



EMPRES presents  
**THE ART OF NOISES** **V** (IRTUAL)

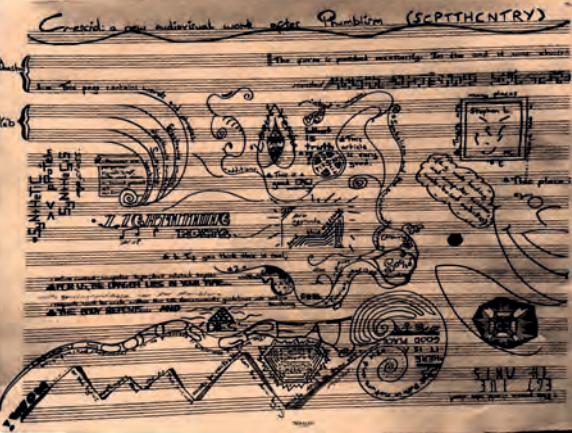
*A festival of Experimental Electronic Music  
and Sound Art*

*Streaming from 23rd to 27th November 2020*

[modernartoxford.org.uk](http://modernartoxford.org.uk)



MODERN ART  
OXFORD



# SCHEDULE

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**19:30–19:45**

**Monday**

MIXER//SHREDDER

<https://youtu.be/GJ72ubty8sc>

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**19:30–20:00**

**Tuesday**

fission [sketchbook] – SALINGER and Xactus

<https://youtu.be/ThSqZYN88jo>

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**19:30–20:00**

**Wednesday**

CRESCID: a new audiovisual work after Phumblism (SCPTTHCNTRY)

<https://youtu.be/seRCWyMkOTA>

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**19:30–20:30**

**Thursday**

2020 State of Exception (a film by Merijn Royaards and Henrietta Williams)

<https://youtu.be/xsZ3iv3WQrl>

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**19:30–21:00**

**Friday**

Atau Tanaka: Body as Instrument (Lecture and Performance)

<https://youtu.be/C7w0U2QfG8c>

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# W E L C O M E

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In April 2020, we announced a call for works across the campus that focused on (safe) collaboration, networking and virtual collectivity in relation to the challenges and opportunities of making music and art during the Covid-19 pandemic. At a time when we were all having to find new ways to interact socially, the call invited creative collaborative responses to our shared situation.

Submitted works were in the categories of Sound Art or Experimental Electronic Music. The response was outstanding, and the standard extremely high, but we had to choose an overall winner for each category:

**Sound Art:** CRESCID: a new audiovisual work after Phumblism (SCPTTHCNTRY) by Piers Kennedy and Rowan Ireland (Music Faculty and Ruskin School of Art)

**Experimental Electronic Music:** fission[sketchbook] by SALINGER and Xactus (Jonathan Packham and Alex Saad) (Music Faculty and external)

Both winning entries feature in our festival line up as well as another notable submission from the Ruskin School of Art: MIXER//SHREDDER. Thank you to all who took part.

We have a wonderful week of music, performance, and media art; I'd like to thank all who helped bring this to life with such enthusiasm: Sara Lowes, Clare Stimpson, Cecilia Rosser and all at Modern Art Oxford. Gascia Ouzounian, Eric Clarke and Liz Green at the Music Faculty. Thank you to TORCH for their continuing support. And of course, all our contributors: Atau, Henri, Merijn, Piers, Rowan, Jon, Alex, Alice, Ananda, Sarah and Sofia.

I sincerely hope you enjoy the amazing creativity on display throughout this festival, and take away new ideas and inspiration. See you in 2021!

Daniel Hulme.

Electronic Music Studio Manager, University of Oxford.

Curator of Art of Noises V.

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# PROGRAMME

**MIXER//SHREDDER | 19:30–19:45 (Monday)**

Alice Hackney, Ananda Kupfer, Sarah Catterall and Sophia Hambleton-Grey

Passing through a sequence of willing hosts, MIXER//SHREDDER evolves, mimicking the parasitic nature of a virus.

Four participants metamorphose a visual art practice into an ongoing sound art venture. Our submission, MIXER//SHREDDER was the first of many collaborative productions.

