

<b>Institution:</b> University of Nottingham		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UOA 33 Music		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Nottingham Forum for Artistic Research (NottFAR): Supporting new music practice and transforming engagement with new music in Nottingham.		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> April 2016-July 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>
Dr Elizabeth Kelly	Associate Professor in Music	01/09/2015 - present
Dr Duncan MacLeod	Assistant Professor in Music	01/01/2018 – present
Dr Xenia Pestova	Assistant Professor in Music	01/01/2015 – present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> April 2016-December 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>Regional arts engagement in the Midlands ranks among the lowest in England. Limited infrastructure and opportunities lead to risk-adverse homogenisation of live music programming and the perception that classical music is elitist. Nottingham Forum for Artistic Research (NottFAR) utilised practice-based music research to support the development of the region's music capabilities, focusing on new music which in the context of this ICS pertains to contemporary classical music and creative sound practices. NottFAR provided a platform for composers, practitioners and technologists in the East Midlands and neighbouring environs to share their work, increase their visibility and create transformative experiences for audiences, particularly those with little experience of new music. NottFAR has led to 1) new venue capacity and audience engagement in the region for new music; 2) support for artist development and new music practice, 3) enhanced learning outcomes in schools and 4) the delivery of a series of new digital programmes to support artistic resilience in the wake of Covid-19.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The underpinning research consists of compositions and performances that engage new music practices. <b>Kelly's</b> practice-based compositional research investigates intersections between American vernacular and Western classical music (3.1). She has a particular interest in creating repertoire for instruments not typically found in the concert hall, such as the electric guitar, and unusual instruments like the contrabass clarinet (3.2). Her research embraces cross-disciplinary collaboration with practice-based researchers and computer scientists, who worked with her to develop an opera (3.2). <b>MacLeod's</b> composition practice utilises both acoustic and digital forces. Specific research interests include spectator immersion and the blurring of spatial boundaries between performance platform and audience, and challenging the traditional distinctions of high/low culture. This is realised through reinterpreting traditional performance spaces and exploring unconventional public spaces, engaging new technologies and interdisciplinary practice (3.6). <b>Pestova</b> works on performance practice issues. Her interests lie in contemporary performance, and performance with new technologies (3.4). Her research currently spans the following areas: music for piano and extended techniques; music for piano or other keyboards and electronics - live and/or fixed; new music for portable keyboards (3.5); and design and implementation of new keyboard interfaces such as the Magnetic Resonator Piano (3.4).</p> <p>The teams' research focuses on contemporary music practice, including the <b>creative potential of new technology</b> in composition and performance practice using <b>Virtual Reality technology</b> (3.4) to provide interactive and immersive performances, new ways to engage archival material, and innovative experiences that challenge traditional performance conventions. The research highlighted the role of <b>new instrument technology</b> (3.4, 3.5, 3.6) in reinterpreting existing instruments and repertoire, in the creation of new compositions as well as in developing new techniques and performance practice. Working with researchers and practitioners in the arts, science and technology, the team have authored works that provide examples of how <b>transdisciplinary research-led practice and performance</b> can enrich music writing and <b>challenge and engage audiences</b>. (3.3, 3.4, 3.6). Furthermore, the team's outputs explore <b>new and innovative ways to programme and present new music</b> in existing concert spaces as well as in alternative venues not normally associated with new music (3.1, 3.4, 3.6). A further field of research incorporates composing for <b>under-represented and new instruments</b> as well as <b>re-contextualising existing instruments</b></p>		

such as contrabass clarinet (3.2), toy piano (3.5), Magnetic Resonator Piano (3.4), and use of digital processing of acoustic forces (3.6). This research examines methods in which instruments can be re-contextualised (writing concert music for toy piano), expands the range of repertoire and develops new techniques and performance practice. Together, this has contributed to a greater understanding of under-represented instruments.

### 3. References to the research

(1) Kelly, E. (2019) Blue Flame for string quartet (composition) Premiere: Villiers Quartet California Tour 15/03/19. Commissioned by the Villiers Quartet with funds from the Hinrichsen Foundation and Gemma Trust.

