



School: Bath School of Music & Performing Arts

Researcher: Dr Matthew Sergeant

Project Title: The Velvet Rage (2017, for flute, voice, cello, and electronics)

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

300-Word Statement

The Velvet Rage was commissioned by UK-based ensemble Trio Atem as part of their 10th anniversary celebrations, with funds generously supplied by Arts Council England. The piece was premiered at the University of Oxford on May 18th 2017 and subsequently performed at The Wonder Inn, Manchester, and the University of Leeds. The title is taken from Alan Downs [book of the same name](#) (Downs 2005).

The research content of the work comprises the establishment of new body/instrument relationships through a queer lens, in particular exploring the sonic application of ideas from Sara Ahmed's 'queer phenomenology' (Ahmed 2006). Ahmed offers a queer perspective upon notions of socio-spatiality, dwelling upon the notion of orientation within sexual orientation. Ahmed outlines how relationships between humans and material things are orientated within patriarchal-cum-heteronormative social infrastructures (Ahmed 2006: 30-31). *The Velvet Rage* takes reads the archetypical instrument-body relationship, where body controls instrument and sonic-output, within Ahmed's terms, developing a queered notion of the relationship, where the instrument controls the body, or controls its sonic output against the will of its operator. Movement between these two conceptual perspectives forms the medium-to-larger-scale structures of the piece. A new typology of instrumental actions were catalogued for this second queer framework, where minimal physical input from the performer results in densely chaotic and/or unpredictable sonic outputs (including the use of a TalkBox to re-position the mouth of the vocalist as merely a biological filter for electronic sound).

The research content of the work has been accepted and presented at international conferences, including the Music and Sonic Art (MuSA) conference in Karlsruhe, Germany.