



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS INTERNATIONAL CONCERT SERIES**

Wednesday 14 February 2024  
Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall

**Lucy Railton**  
**Joseph Houston**

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# PROGRAMME

## **Morton Feldman - Patterns in a Chromatic Field**

Patterns in a Chromatic Field (1981) occupies a unique space within Morton Feldman's body of work, sounding far more active on the surface in its first few bars than many of the glacial and hushed pieces for which he is so well known. However, it soon becomes apparent that despite this initial activity Feldman's familiar stasis remains: "In this regularity... there is a suggestion that what we hear is functional and directional, but we soon realise that this is an illusion; a bit like walking the streets of Berlin — where all the buildings look alike, even if they're not." This "in-between-ness", positioning the music in liminal space, is central to Feldman's idea of his work and life and permeates this piece on every level. Patterns consists of variously numbered repetitions of rhythmic cells or chords, whose reiterations often subtly deviate from the original in a variety of ways: durations are altered, the register is shifted, or a new fragment might be superimposed onto something familiar. Our expectations are continually confounded: occasionally something active might interrupt an extremely still section, seemingly important sections are never heard again, and some material appears once and is not repeated. Feldman writes that as a composer he thinks in terms of modules, which he is then able to rearrange, stack, reverse or extend at will. In Patterns these modules "are complete in themselves, and in no need of development — only of extension." Here again, Feldman is occupied by "in-between-ness": the repeated patterns are at once familiar and alien, moving and still, regular and irregular.

Feldman writes about his later works that he was making "a conscious attempt at 'formalising' a disorientation of memory." The sheer scale of Patterns prevents us from perceiving the structure of the piece as a whole. There is a moment – about 30 minutes into the piece – at which one has almost managed to keep track of everything so far, but then reaches a kind of saturation point and must let go, becoming lost within the thicket of repetition and alteration. This "formalised disorientation" also extends to the notation of the pitches themselves, Feldman often using double-flats and double-sharps in the Cello part to indicate certain tones, which at once implies microtonal shading, a reaching beyond the equal-tempered notes of the piano (more "in-between-ness" here), and a further obstacle to the concentration of the performer. Feldman was obsessed with Anatolian rugs and often used them as a direct inspiration for his music: a single stitch or line is weaved, and endlessly repeated,

but – as they are made by humans – each repeated stitch, while in essence the same as the others, contain myriad differences. All of this has the effect of allowing us to focus intensely on each fading sound as a complete object in itself, uncompromised by functional or structural necessity. Stockhausen once asked Feldman what his secret was, to which Feldman replied: “I don’t push the sounds around.”

All of this detail and disorientation occurs at a hushed and fragile dynamic, liminality here making its presence felt in the way the music hovers between sounding and not-sounding. “This is perhaps why in my own music I am so involved with the decay of each sound, and try to make its attack sourceless. The attack of a sound is not its character. Actually, what we hear is the attack and not the sound. Decay, however, this departing landscape, this expresses where the sound exists in our hearing — leaving us rather than coming toward us.”

## BIOGRAPHIES

Berlin/London based musician **Lucy Railton** has been an active performer, programmer and music maker since 2008, releasing albums on Modern Love, Editions Mego - GRM Portraits (split with Max Eilbacher), PAN (with Peter Zinovieff), ECM, SN Variations, Shelter Press and Takuroku. Over the years she has performed and recorded with creators from a range of disciplines including Kit Downes, Catherine Lamb, Rebecca Salvadori, Peter Zinovieff, Beatrice Dillon, Phillippe Parreno, Kali Malone, Sofia Jernberg, Christian Lillinger, Rhodri Davies, Angharad Davies, Laura Grace Ford, Akram Khan, Nicolas Becker, Alex Hills, Alison Knowles, the Tate Modern, Blank Forms, the ICA, the Harmonic Space Orchestra and the Ever Present Orchestra. She has been commissioned by Somerset House, Borealis Festival and INA GRM, Paris and has been a resident at EMS, Sweden and Dark Ecologies/Sonic Acts Norway, and has been involved in presentations of work by Maryanne Amacher and Henning Christiansen amongst many other productions during her time as co-director at London Contemporary Music Festival (2013-16) and Kammer Klang (Cafe Oto, 2008-2018).

**Joseph Houston** is a British pianist based in Berlin. His performance practice encompasses a range of music, including contemporary and experimental music; late 19th- and early 20th-century piano music; music for synthesisers; as well as his own compositions.

Joseph aims to curate unique and immersive programmes that combine music from various genres, generating a whole that challenges and informs the understanding of each individual work, while involving himself as much as possible in the compositional process of new commissions. He believes music is fundamentally collaborative and is particularly interested in works that reassess the traditional composer–performer–listener triangle; make use of alternative keyboard instruments (synths, harmonium, harpsichord etc.); and intensely explore the sonic capabilities of the piano. He works on a project-by-project basis, building programmes that explore these ideas.

Joseph performs as a soloist and with various groups, with recent performances including duos with Rolf Hind (piano), Lore Lixenberg (voice), and Lucy Railton (cello), as well as larger collaborations with Quatuor Diotima, the Boulez Ensemble, and the Harmonic Space Orchestra (a Berlin-based group focused on rational intonation). He has worked extensively with various composers on new and recent music during the last 10 years, including: Rebecca Saunders, Charlotte Bray, Catherine Lamb, Chiyoko Szlavnic, Klaus Lang, Brian Ferneyhough, Nomi Epstein, Christian Mason, Mark Barden, Clara Iannotta, Louis D'Heudieres, Marco Stroppa, and Christian Wolff. He is also the pianist with the Octandre Ensemble, a London-based group dedicated to performing music written since 1945; a member of the Phonetic Orchestra, a collective of musicians based in Melbourne, Perth, and Berlin exploring durational performance and the fluid borders between composition and improvisation; and has a duo with American violinist Sarah Saviet.

Festival and venue appearances include among others Berlin Biennale (DE); Lille Piano(s) Festival (FR); Donaueschinger Musiktage (DE); BBC Proms (London); Summartónar Festival (Faroe Islands); Kammer Klang (London); Konzerthaus (Berlin); Cheltenham Festival (UK); Philharmonie (Berlin); International Pharos Contemporary Music Festival (Nicosia); Southbank Centre (London); Orpheus Instituut (Ghent); and Wigmore Hall (London).

Recent highlights include solo performances at Donaueschinger Musiktage 2019, broadcast on SWR; duos with Sarah Saviet (violin) at Radialsystem as part of Sasha Waltz's ZUHÖREN #4; a CD of chamber music by Thomas Simaku with Quatuor Diotima on BIS; and a portrait CD of composer Mark Barden, released on WERGO.