

Institution: University of Sussex
Unit of Assessment: UoA 35 Music
Title of case study: <i>Music Walk</i> : new music in public spaces
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The <i>Music Walk</i> project has brought contemporary art music to new audiences and enriched the public's experience of public spaces. The impact of Hopkins' research arises from this project commissioned by the BBC Proms for its John Cage Centenary on 17 August 2012, with the involvement of Transport for London. The project had direct impact upon 600 members of the public who took part in a performance event around the Albert Hall using mobile media devices, and a further 5,961 people who accessed the project website. The project also had impact upon the policy-thinking of the BBC in relation to using mobile media to reach and engage new audiences, on Transport for London in relation to its strategy for pedestrians, and on new music promoter Sound and Music, which has commissioned further iterations of the project for London and beyond.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Hopkins has an extensive professional practice as a director and designer for opera, and as artistic director for devised performance projects employing new media and technologies. As a NESTA Research Fellow between 2000 and 2005 Hopkins undertook in-depth research into the use of new media platforms for performance. Hopkins also has expertise in site-specific projects, e.g. <i>Elephant and Castle</i> (Aldeburgh Festival, June 2007), a music theatre performance that took place in and around the Snape Maltings, Aldeburgh, that effected dislocations between an actual location (Snape) and a virtual location (Elephant and Castle, London) through the use of sonic and visual media [see Section 3, R1].</p> <p>Hopkins has been at Sussex since 2007. He held an AHRC Fellowship in the Creative and Performing Arts between 12 June 2007 and 31 December 2012, during which he undertook a series of projects specifically exploring the potential of new media technologies for music theatre. <i>Give me Your Blessing</i> (2009) deployed combinations of live performance and digital media in a theatrical context, offering a deconstruction of Stravinsky's <i>Les Noces</i> that incorporated virtual platforms such as <i>Second Life</i> [R2]. The project is documented in the book <i>Mapping Intermediality in Performance</i> (2010) [R3]. <i>Lost Chord</i> (2010) investigated new technological interfaces between audiences and performance events in a site-specific context [R4].</p> <p>In 2009 Hopkins staged one act of Harrison Birtwistle's <i>Masque of Orpheus</i> for the BBC Proms, exploring aspects of mobile performance in a site-specific staging [R5]. The BBC Proms commission for <i>Music Walk</i> followed from this, and from Hopkins' recognised research expertise in the use of new media for site-specific performance.</p> <p><i>Music Walk</i> was developed by Hopkins for the BBC Proms between 2010 and 2012. Background research for the project concerned uses of 'pervasive media' tools and interfaces such as radio-frequency identification (RFID) systems, QR Codes (portals to URLs or text) and GPS systems (locating users of mobile devices). The creative use of such technologies foregrounds issues of live performance and embodiment, the social effects of digital portability, notions of public space as curated space, and opening the digital realm outwards to the 'real' world, with the potential to augment our experience of that world. Twelve composers from a range of musical backgrounds were commissioned to write ten short compositions inspired by locations around the Albert Hall. The composers – including the eminent American experimental composer Alvin Curran, the Scottish composer Judith Weir, and the electronic music duo Sound Intermedia – represented a</p>

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wide variety of approaches to contemporary musical composition. Their compositions were then made available online to be heard on headphones via mobile technologies such as smartphones/Mp3 players at the locations themselves, or downloaded and listened to elsewhere. This placed headphone-wearing listeners at the centre of new artistic experiences, triangulating perceptions of sites, sounds and audience connection and action. Access was free via online sign-up in advance or walk-up on the day. Sign-up enabled the orchestration of participants into mobile clusters across timed routes. Each group was sent instructions, playlists and performative tasks, designed to heighten experiences at locations. Some locations were places of expected distinction (e.g. Ai Weiwei's Serpentine Pavilion); others invited visitors to perceive poetry in the mundane (e.g. bike parks). The project's website offered online access to the music to approximately 6,000 additional visitors throughout the Proms season [R6].

3. References to the research

- R1** *Elephant and Castle*, 21 June 2007, public performance: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cromt/projects/ahrcfellow/hopkins-ref/research-underpinning1>
- R2** *Give Me Your Blessing For I Go to a Foreign Land*, Clore Studio, Royal Opera House, 13 February 2009: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cromt/projects/ahrcfellow/hopkins-ref/research-underpinning2> (REF2 submission).
- R3** Hopkins, T. (2010) 'Retrospection: the Pre- and Proto-Digital; Instance: Give me your blessing for I go to the foreign land', in Bay-Cheng, S., Kattenbelt, C., Lavender, A. and Nelson, R. (eds) *Mapping Intermediality in Performance*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 239–48.
- R4** *Lost Chord*, Grand Theatre Leeds, 23 January 2010 and Riverside Studios, London, 5–6 August 2010, public performance: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cromt/projects/ahrcfellow/hopkins-ref/research-underpinning4>
- R5** *Masque of Orpheus*, BBC Proms, 14 August 2009, public performance, TV Broadcast BBC4: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cromt/projects/ahrcfellow/hopkins-ref/research-underpinning5>
- R6** *Proms Music Walk*, public performance and interactive website, live event 17 August 2010, online presence launched 3 July 2012.
Project website: <http://www.promsmusicwalk.com/> (last accessed 18 November 2013). PDF available at: www.sussex.ac.uk/cromt/projects/ahrcfellow/hopkins-ref/research-underpinning6

Full documentation for all references can be supplied by the University on request.

