

Ensemble 1604 presents ...shadows that in darkness dwell...

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In our 18nite session Ensemble 1604 will perform my recent work *...shadows that in darkness dwell...* for recorder, counter-tenor, theorbo, baroque cello and electronics (pre-recorded multi-channel electroacoustic music). The work explores an approach to combining early music performance practice with electronic music.

Programme Note:

I imagine the character of John Dowland, a reclusive and private man with a mysterious past: as a musician in the court of the Danish King, Dowland was also working as an English spy. Dark, shadowy and melancholic the ensemble inhabits a labyrinthine sound world that explores the mood and feeling of Dowland's sombre *Seven Teares Figured in Seven Passionate Pavaues*.

Artistic Research:

Through examining the character of the instruments and exploring their amplification I was able to discover several aspects that became important in the work. The design of the instruments and their performance practice allowed me explore this. For each instrument there were intriguing aspects. The gut strings and baroque bow used by the cellist create fascinating timbral variation, The counter-tenor voice has an ethereal quality, perhaps in part because it is a less familiar voice type. In the work the theorbo draws together the different instrumental/vocal strands. The theorbo part performs its role as a continuo instrument through improvising accompaniment figures and articulating harmonic progressions. Finally, the renaissance recorder has a very particular timbral quality. The wider bore of the instrument makes the sound less focussed than baroque and modern instruments, giving a more breathy quality. When amplifying these instruments I was able to reveal this detail. When amplifying the theorbo, for example we become aware of it's own resonance and a greater strength of tone. Amplification also brings the instrumental sounds towards the soundworld of the electronic part.

The electronic part was conceived as four counterparts, one for each musician, with loudspeakers placed closely behind them to locate their sounds with them. The work examines the aesthetic relationship between the two parts and the technical means to achieves this. The closeness of the loudspeakers allows the performers to respond to their counterpart, as well as to the other musicians and the wider soundworld of the electronic part. Through asking the players to interact with their counterpart I was able to explore the layering of instrumental and electronic material.

When beginning the project my focus was on early music rather than early music performers. My exploration of early music performance practice led to the discovery that these performers' approach to interpretation makes them perfect partners for interpreting music for instruments and electronics. Their practice focuses on improvisation, ornamentation and has a sense of playfulness, which became a focal point in the compositional process. This is explored through asking the performers to play with sound in ways that are difficult to notate, such as techniques where there is no clear notational taxonomy like string players moving between bowing positions. The compositional process embeds this playfulness in the electronics by manipulating recordings of the four musicians playing highly decorative, ornamented material. The players then respond to this material, drawing on the attitude of playfulness that characterises early music performance.



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Timothy Cooper is a composer and performer of electroacoustic music.

Recent projects include the site-responsive installation *Tide Times* made with Laura Bissell, *Breathing Space* for tuba and electronics composed for Danielle Price and most recently *...shadows that in darkness dwell...* for counter tenor, recorder, theorbo, baroque

cello and electronics commissioned by *The Night With...*

Tim is a PhD candidate at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland supervised by Professor Alistair MacDonald and Dr Diana Salazar.

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