
Chorus



UnitedVisualArtists.

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Chorus

Introduction

Commissioned to celebrate the re-opening of the Howard Assembly Room, 'Chorus' is simultaneously an intensely physical and yet ephemeral experience. An array of motor-assisted pendulums, suspended from the roof, swing through the space emitting light and sound.

As the dynamic system evolves, the rhythms revolve through chaos and return to unison, producing a hypnotic and seductive performance that heightens the viewer's awareness of the space and their relationship with it.

'Chorus' is effectively a new kind of musical instrument, one in which the spatial location of each sound is a critical part of the composition of the piece.

Commissioned by Opera North Projects for the opening of the Howard Assembly Room 2009 in association with The Culture Company

Music by Mira Calix

Originally installed at the Howard Assembly Room, Opera North, Leeds

"Chorus provides a challenging opportunity to compose for an entirely new (and slightly unpredictable) instrument. The foundation of the piece is built of recordings made with core members of the Opera North Company, both voice and instrument. Due to the mechanics of the pendulums, the musical time frame continuously shifts, requiring the composition to be flexible in form, as it will never repeat identically. The sensation of multiple moving airborne speakers is magical and at times puzzling, even threatening. There is an emphasis on voice, to not only reflect opera, but to humanise the structure. To write music for a project of such physicality and scale has been testing but ultimately thrilling."

- Mira Calix

Chorus

Chorus at Durham Cathedral



Chorus

Chorus at Opera North, Leeds



Artist's Statement

To celebrate the restoration and re-opening of the Howard Assembly Room, Leeds, Opera North Projects & The Culture Company commissioned United Visual Artists to create a site-specific response.

'Chorus' is kinetic light and sound sculpture. It consists of an array of pendulums suspended from the ceiling of the auditorium. The concept arose from the search for a simple and unifying relationship between music, light and movement. The pendulums' kinetic nature allowed us to create a striking, large-scale work without obstructing the view of the beautifully renovated architecture.

Mounted on each of the eight pendulums is a light and a single speaker. Together these pendulums form an instrument that allows us to explore the relationship between performance, sculpture and composition. 'Chorus' is simultaneously an individual and a collective experience; every position in the space offers a new relationship with the work.

Observing the array as a whole offers a contemplative view of the carefully orchestrated performance. Standing directly under a pendulum, however, creates a more visceral experience. The sheer scale of the work is almost intimidating, and the speed of the pendulums is enough to introduce a Doppler shift in the audio as they swing past the viewer.

Each pendulum has a unique score, an individual voice; together they form an ensemble of light and sound. As 'Chorus' is based on a real-world physical system, each repeated performance has subtle rhythmical variations, with no two performances being alike. Structured in three distinct phases the music is composed by Mira Calix. Working with musicians and singers from Opera North, Mira Calix created thousands of separate recordings which she then abstracted to create the finished composition. 'Chorus' invites us through its hypnotic rhythm's to focus our senses and to dissect the sources of the score and the movements within.

Arcs of light hypnotise and seduce as the rhythm of the pendulums shift between harmony and phasing. Movement controls and transforms the relationship between sound and light, encouraging the viewer to reconsider the way they see and hear the world and how our senses are linked.

'Chorus' offers a suspension of standard time, replacing it with a mesmerising moment, measured by the swing of the pendulum.

With music by Mira Calix

About the Artists

United Visual Artists

Founded by Chris Bird, Matt Clark and Ash Nehru in 2003, United Visual Artists (UVA) is a London based art and design practice. Their work spans architectural and responsive installations, live performance and public art. Research and development is core to their process enabling them to constantly explore new fields as well as re-examine more established ones.

UVA's work is about social experience, turning the audience into active participants. The relationship between space, the performer and the audience is at the heart of UVA's practice.

They created The V&A and Sony Playstation commission 'Volume' which was the first major commission for the museum's John Madjeski Garden and the work is currently touring internationally. 'Volume' won the D&AD yellow pencil in 2007 for interactive installation and featured in the 'Designs of The Year 2008' show at the Design Museum, London.

In 2008 they were shortlisted for the Darwin bicentenary commission at the Natural History Museum, London. UVA have been selected to create two major new public art commissions for Maple Leaf Square in Toronto, Canada.

About the Artists

Mira Calix

Mira Calix composes and produces music and is signed to Warp Records, on which she has released five albums, the most recent being *The Elephant In The Room: 3 Commissions*. She began her musical adventure by djing, performing at club nights, and as support on several tours, playing a variety of slots with a diverse selection of artists from Radiohead to Aphex Twin. As well as performing her own material, she has created several installation pieces and commissions, including the setting of one of Shakespeare's Sonnets for the Royal Shakespeare Company and Opera North, curated by composer Gavin Bryars. In 2007 she completed a very modern opera in partnership with composer Tansy Davies, with a libretto by Blake Morrison for the Aldeburgh Festival.

Later that year, she composed the soundtrack to renowned puppeteers; Faulty Optic's take on Monteverdi's *Orpheu* for the Manchester International Festival and Opera North. The production, titled; *Dead Wedding*, went on to the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, The Sage and The Barbican. December 2008, saw the premiere of a choral installation – *My Secret Heart*, based on Allegri's *Miserere*, for Streetwise Opera at The Royal Festival Hall. The installation will tour internationally throughout 2009. This spring she will release a new surround mix of *Nunu* on an SACD commissioned by the BMIC. *Recovery To Discovery*, features rare work by Jonathan Harvey, Harrison Birtwhistle and Jose Alvarez.

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Technical Details

- Set-up time for Chorus is 3 days.
- 4 UVA technicians are to attend for set-up
- Ceiling height of the venue must be minimum of 8m
- Width of the venue must be minimum of 5m

Chorus consists of:

- 8 x 5m pendulums
- 1 x Truss rigging system (truss plan developed according to site)
- 1 x surround sound system
- 2 x d3 control systems and monitors
- Single phase 63 amp

** See attached technical drawings for more details*

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Contact

For further information on Chorus, please contact:
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Watch the video of Chorus online

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