The practice initially manifested as visual art in the early weeks of COVID-19 isolation as a collaborative effort organised between first year students at The Ruskin School of Art. The instructions were simple: 1) select four images, 2) organise a repetitive 'running order' or sequence, 3) send your chosen images to the next host in the chain via email, and 4) upon receiving the images yourself, modify them using any of the digital utensils available (Photoshop, etc.). We would continue this cycle for around 2 hours per session.

Meanwhile, the intermittent sounds of our households and noisy electronic devices were echoed by the digital platform we utilised to video call each other. As a group, we reflected on this mediated 'static' we had come to expect in our weekly online sessions and decided to shift our focus, mutating into this new medium – sound.

MIXER//SHREDDER is comprised of the same strains, slices, augmentations, manipulations, and restrictions implemented by the original instructions. How-

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ever, this time, we used a selection of sounds (as well as sound editing software and microphones of choice); activating a new sensory practice that is effortlessly dynamic.

Facing another imminent lockdown, our group revisits MIXER//SHREDDER, delving into film and continually infecting new mediums. This video art took film footage collected from our unique perspectives and early MIXER//SHREDDER visual art – expanding into what you see before you.

Our practice is greater than the sum of its parts. Muffled by unfamiliar reverberations, you may pick out words and lyrics or notes, but an attempt at a comprehensible interpretation is irrational. Its substance lies in its creation and not the final cut.

Find us on Instagram: @mixer.shredder and #mixershredder

## **fission[sketchbook] | 19:30–20:00 (Tuesday)**

**fission** (2020—ongoing) is an online collaboration between **SALINGER** (Jonathan Packham) and **Xactus** (Alex Saad). It is an iterative composition consisting of a repeating processual loop.

The process was initiated with a 100 second audio file (fission 1.1.wav), which was produced by Saad and sent via file-sharing platform WeTransfer to Packham. He cut, altered, and added elements to create a new iteration of the composition (fission 1.2.wav), which was then sent back to Saad. This new version was subject to the same process again, with new elements, alterations, and additions radically reconstituting the track with each successive iteration. Crucially, with each new version editing individual layers of the previous iteration becomes impossible. In many ways, fission details our working relationship through palimpsest.

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**fission [sketchbook]**—presented here—is a mix that comprises different iterations of the track alongside original compositions and field recordings by Packham and Saad across their resident cities of Oxford and Berlin. It also features spoken word sections which seek to explicate some of the compositional, conceptual, and philosophical thinking behind fission.

**SALINGER (Jonathan Packham)** is a DPhil composer, researcher and performer of contemporary music.

**Xactus (Alex Saad)** is a composer, producer and performer of electronic music based in Berlin. His debut EP Xero was released by EXPO in February 2020.

**19:30–20:00** | **(Wednesday)**

**CRESCID:** a new audiovisual work after  
Phumblism (SCPTTHCOUNTRY)

**Pre-show talk: 22:06 minutes**

**Crescid: 4:27 minute audiovisual work**

*CRESCID will be directly preceded by a talk with Piers and Rowan about their process, collaboration, what 'Crescid' means, and Phumblism.*

**Piers C. Kennedy – Musician**

'Piers Kennedy is a DPhil candidate in Music Composition at St Cross College, where he holds the Helene La Rue scholarship. His music has featured internationally and abroad, including at the Three Choirs Festival and on BBC Radio 3. Piers has previously collaborated with artists such as Stephen Ledbury, with whom he was a finalist of the Art For Hertfordshire's 'Let's make ART' 2012 com-

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competition marking another 27 years of Hertfordshire art. Specialisms include Improvisation, Rhetoric in Contemporary Art, and Technology and Hermeneutics.'

### **Rowan C.C. Ireland – Artist**

'Rowan Ireland is a Fine Art undergraduate at The Queen's College, where he is a choral scholar. His practice focuses on the relationship between the artist and audience, addressing power-imbalance and trust; sincerity and humour. Rowan has collaborated with musicians extensively and is currently working with Michael Heslop and Stephen Ledbury on a revival of the 1999 performance 'Opera 4 Batz!!'. Rowan's artistic practice has been greatly influenced.'

### **About the piece**

'In this new work, Crescid, explores the concept of collaboration in our time. Melding found sounds with spoken word, the piece attempts to uncover and provoke necessary questions that we need to ask ourselves from within this new normal: What are we? Who? How can we stay safe?