(2) Kelly, E. (2018) Into the Depths for contrabass clarinet & piano (composition) Premiere: SCAW Duo at International Clarinet Association ClarinetFest! in Ostend, Belgium, 08/07/18 Commissioned by Sarah K. Watts with funds from the PRS Foundation, Women Make Music.

(3) Kelly, E. (2019) Losing Her Voice (composition): multimedia opera in two acts for four singers, chorus, mixed septet and audience mobile phone interaction. Premiere: Lakeside Arts, Nottingham 06/04/19 [G1, G2]

(4) Pestova, X. (2020) Atomic Legacies (recording): original works by Pestova for Magnetic Resonator Piano and string quartet released on Diatribe Records [G3]

(5) Pestova, X. (2017) Toy Pianos, poor tools: Virtuosity and imagination in a limited context. *TEMPO* 71 (281): 27-38

(6) MacLeod, D. (2019) *The Metalization of a Dream* (composition) for open ensemble and electronics. Premiere: Lit & Phil, Newcastle, 12/02/19. Commissioned by Galvanize Ensemble with funds from the Arts Council of England, PRS Foundation, and RVW Trust.

#### Grants:

G1 'Losing Her Voice'. Opera America and Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, Opera Grants for Female Composers: Discovery Grants. 1/05/18 - 30/06/19. PI: Elizabeth Kelly \$13,250 USD

G2 'Amplified Diva, Magnified Celebrity: Geraldine Farrar's transition from Opera Stage to Silent Screen'. British Academy and Leverhulme Trust, Small Research Grant. 1/10/18 to 01/06/19. PI: Elizabeth Kelly. £9,996. Reference number: SRG18R1\180036

G3 'Magnetic String Resonance'. PRS Foundation, Women Make Music. 01/10/18 – 31/08/19. PI: Xenia Pestova. £3,700. Grant number: WMM2S4\100061

### 4. Details of the impact

Arts engagement in Nottingham ranks in the lowest 20% in England [I 1] with only 40% of people participating in arts events [I 2 & 5]. As the 11th most deprived district in England, Nottingham has high levels of poverty and low levels of education [I 9] while underinvestment in arts provision has restricted engagement and the cultural offer of the city [I 6]. Barriers to arts engagement include limited access [I 8], ticket pricing and the perception that classical music is elitist [I 3]. In 2016, public funding for the arts per head in the East Midlands was £2.40 p.a., markedly less than £7.54 p.a. in the West Midlands [I 4 & 6]. In Nottingham, this has seen concert venues privilege mainstream artists that guarantee box office returns, which has led to a risk-averse, homogenisation of live music programming, excluding contemporary classical music and creative sound practices [H p.6]. The decade leading up to NottFAR saw a decline in new music practice and programming in Nottingham [H p.2]. There was a limited range of small venues supporting new music with few regional opportunities for local artists [H p.6]. As violist Carmen Flores attests '*Before NottFAR came along in 2016, there was virtually no professional platform for new music performance in Nottingham*' [E].

#### 1) Building venue capacity and audience engagement in the region for new music

Since 2016, NottFAR has programmed over 78 high-calibre events comprising concerts, workshops, talks, symposia and a festival, both online and at 17 venues across Nottingham [A 1]. These events have featured 142 composers, and 136 ensembles and performers [B]. As a result, NottFAR has been recognised as having '*provided incredibly valuable opportunities and building capacity and events infrastructure in a region that suffers particularly from a lack of such cultural prospects*' by the Executive Director of nonclassical - the leading new music promoter and events producer [F]. NottFAR have partnered with traditional concert venues and organisations and enabled them to **engage audiences** who have had limited contact with new music, encouraging these venues to include **new music in their programmes**. UoN's Lakeside Arts has provided a testing ground for the team in the development of their new music programmes and has demonstrated to the city's venues the potential of new music to enable audience engagement.

