



Spotlight gig: Aurora Engine *Terre*

Thursday 28th October 2022, 3pm

Cowdray Hall

In association with Aberdeen Archives, Gallery & Museums.



Programme notes

Deborah Shaw *Terre*

Terre is a sonic exploration of Scottish landscape by composer Deborah Shaw (Aurora Engine). A suite of four contrasting works all inspired by and developed from data collected from specific locations. Each piece is harmonically static; the sonic journey being textural, a deliberate device intended to evoke a sense of home and roots.

Plastic Siren Aeolian Harp, kalimba, voice, harp, glass and plastic bottles

Opening with aeolian harp, played by the autumnal wind on Thortonloch Beach (Scottish Borders), this piece explores the sounds of the Scottish coastline using recyclable ocean waste, sounds made from glass and plastic bottles are blended with traditional instruments and voice. Deborah delivered sound art workshops in the community working with school age children to make instruments and create music using objects from their household recycling.

*Seawash and Aeolian harp were recorded with Chris Watson (sound recordist).

Drone Bees, harp, voice, synth, electronic percussion, French horn

Drone is made up from bee sounds collected from Edinburgh University's Apiary. Drawn to the intriguing sounds and communal habits of bees, Deborah recorded a variety of hive sounds. Drunk on smoke, jumping, shouting and, of course, buzzing, the bees make different sounds depending on their mood, surroundings and time of year.

Fractal Harp, voice, French horn

Fractal was devised from a graphic score designed by the composer based on the fractal patterns of nature - specifically trees. Starting from a mid range note (E Flat 4 - G4) the work expands contrapuntally, creating melodic layers and fragmented rhythms as the branches split. For the **soundfestival** premiere, Deborah is using a series of extended techniques on the harp to develop the fractal shape. French horn and voice add sonic foliage.

Syrinx Human voice, piano, hand percussion

Drawn to birdsong since childhood, in composing *Syrinx* Deborah recorded and analysed vocalisations from birds on the Water of Leith, Edinburgh. Notating rhythms and using pitch shifting techniques to decipher melodies and intervals in detail, Deborah recreates the sound of birds using her own voice. Deborah has led a series of workshops with choirs exploring birdsong and recording / biomusic, creating 'flocks' of sounds made of collective human voices.

Biography

Deborah Shaw

Aurora Engine / Deborah Shaw is a composer, harpist and pianist based in Scotland. Fusing real instruments, voice and progressive electronica, her work encapsulates a singular and striking sonic landscape. Using collected sounds and inspiration drawn from the natural world such as birdsong, the tides and community voices, she sets out to create beguiling songs and compelling soundscapes. Performing as *Aurora Engine*, her album 'A Secret Knock' will be released in early 2023.

Recent projects include two live scoring film commissions to compose music for silent film to include 'The Seashell and the Clergyman,' and 'Meshes of the

Afternoon,' funded by *Film Hub Scotland* and *BFI* as part of an initiative 'Electric Muses,' led by *Cinetopia* - a film project celebrating women using technology as part of their creative practise spanning two centuries. In November 2022 Deborah will premiere a third film score, this time funded by *UK : CHINA Film Collab* to livescore the iconic Chinese film 'Cave of the Silken Web' 盤絲洞 at *Dundee Contemporary Arts*.

Deborah has composed for film and TV and screen and has completed three documentary films. She is currently Composer in Residence for *Earth In Common*, an environmental organisation responding to the climate crisis and exploring nature through the arts.

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