

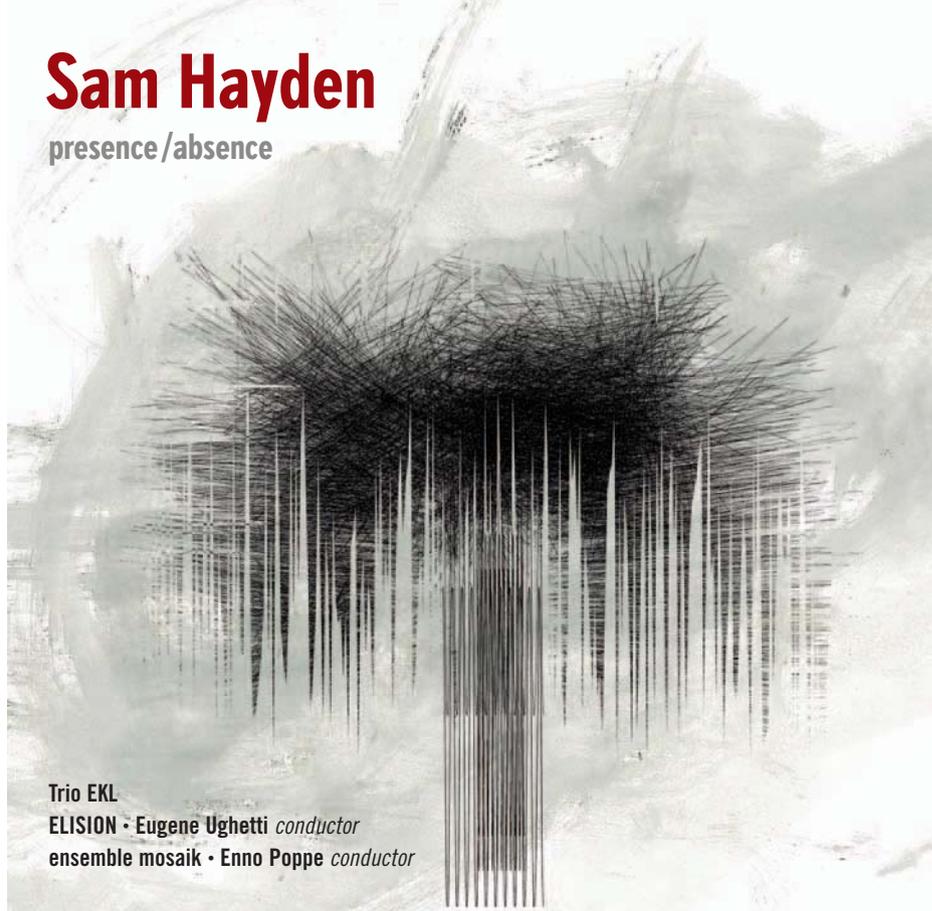
# Sam Hayden

presence/absence

Trio EKL

ELISION • Eugene Ughetti *conductor*

ensemble mosaik • Enno Poppe *conductor*



# Sam Hayden

<b>1</b>	<b>system/error</b>	<b>16'23</b>
	Trio EKL Mieko Kanno <i>violin</i> Anne La Berge <i>flutes</i> Claire Edwardes <i>percussion</i>	
<b>2</b>	<b>presence/absence</b>	<b>15'03</b>
	ensemble mosaik Enno Poppe <i>conductor</i>	
	<b>misguided</b>	<b>20'09</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>I</b>	3'52
<b>4</b>	<b>II (a)</b>	2'28
<b>5</b>	<b>II (b)</b>	2'31
<b>6</b>	<b>III</b>	4'36
<b>7</b>	<b>IV</b>	3'52
<b>8</b>	<b>V</b>	2'50
	ELISION Eugene Ughetti <i>conductor</i>	
<b>9</b>	<b>Die Modularitäten</b>	<b>20'17</b>
	ensemble mosaik Enno Poppe <i>conductor</i>	
	Total timing	72'06

