



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Artist Brief

SOUNDING
CHANGE

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About the Department of Music at the University of Birmingham

The Department of Music is one of the most distinguished in the UK, with a history stretching back to 1905 when Edward Elgar was appointed the University's first Professor of Music. While we are proud of our long venerable history, we are committed to investing in a future that involves the latest cutting-edge developments in the practice and study of music.

From undergraduate and postgraduate study to research and University Music, Birmingham ranked in the top 70 in the world for Arts and Humanities, with The College of Arts and Law placing 67th in the Times Higher Education 2022 rankings. The department boasts world-class facilities set within the £16 million Bramall building including the 450-seater Elgar Concert Hall, state-of-the-art electroacoustic studios and the associated Birmingham Electroacoustic Sound Theatre (BEAST) a 100-channel sound diffusion system for the performance and development of electronic music. University Music is at the forefront of university level music-making and this sector-leading offer brings together public engagement, research, and student experience with the Music Society and Department of Music.

The Department of Music is seeking to take steps to become more responsive to today's world as well as more representative and reflective of Birmingham as a future-facing, dynamic and diverse city. We wish to continue to be innovative in the practices and study of music and tackle issues of under-representation within the performative and academic study of the arts.

What is the Sounding Change Programme?

Sounding Change is our new Artist Residency programme, which supports musicians, composers and artists at pivotal stages of their careers to explore new ideas and develop their practice in our research environment. The programme is focused on engaging with artists that are currently underrepresented within the Music Department including artists who identify as d/Deaf or Disabled, Neurodivergent, LGBTQ+, those from the Global Majority and those from a low socioeconomic background.

During the 10-month programme, artists will conceive and deliver a new work to be presented as part of the University's Spring / Summer Concert Series between March and May 2024. Artists are encouraged to choose from a variety of venues, both on the University campus and across the city, in order to present their commission. Artists will have opportunities to work alongside academics from across the university to develop their ideas as well as access to the Department of Music's facilities and University Music Ensembles.

Each programme will be unique from artist to artist and that excites us. It's an opportunity for artists to take essential time to explore and develop work. We want to be challenged as a Department and to enable bold and ambitious projects.

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Examples of how the commission could be interpreted include:

- Composing a new piece of music to be performed by one of the University Music Ensembles. This could also include a Special Guest Artist(s).
- Working with Researchers and/or Academics from across the University of Birmingham to explore themes within your music and expand your practice by engaging with current research being undertaken at the University.
- Working in the Electroacoustic Studios to develop your electronic music practice and /or work with cutting edge spatial audio technologies

Please refer to the Appendix for a full list of the facilities and Ensembles at the campus that you could utilise, as well as further information on current research being undertaken at the University of Birmingham that you could align your commission with.

The programme's Artistic Lead is Associate Professor Dr Annie Mahtani and the programme's Producer is Becky Woodcock.

How does it work?

The bespoke programme for up to three artists will include:

- A 10 month programme beginning in July 2023 and ending with the delivery of a commission as part of the University's Spring / Summer Concert Series between March and May 2024
- A Sounding Change in-person networking day and programme launch event on Thursday 6 July 2023 to meet the other artists, view the facilities available at the University of Birmingham and publicly launch the programme
- The delivery of a relevant workshop by each artist to Music students and/or those involved in University Music
- Mentoring by relevant academics from across the University to support with the research and development of artists' ideas

Finances

Artists participating on the Sounding Change programme will receive:

- A £2,500 bursary for research and ideas development time
- A fee of £4,500 per commission for a new work to be presented between March and May 2024
- £500 fee for delivering a workshop within the Department of Music during the programme
- Production budget of up to £2,000 for the performance of the commission (to cover elements such as venue hire, technicians, guest performers etc)

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Artists' travel and expenses will also be covered for Sounding Change activity which we ask you to take part in, such as the networking day and programme launch, workshop for students and rehearsals for the performance.

