

## Cinema Organ or Organ Cinema (working titles)

This project celebrates the Royal Albert Hall organ as a great victorian and contemporary musical instrument, and the experience of public participation. It combines a new organ work with volunteer performance and mass audience action.

The idea has three elements. From an initial focus on the organ itself, they radiate outwards to the whole auditorium.

The first is the performance of a new commission for the Hall organ written by a leading contemporary composer. The second is an accompanying combination of recorded and live video projection and action, using architectural video mapping on the surface of the organ pipes and the concert platform, featuring volunteer performers drawn from families, children or schools. The projected image initially repeats the reality of the surface. Then the pipes appear to open up, giving an impression of the organ as phantasmagoria. Through advent-calender type portals we see fictive spaces and human figures within, played by the volunteers, who appear to emerge through the organ and interact.

Some of this content is a pre-filmed layer, shot on location in the hall itself, and elsewhere using a miniature scale replica in card. The photographing of the real organ surface can be done at any time, with a fast set up and turn around, using a digital stills camera shooting from a position that would eventually be occupied by the projector. This image forms a template on which other layers such as images of people (filmed elsewhere) can be composited.

This is augmented in performance with a live element of simple actions performed by the same volunteers. They walk across spaces in front of the organ as it simultaneously displays their projected presence. They also use basic 'point and shoot' camcorders to film each other doing their actions, and the miniature card replica, which is placed in view on the concert platform.

These live and recorded layers are mixed in view, using a laptop with live video software (such as *Isadora*.)

The aims is to create a magical, consequent spectacle, playing with sensations of sound made visible, and images of past and future. The figures in the organ are like the inner life of the great machine; the imagery connects the modern organ in the concert hall to the decorated organs of the baroque - the projected children and adults on its surface recalling the 'putti' and saints of the past. In another sense, the families / children are curious adventurers exploring a new world. The organ may resemble an elaborate medieval automaton clock, or a futuristic teleportation device.

A tradition of improvisation exists among some virtuosic organists (eg the American organist / composer, Carson Cooman.) This kind of artistry could also play an interactive role - in spaces created within the organ composition itself, or at the moment of interpretation in performance.

The third element transfers the status and function of the organ to the larger auditorium and audience. Using composed sound files sent in advance to audiences' mobile devices/phones, the auditorium becomes an acoustic canvas, activated by dialing sequences of phone numbers, orchestrated spatially using data from seating plans and ticketing. Techniques like this have been used successfully elsewhere. The distinction for this project would be how such a device accents and connects the contexts of the organ and the audience in a lyrical way. The approach could exploit a range of aesthetics - related examples using more traditional means include Xenakis' creation of circulating waves of orchestral sound in his immersive *Terretektorh*, or the invocation of place memory in Ives' *Central Park in the Dark*. In this instance the audience has a very direct form of creative participation, as it has to embody the instrumental layout, and collaborate, to experience the work.

Tim Hopkins 2012