

Centre for Composition and Associated Studies (COMPASS)



The Centre for Composition and Associated Studies (COMPASS) is the focal point for all activities related to contemporary music at the University of Birmingham, and is comprised of internationally recognised faculty and a dynamic community of undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Faculty

COMPASS faculty members include composers, **Michael Zev Gordon** (</staff/profiles/music/gordon-michael.aspx>), Daria Kwiatkowska, **Jonty Harrison** (</staff/profiles/music/harrison-jonty.aspx>), and **Scott Wilson** (</staff/profiles/music/wilson-scott.aspx>), and musicologist **Ben Earle** (</staff/profiles/music/earle-ben.aspx>), who together bring to COMPASS a wide range of interests including:

- Large ensemble composition
- Multichannel electroacoustic music and spatialisation
- Live and interactive electronics
- Music for theatre and dance
- Contemporary Music Study, Analysis and Aesthetics

See our [academic staff](/schools/lcahm/departments/music/staff/index.aspx) (</schools/lcahm/departments/music/staff/index.aspx>)

Composition study

Student members of COMPASS are part of a dynamic learning community which offers them the opportunity to explore many aspects of contemporary music today. Rather than being made to specialize in one area of contemporary music, students are encouraged to find their own path, and develop a personal compositional practice which can freely mix instrumental and vocal composition, studio-based or live electroacoustic work, sound installations, technical research, etc., as appropriate to each individual. The department offers a wide range of course and programme options (full-time, part-time, external) at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level. We have many students from overseas, and international applications are welcome.

Research

COMPASS hosts a number of ongoing research projects in various areas, with a particular focus on the area of multichannel spatialisation and sound diffusion. Recent research includes:

- Performance practice work on extended cello techniques
- A new viola-based control interface for sound synthesis
- Development of software for the control of large-scale multichannel electroacoustic presentation systems
- Ongoing contributions to the **SuperCollider** (</facilities/ea-studios/research/supercollider/index.aspx>) computer music language
- The **BEASTtools** (<http://www.beast.bham.ac.uk/research/tools.shtml>) suite of sound processing modules.

BEAST and the Electroacoustic Music Studios



COMPASS is home to **Birmingham ElectroAcoustic Sound Theatre (BEAST)** (</facilities/ea-studios/index.aspx>), an internationally recognised concert organisation which is famous for its presentation of electroacoustic music on multichannel systems of as many as 96 loudspeakers. BEAST's activities center around the department's seven electroacoustic music studios, which along with BEAST's performance system recently underwent a £500,000 refit. As part of that we have expanded our facilities to include MiniBEAST, a permanently installed 30 channel loudspeaker system for performance, rehearsal, and weekly listening sessions.

BCMG Link

COMPASS has a long standing link with the **Birmingham Contemporary Music Group** (<http://www.bcmg.org.uk/>), our

'ensemble in association', and one of the finest contemporary music groups in the country. Our joint activities are varied, and include workshop sessions in which student composers have the opportunity to have their works performed and recorded with the ensemble. Each year one work from the workshops is awarded a prize and usually given a public performance by the ensemble.



Birmingham Ensemble for Electroacoustic Research



BEER (</facilities/ea-studios/research/beer.aspx>) was founded in 2011 as a research project within the Music Department to explore aspects of real-time electroacoustic music making. Particular interests include networked music performance and live coding.

New Music Ensemble and Contemporary Music Performance



The department's New Music Ensemble gives regular



performances of contemporary music, and plays student works in both concerts and workshop sessions. Other ensembles within the department and the University Music Society also perform contemporary and student works. There are two competitions each year for student orchestral compositions, the winning pieces

of which receive public performances.

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