

Apple links with the University of York for world's first laptop orchestra

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50 music students from the University of York will perform three orchestral pieces on laptop computers at concerts this month. They will form the largest digital ensemble of its kind anywhere in the world.

The Worldscape Laptop Orchestra (WLO) will perform new music written with laptops supplied by Apple Computer Inc.

The multimedia performance has been created by students of the Department of Music at York in just five weeks. WLO is designed and directed by Dr Ambrose Field, an award-winning composer in the Department.

The full range of software functionality is used in the performance – including video detection where hand movements of performers are decoded by Apple Macbooks into musical events. The 50 laptops use ‘Airport’ wireless internet to communicate, sharing audio and control data. The concerts will be streamed live from the University’s website.

Musicians, each with a laptop, will be seated on the floor, and surrounded by video screens in an atmospheric lighting scheme, creating a stunning spectacle. The highly unusual sound of the orchestra will combine with this to produce an ‘immersive’ multimedia performance.

Ambrose Field highlights the musical integrity of the project. “The computers become musical instruments in this performance. We set out to push the boundaries of human interaction with computers in the

WLO, enabling 50 people to explore musical performance in a way which was previously not possible.”

Paul McFadden of Apple said: "Universities and companies often collaborate on research and innovation. This project is exciting for us because it's innovation at its most creative - it opens up a whole new vista of using technology in performance."

Philip Morris, Business Development Manager at the University of York said: “The Worldscape Laptop Orchestra bridges the arts/science divide by bringing advanced computing and video technologies into the concert hall. Digital processing has become an art form.”

Source: University of York

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