by RCS Trust to undertake a Masters qualification in Music at RCS and, thereafter, she was awarded an Artist Diploma under the guidance of Professors Aaron Shorr and Fali Pavri, in 2021. In 2019 she was awarded a Diploma in Piano Teaching by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM). In 2021, she was successful in securing a place on the Doctor of Performing Arts (D.Perf.) programme, jointly supervised by RCS

and the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. Her proposed area of study relates to composers and music suppressed by the Nazi regime during the Second World War and subsequently neglected in the classical repertoire. She is excited by the prospect of embarking on her chosen artistic projects and research as part of her forthcoming doctoral studies.

As a soloist and collaborative musician she has performed in Glasgow, Edinburgh, London, Beijing, Xuzhou at venues including the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, House for an Art Lover, Glasgow; Ningxia Theatre and Steinway Hall in Beijing. Currently she works with several contemporary composers and has performed in Hidden Door Festival (2022) with Post Coal Prom Queen. Baichuan has won several competition prizes, including the Agustin Aponte International Music Competition (second prize), RCS' highest award for performance, The 7th Shenzhen Piano Open Competition (first prize), and the Jock Holden Memorial Mozart Prize (first prize).

**Masha Zhuravlova** · Violin

Masha Zhuravlova is a Ukrainian violinist. She completed her Junior Bachelor degree in Lyatoshynsky's Kharkiv Music College and is currently studying towards the completion of her BMus (Performance) at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Whilst trained in the classical tradition, she is an avid enthusiast of folk, country and jazz music. She has participated in a number of cross-genre collaborations, as well as in projects that utilise free improvisation in the context of movement and theatre practices.

**Santiago Gil Duarte** · Cello

Santiago began playing at the age of 9. He studied music at the Universidad Nacional del Arte in Argentina, where he stood out among his peers. He is a flexible, collaborative musician with extensive experience in solo performance, chamber music, arranging and conducting. Some of his most memorable experiences involve delivering performances at Teatro Colon, Clásica Joven, and being a core member of 'Reencuentro'. He has also performed with famous Argentinian pianist Fernanda Morello, who later supported him in founding the Planck

Quartet. Santiago is constantly looking for ways to challenge the limitations of his instrument, the cello, and often works with new music composers and improvisers. His work is varied, ranging from performing traditional repertoire to leading genre-bending projects requiring new, innovative approaches towards sound. He has premiered new pieces that were commissioned by several Latin American composers, including Eva Lopzick's "Neshama" and Santiago Parias' "Three Pieces for Violoncello".

#### **Isidor ten Hooven** · Electric Bass

Isidor ten Hooven (b.1995) is an electric bass player and composer currently based in Glasgow. His style of playing draws from different worlds, such as classical music, punk, folk music and the Dutch free improvisation scene. In the Netherlands, he studied at Het Utrechts Conservatorium, and worked as a freelance composer and bassist towards the completion of several projects involving music theatre, contemporary ensembles, free improvisation and education. Isidor completed his Master's degree in Composition at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

#### **Dean Garrity** · Saxophone

Dean Walker Garrity is a Scottish saxophonist approaching the end of their studies at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. They are currently studying with Josef Pacewicz and receive regular tuition from visiting professor Arno Bornkamp. Having attained a First Class Bachelors Degree with Honours, Dean has had many fortunate experiences which have shaped him as the musician he is today. In 2021, they were fortunate to be awarded the woodwind prize of the RCS concerto competition and an opportunity to deliver the Scottish premiere of John Adams' Saxophone Concerto with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in June 2022. In 2022, Dean was awarded first place in the Governors' Recital Prize for Chamber Music with their saxophone quartet, and in early 2023 received commendations with their newly formed piano trio. Other chamber engagements include performing for the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon at the historic Govanhill Baths celebrating 30 years of Doors Open Day, as well as working with Chamber Music Scotland and the Mid-Argyll Arts

Association. Alongside this, Dean travelled to Bad Homburg (Germany) to participate in the International Saxophone Masterclass as the only British participant, and attended the SAX18 and SAX19 festivals at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam hosted by Arno Bornkamp. They were awarded the 'Outstanding Soloist' Award at the National Concert Band Festival in both 2016 and 2019 with the Clyde Wind Ensemble. Dean has participated in side-by-side schemes with Scottish Opera where they performed the alto saxophone solo from Mussorsky's Pictures at an Exhibition and Rachmaninov's Symphonic Dances. Dean is a huge lover of contemporary music and actively commissions new composers to write for the instrument. They also perform with new music ensemble Insula and have participated in international tours with rock band Ashenspire. Dean is a recipient of a postgraduate scholarship from RCS, assisted by Help Musicians UK and the Cross Trust. In 2021, he was awarded with the John Mather Rising Star Award and won first place at the Birmingham International Music Competition in their category.

#### **Alexandra Katerinopoulou** · Sound Editing

Alexandra Katerinopoulou is a composer and sound artist based in Athens, Greece. She holds a BA in History and Theory of Art from the School of Fine Arts in Athens, Greece, where she also studied piano. Whilst living in the UK, she studied at the University of Edinburgh, from where she graduated with a Master's degree in Composition for Film. During this time she also attended introductory classes in Film Composition at Goldsmiths University London and master classes in conducting at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Katerinopoulou has participated in Erasmus placements in Bologna, Italy, with composer Marco Biscarini, and has composed extensively for cinema, theatre, dance and art installations in Greece and the United States.

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Forthcoming concerts:

Tuesday 21 March 2023

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

Thomas Metcalf · composer

David Palmer · piano

Ennui(t) (2022)

Conditional (2015)

Disintegrated Bones (2022-2023)

Melody for Elodie (2022)

Arrays (2020-2021)

Admission Free

Tuesday 28 March 2023

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

Performances by students from the Reid School of Music

including Arisa Kobayashi · violin

and Zoë Hutcheon · voice

Admission Free

For details of further events please check <https://www.ed.ac.uk/events>

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