

Media Release: For immediate use

Spire

Organ music past, present & future

Friday 12 May, 19:30 – 23:30 | FuseLeeds06, Town Hall, Leeds, UK
Saturday 13 May, 18:30 – 22:30 | St George's Church, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

Featuring:

Marcus Davidson & Charles Matthews [organ]
Christian Fennesz [laptop]
Philip Jeck [turntables] *
Robert Millner [tenor]
BJNilsen [chamber organ & electronics]
Leif Inge [sound installation] **

*exclusive to Spire Newcastle

**exclusive to Spire Leeds

Spire is an evening of live performances that embrace historical, classical, contemporary and experimental approaches to organ music. Produced by leading arts agency forma and curated by acclaimed British record label Touch, who this year celebrate their 25th anniversary, Spire features world-class musicians, composers and artists.

In Spire, international organist Charles Matthews, composer and organist Marcus Davidson and operatic tenor Robert Millner perform historical, classical and contemporary works for main organ and voice by J S Bach, Henryk Gorécki, Arvo Pärt and others.

Spire also presents new, experimental works by today's leading sound artists and electronic composers. BJNilsen creates an immersive soundscape from real and sampled organ, his performance alternating between chamber organ and electronics. For Spire Newcastle, experimental musician Philip Jeck uses turntables to combine samples, loops and scratches from organ sources ranging from liturgy to rock and roll.

Acclaimed Austrian musician Christian Fennesz uses laptop to create densely layered compositions – anything but sterile computer experiments – which have an inherent naturalism, evocative of light and atmosphere.

A new sound installation by conceptual artist Leif Inge comprising an expanded version of Bach's organ composition creates a beautiful yet thrilling soundscape, presented in the court room of Leeds Town Hall for the duration of the evening.

Both Spire Newcastle and Spire Leeds include ensemble performances with main and chamber organs plus electronics. The World Premier of 'Organoise', composed and

conducted by Curator Mike Harding, takes place at Leeds Town Hall. The entire ensemble performs a new piece which incorporates an element of improvisation into the score. The piece promises to push the ensemble and their instruments to the limit and it will raise the roof of the Town Hall.

Mike Harding, curator of Spire, explains:

'Some Spire contributors refer to earlier versions of the organ and its often highly political usage, others explore aged instruments themselves. Some study the effects of the sounds produced on the physique and the psyche, while others either build their own or record natural or man-made phenomena which utilised the same basic process - wind through pipes.'

From its earliest inception as the Hydraulis, to the bellows organs of the late Roman period, its absence from western music until the 8th Century to its development during the Middle Ages, the organ has always developed along with technological progress. Spire is an essential event that embraces the past, present and future of the organ, pushing the instrument to its limits.

For further press information and images, please contact:

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LISTINGS & INFO

Friday 12 May

19:30 – 23:30, FuseLeeds festival, Town Hall, Leeds, Tickets: £15 / £12 concs.

Box Office: 0113 213 7700

Produced by forma, presented by fuse leeds

Saturday 13 May

18.30 – 22.30, St Georges' Church, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tickets: £15

Available from The Sage Gateshead: 0191 443 4661

Produced by forma, presented by forma and no-fi

www.touchmusic.org.uk/spire

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Artists' Biographies

Marcus Davidson

Marcus Davidson is a composer, pianist/organist and musical director who studied composition with Vic Hoyland and Rhian Samuel. He has written and arranged for TV, radio and theatre, and specialises in accompanying for Ballet and Contemporary Dance. Recently performed works include 'Opposites Attract' for Organ performed by Charles Matthews at La Batie Festival, Geneva Cathedral, 2004. 'Cyclo-fantasia' for solo Piano, performed by Jose Senitio at The Warehouse, London, 2005, and 'Om Mani' for tenor and Organ performed by Robert Millner and 'Standing Wave for Organ and Delay' at the Gas Festival Stockholm 2005. In 1999 he was commissioned to write the finale for the Festival of Classical Greek Dance at the Royal Albert Hall in November of that year.

Christian Fennesz

Christian Fennesz uses guitar and laptop to create electronic soundscapes of enormous range and complexity. "Imagine the electric guitar severed from cliché and all of its physical limitations, shaping a bold new musical language." [City Newspaper, USA]. His densely layered compositions - anything but sterile computer experiments - have an inherent naturalism, evocative of light and atmosphere. His latest album, 'Venice' [Touch, 2004] has been hailed as a masterpiece, and is by some distance the label's best-selling CD.

Leif Inge

Leif Inge is a conceptual artist whose installation works have incorporated various media including ice, light installation, earthworks, stained glass, as well as sound. Recent work has explored the possibilities of stretching sound over extended periods of time to create beautiful but thrilling and powerful soundscapes. The recent '9 Beet Stretch' - a 24 hour long concert with the time-stretched 9th Symphony by Ludwig van Beethoven - was an epic and compelling sound sculpture that received widespread critical acclaim. Inge lives and works in Oslo, Norway.

