

in audible:

## The Baroque Cello Project

[www.baroquecelloproject.com](http://www.baroquecelloproject.com)

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ARCADECARDIFF



*a multi-disciplinary collaboration*

*Leona Jones, Siôn Dafydd Dawson, Adam Winskill, Jeff Chapman*

Thank you for visiting our installation. We'll all be around at various times over the presentation period, so if you have any questions or comments, we'd be very pleased to talk and listen with you. Ac mae Siôn yn siarad dwy iaith.

The cello, made by luthier Adam, was commissioned by musician Siôn in 2013. Handcrafting began in Adam's London workshop in December 2013 after he had sourced wood (mostly maple and spruce) of the right quality. From the very start, Leona began recording the sounds and Jeff the images of the making process, in a wood-scented space of sawdust and shavings. The making was an organic process: sensual, time-disdainful, intricate, brutal, concentrated, delicate, repetitive, physically and intellectually demanding. The gathering of material for the project had to discreetly follow the process, never interrupting or distracting from it.

The epicentre of the project is the cello itself. But equal attention radiates outwards to other elements - elements usually left out, unconsidered, and dismissed as not important. Within the sounds of the making process, and other ephemeral products of razor-edged blades, lie ignored qualities and uniquenesses. Opportunities for other focuses in listening and seeing invite enhancement and expansion of this finely-crafted instrument, plus chance to consider what is easily thrown away and lost.

Every act of making means somethings are discarded. Woodworking produces too-familiar sounds that *crCReak*groanTHUMP on the very periphery of our acoustic world. Such sounds are not even usually linguistically designated 'waste'. However, within them lie multi-layered, rich and rhythmic soundworlds. Each and every sound that has ever happened exists fleetingly in time, disappears out of our hearing, another hurrying to resonate IN/over/through its place. On the workbench every single one of these usually ignored sounds contributed to the creation of the instrument now placed among them, complete and ready to 'sound' itself. The sounds used in the soundscape have not been manipulated digitally after recording; they are as they were recorded. But editing choices have been made as to which to use and where to place them in relation to their fellows, elevating one sound and ignoring another, in order to sculpt a 'music' of transforming solidity. All that is audible expresses that which is inaudible.

Cello, offcuts and shavings, as well as making sounds, all are the result of considered movements, gestures repeated and repeated, pre-dating the musician's considered movements and gestures needed to make the instrument 'speak' or 'sing'. And the instrument is not the only solid or soundmaking product of the making. What of the heaps of shavings, the offcuts of wood, the oh-so-nearly-cellos, those parts that were destined mostly have been binned or burnt - can these be elevated to be considered in the same aesthetic way? What happens when the disregarded is given the same close attention as the instrument? All things visible express that which is invisible.

Improvisatory performances continue the exploration of definitions of aesthetics and values. The ever-changing process of improvisation means certain ideas are perfectly relevant on some occasions but misplaced on others. A balance of spontaneity, thought and rehearsal prevents ideas from becoming over-used, standardised, rather than developmental. Certain musical elements of 'classical' training must be put to one side, leaving basic techniques and creativity, supported by a pre-arranged structure, to underpin a coherent performance. And continuing the celebration of the hidden, the underheard, the disregarded, the nevernoticed in the act of sounding, the performances will take place in a situation where ever changing external sounds will necessarily join the soundscape.

Although many forms of contemporary technology allow obsessions/recordings/documentings/repeatings/passings on/passesonpassesonpasseson in reality the nature of sound/live performance is always ephemeral. Any recording is only a capturing of particular moments in time, from particular vantage points. Only each individual can completely understand for themselves how witnessing affects both the soundspace and their perceptions of meaning. And witnessing is not easy in distracted and distractable times. It requires engagement from inside the mind, as well as stimulation from outside the body. Listen through other ears, nurture another skin, return to the resonance of soundwaves and gestures that begin at the intersection of gut and hair, blade and wood, and the sensitivity of fingertips.

The cello was completed in mid September, and delivered to Siôn to begin its next stage of life. Rain, wind, streams, the outside environment that the wood was bound up with, none are ever likely to be in extended proximity to it again. But the instrument will always retain its organic roots, reacting to temperature, humidity, periods of activity or inactivity, in different ways over the decades. This presentation with the premiere public playings of the instrument can be considered as 'rests', contained stillnesses before further momentum. Stillnesses, time of repose, offer chances to take stock, to consider. And listen to the voiceless shadows in audible.

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