Learning to live together, to overcome the obstacles that we face is the inspiration explored within the piece itself. Written and recorded entirely lockdown. Where virtual collectivity can enable creativity which overcomes the predicament, Crescid, offers a vision of the new normal – where networking and social interaction can produce an opportunity rather than a crisis that is unprecedented. Crescid invites a collaborative response to the challenge.

Having met to collaborate initially on a project for the ANIMA initiative at the JDP due to have been performed on 31st May but then cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic Piers and Rowan were invited to reflect on their respective roles: Crescid as such explores the intersectionality of musical and artistic composition together with an exploration of how each respective role is inhibited or enhanced by virtual collectivity during this unprecedented time when non-virtual connectivity is seemingly a thing of the past, or of the distant future, or of

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the distant future, or of a possible world in the distant past, present, or future which is the inspiration explored in Crescid.

This piece was originally conceived as a live work to be performed by two singers either side of a twelve foot screen, microphones and live video mixing melding meticulously into a machinated matrimony between art, music sound, and performance; due to the constraints of the Coronavirus it has been reconfigured for home consumption. Thusly, it challenges the audience's sensitivity to background in this 'zoom generation', and Crescid recontextualises an attempt to 'foreground the background', using only the materials available to hand in quarantine.

Everyday objects become all the more charged during this time – but what do they mean and how are they voiced? The media has become a prominent part of our daily benefaction – but in what way can it be heard, what does it mean to us, and what do we mean to it? Collectively or as individuals? Crescid is a celebration of the creative response of new ways of collaboration of bridging the arts of finding oneself of finding one another.'

*P.C.K & R.C.C.I*


## **19:30–20:30** | **(Thursday)** **2020 State of Exception** (film screening)

**- a film by Henrietta Williams and Merijn Royaards.**  
**In conversation with Gascia Ouzounian.**

On 23rd March Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced a Covid-19 lockdown across the UK. At once, London became a city with no people – a ruin in reverse – heavily policed and surveilled. Against the backdrop of this empty chaos, the government rushed through the Coronavirus Act 2020, a bill that introduced emergency powers –

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a radical suspension of the basic rights of the citizen, including the right to protest. After almost 100 days of lockdown the Black Lives Matter protests erupted onto the streets, an outpouring of humanity, solidarity, and emotion, banned by the Home Secretary. The surveillant gaze of the police helicopter logged all of this, the empty and the full.

lustitium/State of Exception charts a journey through the dystopic landscape of lockdown London and proposes a new form of engagement with the online audience.


Central to the work is a figure portrayed through the machine vision of a thermal imaging camera, similar to those used aboard the police helicopter. The heat of our bodies is now a key indicator of viral infection, the surveillant gaze inextricably bound to the heat sensor. A woman glows white with the warmth of her body, trapped within her domestic environment, she issues a set of instructions to encourage the viewer to join with others, across digital space.

Are you here with me? Press your hand to a window, feel the cold of the glass against your warm hand.

This is not passive, but active viewing, the audience experience together apart. The instructions connect the viewer's sense of their own corporeality to the landscape of documentary footage portraying a city in lockdown, and as it emerges in protest in the final moments. Masked faces. Warm bodies moving together.

A hyper-real sonic landscape intensifies the effect and should be listened to with headphones. The birdsong of a never-ending Sunday morning echoes through deserted streets, but the continuous waves of distant sirens and the incessant drone of circling helicopters tell a different story of curtailed freedoms and watchful eyes. This din of police helicopters has been sampled, de-constructed and reconstructed. The resulting output envelopes the audience in the defining sounds of London's lockdown.

This surge in surveillance and blocking of protest is Giorgio Agamben's state of exception in action, a moment of transmissible fear that allows governments to argue for a radical suspension of basic rights of the citizen. As the helicopters thrum, and we see each other's bodies as the threat, we need to feel concern and to



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argue for a radical suspension of basic rights of the citizen. As the helicopters thrum, and we see each other's bodies as the threat, we need to feel concern and to remember this moment. Let us fight against the state of exception becoming the rule.

**Merijn Royaards** is an artist-researcher guided by convoluted movements through music, art and architecture. The interaction between space and sound in cities with a history/present of conflict has been a recurring theme in his multi-media work. His recently awarded doctoral thesis explores the state-altering effects of sound, space and movement from the Russian Avant-Garde to today's clubs and raves.

