

## Alwynne Pritchard

Composer, Performer, choreographer and Artist

*“Craw, by Alwynne Pritchard, refreshed the palate with silence and delicate atonality a la Webern.. the writing was cool and lucid, like frosted flowers in morning sunlight.”*

Nicholas Williams, The Independent

Alwynne Pritchard is a British artist, performer and composer based in Bergen on the West coast of Norway. She was born in Glasgow studied with Robert Saxton at the Guildhall School of Music, and later with Melanie Daiken, Justin Connolly and Michael Finnissy at the Royal Academy of Music, where she was awarded many prizes for her work. During this time she also studied voice with the mezzo-soprano Linda Hirst. 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. In April 2007 she completed a one-year residency at the Internationales Künstlerhaus Villa Concordia in Bamberg, Bavaria after which she spent a year living in Berlin; from June until August 2010, she was resident at PointB Worklodge, New York; and in 2012 she was Artist in Residence at the Philippine High School for the Arts (PHSA) in Los Baños, Philippines.

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 esoteric and often immersive rituals. 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.

As is so often the case in her recent work, it is by depriving her performers of both sight and hearing that Pritchard turns their attention inwards. Their focus is thus directed entirely towards tasks dictated by the rhythms and contours of their own bodies, and by that most primal of senses - touch. In this case, it is the very distance thus created between the audience and the performers which also brings them together: the private, intimate space of the performer becomes a shared one, by nature of co-presence with the audience. The isolation and vulnerability of the performer is cause for empathy in those witness to the challenge and intensity of the investigations she endeavours to undertake. This empathy is also an invitation to the audience to access similar processes of investigation within themselves – to explore the cognition of their own bodies.

In recent years, Alwynne has expanded her visual arts practice. In 2006 she started working with paper instruments; first performing with them at the sound gallery Lydgalleriet, Bergen. The project has travelled and sees sheets of material manipulated to create very simple but precisely constructed musical instruments. She is currently developing this 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, Bergen as part of the Borealis Festival, 2013 Notations exhibition.

Over the last decade and a half Alwynne's music has been performed by leading players and ensembles throughout Europe and America. Her work is regularly heard in the UK and has received performances in America, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Holland, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Poland and Norway, and has often been broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and 4, as well as abroad.

As a vocalist, Alwynne has performed both improvised and composed music and has recently commissioned a 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 and Hollie Harding on the theme DOG/GOD. This was premiered at the Bergen International Festival in 2015.

From 2008 until 2013, Alwynne was Artistic Director of the Borealis festival in Bergen, Norway. In 2015 she formed the music-theatre company Neither Nor with her partner Thorolf Thuestad.

In 2016 she was invited to be among the shortlisted candidates to submit a piece to mark the opening of the new Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design at the University of Bergen. Her submission was chosen and the book of text pieces, short poem-like texts that also act as musical instructions, was selected. The book will be launched and the first piece performed when the building is officially opened in October.

From 2001 until 2008 Alwynne taught composition at Trinity College of Music in London. She has also worked regularly as a project leader for the BIT20 Ensemble's music education projects in Norway and abroad and presented many contemporary music programmes for BBC Radio 3. She is currently Artistic Director of the BIT20 Ensemble.