Key Dates

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Friday 9 June 2023 at 5pm | Applications Deadline |
| Mid – Late June 2023 | Shortlisting and Artist Selection |
| Thursday 6 July 2023 | Artist Networking Day and Launch Event |

Accessibility

If you have accessibility needs and require additional support for applying, please contact soundingchange@contacts.bham.ac.uk

We can offer alternative application methods e.g. video and financial support for anyone who needs additional access support, including at the application process. We want to accommodate any access needs so please get in touch so we know how we can help.

How do I apply?

We welcome applications from artists who:

- Are over 18 years old
- Are not currently in any full or part-time formal education
- Are living and working in the UK
- Not currently affiliated to the Department of Music in any capacity

If you fit the above eligibility criteria, please follow this link to complete an application form:

<https://forms.gle/DunTcJhyjiGPn7Z86>

To apply you will be asked to provide:

- Contact Information
- CV / short biography (PDF file, up to 1 side of A4) or a video (up to 3mins) which includes an overview of your practice
- Up to three examples of your work using weblinks
- A statement (PDF file, up to 1 side of A4) or a video (up to 3mins) which includes answers to the following questions:

1. What interests you about the opportunity to conduct an Artist Residency within the University of Birmingham Department of Music?
2. What ideas would you like to explore and/or build upon during the 10 month residency? (We are not looking for final ideas at this stage)
3. What areas of academic support would be useful to help you develop your ideas?

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Application Making Advice and Support

If you require an alternative format of the programme brief or application form - eg audio recording, large print, etc. - please contact soundingchange@contacts.bham.ac.uk Please allow a one week turnaround for alternative application formats.

We are happy to receive questions about the opportunity or application process. Please contact soundingchange@contacts.bham.ac.uk

We also offer applicants the opportunity to speak with a member of the Sounding Change project team for a ten-minute advice session on:

- Tuesday 9 May 2023 between 12pm and 1pm
- Wednesday 10 May 2023 between 4pm and 5pm
- Monday 15 May between 6pm and 7pm
- Thursday 18 May between 10am and 11am

In these sessions, we can discuss your specific ideas and recommend ways you might frame these to strengthen your application. We are unable to read draft applications or examples of your previous writing. Please email soundingchange@contacts.bham.ac.uk with the areas of your application you would like to discuss and your phone number to book an advice session and we will confirm the process for your advice session over email.

Please note that the advice we provide will centre around the eligibility and suitability of your application to the programme and will have no bearing on its assessment. You do not need to have had an advice session with a member of the Sounding Change project team before submitting an application.

Selection Process

Artists will be shortlisted and selected based on their application by a diverse panel consisting of the Sounding Change Project Team and four external industry consultants.

The assessors will consider applications based on the following criteria:

- The quality of the applicant's practice, as evidenced in examples of their work
- How the applicant intends to approach the programme, the academic support they feel would help them to do so and their willingness to learn, take risks and collaborate
- The experience of the applicant in leading their own projects and undertaking new commissions
- How pivotal a career moment the applicant has articulated in their application, and the impact that a focused research and development opportunity would have on the direction of their practice

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Successful applicants will be contacted in mid-June. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed by the end of June and feedback will be available on request.

The University of Birmingham Music Department is committed making the Sounding Change cohort representative and reflective of the city of Birmingham and to tackle issues of under-representation within the performative and academic study of the arts. Such a group that brings together a wider variety of backgrounds is hugely exciting for us artistically, as well as allowing us to commit to fairness and equity for all. We actively encourage applications from artists who identify as d/Deaf or Disabled, Neurodivergent, LGBTQ+, those from the Global Majority, those from a low socioeconomic background, and those who have had a gap in their careers.

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APPENDIX

Facilities at the Department of Music, University of Birmingham

Bramall Music Building

The £16 million Bramall Music Building include a 450-seat concert hall designed by renowned acoustician Nicholas Edwards of Acoustic Dimensions (Symphony Hall Birmingham, Symphony Centre Dallas, Royal Shakespeare Theatre).

This is the most adaptable space of its kind in any University in the UK. The concert hall and its acoustics can be configured for rehearsals and performances ranging from solo recitals to full symphony orchestra, 200-strong University Choir, multi-projector video and music-theatre presentations, and the electroacoustic studios' 100-channel sound diffusion system ('BEAST'). A pipe organ – the first to be built in this country by the renowned French builder Marc Garnier – was installed in summer 2014.

