

An immersive music experience – iForest by Pete M. Wyer – is now open at Manitoga in Garrison, New York and Descanso Gardens in Los Angeles

At a time when the live music industry is on its knees and artists are recording from lockdown, the ‘extraordinary sonic experience’ of iForest is offering a new and unique way to experience immersive music within a completely natural landscape.

Leading British composer and musician Pete M. Wyer has created two new symphonic works for the largest and most ambitious of these site-specific installations known as iForest. In iForest, which combines music, technology, and nature, you walk through a woodland trail experiencing the music all around you – each journey is different depending on the time of day, landscape and weather.

Two iForests – at Manitoga in Garrison, NY and Descanso Gardens in Los Angeles – are now open with social distancing in place, providing a unique means of experiencing music in nature at a time when concert halls and theatres are closed. Early responses have been rapturous, with visitors describing the experience as ‘unforgettable, bringing hope and solace’, ‘so moving after weeks of isolation’, and ‘awe-inspiring in the vast reach of the music’. A 7-year-old girl said: ‘Now I know how angels sound.’ John Schaefer, presenter of WNYC New Sounds described iForest as an “extraordinary sonic experience”.

Pete Wyer has created scores for the London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Royal Opera House as well as several operas, music theatre works and soundscapes projected onto iconic buildings such as the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow.

- **Two works, two iForests:**

‘The Sky Beneath our Feet’, world premiere open until August 31 at Descanso Gardens, 20 minutes from downtown Los Angeles. Ticketed entry \$15, book online: <https://www.descansogardens.org/sky/>. Featuring world-class singers and musicians, this is the largest such sound installation ever undertaken, with music from 72 audio speakers. ‘The Sky Beneath Our Feet’ is also an album, featured on John Schaefer’s New Sounds on WNYC (<https://www.newsounds.org/story/4348-pete-m-wyer/>). (1 minute video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6fuyix8OSko&feature=youtu.be>)

- **‘I Walk Towards Myself’, 10 July – 28 September**, Manitoga/The Russel Wright Design Center, Garrison, NY. Ticketed entry, book online: <https://www.visitmanitoga.org/2020-ar-pete-wyer> A story through music featuring a 72-voice choir over 24 audio speakers, in a theatrical setting of ancient woodland and towering boulders with framed views of the Hudson River Valley. Featuring the award-winning choir, The Crossing, singing primarily in the indigenous Mohawk language, Wyer’s composition connects to voices from thousands of years ago thanking nature. The Smithsonian magazine writes: “This forest will sing to you.”

Composer and creator of the iForest Pete M Wyer explains: *“Imagine if Beethoven’s ninth symphony, Mozart’s Requiem or your favorite piece of music had been created so that you could literally walk ‘within’ the music, experiencing it on a different level – no need for headphones or an app. The experience of these two works in the natural environment is unique for each individual; you choose your own journey through the woodland and the*

music, and it is different every time. The two pieces are symphonic, celebrating the lives of trees and the natural world in ways that we can relate to, involving joy, community, struggle, death, redemption and thanksgiving. The iForest has a whole new dimension and meaning in the current pandemic, according to those who have experienced it. The beauty of the natural world that surrounds us has not changed but being able to reconnect with it in this way after self-isolation and lockdowns I think is precious.”

Pete M Wyer and the iForest

- The first iForest, ‘I Walk Towards Myself’, was installed at The Wild Center in the Adirondacks in May 2017, creating music that wraps around listeners as they walk a specially created natural trail. iForest at The Wild Center was a great success, attracting more than 100,000 people ([7 minute film: http://www.eforest.org/](http://www.eforest.org/)).
- A WNYC New Sounds Live commission, ‘Song of the Human’, a work for both birdsong and human voices, was premiered at Brookfield Place in New York in October 2016 (<https://www.newsounds.org/story/3916-new-sounds-live-pete-m-wyer-song-human/>). Host John Schaefer said: “We are amidst the dawn chorus, wind, a passing storm, and then there are humans, who have a different sort of music it would seem, but Pete has found a connection between birdsong and human speech.”
- Part of Make Music New York, ‘Twilight Chorus (for Humans)’ at the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens in June 2018 emerged from the idea of the restorative effects of birdsong for psychological wellbeing.

- Pete M Wyer is the creator of a setting of a Dylan Thomas poem performed by a headphone choir distributed across Manhattan, synchronised via a specially created app on smartphones and tablets; part of Make Music New York in 2014. In 2015 he was the composer and Musical Director for the 175th anniversary of Cunard in Liverpool (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51DnqPhT9ok>) and in 2016 he scored a sci-fi projection mapping installation onto the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow (<http://www.colour-project.com/#!/russian-international-festival-of-light-2016/>). Pete has performed with the Orchestra of the Swan, Asphalt Orchestra, Ralph Samuelson and pianist Matthew Shipp.

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