



Arlene Sierra



Urban Birds

Arlene Sierra's *Urban Birds* brings together three international soloists in a tour de force for three pianos with electronics, sampled birdsong, and percussion. The work combines spectacle with refined keyboard artistry, juxtaposing harmony, rhythmic drive, and sounds from nature. The work engages musically with one of the central preoccupations of our time: our relationship with the natural world.

Urban Birds is in three movements:

1. Sylviid Babblers

This movement features the extended song of the Blackcap with answers from related species known collectively as Sylviid Babblers, as well as from the pianos and a single crotale.

2. Skylark Loops

A looped fragment of the Skylark's song is transcribed, manipulated, and repeated with percussive contributions from stopped piano strings and woodblock.

3. Cuculus-cornuta

Cuckoo calls dominate this movement, punctuated by the guiro, until rogue elements are introduced in the form of an extended passage for pre-programmed Disklavier and the call of a very different bird: the South American Horned Screamer.

Artists: Xenia Pestova, *piano & percussion* | Kathleen Supové, *disklavier*
Sarah Nicolls, *piano* | Jose Miguel Fernandez, *electronics*

Timing: 14'24

About Arlene Sierra

London-based American composer **Arlene Sierra** writes music that takes its impetus from rich sources including military strategy and game theory, Darwinian evolution, and the natural world. The Guardian describes her work as “remarkably sure-footed... quirky and individual” and “startlingly fresh and assured”, while Time Out New York describes it as “spry, savage, sly and seductive.” Important commissions include *Game of Attrition* – New York Philharmonic, *Art of War* – BBC National Orchestra of Wales, *Cicada Shell* - Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust, *Insects in Amber* – Cheltenham Music Festival, *Neruda Settings* – Tanglewood Music Festival, *Hand Mit Ringen* – Huddersfield Music Festival, *Moler* – Seattle Symphony and *Urban Birds* – PRS New Music Biennial.

Sierra gained international recognition when her first score for large orchestra, *Aquilo* was awarded the Takemitsu Prize. She has had the honour of Composer Portrait concerts at the Crush Room, Royal Opera House, London, the Yellow Barn Chamber Music Festival, Vermont, and Columbia University’s Miller Theatre, New York. Her chamber and orchestral works have been the focus of various recordings.

Born in Miami to a family of New Yorkers, Arlene Sierra is a graduate of Oberlin, Yale, and the University of Michigan. Her principal teachers were Martin Bresnick, Michael Daugherty and Jacob Druckman; she also worked with Betsy Jolas and Dominique Troncin at Fontainebleau, and Paul-Heinz Dittrich in Berlin. At Tanglewood, Aldeburgh, and Dartington she studied with Louis Andriessen, Magnus Lindberg, Colin Matthews, and Judith Weir. Dr Sierra is Senior Lecturer and Director of Postgraduate Taught Programmes and MMus Composition at Cardiff University School of Music.





INTER/actions

INTER/actions Festival

INTER/actions is a symposium and mini-festival focusing on performance and interaction in electronic music. It provides a lively environment to exchange new ideas and instigate collaborations for composers, performers, sound artists and music technologists interested in the concept of 'performance' in electronic music.

Urban Birds was commissioned by INTER/actions Festival.

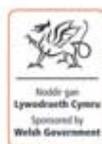
'The INTER/actions Festival of Interactive Electronic Music is proud to present the world premiere of Arlene Sierra's 'Urban Birds'. We are excited to bring together three acclaimed keyboard soloists Sarah Nicholls, Xenia Pestova and Kathleen Supové, combining acoustic piano, digital piano, electronics, percussion and sampled birdsong in an enticing mix.'

INTER/actions

The performance of *Urban Birds* was recorded live by the BBC at the South Bank Centre, Queen Elizabeth Hall, London on 5 July 2014 and broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on 12 July 2014.

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