And bonus download track:

<b>schismatics</b>	<b>13'45</b>
<b>I</b>	2'54
<b>II</b>	2'19
<b>III</b>	1'05
<b>IV</b>	0'33
<b>V</b>	0'47
<b>VI</b>	2'10
<b>VII</b>	3'57

Mieko Kanno *electric violin*  
Sam Hayden *computer*

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## ELISION

Richard Haynes *clarinets*  
Timothy O'Dwyer *saxophones*  
Tristram Williams *trumpets*  
Benjamin Marks *trombone*

Eugene Ughetti *conductor*

Daryl Buckley *artistic director*

## ensemble mosaik

### presence/absence:

Bettina Junge *bass flute*  
Martin Losert *baritone saxophone*  
Seth Josel *guitar*  
Karen Lorenz *viola*  
Roland Neffe *percussion*

### Die Modularitäten:

Bettina Junge *piccolo/alto flute*  
Christian Vogel *e-flat/bass clarinet*  
Martin Losert *soprano/baritone saxophone*  
Ernst Surberg *piano/electronic sounds*  
Chatschatur Kanajan *violin*  
Karen Lorenz *viola*  
Mathis Mayr *cello*  
Enno Poppe *conductor*

Photo: Astrid Karger

# Sam Hayden

by Björn Heile

Sam Hayden's music is not ingratiating. It does not demand to be loved and it does not flatter listeners by allowing easy recognition of models or technical procedures. It does not lead them by the hand from moment to moment, nor does it caress or seduce them with slick or glossy sonic surfaces. There are no knowing nudges here, no 'I see what you're doing there'. The music does not set out to please anyone in particular: although Hayden does not obscure the formative influences he has received as a student of, among others, Michael Finnissy and Louis Andriessen in his music, he is also a connoisseur of such genres as jazz-fusion, prog-rock, free improv, metal and electronica, and has worked with the Swiss 'Avant-core' trio Steamboat Switzerland – aspects of his musical personality that are just as audible as is his indebtedness to the so

called 'complexity school' or European minimalism. While it would be wrong to claim that his music is entirely *sui generis*, unlike any other, Hayden is evidently not content with simply following a pre-established path. He has no interest in becoming the standard-bearer for this school or faction or to win the acclaim of that influential group of critics.

*The energy of the performance gestures is much more important than the literal interpretation of the notation.\**

Instead, his music is deeply serious. This word has become rather old-fashioned, so that it almost requires, if not an apology, at least an explanation. Hayden's music is serious because he takes it seriously himself: it is painstakingly constructed, without shortcuts and without the 'painting-by-numbers' routines of models and techniques that can be readily recycled

from piece to piece. Every composition is genuinely different and unique. It is serious because it takes performers seriously: this is no virtuoso fodder for conservatoire competitions; it takes time, effort and dedication to master, but it repays those labours by involving the musicians' individual creative contributions. But most important of all, it is serious because it takes listeners seriously.

The music addresses each listener as an individual. There are no preconceived ideas about what listeners want or expect, no references that the cognoscenti can congratulate themselves on recognising (while excluding others), no shibboleths that only the select few can overcome. It is open to anyone who, in turn, is serious in willing to encounter it.

'Serious', then, does not mean 'difficult' (at least not for the sake of it) or

'forbidding'. Nor does it necessarily aim for the profound, sublime or rarefied. *system/error* on this recording has an admirable lightness of touch and *misguided* is, at times, riotously funny. At the risk of sounding facetious, Hayden may have learned something from his eighteenth-century Austrian near-namesake about the serious business of light-heartedness. Hayden's music is nothing if not enjoyable: full of sparkling wit, sensuous gestures and, for all its many grating, piercing, even abrasive moments, beauty.

