

## JOHN KENNY & CHRIS WHEELER

### RESIDENCY REPORT

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Musicians John Kenny and Chris Wheeler were invited by Deveron Arts to come to Huntly to work for a period of ten days followed by a performance as part of the 'Halloween in Huntly' festival.

As well as playing the trombone John is one of the only musicians playing the Carnyx, an ancient Celtic instrument which archaeologists discovered in the north-east of Scotland. John plays a replica of the original which resides in the museum of Scotland.

Chris Wheeler, also a trombonist, is an experienced sound engineer and a prominent club DJ in London.

John and Chris were commissioned to compose a new piece of music relevant to the town of Huntly which would then be performed during the festival.

#### Project Brief

Composer  
Sound Designer  
Other Artists

John Kenny  
Christopher Wheeler  
Jim Brook/Caroline Ross

The brief of this project was to create an electro acoustic and audio composition, created out of sounds and images of both the natural and man made environment of the town of Huntly, with specific reference to the phonemes, phraseology and cadence of the Doric dialect. The composer intended to use a combination of historical fact, local storytelling and contemporary gossip to develop a structure for the piece, which was to consist of an electronic sound score produced by treating and manipulating these environmental sound sources in a studio workshop, and combining this with both composed and instrumental elements, performed live.

The proposed title of the piece was DORIC.

'DORIC' was to be performed as an integral part of the yearly Halloween in Huntly festival. Initially it was proposed that the performance would take place entirely within the town square.

## RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PHASE

John and Chris arrived in Huntly for their ten day development stage of the residency on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2004. This period was spent in tirelessly collecting sounds from around Huntly, sounds which reflected both the contemporary way of life and the historical roots of the area. John got to know local poets, writing in Doric, and spoke to a number of locals whose dialect was particularly strong and natural. Agricultural sounds and noise from established local industries, such as a tannery, were sampled.

As sound engineer Chris was largely responsible for turning all this noise into a sound track which was to be projected during the performance to accompany John playing live.

John planned to use both the trombone and the carnyx to reflect back the rhythm and cadence of the sampled speech and sound in his live performance. The Carnyx in particular was to play an important role in the live performance with its strange eerie drone contributing largely to the Halloween atmosphere.

It was decided quite early on that, while John should play the Carnyx in the square during the festival, the main performance itself would have to take place indoors. This was due to the unpredictability of the weather and the need for sophisticated sound equipment.

John and Chris worked a great deal in the proposed venue, the Stewart's Hall, to get an idea of how the acoustics would work within the building.

During this period John and Chris worked with Jim Brook and Caro Ross of the band 'Delicate AWOL' who live, work and have a sound studio locally. This studio was used for the creation of the sound projection. The four musicians found that they worked well together and decided to add an experimental improvisation piece to the performance programme.

John also planned to include a new composition, ANKH, by Morris Pert in the performance programme. This piece, composed specially for John, and influenced largely by the mysticism of ancient Egypt, married well with the mystical theme of Halloween. It was to be the UK premiere of this piece.

## PERFORMANCE

After the initial ten day period John and Chris went away to work on other projects to return at the end of October for the performance.

Chris arrived back in Huntly a couple of days in advance of the festival and was able to fit in a special DJ workshop session at the local community centre, The Linden Centre, with a dozen local youngsters. Chris also used this time to make sure all the sound equipment was ready at the Stewart's Hall for the performance on 31<sup>st</sup> October.

John arrived in Huntly just two hours in advance of the main performance which was to take place at 7pm, immediately after the Halloween parade and Grand Party in the Square.

As the parade was marched into the square from Huntly Castle by the Huntly and District Pipe Band John took up a position overlooking the crowds on the veranda of the Huntly Hotel. With a red bulb lighting him from behind John let out the first droning notes of the carnyx as soon as the band fell silent. Over seven hundred people gathered in the square looked up to see this strange instrument with its boar like head and wagging tongue as it emitted the strangest of sounds. For just a few minutes all were spellbound at this incredible sight and sound. John then left to prepare for the main event.

'Poems Electronique', the name given by John and Chris to the evening performance of