



School: Bath School of Music & Performing Arts

Researcher: Dr Matthew Sergeant

Project Title: Meeting the Universe Halfway (composition for instruments and three custom-made apparatuses)

UOA: 33 - Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies

300-Word Statement

Meeting the Universe Halfway was commissioned by UK-based ensemble, [The House of Bedlam](#), with funds provided by Arts Council England, the Royal Northern College of Music research fund and Bath Spa University research fund. The piece was premiered by the ensemble at the Royal Northern College of Music on May 2nd 2018. At the time of writing, the piece has been additionally programmed at concerts in London and Oslo during the 2018-19 season.

The work's research content comprised the development of methods of creatively activating and sonically foregrounding ideas from the theoretical work of the so-called 'twenty-first century material turn' (Barrett & Bolt 2013) in philosophy and critical theory. This work particularly explores the sonic ramifications of Karen Barad's 'agential realism' (Barad 2007), the title of the work is taken from Barad's first monograph. Three new custom-made acoustic instruments were developed for the piece to act as sonic manifestations of Barad's concept of *apparatus* (see Barad 2007: 148). The instruments are referred to in the score as *Apparatuses I, II, and III* accordingly. These new instruments each sonified a chaotic behaviour, where the sonic output (particularly the timing of events) was determined by the material setup of the instrument and not the human operator/performer. A demonstration video of Apparatus-I can be viewed [here](#) to illustrate. The compositional process derived means by which such 'material-controlled' devices can build a musical discourse with more conventionally-understood 'human-operated' instruments.

The research content of the work has been presented in more detail at international conferences (e.g. Material Cultures of Musical Notation, Utrecht, Netherlands), particularly focussing on notions of nonhuman affordance within the work.