

<b>Institution:</b> Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU)		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA 33 (Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies)		
<b>Title of case study:</b> ICS33.01_Using club culture technology to influence and shape improvised music, contemporary concert music, and multimedia theatre		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2008-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Professor Matt Wright	Professor of Composition and Sonic Art	01/09/2005- to date
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Wright's practice-based research applies club culture technology to improvised music, the contemporary concert hall, and multimedia theatre, connecting composition, performance and studio recording. <i>This allows new ways of performing and composing which have resulted in the co-creation of new music and sound design, influenced creative practice and contributed to cultural programming and the creative economy.</i> His work impacts on the cultural sector to the benefit of audiences for new music, jazz, and improvisation, the theatre going public, creative organisations and professional musicians. Impact has been realised through work with leading saxophonist Evan Parker, Dutch contemporary music group Ensemble Klang, and Belgian ensembles B'rock and B!ndman Hybrid (including Grammy-nominated soprano Claron McFadden). In 2017/18, Wright was Musical Director, and contributed to the sound design, for the National Theatre's (NT) production of <i>Network</i>, for which composer Eric Sleichim received an Olivier Award nomination. The UK run of 75 shows were sold out, with an estimated audience of 67,000, contributing to the highest annual box office ever achieved for NT productions at the Southbank.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Wright works internationally as a composer, improviser and sound designer with his research applying technologies and performance practices usually associated with DJ/club culture to reinvent a range of interdisciplinary practices, located within three distinct areas: Improvised music, contemporary concert music, and multimedia theatre.</p> <p><b>Improvised Music.</b> Wright's collaboration with saxophonist Evan Parker for <i>Trance Map</i> [3.1] demonstrates that with new digital tools, archival recordings can themselves become materials for the live performance and (post) production of free improvisation. Ableton live software, originally developed for use in a club setting by DJs, is utilised by Wright to record, transform and playback music, creating 'navigable archives' of sounds which can be accessed, remixed and used to create new compositions in real time, blending the live and the recorded. Since 2014, this research has been developed via <i>Trance Map +</i> [3.2] with international collaborators such as Peter Evans, Mark Nauseef, and Ned Rothenberg, encapsulated in the quintet recording <i>Crepuscule in Nickelsdorf</i> (2019). This mixing of 'live' and 'recorded' musicians <i>reassesses the role that digital technology can play in improvised music, addressing questions of agency and authorship in live performance.</i> The sampling and live remixing developed within the <i>Trance Map+</i> became a key component in two of Parker's ElectroAcoustic Ensemble commissions for Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, <i>Twelve for Twelve Musicians</i> (2014) and <i>Improvisation</i> (2019).</p> <p><b>Contemporary concert music.</b> For <i>Totem for Den Haag</i> (returned REF 2014) [3.3], Wright worked with Ensemble Klang using a video of turntable rotation as a guide for polyrhythmic performance, enabling the ensemble to efficiently learn, through simple notation, complex rhythmic information which is then reworked for each performance by Wright's live remixing techniques. In 2015, this piece was expanded into a new version for leading Mexican ensemble CEPROMusic, to be performed in Mexico City (as part of UKMX). These techniques were further explored in <i>Fast Gold Butterflies</i> [3.4], a composition where Wright asked Ensemble Klang (a</p>		

group usually performing with saxophones, guitars, keyboards and percussion) to replace their traditional instruments with keyboards controlling Ableton Live software, *therefore changing the role of the performer allowing the ensemble to remix their performance live onstage and project this in surround sound around the audience, bringing a new, previously unexplored soundworld to the group*. Wright composed the piece, designed the Ableton Live patch and mixed the sound live during a performance at Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival in 2018. *Corelli\_HACK [3.5]*, commissioned by the TRANSIT festival and composed by Wright for the combination of the B'Rock early music ensemble and electronics, investigates the radical fragmentation and re-assemblage of Corelli's Concerto Grosso Opus 6, No. 4. It saw B'rock work with surround sound electronics for the first time, which *expanded the spatial reach and ensemble balance* of the traditional baroque ensemble. Wright's work *re-imagined the notion of tremolo*, a technique often associated with classical string performance, but here re-imagined for the turntable, thus *making connections between hitherto disparate baroque and hip-hop performance practices*.