Nottingham's **Theatre Royal Concert Hall** (TRCH) is a leading arts entertainment venue, with annual audiences of 500,000. The team's partnership with TRCH has seen their

research (3.3, 3.4, 3.6) **shape and expand their new music programme**, including the introduction of permanent programmes such as the launch of the biannual **Soundstage Festival**. Here, NottFAR's involvement was vital in establishing the festival which is now a permanent fixture that has '*boosted cultural provision in the city and engaged artists and audiences across the audio-visual arts spectrum*' [C]. The team's specialism in presenting new music in more intimate and alternative spaces (3.4, 3.6) has supported TRCH in making use of alternative spaces (foyer) within their venue, enabling them to **increase their programming and audience capacity**. In bringing these spaces into use, TRCH are now able to programme new music that could not have been delivered in the expanse of their main hall. As TRCH's Music Programme Manager explains, '*NottFAR has assisted us in expanding our core programming in ventures like the Soundstage Festival, to build new audiences for all the spaces in our venue, and to engage with our existing audiences in innovative ways. Thanks to NottFAR's influence over the programming choices of venues across the city and their support for fostering new talent, the team have been able to bring a new dimension to both the activity and practice of TRCH and the city of Nottingham more widely*' [C].

Drawing on expertise in performing in venues that lie outside of traditional concert music (3.4, 3.5, 3.6), NottFAR have created new opportunities for new music performances that draw audiences that normally do not visit formal concert music venues, such as TRCH, and who may perceive these places as exclusive [I 3]. Partnership work on **programming practice** between NottFAR and venues such as **Rough Trade Nottingham**, an independent record store and small live music venue, and the city council run **Museum of Nottingham Life**, have shown how these venues can diversify their activity and attract new audiences, whilst providing a platform for performances that **connect with audiences who would not normally attend new music concerts** [G]. The outcome is a diversification of the number of venues programming new music within the city that offer an alternative, intimate setting. The introduction of these smaller venues has provided a more sustainable low-cost/risk model for new music programming that has **increased opportunities for local artists and created capacity for new music events** [H p.6]. As the Music Programme Manager at TRCH states '*NottFAR has enabled venues in Nottingham to programme repertoire that they wouldn't normally take a risk on. This in turn has led to a more diversified, more daring and experimental cultural life in the city*' [C]. Further developing this cultural landscape, the team's research (3.1, 3.3, 3.4) and programme of events **facilitated strategic partnerships between venues and organisations**, such as between Broadway Cinema and TRCH, that enabled '*joining up... cultural activity of some of the key cultural venues and institutions across the city*' [C]. In collaborating with traditional and alternative venues, NottFAR's **impact on audience engagement** has been marked: '*Since [NottFAR] was set up, it has become obvious that there is a core audience in the city for new music and an appetite for concerts, conferences, and events*' [H p.6]. Indeed, audience surveys have consistently shown a positive response to NottFAR's events, with the majority respondents expressing interest in attending future new music events [A]. Moreover, in a number of cases, a NottFAR event has been an audience's first encounter with live new music.

The authors' interdisciplinary research has resulted in collaborations with poets (3.2), technologists (3.3, 3.4), and fine artists (3.6) and provided a blueprint on how to engage with new audiences. The team's research and programme of concerts with invited artists, has led to the **development of new music practice in Nottingham**, allowing for opportunities for artists to present non-mainstream creative practice. As such, NottFAR has had '*a transformative influence on the cultural life of Nottingham by expanding the provision and enhancing the quality of new music performance across a number of cultural venues*' [C].

In 2018, NottFAR collaborated with **Nottingham Chamber Music Festival** in programming a concert featuring the UK premiere of *Into the Depths* (3.2). The concert enabled the festival to engage new audiences and has had a lasting legacy on the festival structure - leading to **new music incorporated into its programming** for the first time. As the Festival Director states '*this collaborative concert helped in reaching out to new audiences [and] brought together a new mix of people to the concert that I had not witnessed at other places before in Nottingham. The concert gave me confidence to include new music into the future programming of the Festival*' [E].

