

Artists and Artmusic

Helen Ottaway

Composer / installation artist

Helen Ottaway was born in Oxford and studied music at University of London, Goldsmiths' College.

As a student in the 1970's she participated in courses and projects led by John Cage, also appearing in Peter Greenaway's film on the composer for Channel 4, experiences which have hugely influenced her own work.

She was a founder member of the new music performance groups Regular Music and 3 or 4 Composers and also performed internationally with experimental theatre companies including Lumiere & Son and IOU.

As a composer who has a unique ability to place sounds within buildings and other environments, she has received commissions from Nottinghamshire County Council; The Dean and Chapter of Salisbury Cathedral; BBC2, Bath Film Festival and Frome Festival among others. She has been Composer in Residence for Salisbury Festival ('In Praise of Trees', 2001-2) and Frome Festival (2006).

In 1999, with her partner Arts Administrator Steve Ehrlicher, she formed Artmusic to produce and promote collaborative work between artists from different disciplines. With Artmusic she has created large scale installations, performances and educational projects for The National Review of Live Art, European Capital of Culture Cork 2005, Oxford Contemporary Music, Norfolk & Norwich Festival and many more. With sound designer Alastair Goolden she has become well known for creating movement-generated sound installations using Soundbeam technology.

Helen is currently composing music for live artist Franko B's new performance piece, 'I'm Thinking of You' which will premiere at the National Review of Live Art in Glasgow in February 2009. She has also been commissioned to create a new work for the re-launch of the Birmingham Arts Centre, mac.

Melanie Thompson M.A

Performer/ lecturer / consultant in collaborative art practice

Melanie Thompson originally came from London. She studied theatre and dance at Dartington College of Arts in Devon in the 1970's, then joining international performance company Cardiff Laboratory Theatre in the 80's. She then formed her own company 'Intimate Strangers' with Paul Roylance. The company toured nationally and internationally, and was supported by the Arts Council.

During this time she taught and directed experimental theatre for ten years at the 'Tidens Theatre School' in Århus Denmark.

In 1989 she moved to Somerset. Since then she has lectured part time at Dartington College and various other universities across the country.

In 1992 (the same year as she produced twin boys) she started a six year project with visual artist Kirsten Lavers. Together they produced 10 'Episodes' across the U.K.

In 2000 she created 'The Scallop Project' with Jane Hazlewood, a year long residency in a small Somerset village culminating in a final days event. That year she also completed her M.A

From 2001 she has worked on three major public art projects as an art consultant and lead artist.

She has been touring a solo show since 2003 taking it to France, Canada and Norway as well performing it in G.B.

From 2005 - 2007 she was the Director of Tor Dance Festival.

In 2007 she set up a public art partnership - 'Shared Space' - with artist Bob Budd, which is committed to integrating art into public places and everyday environments.

Artmusic (www.artmusic.org.uk)

Artmusic was formed in 1999 to promote collaborative work between artists from different disciplines and to foster new relationships between the arts and

other spheres. The organisation continues to build a repertoire of installation and performance pieces and is committed to exploring new environments and addressing new audiences in the presentation of its work.

The first two works were developed as a research project with funding from South West Arts. *Footprints*, by artist Rowena Pearce, sound designer Alastair Goolden and composer Helen Ottaway, was the first of an ongoing series of installations which use the movement of the public around a space to generate and shape music and sound. *Round & Round*, a cycle of paintings and piano pieces by Barry Cooper and Helen Ottaway with video by Al Morrison was first performed at the Merlin Theatre, Frome.

Site specific installations form a large part of Artmusic's output with works created for The National Review of Live Art in a subterranean corridor and for Salisbury Festival in the roof of Salisbury Cathedral. *Thin Air*, Helen Ottaway and Alastair Goolden's site specific sound sculpture for cathedrals and other religious buildings is recreated for each new venue, using material linked to the building and its history and involving members of the community in the development process.

The creation of interactive environments, an essential element in Artmusic's installation and site specific work, has been developed by Alastair Goolden and Helen Ottaway using Soundbeam. Soundbeam converts physical movement into sound using ultra-sonic sensors. The sensors send out streams of pulses of ultra-sound in invisible beams. Interruptions of the beam by movement cause 'echoes' of the ultra-sonic pulses to be reflected back to the sensor. In Artmusic's work this information is interpreted by a sampler which will 'play' previously recorded individual fragments of music and 'found sound' according to the nuances of the detected movement.

The exploration of aspects of performance is another ongoing strand of Artmusic's activity. In *Black & White*, painter Barry Cooper and composer/pianist Helen Ottaway are developing a joint language for making and performing a series of improvised and composed duets. The documentation of their research includes text, drawings, notation, paintings and audio and video recording.

In both the conception and the realisation Artmusic's work includes much which is either random or

intuitive or both. When two or more elements coexist and interact the results are often unpredictable. The product of the collaborative process is always more than the sum of its parts and there emerges another layer in the work which is indefinable and separate. This is the magical quality which draws people to the work time and time again.

In 2007- 2008 Artmusic acted as Producer for Palace Intrusions, a year-long series of free arts events in Wells and Mendip (www.palaceintrusions.org.uk).

Artmusic is a not-for-profit partnership supported by a voluntary advisory panel.