



*Regular Music, c.1983*

## ONE DAY CONFERENCE – CALL FOR PAPERS

**GOLDSMITHS, 18 SEPTEMBER 2024**

Out of the turn of the 1980s, across that decade and into the 1990s, a young generation of British Composers sought to realign themselves away from the modernist perspective of much of the new music mainstream in the UK at the time - a perspective represented by Paul Griffiths' choice of composers for his *New Sounds, New Personalities* interviews of 1985. Instead, these younger composers looked to connect with a wider set of musical styles and practices - minimalism, pop and jazz, US and UK experimental music – but also establishing and writing for their own ensembles, finding new venues, self-publishing, collaborating with postmodernist artists in other disciplines, and generating an independent and progressive art music scene, largely in London.

This period, these groups, their music, their composers, are not well documented or researched, although several of its key figures have subsequently followed venerable careers into concert composition, media composition, and the academy - they include: Orlando Gough, Andrew Poppy, Errollyn Wallen, Laurence Crane, Glyn Perrin, Jeremy Peyton Jones, Jocelyn Pook, John Lunn, Graham Fitkin and Steve Martland; and groups Lost Jockey, Man Jumping, Regular Music, Ensemble X, the Steve Martland Band, Nanquidno, and George W. Welch. An ensuing clutch of groups - Icebreaker, Piano Circus, Ensemble Bash, the Apollo and Delta Saxophone Quartets - built on the seedbed laid in the 1980s.

**Ian Gardiner** (Goldsmiths, University of London) and **Tom Armstrong** (University of Surrey) were both active as composers and performers during this time, between them having worked with many of the musicians associated with it. They are interested in rectifying the lack of research and documentation attending this period of British contemporary music and in bringing together a broad group of scholars, musicians, journalists, broadcasters and students to share insights into these nearly two decades of music making. They will be holding a one-day conference at [Goldsmiths, University of London](#) on **Wednesday 18th September 2024**.

**Proposals for papers of 30 minutes (20 minutes plus 10 minutes for questions) are invited.** Proposals should be in the form of an abstract of up to 350 words and should indicate any technical requirements beyond standard audiovisual equipment. Abstracts should be emailed to Ian Gardiner at [I.Gardiner@gold.ac.uk](mailto:I.Gardiner@gold.ac.uk) to arrive no later than **Monday 20th May**. The outcome of submission will be communicated in early June.

The conference will *not* present papers in parallel so as to maximise opportunities for networking and informal discussion between delegates. There will be three paper sessions and a roundtable with composers. The aim of the conference is to determine the extent of existing research and interest in this period with the objective of holding a second, longer, event that would survey and map the period in greater detail. At this stage the organisers are most interested in contributions that cast a wide net rather than fine-grained analytical examination of individual pieces although all proposals will be carefully considered. The day concludes with a roundtable of composers, chaired by Sarah Walker (BBC Radio 3).

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There are multiple perspectives from which the activities of these musicians may be approached.

- **Music:** inviting considerations of postminimal style, technique and aesthetic from 'gridded' rhythms, to 'wall of sound' orchestration, to the use of systems, to the incorporation of sounds from jazz and the classics as well as the influence of pop music on everything from instrumentation to titles of pieces and bands.
- **Collaborations:** artists, theatre makers and choreographers were frequent collaborators - the influence of contemporary European performance art, dance and theatre-makers fed into home-grown collaborations with, for example, Lumière & Son, Impact Theatre Co-operative, Second Stride, London Contemporary Dance Theatre and Shobana Jeyasingh Dance.
- **Broadcasters and Festivals:** some of these partnerships were commissioned by the newly-inaugurated Channel 4 and, later in the period, BBC Radio 3 began to feature postminimal, experimental music and its hybrids in programmes such as Midnight Oil. Patronage was also given by the yearly Almeida International Festival of Contemporary Music (1981 to 1990), which provided a platform for the presentation of many experimental US and European musicians and composers, and by Adrian Jack's MusICA series.
- **Technology & the Record Industry:** the small number of commercial releases were recorded using the new digital recording technology, lending a hard, flat, compressed quality and perhaps reflecting input from pop producers – David Cunningham and John Leckie, for example. Recordings were released through indie labels such as Rough Trade, ZTT and Factory.
- **Venues:** a number of London venues formed regular stages for performance, most notably the ICA, the Africa Centre in Covent Garden, Riverside Studios in Hammersmith, and the Place Theatre at the London School of Contemporary Dance in Euston.
- **Institutions:** several groups across the period had their inception in university music departments where, at that time, avant-garde and experimental music was taught and investigated - eg. Goldsmiths (Peyton Jones, Poppy, Wallen), York (Perrin, Lunn), Nottingham (Fitkin, Crane).
- **Critical and interrogative contributions are warmly welcomed:** how do the stylistic, technical and aesthetic concerns of this period sit against the position of other emergent art music developments, eg. New Complexity; did the unbroken period of Conservative government in the UK (deliberately chosen to form the conference timeline) and its cultural hinterland shape the attitudes and positioning of this music and its musicians in any way?