



## VICTOR GAMA

*'the event's most impressive and resonant mix of sound, vision and concept was Instrumentos, an exhibition/performance in the beautiful Paul Hamlyn Hall by Angola-born composer and musician Victor Gama. Each instrument is a beautiful object; each implies a different audio-visual journey that's both ethnic and high tech.'*

The Guardian

Victor Gama was born in Angola and currently lives between Luanda, Lisbon and Bogota. His work of musical composition intersects areas as diverse as music, image, field recording, audio-video installation and the design of contemporary musical instruments. Gama has been commissioned work by ensembles and institutions such as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Kronos Performing Arts Association, the National Museums of Scotland, the Tenement Museum in New York, Prince Claus Fonds, the Amsterdam Fonds for the Arts, the Royal Opera House of London or the Kennedy Center in Washington DC.

A graduate in Electronics Engineering and a Master's degree in Organology and Music Technology from the Sir John Cass College of Art, Architecture and Design at London Metropolitan University, he was

recently guest artist at the Stanford University Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics in California and the MIT Center for Arts Science and Technology.

He composed for the Kronos Quartet who premiered his piece 'Rio Cunene' at the Carnegie Hall in New York with a European premiere at the Centro Cultural de Belém in Lisbon. The multimedia piece 'Vela 6911' premiered at the Harris Theater in Chicago commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra/ MusicNOW and the support of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Vela 6911 was further presented at the Dinkelspiel Auditorium in Stanford and at the Hous der Kultur der Welt in Berlin. Gama's multimedia opera '3 thousand RIVERS' commissioned by the Prince Claus Fund and the Gulbenkian Foundation premiered in Lisbon in 2016 and in Bogota in 2017.

'Aisa Tanaf: the Book of Winds' premiered in February 2017 at the Kennedy Center with musicians from the National Symphony Orchestra directed by Edwin Outwater. Gama has been at the origin of projects such as Berimbau-Ungu with Naná Vasconcelos and Kituxi touring in Southern Africa, the Folk Songs Trio with New York musicians William Parker and Guillermo E. Brown, Odantalan with Barbararo Martinez-Ruiz and Hugo Candelario, and the Makakata Exchange in South Africa with Diso Platges and the Kalahary Surfers.

In 1997 he started Tsikaya, an online platform of musicians from the interior of Angola. Among several works, Pangeia Instruments was released by Aphex Twin on Replex Records, Naloga, Oceanites Erraticus and Quatro Momentos were released by his own label PangeiArt.



## Music/Tech: Victor Gama at MIT

by Anya Ventura

Victor Gama is a composer whose process begins with the creation of entirely new instruments whose design are steeped in symbolic meaning. Concept design, the selection of materials, fabrication, and scoring is all part of the rigorous way Gama creates new music for the 21st century, blending current fabrication technologies with ideas, materials, and traditions inspired by the natural world. From March 2-7, Gama shared his visionary work with the MIT community: performing in a concert, visiting classes and dorms, and presenting a lecture/demonstration for the class “Music and Technology.”

In each of these contexts, people gravitated towards his instruments as if attracted by a magnetic force. The post-digital world, Gama said, has circled back to the object. “The same technology that has dematerialized the object is working to rematerialize the object,” Gama said in his lecture/demonstration. Innovations like 3D printing and digital CAD modeling have brought the object back to center stage after becoming seemingly obsolete with advances in digital technologies and the creation of digital sound libraries. It is about being human, Gama said, and finding ways to merge the virtual and physical worlds in profound new ways. “Can an

instrument be a living organism?” he asked, “Can it learn? Can it interact?” In Gama’s philosophy — heavily influenced by the pre-colonial architecture and cosmology of his native Angola — the instrument is a ritual form, a container of meaning whose design reflects a constellation of allusions to stories, beliefs, and social and natural events.

The instrument is not just an instrument, but a “symbolic system” and “semiotic interface” created by the composer. With the greater control afforded by digital technologies, these symbolic systems can become more finely tightened and tuned, actualizing a geometry as complex as their concept. His instrument, “Toha,” for example, was inspired by the nest of the weaver bird. “One of nature’s most astounding sound installations,” Gama said.

The harp-like instrument is meant to be played by two people, just like the many birds who would make a home in the nest. During the military upheavals in Angola from the late 70s onwards, “the nests were totally empty, you couldn’t see any birds. They all had migrated because of the conflict,” Gama said. Like these densely woven nests, Gama’s work — both the instrument and the resulting music — weaves together the complex strands of the cultural, social, spiritual, and natural.



## Mason Bates's *KC Jukebox: Music & Instruments of Victor Gama*

Wednesday, February 22, 2017, 8:00 PM

The renowned composer and instrument builder brings his unique vision to *KC Jukebox* for an exciting performance including a piece informed by his upbringing in Angola, performed on an array of beautifully constructed instruments.

**Price:**  
\$19.00 - \$29.00

**Venue:**  
Eisenhower Theater

**Run Time:**  
Approx. 1 hour

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About

Renowned composer and instrument builder Victor Gama brings his unique vision to *KC Jukebox* with a piece informed by his upbringing in Angola, performed on an array of beautifully constructed instruments. The program also includes Mason's *Difficult Bamboo*, a work inspired by Gama's music that adds kalimba and other ethnic percussion to a traditional chamber ensemble; Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Caroline Shaw's *Valencia*, a fruity celebration of the natural world; and *You Are Free*, a striking work by Sarah Kirkland Snider.

Performance Timing: Approximately 1 hour, with no intermission.

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6 Maio 2016

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# News

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

February 20, 2012

**Press Contacts:**

[Rachelle Roe](#)  
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## ***MusicNOW* EXPLORES NATURAL WORLD THROUGH DIGITAL PRISM WITH SPECIAL GUEST VICTOR GAMA**

**Monday, March 5 at 7 p.m. at Harris Theater in Millennium Park**

CHICAGO — The third concert in this season's *MusicNOW* series explores the natural world through a digital prism on [Monday, March 5 at 7 p.m.](#) at Millennium Park's Harris Theater for Music and Dance. Hosted and curated by CSO Mead Composers-in-Residence **Mason Bates** and **Anna Clyne**, the series offers groundbreaking compositions and collaborations; this concert features a world premiere piece from Angolan-born composer and instrument builder **Victor Gama**.

Gama's *Vela 6911*—written specifically for *MusicNOW*—was inspired by the secret nuclear test carried out by South Africa in Antarctica in 1979 and detected by the Vela 6911 satellite. Principal Conductor **Cliff Colnot** leads the piece, which fuses Gama's unique, handmade instruments—the Acrux, Toha and Dino from his *Pangeia Instrumentos* series—with beautiful digital projections created from Gama's specially undertaken trip on a polar research ship to the Antarctic Peninsula in January 2011 to collect sound and video to incorporate into the piece.

