

## Meet BEAST



BEAST (Birmingham ElectroAcoustic Sound Theatre) is the concert sound system of the University of Birmingham's Electroacoustic Music Studios.

It was founded in 1982 by Emeritus Professor Jonty Harrison, to showcase electroacoustic music produced in the Studios and around the world. Over the succeeding decades, over 80 composers based in the Birmingham Studios have been members of BEAST. As well as winning international competitions and receiving performances, broadcasts and commissions, many of these composers have gone on to teach in universities all over the world (Manchester, De Montfort, Harvard, etc.). In 2002, BEAST became part of the newly formed Centre for Composition and Associated Studies (COMPASS) in the Department of Music at the University of Birmingham and has, for many years, enjoyed a close working relationship with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. From the 2014/15 season, [Scott Wilson \(/staff/profiles/music/wilson-scott.aspx\)](/staff/profiles/music/wilson-scott.aspx) has taken over as Director.

BEAST has performed extensively in the UK and other parts of Europe, including at London's South Bank Centre (often as part of Sonic Arts Network promotions), the Edinburgh and Huddersfield Festivals, the Henry Wood Hall in Glasgow, the Adrian Boult Hall in Birmingham, *MultiMediale II* in Karlsruhe, The Royal Dutch Conservatory in The Hague, *The Acousmatic Experience* in Amsterdam, the *Aspekte* Festival in Salzburg, the *Inventionen* Festival in Berlin, the *Echt-Zeit* Festival in Basel, *Aix en Musique* in Aix en Provence, the *Sound Around* Festival in Copenhagen, and *Inventionen* in Berlin. It received very high acclaim as the concert sound system at the 1990 International Computer Music Conference in Glasgow and was an important contributor to both *Sounds Like Birmingham – UK City of Music 1992*, and Birmingham's *Towards the Millennium Festival* during the 1990s. BEAST's own promotions in its home town have included ten years of the Barber Festival of Contemporary Music, several years of rumours... and related events at the Midlands Arts Centre, *murmurs...* at the Crescent Theatre and, for the past decade, it has been a regular part of *The Series* at the CBSO Centre. In 2012 BEAST began holding concerts in its new home, the custom designed Elgar Concert Hall at the Bramall Music Building.

The BEAST diffusion system uses multiple channels of separately amplified loudspeakers, whose differing characteristics make them appropriate for a particular position or function. The system includes arrays of tweeters (high frequency speakers which can be suspended over the audience), sub-woofers (low frequency speakers) and full-range speakers of varying characteristics and from different manufacturers. The performer is able, via a custom-built diffusion desk or a computer interface, to create a variety of sound images, and to 'sculpt' the spatial, dynamic and dramatic implications of the music in a particular performance environment in order to interpret and realise the composer's intentions. BEAST is engaged in ongoing research into new controllers and interfaces for the performance of acousmatic and electroacoustic music and can now install systems of around 100 loudspeakers.

For more than thirty years, BEAST has been committed to performing electronic music to the highest possible standards. The composers associated with the system display a variety of styles and aesthetics, but are united by a desire to explore the unique creative potential of the electroacoustic medium.

