**Composer and performer: an experimental turn and its consequences**

**Tom Armstrong (University of Surrey)** **with Simon Desbruslais (University of Oxford)**

**2 June 2014  
17.00 - 18.30  
Chancellor's Hall, Senate House, University of London, Malet Street, London WC1**

Since 2009 Tom Armstrong's compositional practice has been shaped by a heightened awareness of the creative agency of the performer, evident chiefly through adoption of indeterminate notation. The consequences of this decision have affected the expressive, technical and aesthetic aspects of his music leading to a much closer relationship with the experimental tradition than he could have conceived five years ago. This talk will take stock of these changes and reflect on them through recent scholarship in composition and performance creativity. Its focus will be on *Albumleaves* (2013) for trumpet and string quartet, a large scale, open form work that constituted a 'testing ground' for experimental approaches new to him at the time. Trumpeter Simon Desbruslais will co-present, offering a performer's perspective from which to interrogate the notions of performer creativity and freedom that informed the composition of *Albumleaves*. In common with all practice-based research there has been an emergent quality to the knowledge the pair have acquired during their collaboration; they will not, therefore, seek to provide hard and fast conclusions but to produce insights into a practice sustained by an ongoing dialogue between the acts of composition and performance.

**Tom Armstrong** studied composition with Roger Marsh at the University of York; he also attended Vinko Globokar's class at Dartington Summer School and the Advanced Composition and Performance course at the Britten-Pears School, Aldeburgh. His output encompasses work for the concert hall, theatre, amateurs and children with commissioners including Endymion, Making Music, [rout], the National Youth Ballet, Sinfonia Viva, Martin Feinstein, the Crossness Engines Trust and Notes Inégales. His recent work has become more collaborative, engaging in various ways with performer creativity. He is at work on a number of current projects: *Arachne*, featuring Melanie Pappenheim and Rebecca Askew, an open-scored work for one or more keyboards and an ongoing series of revisions of chamber works for release on CD. His music is available on Meridian Records (*Songs Now*) and on Signum Classics (*Albumleaves*, forthcoming). Tom is Lecturer in Music and Programme Director of the MMus at the University of Surrey.

**Simon Desbruslais** is a British trumpet soloist, whose performances have been critically acclaimed as 'steel-lipped', 'musically compelling' and possessing 'supreme confidence and flair'. He came to international prominence with the first ever recording of Hertel's *Third Trumpet Concerto* on the natural trumpet. This was followed by new trumpet concertos from John McCabe, Robert Saxton and Deborah Pritchard, all recorded for Signum Classics, and David Bednall's ground-breaking *Christmas Cantata*, for solo trumpet, choir and organ. He has worked with conductors Masaaki Suzuki, Ian Page and Benjamin Bayl on period instruments, and with Marin Alsop, Oliver Knüssen, Andrew Litton and Ryan Wigglesworth. Solo and chamber collaborators have included Malcolm Martineau, Clare Hammond, Julian Bliss, Mahan Esfahani, Stephen Farr and the Ligeti String Quartet. In addition to championing the work of today's composers, Simon unearths forgotten gems from the Baroque era with his specialist early music ensemble, *Collegium*. Simon was educated at King's College London, the Royal College of Music and he recently completed his doctorate at Christ Church, Oxford, on the music theory of Hindemith.