Also featured is Mason Bates' chamber work *Red River*, which traces the complete path of the Colorado River from the Continental Divide in the Rocky Mountains to the river's end in the Sonoran Desert. Evan Ziporyn's *Speak, At-man!*, a wandering piece for solo flute and piano, rounds out the program.

Before the concert, music in public spaces of the Harris Theater is provided by Justin Reed of *illmeasures* Chicago. The postconcert reception performance features original electronic compositions from Dubfront Records recording artist Ryan Keesling (*Search11te*) with accompaniment from Dominick Johnson on electric viola. The postconcert reception also includes complimentary food and drink.

The final *MusicNOW* concert of this season takes place on [Monday, May 14, 2012](#), featuring members of the Chicago Symphony Chorus led by Chorus Director and Conductor Duain Wolfe.

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MÚSICAS DO MUNDO

# Victor Gama

## Vela 6911

ANTÁRTIDA © VITOR GAMA

20  
/  
01

DOMINGO 20 Janeiro 2013  
19:00h — Grande Auditório

GULBENKIAN  
MÚSICA



FUNDAÇÃO  
CALOUSTE  
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# Victor Gama

## Vela 6911

Victor Gama ACRUX, TOHA E DINO  
Salomé Pais Matos TOHA

Rui Pinheiro MAESTRO

### Músicos da Orquestra Gulbenkian

Bin Chao 1º VIOLINO

Cecília Branco 2º VIOLINO

Bárbara Friedoff VIOLA

Samuel Barsegian VIOLA

Maria José Falcão VIOLONCELO

Raquel Reis VIOLONCELO

Vera Dias FAGOTE

Pedro Araújo e Silva TIMPANEIRO

Rui Peralta OPERAÇÃO DE VÍDEO (PROJEÇÃO)

Paulo Machado TÉCNICO DE SOM

Isabel Worm ILUMINAÇÃO

*Vela 6911* é o nome do satélite norte-americano que detetou, a 22 de Setembro de 1979, uma explosão nuclear atmosférica próxima das ilhas Marion e Prince Edward, na proximidade da costa da Antártida, sob administração da África do Sul. Esta explosão validou o programa de armas nucleares e o poderio militar desenvolvidos pelo regime do *apartheid*, sendo as ogivas posteriormente desmanteladas no início dos anos 90 sob supervisão da ONU.

A peça *Vela 6911* está ligada àquele acontecimento. Baseia-se no diário de bordo de uma oficial da Marinha Sul-Africana, a tenente Lindsey Rooke, que revela um conflito entre o seu amor

pela natureza e a missão de contaminação radioativa em que participava.

*Vela 6911* teve estreia mundial em Chicago no Harris Theater a 5 de Março de 2012, integrada no ciclo de concertos *MusicNOW* da Chicago Symphony Orchestra. A peça resultou de um convite feito a Victor Gama para compor para um *ensemble* de músicos daquela Orquestra e para os instrumentos por si construídos, acruX, toha e dino.

*Vela 6911* é uma peça multimédia com uma componente vídeo filmada por Victor Gama na Antártida em Janeiro de 2012, com o apoio da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.



VICTOR GAMA ON TOHA SAJIB SAJIB © DR

Victor Gama nasceu em Angola, em 1960. Músico, compositor e criador de instrumentos contemporâneos, Victor Gama explora a interceção entre o virtual e o físico, o digital e o analógico, e a forma como nela se manifesta como um novo território musical e sonoro. No seu trabalho de permanente pesquisa, faz uso de elementos dinâmicos e variáveis que surgem num processo de composição que inclui a conceção, *design* e construção dos instrumentos com que a obra é executada, dando assim origem ao instrumentário e instalações da série Pangeia Instrumentos. Como resultado tem vindo a atrair encomendas por parte de *ensembles* e instituições de prestígio mundial como a Chicago Symphony Orchestra, a Kronos Performing Arts Association, o National Museums of Scotland, o Tenement Museum de Nova Iorque ou a Prince Claus Fonds da Holanda. Desenvolve desde 1997 o primeiro arquivo digital de música e músicos do interior de Angola, o projecto Tsikaya – Músicos do Interior. Entre trabalhos editados encontram-se o álbum *Pangeia Instrumentos* produzido por Aphex Twin para a Rephlex Records e *Oceanites Erraticus* editado pela PangeiArt.

Salomé Pais Matos finalizou a sua formação em harpa no Conservatório Giuseppe Verdi de Milão em 2010. Desde então colabora em diversos projetos a solo e com grupos de música de câmara e orquestras como a Orquestra Sinfónica Portuguesa, Metropolitana de Lisboa e Gulbenkian. Apresentou-se no Concertgebouw, em Amesterdão, Casa da Música, no Porto, Sala Puccini, em Milão, Teatro Nacional de São Carlos e Centro Cultural de Belém, em Lisboa.

Rui Pinheiro foi Maestro Associado da Orquestra Sinfónica de Bournemouth (Reino Unido) nos dois últimos anos. Em Portugal dirigiu a Orquestra Sinfónica Portuguesa, a Orquestra Nacional do Porto e a Metropolitana de Lisboa, entre outras. Internacionalmente destacam-se concertos com a Ópera do País de Gales e apresentações nos BBC – *PromsPlus* e no Barbican, em Londres. Após terminar os seus estudos de piano em Portugal e na Hungria, Rui Pinheiro concluiu o Mestrado em Direção de Orquestra no Royal College of Music de Londres.

DURAÇÃO: CERCA DE 1H30 / SEM INTERVALO

apoio à divulgação







# VELA 6911 VICTOR GAMA

MULTIMEDIA CONCERT

Friday 6th March 7:30 pm  
Dinkelspiel, Stanford University

VICTOR GAMA WITH  
STANFORD NEW ENSEMBLE  
CONDUCTED BY JINDONG CAI

ALERT 747 exhibit  
CECIL H. GREEN LIBRARY  
South Lobby  
3 February to 9 March, 2015

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# VELA 6911

A MULTIMEDIA PIECE BY VICTOR GAMA

This concert and Green Library exhibit is produced in collaboration with the Stanford Department of Music, Stanford University Libraries (SUL) and the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA).

STANFORD NEW ENSEMBLE

JINDONG CAI CONDUCTOR

VICTOR GAMA ACRUX, TOHA, DINO, COMPOSITION, VIDEO

DAVID GRUNZWEIG TOHA

CHRIS CHAFE CELETO

JOHN GRANDZOW DAXOPHONE

ALISON RUSH CETACANT

ALVARO BARBOSA RADIAL STRING CHIMES

DAVID KERR VIDEO TECHNOLOGY

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Vela 6911 is based on the diary of Lieutenant Lindsey Rooke, an officer who was on board one of the ships taking part in a secret nuclear weapons test conducted in 1979 by the South African apartheid regime off the coast of Antarctica. The test, detected by a US satellite called Vela, was the validation of apartheid's military power that engulfed the whole Southern African region in a destructive 'cold-war' conflict in the late 70s and 80s. Her diary, found in 2001 by South African journalist Stacy Hardy, reveals someone in conflict over her love for nature and the mission she was on, which left a trace of devastation, death and radioactive contamination in one of the most pristine and protected environments on earth.