*... (noisy and dirty sounds are preferable). Precise pitches are less important than creating interesting, noisy timbres.*

Throughout this text, I have ascribed agency, subjecthood to Hayden's music; this is because I think that is the best

way to describe it. It is indeed like a person, an other one encounters. Like with actual people, one has to adjust to the music, accept its idiosyncracies, respect its otherness. It may not be familiar at first hearing, but it demands to be listened to in all senses of the word. Yet, like the best music, it opens up bit by bit and gradually reveals its secrets before us, and each time we listen we find something new to admire, like we discover new features on the face of a good friend or lover every time we see them. And, like with love and friendship, our changing perception of the music may be simply the result of greater familiarity, but it could also be a reminder that we ourselves are changing, not least due to our encounters with others – and with music.

*It should sound like a time-traveller from the 1950s has invaded the concert hall.*

Like people, the music has distinct characters and 'moods', from the violent eruptions in *Die Modularitäten* through

the occasional tender gestures of *schismatics* to the rumbustious humour of *misguided* (needless to say, compositions are not confined to just one emotional expression). That music contains affects or expresses or depicts human emotions is admittedly hardly a novel phenomenon. Yet, we are often told that modernist music lacks these human, expressive aspects, a claim that is not without justification with regard to at least a tradition or strand within modernism that sought objectivity or even what the Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset called 'the Dehumanization of Art'. Hayden's music is as committed to the legacy of musical modernism as any; indeed, his programme note for *Die Modularitäten* calls for a '1950s Neue Musik revival' – although what is meant is surely a critical, creative reappraisal with an element of irony (time-travellers and all), rather than a simple recreation or reconstruction. And, surely, we wouldn't do Hayden's music justice if we were to associate it with the reassuring

emotional balm familiar from neo-romanticism. This music knows of and speaks to the alienation of subjectivity in modernity or its decentering in postmodernity. And yet, not unlike the philosophy of Adorno, it refuses to give up the idea of subjectivity, however mediated, altogether.

Hayden's use of technology is a case in point. Many of the pieces assembled here make use of digital technology to invent or develop musical structures and/or create, modify or distribute sound. However, while engaging with the technologies which perhaps exemplify modern life and culture like no others, the composer's approach could hardly be further removed from naïve technoutopianism. Rather, he seems to work as often against as with these technologies. It would be too simple to say that technology is only used as a tool and that the composer's intentions reign supreme; instead, there seems to be a more dialectical process, driven both by the recognition that absolute control is

no longer possible and by the simultaneous unwillingness to give up intentionality altogether. Thus, Hayden describes in his programme notes for *misguided* how 'the computer-generated materials (mis)guided me towards certain compositional outcomes which may not have otherwise occurred'. A similar critical and dialectical approach is also characteristic of Hayden's use of formalised compositional techniques more generally. As his programme notes demonstrate, the composer uses procedures for the generation and manipulation of musical materials, such as pitch and rhythm but also formal structures, that are as sophisticated as any, and the resulting scores are bewildering in their complexity, but these intricacies are evidently not ends in themselves. They cannot be said to represent the stuff of composition as such and it is not for Hayden to be congratulated on the complexity of his compositional systems or the awe-inspiring appearance of his scores.

Rather, it would seem as if he is constantly (re)negotiating the limits of the imagination and of compositional control as well as probing the interactions between abstract, objective and technological systems on the one hand and subjective volition and spontaneity on the other. As he has put it in the programme note to *system/error*: '[t]he idea behind *system/error* is the contradiction between the theoretical precision and control of formalized compositional systems and the practical imprecision and accidents associated with the sonic realities of performance and interpretation of notations'.

This quotation points to a quasi-metaphorical relation between Hayden's music and life in late, 'digital modernity', and it is this which makes it so vital.

#### **system/error** (2003, rev. 2005)

A high-energy interplay between three players, all almost consistently playing at ferocious speeds with astonishing leaps. Only occasionally do they come

to rest on sustained notes, like the more common outbreaks of frenetic activity in sudden, unexpected synchrony. Whether they are battling or competing against one another, or whether, like birds flying in formation, the mysterious coordination of their movements is due to an underlying kinship, never quite becomes clear.

