

Lunchtime Concert: Bird Radio

23 October 2020



For today's lunchtime concert we welcome flautist and storyteller extraordinaire Mikey Kirkpatrick.

Kirkpatrick, performing as Bird Radio, will present a part-improvised piece that draws inspiration from the life of East End criminal Arthur Harding. The diaries of this character of the London underworld in the first half of the twentieth century are held in our collection.

No Daylight Could Penetrate The Darkness

No Daylight Could Penetrate The Darkness is a new part-improvised / part-composed piece for solo flute using live looping and effects by musician, composer and performer Mikey Kirkpatrick, who performs under the name Bird Radio.

The piece is inspired by *My Apprenticeship to Crime*, the unpublished autobiographical typescript of Arthur Harding, a notorious London criminal and “king of the Brick Lane van-draggers”, who was born in 1886 and grew up in the slums of Boundary Street in East London – an area known at the time as “The Nichol”.

Harding wipes the dirt off a murky window with his sleeve into one of the poorest and most dangerous areas to find yourself in at the end of the nineteenth century. He describes having an old orange box as a cot, his sister sleeping on the floor while his mother worked 16-hour days making matchboxes for very little pay, and their basement, the laundry room, being a shelter from the cold for the homeless.

He describes the appalling conditions, the collapsing homes, the lack of support, the illness and decay around him. He was forced out of the house at 9 years old, lived in the streets, doing odd jobs and stealing from market stalls, before growing up and making a living through more serious organised crime.



Raphael Samuel Archive

What makes Harding’s story even more fascinating was his reason for writing his life story. In 1970 he sent copies to his local MP and the Cambridge Institute of Criminology, to help see that, in order to put a stop to crime, first they’d have to put a stop to poverty.

Bird Radio invites you into Harding’s universe, the space around his words, attempting to time travel back to Boundary Street, sit on the corner, and offer a moment of musical light to Harding, to everyone who finds themselves having to make something out of nothing, past and present.

This first performance was commissioned by Bishopsgate Institute. Arthur Harding’s book can be found in the Institute’s [digital archive](#).

Meet our performer

Mikey Kirkpatrick (who performs under the name Bird Radio) is a London-based flautist, singer, composer and performer originally from Hereford, UK, who performs original songs and compositions using technology such as live looping and effect processing, working both solo and in collaboration with film makers, sound artists, poets, artists and musicians.

His music is inspired by folk traditions from around the world, ritual, protest music, storytelling, dream, the imagination, time, and memory. He has toured extensively across the UK, Europe, US, and Russia, composed music for feature films and touring theatre productions, and released multiple albums both independently and through Strike Force Entertainment / Cherry Red Records. Mikey also currently performs with the Mosaic Sufi Music Ensemble, the Zashiki Warashi Taiko and Flute Duo with Akinori Fujimoto, Bones And The Aft with poet and book artist John Bently, and Nighthaunts.

You can find out more about Mikey and Bird Radio here: mikeykirkpatrick.com

Discover the history of our lunchtime concerts



Music brings people together and offers comfort in difficult times, and our lunchtime concerts were first created as a way of raising morale during the Second World War.

Learn more about the history of our lunchtime concerts and the legacy of Dame Myra Hess through our online gallery: bishopsgate.org.uk/news/the-history-of-the-lunchtime-concerts

Bishopsgate Institute Archive

Support our free concerts

Our lunchtime concerts have been a tradition since 1948, providing inspiration and respite from the world outside for an hour a week in a relaxed performance environment. We always pay our musicians for these performances, but the concerts are free to audiences. Help support these concerts by donating: bishopsgate.org.uk/give