The idea to compose Vela 6911 started at Stanford in 2010 when Gama was a SICA Arts Visitor at the Humanities Center. Valuable contributions during the research phase of this project were provided by Stanford University Libraries and specifically by librarian, Regina Roberts. The piece was subsequently commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and premiered at Harris Theater in 2012. It was presented at the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon in 2013 and in Luanda, Angola in 2014. Vela 6911's video component was shot in Antarctica by Gama in January 2012. In 2013, Gama gifted all of his Vela 6911 research and production content materials to the Archive of Recorded Sound at Stanford University Libraries. This collection features 507 videos, 3,093 high-resolution photographs, 600 research documents, scanned original scores and performance information.

This multi-faceted collaboration also represents the important role of libraries in the cycle of research, access to historical insight, creative output, and thinking through contemporary issues and challenges. The performance of this piece by the Stanford New Ensemble with Gama and collaborators from CCRMA is a unique opportunity to make this collection come alive, one that challenges representations of the past and encourages current generations to evaluate more deeply the consequences of our actions.

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## Victor Gama

a composer whose process begins with the creation of an entirely new instrument, one whose design is steeped in symbolic meaning. Concept design, the selection of materials, fabrication, and scoring is all part of the rigorous way Gama creates new music for the 21st century, blending current fabrication technologies with ideas, materials and traditions inspired by the natural world. He holds a BSc in electronics engineering and an MA in Music Technology from the Sir John Cass Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design in London. Gama has collaborated with the Kronos Quartet who premiered his piece 'Rio Cunene' at Carnegie Hall in March 2010. 'Rio Cubango', commissioned by the the Prince Claus Fund and the Amsterdam Fund for the Arts premiered in November 2011 at Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. His most recent piece '3thousandRIVERS: prelude', for ensemble and soprano singers was commissioned for the 2013 Prince Claus Awards Ceremony at the Royal Palace in Amsterdam. He has exhibited his instruments and sound installations and performed extensively in Africa, Latin America, USA and Europe. His album Pangeia Instrumentos was released by Aphex Twin on Rephlex Records. [www.victorgama.org](http://www.victorgama.org)



## Jindong Cai

Jindong Cai joined the Stanford University faculty in 2004 as the Director of Orchestral Studies and Associate Professor of Music in Performance. He is Music Director and Conductor of the Stanford Symphony Orchestra, the Stanford Philharmonia Orchestra, and the Stanford New Ensemble. He is also the Artistic Director of the Stanford Pan-Asian Music Festival, which he founded in 2005. Jindong Cai serves as the Principal Guest Conductor of the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra in China, and of the Mongolia State Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet in Ulan Bator. Jindong Cai received the ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music with the Stanford Symphony Orchestra. He has recorded for Centaur, Innova, and Vienna Modern Masters labels. Together with Sheila Melvin, Mr. Cai has co-authored several New York Times articles on the performing arts in China and a book *Rhapsody in Red: How Western Classical Music Became Chinese*..



CARNEGIE HALL

presents



Kronos Quartet  
Margaret Leng Tan  
Victor Gama  
Matmos

Friday, March 12, 2010 at 7:30 PM  
Zankel Hall

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Perspectives: Kronos Quartet

Tickets: \$28, \$42

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**KRONOS QUARTET e VICTOR GAMA**  
CENTRO CULTURAL DE BELÉM | 21 DE NOVEMBRO, 21H



Créditos: Richard Termine

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**VICTOR  
GAMA**



**RIO CUNENE**  
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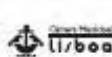
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# Um rio com memórias

**A estreia europeia de *Rio Cunene*, uma ideia de Victor Gama, convida-nos a descobrir pontes improváveis entre a guerra e a paz**

POR ERICA FRANCO

**F**oi seguindo um irresistível «impulso criativo» que Victor Gama, nascido em Angola nos anos 60, formado em Engenharia Electrónica e Telecomunicações, procurou, na música, uma forma de se exprimir. «Achei que, na música, podia ser absolutamente livre, fazer aquilo que me apetecia, sem os constrangimentos da academia da época», diz, ao falar do percurso que o levou até aos palcos.

## Reciclagem maior

O presente, esse, é marcado por diversos projetos em simultâneo, entre eles a peça *Rio Cunene* – estreada no Carnegie Hall, em Nova Iorque, em março de 2010, e com estreia europeia marcada para este domingo, 21, no Grande Auditório do CCB, em Lisboa, encerrando o Festival Temps d'Images – que o fez viajar até às suas raízes angolanas. «O que me inspira em Angola é algo que só depois vim a compreender, mas não totalmente», diz, falando de um «reflexo de uma liberdade criadora que segue parâmetros pouco definíveis» – característica da música angolana e, no fundo, da sua própria forma de estar na música.

O espetáculo *Rio Cunene* é, na realidade, uma «montagem de várias peças», que integra, para além da composição homónima interpretada pelo Kronos Quartet, uma apresentação a solo de Victor Gama: *SOL(t)O*. Mas se, em *Rio Cunene*, o fio condutor é o rio, no caso de *SOL(t)O* é «uma estrada», marcada pela pluralidade e transversalidade dos elementos que a compõem. *SOL(t)O* é um espetáculo multimédia que reúne um conjunto de composições para Pangeia Instrumentos, desenhados e construídos por Victor Gama, como um «reflexo das significâncias, dos símbolos e dos conteúdos da narrativa que estrutura uma peça». Por outras palavras, estes



FOTOS DR.



'*Rio Cunene*' Um espetáculo em que o Kronos Quartet (*em cima*), instrumentos inventados por Victor Gama (*à esq.*) e outros por crianças angolanas (*à dir.*) são protagonistas

instrumentos surgem, não como base, mas como resultado do processo de criação e escrita musical.