By influencing programming practice, optimising venue use, and partnership building NottFAR has **created a substantial change to Nottingham's cultural offer** - making Nottingham a focal point for new music practice in the East Midlands that engages regional,



national, and international artists. NottFAR's 4-year programme alongside the team's outputs (3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.6) has featured over 50 international living composers from Australasia, Far East Asia, Europe, and North America. As TRCH testifies '*NottFAR has extended the existing capacity in the city and put the East Midlands on the international map of contemporary classical music, helping the region and its venues transform its contemporary cultural identity*' [C]. From an artist's perspective, Lee states '*It felt important too that for once, there was a public presentation of some of the people and groups working on new music in Nottingham*' [H p.2]. Further strengthening this transformation, NottFAR launched the inaugural **Midlands New Music Symposium**, a biennial programme dedicated to new music practice (Dec 2020, delayed by Covid-19 from May 2020). The online programme featured presentations, lecture-recitals, and concerts with contributions from 50 delegates and over 150-attendees from across the globe. As one of the few symposia dedicated to new music practice in the UK, it offered creative practitioners an opportunity to share ideas as composer Sohrab Uduman observes '*[The impressive] range of creative thought which came out in the Symposium ... presented something that has not existed in the region in recent years, nor has it been much in evidence in this nation of the UK*' [H p.5]. Indeed, a delegate survey revealed that 94% of participants found the programme to be a valuable opportunity to network and share practice and have expressed interest in contributing to future symposia [A pp.67-71]. As such, NottFAR will run the symposium as a biennial event, returning in 2022.

## **2) Supporting Artist Development and new music practice**

NottFAR has supported Midlands (and neighbouring environs) composers, performers and ensembles working in new music practices by providing a platform to share work and develop new music practice in the region. Prior to 2016, artist opportunities within the region were near non-existent as Nottingham composer Rebecca Lee explains: '*Promoters and national music development projects consistently overlook Nottingham*' [H p.2]. This sentiment is echoed by musician Sarah Watts: '*Nottingham has always been a difficult city for artists based in the city and there is little support for promoting concerts*' [H p.6]. With limited opportunities locally, artists have had to work further afield [H pp.4 & 6]. To date, NottFAR has **programmed and commissioned over 60 composers**, soloists and ensembles from across the Midlands. In 2019, NottFAR launched NottNOISE, a new music series dedicated to local artists in partnership with **Rough Trade Nottingham**, and online with new music promoter **nonclassical**. The informal format of the series (presenting new music in alternative venues), draws upon the team's own research (3.4, 3.5, 3.6). The series has so far featured 33 composers and performers and has **enabled these artists to engage with audiences** within Nottingham, and further afield as composer Helen Papaoiannou states '*NottNOISE's collaboration with nonclassical harnessed the dual reach of this partnership to introduce my work to a wider audience ... which boosted the digital promotion of my work*' [H p.4]. NottFAR has **enabled artists to build relations** with each other leading to further collaborations and commissions (3.1, 3.2, 3.5) as Watts states '*Nottingham has some internationally renowned musicians and composers who are often overlooked... NottFAR has filled in a gap here and bringing... a collective of core composers, performers and researchers together has created a growing hub and platform for all stages of artistic practice from researching and developing ideas, to collaborating, to putting all into practice and through to premieres, performances, and recordings*' [H p.6]. It has enabled artists to build partnerships with programmers and keystone arts organisations in the city, enabling them to secure further work and funding as Papaoiannou attests '*The emergence of NottFAR has ... greatly boosted prospects for artists like myself to find professional opportunities in the Midlands.*' [H p.4]. Moreover, the team's research (3.1, 3.4, 3.6) has also introduced artists to new ways of working from digital delivery through to music education, as demonstrated with the Villiers Quartet whose work with Kelly and the Nottingham Music Service led the quartet to develop 'new modes of chamber performance for young audiences' and to make commissioning new music and music education key priority areas for their organisation, leading to new strategic partnerships and funding [E].