The Dome Room provides a second flexible space for rehearsals whether for solos and ensembles or a full symphony orchestra. It can be configured, too, for small-scale recitals or theatrical performances. It also houses the BEASTdome, a semi-permanently installed 30+ channel Genelec loudspeaker system providing an intimate space for performances and other events requiring immersive audio and video.

A range of teaching spaces in the Bramall Building include seminar rooms which double as spaces for rehearsals, practice rooms, and a recording studio linked to the concert hall and Dome rehearsal room. There are rooms in which our large collection of early music instruments are housed and used for teaching and rehearsal, and a range of electroacoustic studios including a large teaching studio whose computers are equipped with composition and music-processing software.

Frankland University Music Hub

The University Music Hub includes a range of small to medium size practice rooms, with upright and grand pianos, as well as a rehearsal studio, and recording facilities. The recording control room connects to a variety of spaces in the building, each with different acoustic qualities, and can be used by students and our technician to support project from our student groups and guest artists. A dedicated team of staff run University Music from the University Music Hub, with 1-1 visiting tutors giving lessons to music students and music scholarship in the teaching rooms.

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Frankland Studio Recording Facility

The recording studio is equipped with industry standard equipment and microphones found in many top studios around the world and is designed to record soloists up to small-medium sized ensembles. The studio houses:

- 16ch Millennia Preamps
- SSL X-desk Mixer
- Genelec Calibrated loudspeakers
- Apogee Symphony Audio Interface
- M1 Mac Mini with Reaper, Arturia Plugins, UAD Full Suite, Lexicon Reverb Bundle
- Bricasti M7 Reverb Unit

Electroacoustic Studios

Birmingham Electroacoustic Sound Theatre is established as a world leading institution in the field of multichannel audio, electronic music composition, performance and spatialisation. Our studios offer industry leading monitoring environment for ambisonic and multichannel audio research and composition and an extensive range of portable equipment including ambisonic microphones and multichannel recording devices. Recent additions to our spatial audio facilities include a MHAcoustics 64 channel Eignemike (the first in the UK) and an IKO 3D audio speaker.

Spatial Audio Studios

Studio 1 is a 38 channel fully calibrated Genelec loudspeaker composition room. This is used for stereo, multi-channel and ambisonic composition. At the heart of this is an Apple Mac Studio computer containing a range of software and plugins for spatial and electronic composition including Reaper, Ableton, Max/Msp, Supercollider and Spat Revolution amongst others.

Studios 2 & 3 are 18-channel composition rooms comprising of 16 Genelec calibrated loudspeakers, with 2x ATC main monitors for stereo composition. This is also used for stereo, multi-channel and ambisonic composition. These studios have iMac Pro with similar range of software.

Electronic Music Studios

Studio 4 & 5 are stereo composition rooms with calibrated Genelec loudspeakers and iMac computers.

Shared between these rooms are our electronic and dance music equipment which includes:

- Make Noise Tape and Microsound System (modular processor)
- Buchla 208 Easel
- Moog Matriarch
- Ableton Push
- Technics SL1200G Decks
- Allen and Heath Xone 96 DJ Mixer
- Roland TR8S Drum Machine
- Eventide H90 Fx pedal and other synths and midi controllers.

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For further information on the Studio facilities visit:

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/ea-studios/studios/index.aspx>

University Music Ensembles

University Music Ensembles range from full size symphonic orchestras, a jazz orchestra and various jazz small bands, a range of instrumental choirs, folk group, classical chamber ensembles and early music groups, a brass band and a wind band, through to a selection of 11 choirs of various sizes and musical styles.

For a full list of all ensembles visit www.birmingham.ac.uk/universitymusic

Research at University of Birmingham

Examples of areas of Research you may want to explore as part of your commission could include climate change, equal rights activism, physics, psychology, non-Western musics/musics of the Global Majority, historical Western musical traditions not limited to Classical music, electronic music etc.

For more information on Research currently being undertaken across the University of Birmingham visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/climate/index.aspx