A ideia do projeto *Rio Cunene* surgiu de uma conversa com David Harrington (fundador do Kronos Quartet), em que Victor se propôs escrever uma peça, usando instrumentos do quarteto de cordas e da série Pangeia Instrumentos. Como nos conta Victor, «ele [David Harrington] ficou muito interessado numa coisa que eu lhe contei, que era o facto de algumas pessoas, durante o conflito armado em Angola, viverem em zonas muito isoladas, tendo como principais recursos detritos dos equipamentos militares, e o facto

de existirem crianças que construíam brinquedos e instrumentos musicais a partir desses objectos». Daqui nasceu o motor deste projeto, «uma grande metáfora sobre o potencial que existe na natureza humana de recuperar de situações de conflito, neste caso demonstrado por crianças que reaproveitam os detritos que ficaram de uma guerra». Para Victor, é um prazer poder partilhar a criatividade imensa destas crianças que pegam em resquícios da violência e «alegremente os transformam em música». No segundo momento do espetáculo entram em cena esses instrumentos construídos pelas crianças da vila de Xangongo: o carregador, o bатуque, a viola, a lata...

No vídeo projetado durante o espetáculo, podemos ver as crianças a brincarem num tanque, que para elas é, sobretudo, um baloiço. São muitas as histórias por contar, por detrás deste espetáculo, um trabalho fascinante com um grupo de miúdos «ávidos de aprender, desejosos de ir à escola e de conviver com as pessoas».



## Victor Gama

«Achei que na música podia ser absolutamente livre, fazer aquilo que me apetecia, sem constrangimentos»

LUIS BARRIA



# Restos de armas transformam-se em peça musical

**Concerto.** Victor Gama estreia com o Kronos Quartet no CCB a peça 'Rio Cunene'

JOÃO MOÇO

Foi há oito anos que terminou a guerra civil em Angola e foi nessa altura que o músico e compositor Victor Gama encontrou várias crianças que constituíam os seus instrumentos musicais com destroços de armas e equipamento militar. Este acontecimento levou o músico a compor a peça *Rio Cunene*, que será apresentada esta noite ao lado do norte-americano Kronos Quartet, um dos mais prestigiados quartetos de cordas, no grande auditório do CCB, depois da estreia mundial no Carnegie Hall, em Nova Iorque.

"As crianças brincam com tudo e se não tiverem brinquedos transformam-nos. O facto de criarem instrumentos musicais com restos de armas tem um impacto muito forte também, por este as-

pecto metafórico, de conseguirem dar a volta a instrumentos de violência e destrutivos e transformá-los em algo que pode transmitir paz", referiu o músico ao DN.

Quando há cinco anos Victor Gama propôs ao Kronos Quartet compor uma peça tendo estes instrumentos e esta temática como pano de fundo, logo o grupo se mostrou bastante interessado: "Eles têm uma postura muito vanguardista e progressista na música, andam sempre à procura de algo que tenha uma mensagem, e expandem o seu repertório muito além do quarteto de cordas", explicou.

Ao longo destes últimos cinco anos, Victor Gama foi trabalhando com crianças da aldeia de Xangongo, situada numa das margens do rio Cunene, em Angola, e quatro dos instrumentos que serão tocados esta noite foram construí-



Victor Gama começou a trabalhar com o Kronos Quartet em 2005

dos por essas crianças. "O rio Cunene é um rio muito presente na vida das pessoas daquela região. Na época das chuvas torna-se uma zona de inundação e transforma tudo. Além disso, como toda aquela região foi marcada pelo conflito, primeiro com África

do Sul e o *apartheid*, depois com a guerra civil, faz com que o rio seja uma testemunha dessa época e também um agente pacificador e de comunhão e tudo isso entra subconscientemente na peça", salientou.

Além da peça *Rio Cunene*, inter-

**'ENSEMBLE'**

**Kronos Quartet revisita Paredes**

> Esta colaboração do Kronos Quartet com Victor Gama não é a primeira vez que o *ensemble* toma contacto com um artista nacional. Há dez anos, o quarteto lançou o álbum *Caravan*, no qual interpretava peças de compositores de vários países. Entre os vários nomes encontra-se o do guitarrista Carlos Paredes, que foi assim evocado através das reinterpretações de *Romance N.º 1 e Canção Verdes Anos*. O quarteto, formado em 1973, já trabalhou com compositores como Arvo Pärt, Philip Glass, Steve Reich ou Henryk Górecki. Colaboraram ainda com Björk ou David Bowie e compuseram a banda sonora de *A Vida não É Um Sonho*, de Darren Aronofsky.

pretada por Victor Gama e pelo Kronos Quartet, o espectáculo desta noite, integrado no Festival Temps D'images, contempla ainda repertório habitual do *ensemble* de câmara e o espectáculo multimédia *SOL(t)O*, da autoria de Victor Gama. Bilhetes a 15 euros.





Victor Gama

### Max Eastley/Victor Gama

Kings Place, London, UK

Brian Eno once told a cautionary tale that a contact at one of the major digital instrument companies had in turn related to him: when buyers brought in their synths, drum machines and the like to be serviced, the company's engineers were dismayed to find that only a minute proportion of said buyers had modified the presets of their machines in any way. Most hadn't bothered to touch them. Which is a long-winded way of saying that, given the infinite possibilities offered up by the digital age, an aspect of imagination in the musicians had been closed down. They preferred to express their own music via another person's sonic language.

While Eno didn't have to say which side he was on, there is nothing inherently wrong with those who choose not to twiddle with their presets, or, for that matter, pre-existing instruments. The manipulation of pre-existing sounds will yield great poetry, but there is an argument to be made for recognising the instrument builders themselves as the real pioneers of sound. This was the premise for a dedicated evening of short concerts for New And Rediscovered Musical Instruments (the title of Max Eastley's 1975 collaboration with David Toop on Eno's *Obscure* label).

Max Eastley opened things up with an unobtrusive solo for his arc. This is an electroacoustic monochord, an instrument that looks like a ski with a string. Eastley bows and finger-stops the ark, generating waves of multilayered sounds. Its timbres range from high to low and hard to soft, with sudden endings, scratchings and sawings, and there's a point where the

string is percussed by what looks like a metal chopstick. After about half an hour, Eastley is controlling the fallout of a whirl of harmonic clusters, and the resonance created is always a rich one. His history as an improviser is a long one, during which he has created many new instruments to express himself.

In Portuguese composer and instrument builder Victor Gama's work, sound and its production are inseparable. To this end, his longstanding project *Pangeia Instrumentos* has involved making instruments, and exploring new electroacoustic modalities, notational and even belief systems. For Gama, music is embedded within a wider culture and needs to reflect as much. That's not to say that his music is too encumbered to be responsive.

As this evening's improvised *Accrux Creation* demonstrates (Gama is joined on laptop by digital artist and sometime collaborator David Gunn), 'dialoguing' – his term – is the key. The *accrux*, one of Gama's Pangeia-invented instruments, is an extraordinary object: something like a small kettledrum acting as a resonator, with four spindles loaded with metal discs which can be strummed or plucked. Seated, he quickly loops some of the *accrux*'s sounds, building up a mesh of tones. Ghostly clangings and delicate marimba-like patterns ensue while Gunn and Gama feed excerpts back and forth, each one modulating, refining and transforming what came before.

