

Alwynne Pritchard

Artist, performer and composer

...playful, sinister and altogether riveting

Alwynne Pritchard is a British artist, performer and composer based in Bergen on the West coast of Norway. Her practice encompasses a wide range of disciplines and media including musical composition, choreography, vocal and physical performance, text, video and photography. Much of her most important recent work is conceived in the form of self-contained capsule-performances, in which she employs a multidisciplinary language to create a conceptual framework for extraordinary and often immersive rituals or 'acts of observation'. These are drawn almost exclusively from the movement and functions of the human body – her own – and can be simultaneously grotesque, fragile, terrifying and absurd.

Central to Pritchard's performative work is the idea that the human body is an access to thought. An unpredictable force, without morality or language, it can create rifts in perception from which the unforeseen can emerge. From the physicality of this corporeal self – the pulsings, twitchings and contortions of the body – the performer's voice also comes into being, strong, ugly, delirious and fragile.

Withdrawing into oneself, into one's body on a public stage is a subversive act. It rejects the definition of performer and redefines the relationships between those onstage and off. To observe someone in such a state of concentrated withdrawal is fascinating to Pritchard, and her work as a *composer, choreographer and performer* has become increasingly about creating situations in which this takes place. But the withdrawal must be concentrated and highly controlled – a practice developed around principles of precision, discipline, intimacy and constraint. The performance is not a staging or an enactment but a kind of public rite of investigation.

Over the last decade and a half, Alwynne's music has been performed by leading players and ensembles around the globe. Her work is regularly heard in the UK, and has received performances in America, Belgium, Canada, Finland, Germany, Holland, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Poland and Norway, and has often been broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and 4, as well as abroad. Her work *Decoy*, created at the Heinrich Strobel Stiftung in Freiburg in 2006, for the Donaueschingen Musiktage, was awarded the special prize given by the Foundation Ton Bruynèl, STEIM and the Foundation GAUDEAMUS

As a vocalist, Alwynne performs both improvised and composed music, and has in recent years been commissioning an ongoing series of short music-theatre pieces from composers Vinko Globokar, Felix Kubin, Helmut Oehring, Trond Reinholdtsen, François Sarhan, Gerhard Stäbler, Øyvind Torvund, Adam de la Cour, Gwyn Pritchard, Hollie Harding and Justin Connolly on the theme DOG/GOD. This was premiered at the Bergen International Festival in 2015 and works from the series have since been performed in London, Berlin, Riga, Florence, Weimar, Düsseldorf, Trier and Tel Aviv.

In recent years, Alwynne has expanded her visual arts practice. In 2006, she started working with paper instruments, first performing with them at Lydgalleriet (the sound gallery) in Bergen. The project has

travelled, and sees sheets of material manipulated to create very simple but precisely constructed musical instruments. She is currently developing a project that links the human body, manufacturing process, the history of paper and its potential for telling stories through sound rather than on it.

In 2013, her *Tear me, eat me, burn me*, a work which inhabits a realm somewhere between musical score and purely visual artwork, was exhibited at the Visingsrommet gallery, USF, Bergen as part of the Borealis Festival 2013 Notations exhibition.

In 2016, Alwynne was awarded the commission to create a fanfare or 'marker' to celebrate the opening of Snøhetta's building for the University of Bergen's newly created Department of Art, Music and Design, for which she created the book of text scores, *up without an insistent casting away*.

Alwynne was born in Glasgow and studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and later at the Royal Academy of Music, where she was awarded several prizes for her work. In 1997, she was awarded a research scholarship by the University of Bristol, and in 2003 received a PhD in composition. In the summer of 2000, Alwynne was awarded a Visions of Norway scholarship for a two-month artist's residency at the Kulturhuset USF Verftet, Bergen, and later returned for an extended residency three years later. She has completed further residencies in New York, Bavaria, Bergen and the Philippines.

Alwynne's professional life has also included stints as a writer and presenter for BBC Radio, a composition teacher at Trinity College of Music in London and as Artistic Director of both the Borealis festival and BIT20 Ensemble in Bergen.

In 2015, she formed the music-theatre company Neither Nor with her partner Thorolf Thuestad.