Philip Jeck

Philip Jeck is perhaps best known for his highly subversive work 'Vinyl Requiem' (Time Out Performance Award, 1993) with Lol Sargent, a performance for 180 Dansette record players, 12 slide- projectors and 2 movie-projectors. In his performances, recordings, and collaborations Jeck combines samples, loops and scratches from various analogue sources to create complex, highly involving and often moving soundscapes. He has released 4 albums on Touch since 1995.

Charles Matthews

International organist, pianist, composer and teacher Charles Matthews (first prize Ferenc Liszt Organ Competition, Budapest) has performed in Russia, China and across Europe, including London's Wigmore Hall. He teaches organ at the Birmingham Conservatoire and is Organist of St. Catharine's Church, Chipping Campden.

Robert Millner

Operatic tenor Robert Millner studied singing with Thomas Hemsley, Paul Hamburger and Franco Corelli. Touring internationally, he has sung the roles of Alfredo for Music Theatre London's Olivier Award-nominated production of La Traviata, Ferrando (Così fan tutte), Rodolfo (La Bohème) and Eisenstein (Der Fledermaus) among others. At the Hermitage in St Petersburg, he performed Britten's Serenade and he sang Turiddu in the inaugural performance of Cavalleria Rusticana at the Vietnam Opera House in Ho Chi Minh City.

BJNilsen

Swedish sound and recording artist BJNilsen has been active in experimental music since the early 90's. For the past 5 years he has been releasing records as Hazard and then BJNilsen, also making music and sound for documentary film, television and commercials. He often uses his own field recordings electronically treated, to explore the natural world and the effect of sound on human perception. His latest album, 'Fade to white', was released on Touch in 2005.

forma: arts and media producers

Forma is one of Europe's leading agencies for contemporary, cross-artform projects. Working with artists, venues and festivals worldwide, Forma produces, publishes and tours a groundbreaking programme of new hybrid forms of music, visual art, film, new media, dance, theatre and live art.

In the last year, forma productions have been presented at major festivals and venues in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Monaco, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, the UK and USA.

Working with renowned artists such as Cerith Wyn Evans, Dominique Gonzalez- Foerster, Kim Gordon, Ryoji Ikeda, Carsten Nicolai, Philippe Parreno, DJ Rupture, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Saburo Teshigawara and Richard Wilson, Forma also works regularly with equally interesting artists at earlier stages of their careers to develop new projects and to tour existing works.

The company collaborates with artists to develop projects over extended periods of time, forming unique relationships with practitioners and creating rich dialogues between artists, audiences and places.

For further information, please visit www.forma.org.uk
forma is supported by Arts Council England

Touch

Since its first release in 1982, Touch has created sonic and visual productions that combine innovation with a level of care and attention that has made it the most enduring of any independent music company of its time.

The first period up to the digitisation of music in the mid-80's saw the release of several cassette magazines, where sounds by luminaries such as New Order, Cabaret Voltaire and The Residents were paralleled by visual work and writing by Neville Brody, Jon Savage, Joseph Beuys and many others. As the industry went through its usual elaborate cycles of self-annihilation and rebirth, Touch adapted to incorporate new technologies with the old, underscoring the power and necessity of editing and presentation to bring the best out of each production.

Now working extensively with Fennesz, Chris Watson, Philip Jeck, Biosphere, Ryoji Ikeda, BJNilsen and many others, Touch celebrated its 20th year in 2001 with a UK CMN-backed tour, including sell-out dates in Brighton, Bristol, Glasgow, Newcastle, Salisbury and the QEH in London. The transitions from analogue to digital, from camera-ready artwork to broadband file-sharing and from 1/4" masters to website downloads are only the surface manifestations of the great changes that have taken place in recorded music over the last 20 years. Touch has been at the forefront of these changes, and will continue to be.

no-fi

no-fi has since 2001 been presenting adventurous musical events in Newcastle Gateshead. In that time, no-fi has presented over 60 such events featuring artists from across the globe, the majority of whom would never have performed here otherwise. Artists no-fi has worked with include Otomo Yoshihide, Sunn O))), Lee 'Scratch' Perry, Trans Am, Wolf Eyes, Aphex Twin, Burning Star Core, Papa M, Faust, To Rococo Rot, Sunburned Hand Of The Man and Pan Sonic amongst many others.

2005 saw no-fi's involvement in the Version festival aboard MS Stubnitz on Newcastle Quayside, its first collaboration with Forma and an event regarded by The Wire, Brainwashed and others as an excellently programmed and presented weekend. A second Version festival is planned for 2007.

2006 sees no-fi launches its own record label:

The NO-FI label will release original recordings as well as a selection high quality live recordings from no-fi events. Its first scheduled releases are the 7" 'Sir Richard Bishop plays Sun City Girls' and a series of 7"s by The Matinee Orchestra.

For further information, visit www.no-fi.org.uk

no-fi is supported by Arts Council England

fuseleeds

fuseleeds is a major new biennial music festival celebrating the wealth and diversity of today's vibrant new music scene. fuseleeds06, from 6 – 13 May in Leeds, presents an international live programme placed at the forefront of jazz, world, classical and popular music including experimental new collaborations, specially commissioned works and world premieres, and an extensive education and fringe programme.

fuseleeds is a collaborative venture between Leeds City Council, Leeds College of Music and Leeds Jazz with BBC Radio 3.

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