4. Details of the impact

The project had impact upon four key groups:

Public participants

The most direct impact was created by the *Music Walk* performance itself, which took place over a 1.5-hour period on 17 August 2012. Six hundred people took part, experiencing ten pieces of new music in ten different locations around the Albert Hall, encouraging exposure to new musical sounds, and an enriched experience of urban environments.

Project materials also reached a much larger public over an extended two-month period – e.g. through chance or planned visits to project locations, where signs [see Section 5, C1] led visitors to a BBC project website [C2], random or directed online access to the website, or access to a 'twitterbot' releasing daily 'thoughts from the mind of John Cage' [C3], etc. The BBC's figures record 5,961 visitors to the website, 2,664 listeners streaming the music, and 903 full playlist downloads [C4]. Other institutions involved in the project included the Serpentine Gallery and the

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Victoria and Albert Museum, each of which have their own visitors, substantially increasing the number of people benefiting from the work but making the absolute number of people who experienced the project unquantifiable.

Confirmation of qualitative impact upon audiences is offered by the BBC: 'Our feedback and figures suggested an impressive depth and extent of public impact' (Steve Bowbrick, Interactive Editor, BBC Radio 3) [C5], and by new music promoter Sound and Music, who have commissioned Hopkins to expand the project throughout London:

It was through reports of audience experiences of the climactic 17th August event in particular that the quality and potential of its concept had an impact on our thinking. These were outstandingly positive accounts, characterised by a sensation of engagement that can be hard for contemporary music presentation to achieve (Richard Whitelaw, Head of Programmes, Sound and Music) [C6].

BBC Radio 3

The BBC is constantly concerned with the potential of new digital broadcast platforms, and this project was one of the BBC's most substantial explorations of the creative potential of mobile media. BBC Radio 3's Interactive Editor confirms the impact of the project on the future thinking of BBC Radio 3:

Online resources are a substantial and growing part of how the BBC addresses its remit of universal reach. Proms *Music Walk* represented a significant new model in this emerging area – projecting outstanding new compositions to a broad audience... As a project which reached out to the public in what was for us a significant new format – using online to link place, new music and audience in a focused way – it had a significant impact not only on participating audiences, but on our continuing debates around how we reach and stimulate audiences in the future [C5].

Transport for London

Music Walk instigated the first collaboration between the BBC and TFL, enabling each to consider more carefully how cultural interventions can enhance public space as creative space. TFL has a Surface Planning policy of incentivising non-vehicular travel, and recognised the potential value of *Music Walk*'s enrichment of travellers' experiences on foot. TFL created bespoke mapping for the project, using its particular mapping-design expertise to indicate composers and locations [C7].

Lilli Matson, Head of Delivery Planning at TFL, confirms the impact of the project for TFL:

TFL's interest in the *Music Walk* project related to our continuing policies designed to enrich the experience of London's urban realm, and to our role in incentivising walking as a mode of travel... We saw this project as an innovative way of extending our activities, with a significant impact, not only at a crucial moment in the summer of 2012 for London's surface network, but also as a potential model for supporting cultural content across the capital in the future [C8].

TFL has committed to involvement in a further project based on the *Music Walk* principles [C8].

Sound and music

Sound and Music (SAM) is the leading UK promoter of new music. The project impact has led SAM to commission Hopkins to develop a large-scale extension of *Music Walk* principles throughout London, and a further project for an exportable model for other cities. Sound and Music confirm the impact of *Music Walk* upon their commissioning policy:

The use of a widely available technology – offering the lowest possible barrier to

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participation – the idea of location as an audio-visual muse for composers – the carefully curated experiences offered to audiences engaging in different ways: all these elements suggested a mode of work which could help us extend our curatorial activity in a significant way [C6].

Hopkins' work therefore contributes to efforts to bring new art music to a wider audience and to enrich public space.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- C1** Photographs of signage at performance locations:
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cromt/projects/ahrcfellow/hopkins-ref/signage>
- C2** Main project website: <http://www.promsmusicwalk.com/> (last accessed 18 November 2013).
PDF copy: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cromt/projects/ahrcfellow/hopkins-ref/music-walk>
- C3** John Cage Twitterbot page: <https://twitter.com/johncagebot>; PDF copy:
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cromt/projects/ahrcfellow/hopkins-ref/john-cage-twitterbot>
- C4** *Music Walk* Website Users Data: Source BBC Proms team, Caper (website builders).
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cromt/projects/ahrcfellow/hopkins-ref/website-userdata>
- C5** Statement concerning project impact on BBC from Interactive Editor, BBC Radio 3, 23 July 2013. Statement provided for purposes of REF.
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cromt/projects/ahrcfellow/hopkins-ref/bbc-impact-statement>
- C6** Statement concerning project impact on Sound and Music from Head of Programmes, Sound and Music, 27 July 2013. Statement provided for purposes of REF.
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cromt/projects/ahrcfellow/hopkins-ref/impact-sound-and-music>
- C7** Transport for London, *Music Walk* Map.
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cromt/projects/ahrcfellow/hopkins-ref/tfl-map>
- C8** Statement concerning project impact on Transport for London from Head of Delivery Planning, Surface Planning, Transport for London, 23 July 2013. Statement provided for purposes of REF.
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cromt/projects/ahrcfellow/hopkins-ref/tfl-impact>
- C9** Statement concerning project impact from composer of '*What's in the Lake?*' for location 10, Serpentine Pavilion. 24 July 2013. Statement provided for purposes of REF.
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cromt/projects/ahrcfellow/hopkins-ref/impact-composer>