

Playing the Bridge: exploring the sonic potential of Hull's swing bridge as a giant musical instrument

Jonathan McDowell, Nye Parry, Madi Boyd

The paper will present the outcomes of 'Playing the Bridge', a commission to be carried out as part of Hull 2017 UK City of Culture that will allow people to develop a unique relationship with the city's new Scale Lane Bridge. The event in early 2017 will consist of a series of workshops, performances and an audio-visual installation, all located on and inside the bridge. These will allow people from the community to play the massive steel structure as a musical instrument and to explore the bridge's physicality and hidden engineering.

The multi-disciplinary project is organised by Jonathan McDowell (architect of Scale Lane Bridge), Nye Parry (composer), and Madi Boyd (artist), with Hull Music Service, Hull Community Gamelan, York University Music Department and Hull University Creative Music Technology programme. It is commissioned by the city's Creative Communities Programme.

The workshops will allow members of the public to experiment with creating sound by using the bridge as a huge instrument, drawing on the Indonesian *gamelan* tradition that creates music by striking tuned metalwork. The performance will include material created in the workshops as well as traditional and contemporary *gamelan* music. The audio-visual installation will be a spatial composition in the bridge hub, which utilises sounds from the workshops along with narratives of the bridge's construction, while projections reveal its concealed workings and engineering.

Scale Lane Bridge has won numerous national and international awards since it opened in 2013. It was designed to be a focus for regeneration, a new connection between the city centre and the underdeveloped east bank of the River Hull, and a new civic place for people to enjoy the riverscape. The bridge is the world's first that allows the public to ride on it while it moves. It has already become a cultural destination in the city and is regularly opened as a visitor attraction for people to enjoy the ride.

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