**Multimedia Theatre.** Wright has been developing the concept of performer-controlled sound design with the Brussels-based B!ndman ensemble (a leading European ensembles specialising in music/sound for contemporary theatre) since 2008. Artistic Director of B!ndman, Eric Sleichim, invited Wright to join B!ndman Hybrid (a quartet formed specifically to work on music/theatre projects) for *Beyond / Behind* (2016) for Kaaithatre, Brussels [3.6a], and *Network* at the National Theatre (2017), [3.6b] with leading director Ivo van Hove and starring Hollywood actor Bryan Cranston. For *Beyond / Behind* Wright was an onstage member of B!ndman Hybrid and controlled the real time sampling and spatialisation of leading classical soprano Claron McFadden, allowing the audience to hear her improvisations move dynamically through the theatrical sound system as he responded in real time, *using spatialisation as an integral part of musical improvisation*. For *Network*, Wright arranged the music for live playback and created Ableton Live patches that routed Sleichim's score directly from the performers' laptops via the mixing desk to the 10-channel speaker system in the National Theatre's Lyttelton Theatre. In theatrical sound design, the placement of the sound around the audience (spatialisation) is usually constructed on a series of fixed cues and controlled by a sound designer at a mixing desk seated within or at the rear of the audience. In *Network*, Wright created the patches so that the B!ndman Hybrid musicians could contribute to the spatialisation directly from the stage. This speeded up the sound design process and added to the sense of immersion credited in reviews of the performance, with the *spatialisation of the sound around the audience having a direct, embodied connection to the on-stage action*.

### 3. References to the research

#### Improvisation

**3.1** Wright, M. & Parker, E. (2011) *Trance Map*. [Performances and CD release]. Selected as a case study for EUR2.5million ERC-funded project at the University of Huddersfield.

<https://research.hud.ac.uk/institutes-centres/irimas/improvisation/> Submitted to REF 2014 as an output and as underpinning research for Wright's 2014 impact case study. Available CCCU on request.

**3.2** Wright, M. & Parker, E. et al. (2014- ) *Trance Map +* [Performances and CD release] *Trance Map +* is encapsulate in *Crepuscule in Nickelsdorf* (2019) released worldwide on Intakt records, New York City Jazz Record's Label of the Year 2015, 2017, 2018.

<https://evanparkerintakt.bandcamp.com/album/crepuscule-in-nickelsdorf> Submitted to REF2.

#### Contemporary Concert Hall

**3.3** Wright, M. (2010) *Totem for Den Haag* on Music at the Edge of Collapse. [Composition and CD release]. Submitted to REF 2014 as an output and as underpinning research for Wright's 2014 impact case study. Link to Mexico City Performance (2015):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h19Y\\_wOOu9w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h19Y_wOOu9w) Available CCCU on request.

**3.4** Wright, M. (2016) *Fast Gold Butterflies* [Composition and CD release]. Available from CCCU on request.

**3.5** Wright, M. (2016) *Corelli\_HACK* [Composition]. First performed 28 Oct 2016. First broadcast 7 Nov 2016. Commissioned by the Transit Festival. <https://klara.be/transit-special-klara-live-en-late-night-lab> Submitted to REF2.

#### Multimedia Theatre

**3.6** (a) Wright, M. (2016) *Beyond / Behind* [Performance]. First performed 27 Feb 2016. Handelsbeurs Concert Hall, Ghent, Belgium (b) Wright, M. (2017) *Network* [Performance]. First performed 6 Nov 2017. Lyttelton Theatre, National Theatre. Available CCCU on request.

#### 4. Details of the impact

Wright's research offers performers and composers ways of applying DJ/club culture technology to contemporary music and sound design, across improvised music, the contemporary concert hall, and multimedia theatre. Through collaboration this has influenced creative practice, resulting in the co-creation of new music and sound design, contributing to the creative economy and cultural programming. Beneficiaries include audiences for new music, jazz, improvisation and the theatre-going public, creative organisations, and professional musicians. This is evidenced through supporting statements from his collaborators, recordings, airplay and live performances (Over 200 during the assessment period), critical reception, and audience and revenue figures.

**Developing new forms of improvised music.** Wright's collaboration with saxophonist Evan Parker has significance for music audiences, record labels and festival programmers as it brings together audiences for jazz, improvised, and computer music. Wright captures and composes with sound in real time on stage, utilising technology not as a recording device, but as an instrument with which to improvise. The live performance is captured and combined with post-production techniques to make a new recording, which mixes live performance and samples. In 2019 the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival's (hcmf//) brochure detailed Wright's contribution to Parker's music, highlighting how prior to their collaboration Parker's work with electronic musicians had been 'largely responsive', and notes how this 'embracing new types of music' had resulted in Parker developing a 'rich new series of works' that sound 'unlike anything else in his career.' [5.1]

