

TACO!

WENDY

FRANCES SCOTT AND CHU-LI SHEWRING

26 MAY – 09 JULY 2023

‘You will witness the day become near-night, like the deepest twilight. Sunset colors bathe the full horizon, while a gaping black hole gazes down at you from the inky sky, eye-like and surreal, surrounded by the solar corona, a halo of pearly ephemeral light of delicate beauty. Each time the corona looks quite different, and like an old friend’s face you’ll recognize each in photographs.’

Wendy Carlos

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Wendy is a film fan letter and response to the work of composer, electronic music innovator and polymath, Wendy Carlos.

Translated into a series of rehearsals, the work orbits around a duet for four hands on one piano. Together, Frances Scott and Chu-Li Shewring learn to play a transcribed version of *Timesteps*, an original score composed by Wendy Carlos for the film soundtrack *A Clockwork Orange*—in which she first responded to the book by Anthony Burgess, preceding Stanley Kubrick’s film adaptation in 1971.

The film is shown as a film installation at **TACO!**, with 5:1 surround sound arranged in a structure that alludes to the dome and curvature of a planetarium. Embedded on the reverse of the projection screen and the gallery windows are a series of lumen prints—solar photograms that composite exposures of stills from the film.

The duet of *Timesteps* takes place in a wood-panelled room, amid dust drifts, bleached-out window light and the suggestion of umbral shadow, at the dark centre of an eclipse. Frances and Chu-Li focus closely on reworking sections, translated to piano by composer and musician, Sasha Scott.

The music gives way to a halting choreography of hands and voices, where the players’ repetitions and mistakes complicate the shifting time signatures and underline the human, bodily invocation of an electronic piece of music. Hammers and strings, percussive feet and voices count each other in, measuring a slow, half-speed limbo between not-knowing and knowing the script.

The rehearsing of *Timesteps* within the film is accompanied by alternate sequences on piano, vocoded bird song, improvised singing and readings with collaborators artist Michael Curran and dancer Valentina Formenti, and hand-drawn phrases by musician Tom Richards using his synthesiser-sequencer the ‘Mini Oramics’—designed in 1976 by electronic music pioneer Daphne Oram.

Footage of the duet is synthesised with images using nascent digital volumetric filmmaking technology—a three-dimensional modelling technique, and solarised hand-processed 16mm film footage of other rehearsals, horses, moons and of a sun eclipsing as it rises above the horizon.

Showing Frances and Chu-Li in the process of learning, with the instrument’s inherent restrictions—regulated tonal intervals, and notes of finite duration and decay provide a new way to listening to Wendy Carlos’ piece.

Timesteps was originally imagined for the synthesiser, and the instruments capacity for programming shifting layers and textures of sound. There are several arhythmic and dissonant sequences, and rather than being a performative exercise, the duet becomes an intimate attempt to understand, and inhabit, a complex piece of music.

Wendy Carlos describes herself as ‘The Original Synth’, and in this spirit, *Wendy* channels the unbounded voice in composition and transition. *Wendy* is a work of translation and homage, but also of collaboration, fandom and friendship, suggesting a coming into being through sonic synthesis.

Wendy Carlos is known for her expansive, experimental body of work including film soundtracks *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Shining* and *TRON*, electronic music releases such as *Switched-On Bach*, *Sonic Seasonings*, *Beauty in the Beast* and *Re-discovering Lost Scores*. She was a key collaborator and contributor to Robert Moog’s synthesiser and development of the vocoder. Her practice includes solar eclipse photography, of which NASA is known to have employed techniques she developed in her photographic darkroom.

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Several scenes from *A Clockwork Orange* were shot on the Thamesmead estate, and this became the locus for a research project commissioned by **TACO!**

Wendy is the culmination of this 5 year research project, with a number of works realised by Frances Scott as part of **TACO!**’s public programme during the development and production, including: *Incantation*, *Wendy*, both a recorded broadcast for radio (2018) and book published by An Endless Supply / Bobo books (2021), *Rehearsal Letter* a performance with Tom Richards, and moving image works *Valentina* (2020) and *Aureole* (2021).

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FRANCES SCOTT is an artist working with moving image, her work considers the narratives and histories at the periphery of cinematic production and its apparatus. Her films are informed by a collaborative and research-led process, with recent presentations at: Curzon Soho, London (2023); BFI, London; Curtocircuito - International Film Festival, Santiago de Compostela, Spain; Rencontres Internationales, Paris/Berlin (2021/2022); 'Mattflix' Matt's Gallery, London; Anthony Burgess Foundation, Manchester; 38th Kassel Documentary Film and Video Festival; 67. International Short Film Festival Oberhausen (LUX distribution programme); transmediale, HKW, Berlin; CTM Festival, Berlin; 'Unsung Stories: Women at Columbia Computer Music Center, New York (2021); and 57th New York Film Festival (2019). She was awarded The Stuart Croft Foundation Moving Image Award (2017). Her films are distributed by LUX.

CHU-LI SHEWRING is a filmmaker and sound designer, and has worked for and collaborated on several projects with artist filmmakers including Anagram, Siobhan Davies, Jeremy Deller, Beatrice Gibson, Steve McQueen, Ben Rivers, and Aura Satz. Her films combine interview, archival and documentary material, with delicately crafted soundscapes to create realities that sit somewhere between fact and fiction. Her most recent film, Fawley, co-directed with Adam Gutch, won Best International Short Film at Sheffield DocFest (2022) and has screened at the ICA, London and Bertha DocHouse, Curzon Bloomsbury (2023). Working to Beat the Devil was nominated for Best Short Film at International Film Festival Rotterdam (2014). She was awarded the Jules Wright prize as part of the Jarman Award (2017), for her contribution as a sound designer in the area of artists' moving image production.

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TACO! is an artist-led organisation based in Thamesmead, SE London. **TACO!** is engaged with its local context and centres the work and role of contemporary artists, supporting a dialogue between artists, audiences, community and place.

TACO!'s activities are experimental and collaborative. Invited artists are supported to research, develop and realise projects over a dedicated period of time. This research informs a public programme that includes exhibitions, events, discussions, workshops, screenings, broadcasts, publishing, and co-authored participatory projects with local people and groups.

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Wendy was made possible thanks to the funding support of Arts Council England, and The Elephant Trust.

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