As with Eastley's arc, the *accrux* comes without pre-ordained rules of engagement, and much of the listening pleasure comes from the wit and exuberance that its inventor brings to it.

Louise Gray

### Longplayer Live

The Roundhouse, London, UK

Jem Finer's *Longplayer* project is nothing if not ambitious. As originally conceived by the British artist and composer, it's the longest piece of music in history: six differently pitched two minute loops taken from an original piece of source music performed on Tibetan singing bowls, selected to run continuously in such a way that no combination is repeated until exactly 1000 years have passed. It started in digital form in London at midnight on New Year's Eve 1999, and can be heard at various listening posts around the world. As a work not destined to mature until the dizzying date of 2999, one of the key themes *Longplayer* raises is the question of its own survival. In the face of technological and environmental uncertainty, what methods will be used to perpetuate the music into that far distant future? The obvious answer is that, as long as there are people to hear it, there will be people who can play it. *Longplayer Live* is an orchestral installation that gives a glimpse of how that performance could work.

The loops are represented by six concentric wooden circles – the largest 25 metres wide – incorporating curved tables laden with Singing Bowls of varying sizes, an arrangement that Finer calls "a vast, Bronze Age synthesizer". A team of two musicians

is stationed at each table, one conducting with the aid of a stopwatch, the other striking or rubbing the bowls as Finer's graphic score dictates. For this debut in the bell-like, high-ceilinged expanse of North London's Roundhouse venue, the teams include improvisors such as Steve Beresford, Kaffe Mathews and *The Wire* contributor David Toop – straight-faced and sombre in matching grey polyester uniforms like some radical revolutionary cadre – each performing for a few minutes before being replaced, as if in a closely choreographed tag-team event. Although this performance is only scheduled to run for a relatively brief 1000 minutes – from early Saturday morning until the small hours of Sunday – the rising tones, sparse chimes and throbbing bongs of the singing bowls still manage to impart a sense of the project's grand scale. It's easy to imagine this lingering, elongated, astral gamelan being used as a means of interstellar communication.

And ultimately, it brings a message of hope. Despite all of the threats to humanity's continued existence, despite the human race's maddening, self-destructive folly, *Longplayer* seems to suggest that, a millennium from now, there will still be people prepared to lose themselves in the rippling resonances of lightly struck bronze.

Daniel Spicer

### Warp 20

Various venues, Sheffield, UK

Park Hill Flats, Sheffield's answers to Le Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation*, looms above town like a monument to a forgotten future. Four miles away, The Templeborough Steel Works glowers, its smokeless chimneys now industrial cenotaphs. Warp have chosen these venues to celebrate their 20th birthday, and although both buildings fit in with the label's urban aesthetic, one worries if their failures as modern projects are being fetishised. But then the work starts to appear – Warp films unfurling against towering concrete and music juddering through metal juts, showing us how great art can flourish in the most peculiar places.

At Park Hill Flats, as the sun sets, we watch pop promos and short films. Aphex Twin's incredible track "Come To Daddy" still pinpoints the terror inherent in brutalist buildings that their architects, and their defenders, always ignore; Shane Meadows's *The Living Room*, a film about Clayhill's Gavin Clark going solo, becomes a heartbreaking account of struggle and survival; and a documentary about the All Tomorrow's Parties festivals shows another architectural utopia – the great British holiday camp – in a much more upbeat light. Coaches then transport us to the steelworks for a prosaic touch of Sheffield's no-nonsense soul. Now a science and adventure centre by day, it

has been transformed for one night into an Acid-era industrial space.

This is the sound of Warp 1989, not 2009, and even the more recent acts on the bill extract life from this seed. Mark Pritchard's *Harmonic 313* expertly revives the ghosts of Detroit Techno; Clark mesmerises by messing with Aphex Twin's early Pac-Man mixes, while Hudson Mohawke's hypercoloured pop draws breath from the excesses of 80s soul. The older acts also look back to their early years. *Nightmares On Wax* work best, pivoting their vivid set around the emergence of the sound we once called Northern Bleep – splicing "Dextrous" and "Aftermath" around A Guy Called

Gerald's "Voodoo Ray", and shouting "*It's Old School! Say Yorkshire!*" when their power briefly cuts. Squarepusher provides the event's only sour note by spoiling his intricate rhythms with bass slapping that makes him sound like a teenager auditioning for *Seinfeld*.

The night ends well, and warmly. Andrew Weatherall brings House classics by Hercules and Frankie Knuckles out of the shadows, with The Forgemasters playing "Track With No Name" – Warp's first ever 12" – as the day breaks. Rather than providing a night of innovation, Warp have shown that they are proud of their roots, justifiably.

Jude Rodgers



## Royal Museum Project News

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Treasured

# A tiger in the Museum!

## Get your paws on some amazing new instruments, invented specially for the new Museum.

Portuguese musician Victor Gama has unveiled the extraordinary musical instruments that will provide a focal point in the new Performance & Lives gallery. We asked Gama to create four contemporary musical instruments, inspired by the Museum collections, for everyone to play.

Gama is a unique artist – a composer, performer and designer of innovative musical instruments created from a variety of materials. He has exhibited and performed with his sound installations and instruments throughout Africa, Latin America, USA, Canada and Europe.

Each instrument has its own name and story. Tipaw, takes its name from its resemblance to a tiger's paw and was inspired by Gama's visits to Edinburgh: "Every time I visited the museum," he says, "I would pass Edinburgh Zoo on the way from the airport. So I thought about a tiger escaping from the zoo and hiding overnight in the Museum. It prowls around the halls until the morning, when it leaps upon a visitor, leaving these paw prints behind."

The musical function is provided by the paw pads, inverted Tibetan ringing bowls that Gama found in Bengal, home to the famous tigers.

All the instruments are designed to be communal, sounding more harmonious when played by more than one person – which is just as well, as they're going to prove popular when they go in display in 2011. As Dr Henrietta Lidchi, Keeper of World Cultures, says: "You just look at them and just want to work out how to play them, to make them sing."

If you can't wait until we reopen, you can see and learn more about the man and his work at [www.victorgama.org](http://www.victorgama.org)



Artist and musician Victor Gama demonstrates the new Tipaw instrument.

### External links

- ▶ [www.victorgama.org](http://www.victorgama.org)
- ▶ [Meet Victor the Music Maker](#)
- ▶ [Slideshow of Victor and the new Instruments](#)

National Museums Scotland is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.



# Remix culture finds space in NG Ker

MARY FARAGHER

*SPACES of Possibility* will bring a white traditional healer and an Angolan musician into an unbelievably *overtrample* NG Ker.

Rod Suskin, 45, is a well-known figure in South Africa. He's a traditional healer who received his initiation in 1982 and has several books to his name.