Parker writes in support of the impact Wright has had on his creative practice and on improvised music more generally, with Wright's insights creating new ways of using and thinking about technology, bringing new musical outcomes. Parker details that computers had until recently been 'viewed with suspicion by the improvising community' and highlights Wright's role in bringing about a change in attitude [5.2]. He continues, '[t]hat I have chosen to make Matt such a key associate [...] is the most reliable testimony to my view of his significance as a performer. With his use of the turntable in combination with Ableton and surround sound spatialisation he has virtually created a new improvising instrument and a new conception of how recordings can be integrated into real time performance.' In relation to a performance of *Trance Map +* in February 2020, Parker writes how the group were left 'feeling elated at the rewards to be had when risk taking has such a "new musical" outcome. "New music" is still possible!' [5.2] The approach and understandings developed in *Trance Map +* have been utilised for spin off projects by Parker; the *Fifth Man Project*, a five-piece group (of which Wright was a member) performing at Tampere Jazz Happening in Finland (2017); and Wright working with Parker's Electroacoustic Ensemble for two works for hcmf// (*Twelve for Twelve Musicians* in 2014 and *Improvisation* a 90 minute 11-piece work which closed the festival in 2019) [5.2]. An additional piece, *Locked Hybrids* (2020), saw Wright working alone, using Parker's improvised material recorded throughout their collaboration [5.3].

Since 2014 there have been 38 performances of *Trance Map* and *Trance Map+* in the UK, Austria, Belgium, Greece, Finland, France, Holland, Poland and the USA [5.4], playing to an estimated audience of over 4,100, with tickets sales estimated in the region of GBP64,000. It gained thirty-three 4/5 star newspaper reviews in English, Flemish, French, Polish, Spanish, German, Italian, Portuguese and Norwegian [5.5]. Live performances at prestigious events and venues corroborate the significance of the work for audiences and programmers, and include Hull City of Culture (2017); the Cheltenham Jazz Festival (2018); IMPOTECH Athens (organised by IRCAM, 2019); and the Big Ears Festival in Knoxville, USA (2019). The performance from Cheltenham was broadcast on BBC Radio 3 [5.6] (BBC Radio 3 weekly audience approximately 1,900,000). *Trance Map+* recording *Crepuscule in Nickelsdorf* (2019) was released by Intakt Records (New York City Jazz Record's Label of the Year 2015, 2017, 2018), with an indicator of its reception being given by a 4.5 star review in All About Jazz, which reflected Wright's blending of the 'real' and 'synthetic'; '[t]he sounds bloom and the artificial feels real and the real becomes ersatz.' [5.5] *Locked Hybrids* was released on New York's Relative Pitch Label on 20 Nov 2020, and a new version of the work

was commissioned for the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (performed 21 Nov 2020) [5.3]. As detailed on the hcmf// website, *Locked Hybrids* saw Wright organising Parker's improvised material 'into new shapes' and allowing the listener to 'experience an entire new side' of the saxophonist. A feature on Wright by hcmf// highlights how Wright's production reveals 'the joy of listening to listening.' [5.3]. Both *Twelve for Twelve Musicians* and *Locked Hybrids* were broadcast on BBC Radio 3 [5.6].

**Influencing the composition and performance of contemporary concert music.** Wright's work has been a catalyst for new ways of composing and performing developed with two leading international ensembles, Ensemble Klang and B'Rock. Writing in March 2020, Pete Harden (Artistic Director, Ensemble Klang) credits Wright's influence as 'having a profound effect on the whole ensemble's aesthetic and working practice' and details how his 'philosophy of musical notation, rehearsal room technique and on-the-spot working practice, his knowledge of studio techniques and their implementation not just in live performance but within composition itself, and his consistent creativity' has not only influenced collaborative projects but shapes 'the way the ensemble now approaches a whole range of its activities.' [5.7a] Wright's two albums with Ensemble Klang have been streamed over 4000 times to March 2020 via Ensemble Klang's Bandcamp. *Fast Gold Butterflies* was performed by Ensemble Klang at the Dag in De Branding Festival (2016); Sound Festival, Aberdeen (2018) and premiered in an evening-long performance named *Fast Gold Butterflies* at the hcmf// in 2018. In 2015, *Totem for Den Haag* (2010) was selected as one of three pieces representing UK new music (alongside James Dillon and Rebecca Saunders) for the UK/Mexico Dual Year (UKMX) organised by the British Embassy, UKTI and the British Council [5.7b] [5.7c]. The work was performed by CEPROMusic at the Palacio de Bellas Artes [5.7a] [5.7b], one of Mexico's most prestigious performing venues.

Wright's composition *Corelli\_Hack* (2016) was commissioned by the TRANSIT Festival, Leuven for the Belgium baroque orchestra B'rock [5.8a]. After the premiere and subsequent broadcast on Klara FM (7 Nov 2016) [5.6] in which Wright was soloist, *Corelli\_Hack* became the title piece of a concert programme by B'rock featuring virtuoso recorder player Lucie Horsch [5.8b]. Wright also performed the work as soloist with the group at Amsterdam's Muziekcentrum, programmed alongside Steve Reich and Gyorgy Ligeti. From *Corelli\_Hack*, Wright developed *Corelli\_Thread* (2017), performed by Wright with saxophonist Robert Stillman and broadcast for BBC Radio 3's Exposure [5.6]. Insights developed here relating to changing orchestral string timbres via live sampling and spatialisation, are to be developed by Wright with the strings of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra as part of the UK premiere performance and BBC radio broadcast of Ingrid Laubrock's *Drilling* for the Tectonics festival [5.8c]. Originally programmed for May 2020, this was postponed due to COVID-19.