## **3) Improving primary and secondary level music education in Nottingham**

The Sound and Music 2019 National Music Educators' Survey highlighted that while creating and composing music should be a core element of music education, as it develops young people's identity and wellbeing, limited opportunities for students to hear their own compositions performed live and to work with professional composers constitute a huge barrier to their ability to compose [I 10]. Most music educators lack specialist training in composition. As with other services surveyed, the **Nottingham Music Service (NMS)** has

struggled to deliver composition instruction as students, particularly from deprived backgrounds, 'are nervous and unsure how to start or develop their work' and 'music teachers are themselves insecure about teaching and facilitating composing'. [D]. To support NMS' mission of improving its composition provision, Kelly drew on [3.1] to develop teaching which she delivered to both primary and secondary-school students. She further introduced the NMS to partners, the **Villiers Quartet**, who workshopped, performed and recorded the students' compositions, giving the students the crucial opportunity to hear their work performed live. The project engaged with c.1750 students across the city in 2018-19, **enhancing student learning outcomes** at primary and secondary levels **and supporting delivery of the NMS keystone programme**, the '*Great Orchestra Experiment*' [D]. Kelly presented her findings on how to improve secondary-school provision of composition to 29 music educators and stakeholders from across the region at the inaugural Music Education Hubs East Midlands conference. Kelly provided crucial training to regional practitioners in how to enhance music composition learning outcomes for their students. This collaboration also supported the NMS in achieving its strategic goal of finding meaningful ways to engage students with professional performers and enabled the Villiers Quartet to develop their artistic practice around music education, now a major focus of their work. [E]

#### **4) Supporting artistic resilience in the wake of Covid-19**

Since the first national lockdown, arts sectors have been badly affected [I 11], with a ban on indoor performances closing venues. With a lack of digital programme alternatives due to venues furloughing staff, many artists have found livelihoods in the balance [I 7]. In response, NottFAR enabled continued support for artist development and the city's cultural offer through **two digital programmes: (1) With nonclassical**, NottFAR delivered its **NottNOISE** series as a 7-week digital programme that launched in early November 2020. Modelled on digital performances of the team's research (3.2, 3.4, 3.6), the programme comprised 14 mini-concerts featuring 25 composers and performers from the Midlands and neighbouring environs with 1392 views. This provided artists with a platform to perform and share practice whilst engaging with a national audience through nonclassical's established reach [F], enabling them to **showcase and increase awareness of new music practice in the Midlands**. As nonclassical's Executive Director observes '*Through this partnership, it has put the city on the map for its musical output, nationally and internationally with nonclassical's wider following, and through the networks of the artists involved*' [F]. The programme featured two commissioned works that drew on Pestova's research on toy pianos (3.5). NottFAR's partnership with nonclassical has also helped the organisation '*move away from a somewhat Southern-centric programming*' and '*was an excellent first step in fulfilling a core nonclassical objective over the next three years – to expand our support of artists, and audiences, outside of London*' [F]. This collaboration has led nonclassical to view digital events as '*a new opportunity alongside ... physical events and releases to see this as a programme stream unto itself*' [F]. (2) In Nov 2020, NottFAR programmed a **one-day festival of new music** supported by UoN's Lakeside Arts. This was the first festival wholly dedicated to new music and featured (3.2, 3.6), with two commissions drawing upon the research of (3.5). The pre-recorded programme comprised of 9 concerts and 12 interviews, featuring 20 soloists and ensembles performing works by over 40 composers from the Midlands, UK, and abroad. Over a period of one-month, the festival videos have attracted 19,333 views, 65% of whom were new to NottFAR and Lakeside Arts. The festival has provided a platform to perform and share practice, namely '*creating the momentum much needed in the region*' [F], whilst further **developing Nottingham's profile as a focal point for new music practice in the Midlands** engaging with national and international audiences.

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- A. NottFAR Event Evaluation Report.
- B. Schedule of NottFAR impact events (September 2016 – December 2020).
- C. Testimonial from Music Programme Manager, Nottingham Royal Concert Hall.
- D. Testimonial from the CEO of Nottingham Music Service.
- E. Letter, Carmen Flores, Villiers Quartet/Director of Nottingham Chamber Music Festival.
- F. Testimonial from the Executive Director of nonclassical.
- G. Testimonial from the Nottingham Museums Project coordinator.
- H. Dossier of testimonies to impact on regional artists.
- I. Section 4 References.