#### **presence/absence** (2000)

Among the pieces presented here, this is arguably the most continuous in terms of texture and structure. The initial sustained, overlapping sonorities in a largely static texture gradually give way to more and more dissipative elements and disruptive gestures, resulting in a state of near-entropy.

#### **misguided** (2010)

The piece derives its forward momentum from the contrast between rapid, irregular bursts of staccato notes and continuous sonorities, such as glissandi, trills and flutter-tonguing. The

spectral harmony underlying the piece, whereby the micro-structure of the overtone spectrum of musical instruments is projected onto the macrostructure of the harmonies played, goes hand in hand with a denaturalisation of the conventional woodwind and brass timbres, with frequent use of multiphonics, microtones, slap tongue and the like, often in combination, making the piece a *tour de force* for the performers and giving it an edgy, gritty quality. One of the aspects that ensures its intelligibility is its construction out of usually short, seemingly self-contained sections, like individual expressive utterances.

#### **Die Modularitäten** (2007)

The composition consists of individual segments for sub-groups of the ensemble from duos to quintets and tutti, which the performers have to combine to form the piece as a whole, a process Hayden likens to the idea of 'open form' prevalent in the late 1950s

and 60s. The title alludes to the 'modularity' of computer software, namely the extent to which it is put together from separate parts. The individual components consist perhaps of Hayden's most speech-like, gestural music: the instruments appear like characters in a play, engaging now in violent altercations, now in tender and intimate duets.

#### **schismatics** (2007, rev. 2010)

This is a duet of sorts between the electric violin and its defamiliarised, computer-generated alter ego. All the digitally produced music is derived from the live violin playing, but, while this relationship is clearly audible, the electronic echo is strangely distorted, more a bizarrely flickering shadow than a mirror image and, like most *doppelgänger*, distinctly uncanny. The title, alluding to religious schisms, and, according to the composer, highlighting the separation between the instrumental and digital sound worlds, may have

suggested as much. Nevertheless, although there is no shortage here of violent gestures, such as the frequent indication 'scrape!' (with maximum bow pressure) in the second movement, there are also tender gestures and what appear to be attempts at dialogue and conciliation.

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Björn Heile is a Senior Lecturer in Music at the University of Glasgow. He specialises in new music, experimental music theatre and jazz studies.

\* The insertions in this text are taken from the performance guidelines in the score of *Die Modularitäten*. They refer to specific details of that piece rather than Hayden's music as a whole, and they should therefore not give the impression that the precision of notation and performance is of secondary importance in Hayden's music. They are however indicative of his compositional aesthetics more widely.

## Sam Hayden

Sam Hayden (b.1968) studied composition with Martin Butler, Michael Finnissy and Jonathan Harvey at the University of Sussex, Joseph Dubiel and David Rakowski at Columbia University, New York, and Louis Andriessen at the Royal Conservatory, Den Haag.

He has been the recipient of many awards, including first prize in the 1995 Benjamin Britten International Competition (for *mv*, 1992, for orchestra), a summer residency at the Civitella Ranieri Center in Umbria (2000), and a Fulbright Chester Schirmer Fellowship (2001), enabling him to work with Brian Ferneyhough at Stanford University. *Sunk Losses* (2002) for large orchestra, composed during a residency at the Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, won first prize in the 2003 Christoph Delz Foundation Composers' Competition, receiving its premiere from the Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra during the Musik im 21. Jahrhundert festival.

Hayden's Faber Music Millennium Series commission, *Collateral Damage* (1999), was performed in 2003 by Ensemble

InterContemporain in the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Commissions include *Le Retour à la Raison* (2003) for solo percussion and electronics for the Ictus Ensemble; *Emergence* (2004, rev. 2010) for solo accordion, ensemble and live electronics for Frode Haltli and the Oslo Sinfonietta; *Relative Autonomy* (2004) for the London Sinfonietta; and *Substratum* (2006, rev. 2008) for the BBC Symphony Orchestra. His most recent work, *misguided*, was premiered by the ELISION Ensemble at the ABC Iwaki Auditorium, Melbourne, Australia in 2011. His next project is a work for solo oboe and ensemble for Christopher Redgate and the Cikada Ensemble, to be premiered at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival 2012.