**Impact on sound design in multimedia theatre.** For *Beyond / Behind* (2016), Wright was recruited by composer Eric Sleichim to join music/theatre quartet B!ndman Hybrid [5.9]. He was responsible for live remixing and spatialisation, particularly of Grammy-award winning soprano Claron McFadden. In December 2020, this collaboration continued in a co-commission for Wright with McFadden for Ensemble Klang's 'Musical Utopias #3' festival, which brought international artists together during the COVID-19 lockdown (performed Feb 2021). Following *Beyond / Behind*, Sleichim chose Wright as the Musical Director for the National Theatre's *Network* (2017). Wright's creation of Ableton Live patches - assisting in routing Sleichim's electronic score from the performers onstage to the 10-channel surround system via a Dante network - was a component in Sleichim's sound design, which was nominated for an Olivier Award. As well as this technical contribution, Wright was responsible for rehearsing and coordinating the musicians within the immersive multimedia narrative of *Network*, as well as performing, for the entire run of 75 shows. Sleichim writes 'I thought of Matt Wright for leading the quartet and dealing with the electronics [...] As I worked several times with Matt on different occasions - him being a composer and electronic musician having played in a lot of musical situations - I knew I could be confident. [...] it was of a great importance having the musical gestures of the quartet giving [the sound design] a human shape.' [5.10a] *Network* was favourably reviewed in the media, including The Guardian, Time Out, The Daily Mail, Daily Express, and The Daily Telegraph, with reviewers highlighting a sense of audio/visual immersion [5.10b]. Michael Billington, in his 5-star review in The Guardian

writes: '[T]he success of the show, [...] lies in its capacity to use every facet of live theatre'. Quentin Lett writes in The Daily Mail, 'for theatrical spectacle you are unlikely to find a show to match'. In *The Stage*, Sam Marlowe highlights its 'pulsing soundtrack of bombastic theme tunes and Kraftwerk electronica'; and Andrzej Lukowski in *Time Out* writes; 'spectacularly staged – a garish, overwhelming storm of light and sound and video' [5.10b]. *Network* was one of the NT's 'landmark' productions of 2017/8 [5.10c]. Its 75 performances in London were sold out with an estimated audience of 67,000, contributing to the highest annual box office ever achieved for NT productions at the Southbank [5.10c].

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival brochure (2019), *Parker @ 75* (p. 88).

Reproduced here <https://hcmf.co.uk/evan-parker-celebrates-75-years-of-collaborative-revolution/>

5.2 Testimonial from Evan Parker.

5.3 Feature on Wright by hcmf// <https://hcmf.co.uk/matt-wright/> and hcmf// 2020 programme for *Locked Hybrids* <https://hcmf.co.uk/programme/matt-wright/>

5.4 Details of live performances of *Trance Map* and *Trance Map +* since 2014.

5.5 Collated reviews for Wright's work with Parker.

5.6 Details of Wright's work on BBC Radio 3 and Klara FM at

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b7hbwj> (Cheltenham Jazz Festival);

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04sv2lv> (*Twelve for Twelve Musicians*);

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000pm8d> (*Locked Hybrids*);

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08599h4> (*Corelli\_Thread*); and Klara FM;

<https://klara.be/transit-special-klara-live-en-late-night-lab> (*Corelli\_Hack*)

5.7 (a) Testimonial from Artistic Director Ensemble Klang (b)

[https://issuu.com/britishcouncilmx/docs/ukmx2015\\_annualreport](https://issuu.com/britishcouncilmx/docs/ukmx2015_annualreport) (p. 7) (c) Article detailing

Wright's contribution to UKMX 2015 <https://www.20minutos.com.mx/noticia/b282990/se-suma-festival-manuel-enriquez-a-actividades-del-ano-dual-mexico-ru/>

5.8 (a) TRANSIT Festival Programme (2016) (b) Details of Corelli\_Hack concert programme on

B'rock website <https://b-rock.org/project/corelli-hack/> (c) Tectonics Festival

<http://www.tectonicsfestival.com/schedule/bbc-scottish-symphony-orchestra-11>

5.9 Details of *Beyond / Behind* <http://www.blindman.be/en/productions/show/218>

5.10 (a) Email from *Network* Composer and Sound Designer (b) Selected reviews for *Network* at the National Theatre (c) NT Annual Report 2017/2018 (p 9 & 20).

PDFs available for all on-line content