A clinical psychologist and a medical astrologer, Suskin is a teacher who strives to distill the essence of metaphysical knowledge and bring it to a wider audience.

Victor Gama, 47, is an Angolan national who has presented workshops, exhibitions, and concerts all over the world. He is writing music for the groundbreaking Kronos Quartet and records for famous electronic artist Aphex Twin's label, Rephlex.

Most composers make music according to what is possible using the instruments available, whether those are acoustic or electronic devices. Victor Gama however, turns the process on its head. He creates instruments that produce a specific sound required by the unique composition and performance. His performances are visual musical events

which facilitate universal dialogue between people, the environment and the cosmos.

Suskin and Gama will be presenting a talk and a performance that speak to the theme *Spaces of Possibility*. Julia Raynham of Resonance Bazaar organised the event, and specifically chose the NG Ker as the venue. Despite the "overtrample" image of the NG Ker, and the new-age hippie

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**They are presenting material that is spiritual but not religious**

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associations of astrology, she thinks the church is the perfect setting.

She said: "I was looking for a non-mainstream place, and I saw this green space, it has a beautiful garden. So I just asked them (the NG Ker), and they were really keen, it was amazing."

It's the kind of thing that



SPACES OF POSSIBILITY: Multi-instrumentalist Victor Gama will perform at the NG Ker at Sea Point on Thursday.

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## LISTINGS

## MUSIC

MILES KEYLOCK

★ **Asoka Son of Dharma** 68 Koor Street, Cape Town. Hot young Mother City jazz quartet, the Restless Natives, comprising Lee Thomson (trumpet), Mark Fransman (saxophone), Jason Reddon (bass), Shane Cooper (drums) and Keshan Naidoo (drums), cook up an original hard-bop brew every Tuesday. Starts at 9pm. Booking is suggested. Tel: 021 422 0909.

★ **Bang Bang Club** 70 Loop Street, Cape Town. Darryl Cash supported by Shaun Davet and Freddy the Tulp spin the discs on October 12. DJS Sox, Jarrod and Wrecks mix up the sexy house jams at FHM's Homegrown Hoops 2007 party on October 13. Doors open at 9pm. Admission is R50. Tel: 082 891 8565. Website: www.thebangbangclub.co.za.

**Baran's Theatre Restaurant**, corner Bang and Shortmarket Streets, Greenmarket Square, Cape Town. Fly Paper Jet perform spontaneously jazz, funk, alternative rock – and pop-filtered nuggets of their CD. Let's Go Back to the Carnival, at their new show, Traveling Salesmen every Monday from 8.30pm. Starts at 8.30pm. Admission is R60 or R140 including Mediterranean buffet (from 7.50pm). Tel: 021 426 4466. Website: www.baran.co.za.

★ **Baxter Theatre Centre**, Main Road, Rondebosch. The University of Cape Town Big Band and guest soloists and arrangers including Darryl Howes (guitar), Mike Ross (sax), Jason Reddon (bass) and Ubald Pison perform at the SACM Jazz Festival on October 12 and 13. Starts at 8.15pm. Conductor Peter – Louis van Dijk leads the ICT symphony orchestra and soloist Justin Carter (clarinet) through Matthias van Dijk's Passing Time. Weber's Scherzo Concerto No 2 in E-flat Major, Opus 74, J118 and Beethoven's Symphony No 1 in C major at the ICT symphony concert on October 16. Starts at 8.15pm. Admission is R60. Rossi debuts his performance-based musical jazz on concert and continues in cultural programme on October 17.

## Any instrument you like



Angolan musician Victor Gama plays a variety of hand-made instruments

**I**n his new solo show *SOL (I/O)*, celebrated Angolan composer, designer, sound artist and master musician **Victor Gama** navigates a borderless territory between music, installation art, performance art, education and therapy by using his unique hand-made Pangaia instruments (toha, acroty, dino and kisingele) as "mediators of dialogue among people and with nature, the cosmos and the ancestors' world." Sound a tad esoteric? Sure, but there's also a fundamental activism at the core of such an arcane approach to making music: By foregrounding the construction of the instrument in his compositional process, Gama taps into a tradition of experimenting with the metamorphosis of instruments that goes back to prehistoric times. The exercise of "giving form" or "writing through form" becomes a pivotal component in his work.

While drawing inspiration from the African Diaspora and his own native Angolan folk music, his work as a composer further elaborates on music's transformative potential beyond the structures of tradition, Gama explains: "As a musician-citizen I am mostly interested in processes of cultural resistance and generation of spaces of freedom. Destruction and damage of cultural heritage, cultural imposition and control of cultural

identity as a whole. In my practice I respond to this by creating resonating objects that act as mediators of dialogue."

Through employing these "mediators of dialogue" Gama establishes a bridge between new digital production tools premised on the creation of music without an object or instrument, and a new mode of creation where the re-naturalisation of new musical instruments establishes a continuum between old and new topologies of music. It's this conversation between tradition and innovation that has informed his collaborations with everyone from composer Nana Vasconcelos, jazzmen William Parker and Guillermo E Brown to The Kronos Quartet and Aphex Twin. As the press release on his website says, "The sound palette he creates on these beautiful sonic sculptures are hypnotic and otherworldly: percussive loops and string arpeggios built from the barest of components that square the circle between Gaeanular music, the work of turn-of-the-century composers such as Eric Satie and the music of the 20th-century minimalists Steve Reich, Michael Nyman or Arvo Part." Admission is R50 or R20 (marginal masses, migrants, refugees, students and senior citizens). Website: www.victorgama.org. — Miles Keylock

**MMMU Auditorium**, South Campus, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Summerstrand, Port Elizabeth. The music department's annual staff concert on October 17 features guitar duo Dr Howard Nock and Rudi Bower performing works by John Dowland and Manuel de Falla, piano duo Erika Bothma and Colin Campbell performing Mhandli's *Scaramouche* and more. Starts at 7.30pm. Tel: 041 504 2250.

★ **Obz Cafe**, Lower Main Road, Observatory. Acoustic fans can catch emerging singer-songwriters at Like Honey, Like Fire every Sunday. Starts at 8pm. Admission is R20 to R40. Tel: 021 448 0649.

★ **Old Cash Store**, Sandringham Bay, Port Elizabeth. Guy Blurry wears a mesmerising tapestry of improvisational acoustic guitar sketches, quietly psychedelic sitar improvisations and mandolin-picked pastoral-bone poems kessed with classical folk, bluegrass and start-grade blues on October 17. Starts at 7pm. Tel: 041 366 1211.

★ **Pata Pata Mvung Lounge**, 24 Bree Street, DUS Will, Shuter's Kloof, Ashton Place, Kearsley, Phura and guests spin R&B, hip-hop and house at Thursy Thursdays. Admission is R20 (ladies) or R30 (men). Tel: 021 426 4466.