Hayden's works have been performed at major international festivals including Ars Musica (Brussels), BBC Proms, Gaudeamus New Music Week (Amsterdam), Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, MaerzMusik (Berlin), State of the Nation (London), Tage für Neue Musik Zürich, Ultima (Oslo) and Warsaw Autumn. His works have been

recorded on the Divine Art, GROB, Oboe Classics, United Phoenix Records and UTS labels as well as NMC.

Other performers of Hayden's music have included ASKO, BCMG, Canto Battuto, Ensemble Catrall, Composers Ensemble, De Ereprijs, Ensemble Exposé, Gaudeamus Ensemble, Gemini, Gruppe für Neue Musik Baden, Mats Scheidegger, NYVD Ensemble, Steamboat Switzerland, Ensemble Surplus and Orkest de Volharding.

His music has been performed regularly by ensemble [rout], which he co-founded with composers Paul Newland and Paul Whitty. He has also performed in laptop improvisation duos with Tom Hall and Urs Liska. He was appointed Reader in Composition at Durham University in 2010.

[www.samhaydencomposer.com](http://www.samhaydencomposer.com)

Information about the artists on this disc can be found on our website:  
[www.nmcrec.co.uk](http://www.nmcrec.co.uk)

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Cover artwork created by Virgil Ferragut, a student from the BA (Hons) Graphic Design course at Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design. Students were briefed to create cover artwork for the series and winning students selected to have their work used in NMC's Debut Discs series; the judging panel included NMC's Executive Producer Colin Matthews, designer Vaughan Oliver and journalist and broadcaster Tom Service.

Born in Paris in 1991, Virgil Ferragut grew up in Madrid and is currently studying Graphic Design at Central Saint Martins School of Art and Design, London. Having studied back in his home country the tools a graphic designer uses, now he is able to explore his creativity in any form of expression.

Fully committed to every brief he gets, he always tries to find a good balance between deep content and strong form. He truly believes, and always tries to apply in this work, what one of his tutors once said: 'Everything communicates something'.

### Virgil Ferragut writes:

This design started from a deep and personal interest in the peculiar sound of Sam Hayden's piece *system/error*; inspired by the leading role of the percussion and the sense of organized chaos, I developed a methodology confronting the natural with the mechanical.

Architecture and instruments in themselves are made entirely by people to be used and controlled by people. They are artificial. However, when people become involved, it becomes like a city, a living organism, and the situation transforms into something more natural.



I have also emphasised the absence of colour and white space, making the design as strong and clear as Sam's piece.

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*system/error* was recorded live by **RICK CAMPION** at The Warehouse, London SE1 as part of the 2007 BMIC Cutting Edge Series on 22 November 2007, and mixed by Rick Campion and Sam Hayden during summer 2010 at Goldsmiths College Electronic Music Studio, London.

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*presence/absence* and *Die Modularitäten* were recorded at Siemensvilla, Gärtnersstrasse, Berlin, Germany on 28-29 March 2011 for Deutschlandradio, and mixed on 19-20 July 2011.  
**RAINER PÖLLMANN** *Executive Producer for Deutschlandradio*  
**FLORIAN SCHMIDT** *Recording Producer & Digital Editing*

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*misguided* was recorded live at Iwaki Auditorium, ABC Southbank, Melbourne, Australia on 26 March 2011 for ABC Classic FM.  
**STEPHEN ADAMS** *Recording Producer*  
**NICHOLAS MIERISCH, BRENDAN O'NEILL** *Recording Engineers*

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*schismatics* was recorded at Coombehurst Studio, University of Kingston, London on 19 August 2010.  
**DAVID LEFEBER** *Recording Producer/Engineer*

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**RICK CAMPION** *Mastering*  
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Tel. +44 (0)20 7759 1827/8  
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