**Henrietta Williams** is an artist and urban researcher. Her practice explores urbanist theories; particularly considering ideas around fortress urbanism, security, and surveillance. Henrietta is currently based at the Bartlett, UCL, where she is a tutor across a number of programs specialising in using film making as a research methodology and working towards an LAHP funded PhD by design that sets out to critique the aerial viewpoint over London. Her projects have been widely exhibited and published in the UK and internationally, most notably at the V&A Museum in London and on the front page of the Guardian.

**Gascia Ouzounian** is Associate Professor of Music at the University of Oxford. She has published widely on experimental music and sound art, urban sound, new technologies in music. She is the author of **Stereophonica: Sound and Space in Science, Technology, and the Arts** (2020, MIT Press) and director of the ERC-funded project **Sonorous Cities: Towards a Sonic Urbanism** (2020-2025).

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**19:30–21:00**

**(Friday)**

# **Atau Tanaka: Body as Instrument**

Lecture and Performance

**Convened by Eric Clarke.**

This presentation includes a 30 minute lecture, “Body as Instrument” and a 30 minute performance of three short pieces for muscle/music interface:

**Le Loup, Lifting, and Myogram.**

The talk considers the human body as musical instrument. To do so, we look at the use of physiological signals, notably the electromyogram, as a way to capture the gestural intention and effort of the performer. The use of biomedical technologies as computer interfaces, however, do not automatically comprise a musical instrument. To imagine a system that affords expressive musical performance, we will think about the notion of the “instrument”, and contrast it with concepts of the “tool” predominant in our technoculture. We will also consider the word, “performance” and its various artistic, technical, and social meanings. Through this extended vision of musical instruments, we will consider how biosignals provide a virtual instrument, or perhaps even turn performer into instrument.

The concert performance is for performer and the Myo bio-electrical interface as musical instrument. The instrument captures electromyogram (EMG) signals reflecting muscle tension. Live sound synthesis software programmed by the composer create mappings that shape and sculpt sound parameters, filtering, granularizing, distorting electronic sounds in ways not possible with conventional interfaces. The system renders as musical instrument the performer’s own body, allowing them to articulate sound through concentrated gesture. The sources are natural and synthetic sounds, and sounds of the body. In **Le Loup**, howling wolves are stretched and sculpted. In **Lifting** whistling oscillators modulated.

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In **Myogram**, a direct sonification of muscle cell action potentials is heard as a stochastic pulse train reflecting limb activity and feed resonators and filters. This piece was created in musical collaboration with Miguel Ortiz.

**Atau Tanaka** conducts research in embodied musical and human–computer interaction. He studied under Ivan Tcherepnin at Harvard and with John Chowning at Stanford University’s CCRMA. His first inspirations came upon meeting John Cage during his Norton Lectures and would go to on re–create Cage’s Variations VII. Atau has carried out research at IRCAM Centre Pompidou, as Artistic Ambassador for Apple France, and as researcher at Sony Computer Science Laboratory (CSL) Paris. His performances of muscle interaction in music and networked audiovisual installations have been presented at Ars Electronica, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), Eyebeam NYC, Southbank Meltdown London, NTT–ICC Tokyo, and ZKM Karlsruhe. His research has been supported by the European Research Council (ERC), and UK research and arts councils. He has been mentor at the UK’s National Endowment for Science, Technology & Art (NESTA) and was Artistic Co–Director of STEIM in Amsterdam and Edgar Varese guest professor at TU Berlin. He is Professor of Media Computing at Goldsmiths, University of London.

**Eric Clarke** is Heather Professor of Music at the University of Oxford. He has published widely in journal articles and book chapters on topics including expression in performance, the perception and production of rhythm, musical meaning, the relationships between music and language, the analysis of pop music, the history and aesthetics of recorded music, music and the body, music and consciousness/subjectivity, and music and empathy.

He is the author of a monograph on listening (**Ways of Listening. An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning**, 2005), co–author of **Music and Mind in Everyday Life** (2010), and co–editor of **Music and Consciousness** (2011), the **Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music** (2009), and **Distributed Creativity** (2017).

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# ABOUT EMPRES

The Faculty of Music's Electronic Music Practice RESearch group (EMPRES) promotes and advances research and public dissemination in electronic music practice. EMPRES works with musicians, composers, producers, researchers and academics from a wide range of disciplines interested in electronic music, as well as other members of the music industry.

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