



Press Release

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Musical time machine recreates lost concert at royal palace

Virtual reality and ground-breaking acoustic techniques are being used to recreate historical music performances that took place more than half a millennium ago.

The immersive technology, which allows the listener to hear exactly how music would have sounded in the now-ruined chapel at Linlithgow Palace, is the closest people will get to musical time travelling, the researchers say.

Scholars from Edinburgh College of Art and the universities of Birmingham and Melbourne have collaborated with Historic Environment Scotland to reconstruct lost performances at the Palace – once a majestic royal residence of the Stewarts in the 15th and 16th centuries.

The project gives people the chance to experience the music of the time, when skilled musicians performed for the royal household while surrounded by magnificent decorations and sculptures.

Researchers used a technique called LIDAR scanning - a rotating laser gun that takes measurements of the building – to capture the Chapel Royal of Linlithgow Palace as it currently stands.

The team then consulted historical and architectural records and worked with historians at Historic Environment Scotland to virtually reconstruct what the Chapel might have looked like when James IV visited for Easter celebrations around 1512.

This included adding elements to recreate the acoustics of the space, such as the roof, windows, a tiled floor and objects including an altar, throne and drapes.

The researchers then pieced together what music may have been performed in the space.

Music from the Carver Choirbook – one of only two large-scale collections of music to survive from pre-Reformation Scotland – was chosen for the recording.

Professional singers from the acclaimed Binchois Consort recorded the music in an anechoic chamber – a setting which has close to no natural acoustics – which was then overlaid with the reconstructed acoustic modelling of the chapel.

The virtual reality experience is available as a CD launched by Hyperion Records with companion apps available in the Google Play Store and the Apple Play Store.

The recording is part of a project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) using technology to bring lost performance spaces back to life. Researchers worked with Soluis Group Heritage – a company specialising in digital interpretation of historic spaces – on some technical aspects of the project.

Dr James Cook, a lecturer in Early Music at Edinburgh College of Art, said: “This technology enables us to put music back into historic spaces and offers audiences compelling visual and sonic experiences.”



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Researchers are also working with Historic Scotland to bring the project to Linlithgow Palace. With a virtual reality experience, visitors will be able to walk through the reconstructed chapel for a full, multi-sensory, immersive experience.

Kit Reid, Senior Interpretation Manager at Historic environment Scotland (HES) said “We are pleased to have worked with Edinburgh University on this project and have been working closely with them to provide historical research and using laser-scanning data to create this virtual reality project which provides a unique window onto the past.

“Visitors at the Palace and our other properties love to imagine how these sites used to look and picture what life was like. What makes this project so special is the emphasis on not just the visual recreation but also the recreation of the authentic soundscape which gives an immersive insight into the court life at the Palace over 500 years ago.”

A link to the CD recording is available at - Music for the King of Scots - CDA68333 - Hyperion Records - MP3 and Lossless downloads (hyperion-records.co.uk) - https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D_CDA68333

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