★ **Rocktober '07**, various venues. Funky indie – Dharma's Flower bring the noise to Bennie's Mooring in Gardens on Bay on October 12 and ShooWare in George on October 13. 16 South perform passionate hard-rock nuggets of their CD, *The Collapse of Air*, at The Deck in East London on October 12. Woodstock and Morgan Street play at Raas Al Sol in Port Elizabeth on October 18. Website: www.soverl.co.za/rocktober.html.

★ **Silvertree Restaurant**, Kensington Botanical Gardens, Kirstenbosch, Cape Town. Funky hip-hop musicians Dream Soda perform tracks of their new CD, *Energy Vland*, at the next Winter Warner Concert on October 14. Expect an unremittingly chic, laid-back jazz, funk, kwela, goema and breakbeat – blended groove cocktail. Starts at 6.45pm. Admission is R90 or R81 (members) and includes a welcome drink and soup starter. Booking is essential. Tel: 021 762 9555.

into his from Elvis Presley, Queen, Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix, The Police, U2, Pink Floyd, Nirvana. The Darkness and more at Rock Evolution every Thursday to Saturday until December 2. Shows start at 8pm. Admission is R95 or R180 (including dinner from Gpm in the Fascination Cafe downstairs). Book at Computicket. Tel: 021 419 7661. Website: www.theevolution.co.za.

★ **TwentyBrand**, secret venue, Western Cape. An all-star cast of musicians including Harry and Muscle (Italy), Fresh, Hoodler Goodie, Ready D, Viny D and Steve Hyza mix up the sexy, funky flavors at Klub on Fridays. Resident DJs Andrew F, Nick-E, Louder, Leroy, Daniel, Chris Kass, Andy Dunn and Fred spin the chic mix of electronics, techno and progressive beats at Counter Culture on October 13. Deck jockeys Jaydee, Jucy, Leo, Celia and Josh drop the hip-hop, R&B and salsa into the urban beat mix at Bling Me up Scooty on October 18. Doors open at 9pm. Dress code: trendy smart casual. Tel: 021 439 8000.

**Underground Sound Boutique**, 120 Main Road, Sea Point. DJs Peter A, Leroy, Chris Kass, Super Fly, Nick E and Steve Hyza mix up the sexy, funky flavors at Klub on Fridays. Resident DJs Andrew F, Nick-E, Louder, Leroy, Daniel, Chris Kass, Andy Dunn and Fred spin the chic mix of electronics, techno and progressive beats at Counter Culture on October 13. Deck jockeys Jaydee, Jucy, Leo, Celia and Josh drop the hip-hop, R&B and salsa into the urban beat mix at Bling Me up Scooty on October 18. Doors open at 9pm. Dress code: trendy smart casual. Tel: 021 439 8000.

★ **Wadda**, 14 Stegmann Road, off Main Road, Claremont. Goldfish renovate the dance floor with their the electro-jazz-house mix in order to raise funds for a cause dear to the hearts of a home narrow transparent on October 13. Doors open at 9pm. Admission is R40 before 11pm, R50 after. ROAR, no guys under 21, no guys under 19. Tel: 021 671 2180. Website: www.wadda.co.za.

★ **Zula Sound Bar and Restaurant**, 188 Long Street, Cape Town. The Frog King Bantu Sounsoys' tent's Red Rozzano, Dumnastu China, Nore Eshale and Boela Gideli out the Funkadelic – Afro-jazz-dance-funk – soul mash-up on October 13. Vicks starts the sea and the hills. Admission is R20. Emerging singer-songwriters strum their stuff in the Acoustic Sessions from 9pm and in the Stage Fight set from 11pm on October 16. Songwriter Jack Mills



# WIREF

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# Worlds in miniature

By Louise Gray



Victor Gama with his totem harp

## Victor Gama

For the Angolan-Portuguese composer and instrument maker Victor Gama, music began in a simple and affecting way. "One of the first musical impressions I can recall when I was a kid was an old player of ungu, the ancient bow that gave origin to the berimbau in Brazil, who would play along the beaches of Luanda," he says via email. Although now based in Portugal, Gama is currently in the small Angolan village of Lubango, where he is researching a project called Tsikaya, an archive of field recordings of traditional music, before travelling to London to participate in this month's Atlantic Waves festival. "The sound of the ungu and the old player's music was almost like a primeval awakening that transported me to far away places," he continues. "The repeated hitting of the stick on a single string, suddenly stopped and then released by one finger, along with the effect produced by the mouth of the gourd touching the belly of the musician, produced a magical and hypnotising soundscape. I would walk along with him for as far as I could and those encounters were probably my first lessons in music."

Gama, who went on to study music and electronic engineering in Lisbon, returns to this memory as the basis of his approach to music. For him, music is more than just the organisation and replication of sounds: it is charged with cultural, social and sometimes mystical import. In certain works, such as his *Odantalan* project (2002), there were times when collaborators needed to first obtain the blessings of their ancestors, via various religious rituals. Web compositions such as *Folk Songs For The Five Points* (2005), a sound map conceived with William Parker and Guillermo E Brown for New York's Tenement Museum (and reprised at the recent Futuresonic event in Manchester), invited people to construct their own acoustic maps of a city and its musical communities. And for his Pangeia Instrumentos project, whose debut album was released in 2003 on Replex, Gama invented instruments such as the acrux – a dish of stacked metal discs – and the toha, or totem harp. On a piece called "JetStream", the latter is played by the wind and edited by ProTools to include a silent rhythm.

Gama's source materials for his instruments can be prosaic – discarded metal, gourds, a soldier's helmet – but out of them he creates new musical experiences that exist outside conventional frameworks.

Whatever digital manipulation there is in Gama's music, it is kept at an unobtrusive level, often used – as on the unearthly aeolian sounds of "JetStream" – to stress a natural process. His compositions are often a single section of a tripartite structure. For example, *Odantalan* (the name an inversion of the Angolan city N'dalatando), manifests itself as a book, a recording and nothing less than a cultural exchange deploying ancient knowledge in new creative processes. "Odantalan aimed mainly at the philosophical and knowledge systems of the Kongo/Angolan civilisation and particularly at its graphic writing system and its continuities in the Caribbean and South America," explains Gama. "The writing tradition known as Bidimbo in Angola has a central cosmogram from which, according to African, Cuban and American researchers, the whole writing system and vision of the cosmos derives. This cosmogram, a kind of logo which is composed of four circles in a cross formation within a main circle, is called Dikenga. The Dikenga represents the cyclical nature of all life on earth. It represents the cyclical nature of our lives traversing alternately the material and spiritual worlds, incessantly spinning round and round like a wheel, and is therefore also a religious symbol.

"It is also associated with many other concepts," he goes on. "One of them is particularly meaningful to me and has played a major role in the development of my work. The concept of N'kizi, also known in Cuba as Prenda or in Brazil as Inkizi, which derives from the notion that the earth is like a package in which all existing things are meant to interact. The N'kizi is an object that contains meanings represented by things that are put inside it, like leaves, little stones, feathers, dried parts of animals, blood from animals, water, tobacco – a representation of the world in miniature. Miniaturising the world is a means by which to simplify and condense the Earth, without changing its value, in order to disseminate

better harmony and understanding, and control the feelings and emotions for world comprehension and protection. In my work I am particularly interested in the association of the concepts between the Dikenga and the N'kizi. This association, which call the Golián Modes, has become the framework for the Pangeia Instrumentos project and my philosophy.

Gama's work might maintain a dialogue with ethnomusicology, but it's not predicated on any academic discipline. The intention of the Tsikaya project, begun in 1997, was initially to make an archive of the fast-disappearing music from a country savaged by 30 years of war. It soon became clear, Gama says, that there was a new urgency "to get musicians to do workshops, teaching how to play their music and how to build their instruments to schools in the villages and pass their knowledge to younger generations".

Musical objects have historically been "meaning-making machines", he continues, with the implication that we all need to find our own machines for life. To that purpose, he, along with some other music designers and interested parties, has created the Portuguese based MITAIL (Musical Instruments Technology And Innovations Laboratory), a research centre that builds instruments and generates ideas about what music can do.

At Atlantic Waves, Gama, with his acrux and will be putting those ideas in motion alongside Thomas Köner, Asmus Tietchens and Max Eastley a performance "where we all bring in our own and approaches to music and sound sculpting acoustic instruments and devices, electronics and multimedia projections.

"It'll be totally improvised as we won't have chance of rehearsing," he concludes, "but this is what makes it even more interesting as we will be performing with the particular and unique alignment of the planet with the moon, the sun and the rest of the constellations on that night. There won't be another moment like that." □ Victor Gama appears with Thomas Köner, Asmus Tietchens and Max Eastley at the Atlantic Waves festival this month. Out There for details. [www.victorgama.org](http://www.victorgama.org)





Fennesz at FutureSonic



Victor Gama

## FutureSonic

VARIOUS VENUES  
MANCHESTER, UK

Rooted in Manchester's mid-90s dance scene, and now in a celebratory tenth year mode (signature balloons floating in clusters on street corners), FutureSonic has broadened from niche event to a fully eclectic urban festival, guided by a genuine thirst for the unexpected, be it audio, visual or an ingenious blending of both. The ethos of the festival is no longer provided solely by the ebb and flow of electronica, but by a reputation for stretching into lonely areas of innovation, where art installations and social issues are both built into the festival's unique framework. It's a delicate balance and the organisers' greatest challenge is to contain a distinctive flavour in a two-strand festival which sees disparate artists cattered across myriad city venues, from chic cafe bars to sullen jazz cellars, from canal boat trips to Castlefield's Museum of Science & Industry, which fittingly housed the festival's opening and somewhat defining event.

This featured Toshio Iwai, less a musician and more a rolling concept multimedia talent. Iwai provided a keynote talk laced with an emphatic attitude towards his own distinctive mix of Techno-naïveté. Even with the city cowed by cloying humidity, his carefully constructed tale of his own journey from the simplistic flick-book animation of his schooldays to life as

superstar Nintendo game creator and electronica artist remained mercifully within the realms of entertainment. The conclusion saw him performing with his own invention, the electroplankton, a matrix board which pumped, pulsated and glowed with joypad manipulation. This preceded his actual musical 'performance', 24 hours later at Academy Two, where he took his place among a Music For The Beep Generation event. Here, his flamboyance was flanked by New York quartet Battles and Austria's Fennesz. To the bafflement of many, the conventional boundaries of what defines a concert were fabulously crashed. Battles are aptly named, as their complexity – a postulating crack and snap based on mathematical equations – provides an instant challenge to all but the most openly receptive of audience members. Their set built to a thunderous climax, where light and sound wove to a dizzying extreme.

Christian Fennesz, by stark contrast, has gained a powerful reputation for fusing technology with traditional instrumentation. At the Academy, the result was a haunting tumble of guitar chops pulled directly from the edges of rock cliché and hurled into a colourful melodic mix. At times this would shade into a recognisable songform, although this would swiftly dismantle to a state of gentle chaos.

The interactive nature of FutureSonic was perhaps most succinctly voiced by Pangeia

Instrumentos' Victor Gama, whose artist talk, also at the Museum of Science & Industry, focused on the link, albeit tenuous, between ancient and African music forms and the possibilities posed by hi-tech instrumentation. This, if one wishes, can even translate into a spiritual dimension with the concept of n'kizi, a religious object used to communicate with the ancestral world. Gama's unique contribution, however, became clear with his self-designed instruments, which added a wholesome acoustic flavour – a stark and intriguing contrast within the framework of an electronica festival. Gama's ideas of connecting with voices from the past was echoed in the FutureSonic-commissioned *Folk Songs Project* Website hosted by a collective called Manchester: Peripheral, which encourages viewers to create their own acoustic maps of city sounds, from noises sampled around various districts.

By this time, the festival's interactive appeal had been fully ignited, with the vast spread of events and venues controlled by a central hub, situated in the city's northern quarter. Of note, and down in the blackened cubic Roadhouse – a 1977-style venue, rather more fitting for a period Fall gig – came a hip-hop showcase from Manchester label Kr&z, which featured the raw, untempered talents of a precocious pair of 12 year olds (seriously) named Metrodome and Jordan. Clad in the preposterous normality of a shirt and tie,

Metrodome, cute as a choirboy, dipped between decks, and scratched and shifted to unsettling effect.

These may be seen as mere drops in the vast FutureSonic ocean – more than 100 acts crowding 30 events – and this disparate nature did provide problems of invisibility. Everywhere and nowhere, one wandered among the venues, not always aware of what might or might not be under the umbrella. Even poring over the programme proved a somewhat dizzying experience.

Personally, wishing for an alternative dense rock-like atmosphere at the Roadhouse, I lingered awhile amid shards of sunlight in Kro Bar, where the Electroplasm event saw DJ Dave Haslam ably supported by a swathe of electronic collectives – Tramp, Chips With Everything, Contort Yourself – under a Love Music Hate Racism banner, and Berlin's electrifying Cobra Killer, in mind-warping fury at the Bierkeller. Here again, it was possible to sample the fire of sheer energising innovation contained in the most traditional venue in the city. But that, perhaps, became the theme of this year's three-day blast. A spread of new acts and technologies all recognising and utilising the advancements of the past – as if a reflection of the city itself, FutureSonic sees a state of regeneration while retaining a respectful nod to the past.

NICK MIDDLES