Editorial: On the Technology of Liveness
(for the Proceedings of the 2016 International Conference on Live Interfaces)

The diversity of submissions to the 2016 International Conference on Live Interfaces has demonstrated that there is a demand for an interdisciplinary conference focusing on the role of technology in artistic expression. The biennial ICLI conference was first held in Leeds in 2012 and then Lisbon in 2014, chaired by Alex McLean and Adriana Sá respectively. The focus has been on how artists apply interface technologies (a word equally denoting methods and objects) in live performance. The question is one of the interface, and this interfacing is manifold, for example between the performer and the work, between a composer and the audience, between a choreographer and a dancer, or indeed between audience members. With digital technologies being omnipresent in our artistic practices, questions of liveness become increasingly pertinent, as the technology itself can be embedded with intelligence, script, or learning mechanisms.

When employing computational interface technologies in the performing arts, we face diverse problems in relation to how meaningful the performance technology is to the audience. Topics of liveness, immediacy and presence, as well as mediation, signification and expression are critical and questioned in order to gain a deeper understanding of the role contemporary technologies play in contemporary human expression. With this conference we are interested in exploring the philosophy of interface design, and studying how performance technologies function in the diverse art forms, as well as how we use them to communicate our intention as performers on stage.

Following the broad themes and concerns enveloped by live interfaces, our call for participation carried an expansive list of conference topics. We felt the breadth of this list was necessary to cover the rich spectrum of practices in live interfaces, and also to reflect the wide interests of our keynote speakers, coming from fields as diverse as those of puppetry, magic/illusionism, and musical instrument design. The call attracted a large volume of submissions, 142 in total across all submission categories. We felt that each submission should have at least three reviewers in order to maintain a high standard, so we sought additional reviewing expertise from the community of academics and artists who submitted work to the conference. With this fresh influx we were able to give at least three peer reviews to all submissions, and we would like to extend our gratitude to all of our PC members for contributing their time and expertise to the peer review process.

For us, it has been a privilege to see the quality, creativity and diversity of work that is presented at ICLI 2016. In particular, different interpretations of ‘interface technology’ challenge our preconceptions of how digital media and computing might shape the future of live performance. This raises questions of how interface technologies establish themselves as integral parts of performance and where in the creative process they sit. The presentations, performances, and installations during ICLI 2016 explore the concept of ‘interface’ through many forms of expression; including philosophy, design, craft, sound, music, visual art, sculpture and dance. We are excited to be involved in creating this platform for an interdisciplinary dialogue on topic so essential to contemporary artistic practice.
Chair blurbs

PERFORMANCE INTRO by Alice Eldridge
ICLI 2016 showcased the incredible compass of practice-based research and critical performance that is taking place internationally, with over 30 performances across club, concert hall and church venues on campus and around town. Kicking off with a mongrel family of hybrid resonant feedback systems, later concerts featured augmented acoustic instruments, modified games engines, interactive dance, performative installations, mobile apps and gesturally controlled synths, rounded off with some immense AV live coding. The variety, calibre and inventiveness of performances at ICLI this year turned a stimulating conference into an inspirational festival for delegates and audiences alike. Bravo everyone.

INSTALLATIONS INTRO by Cecile Chevalier
We were pleased to present a series of installation work by artists and researchers that thought about live interfaces from reappropriation of obsolete technologies and of junk instruments, to tracking technologies, and the body itself, whilst questioning ways in which the live interface experience expands thinking around synesthesia, ecosystems, ludic experiences and politics. These installations were a wonderful addition to 2016 ICLI conference.

DOCTORAL COLLOQUIUM by Joe Watson
The Doctoral Colloquium saw a wide-ranging, international cohort of PhD researchers explore key live-interface themes through presentation, performance and discussion. Professor Sally Jane Norman provided invaluable insight and cogent analysis throughout the day, particularly in her chairing of the afternoon’s group discussion. Stuart Nolan gave a talk that seemed magically to synthesise all of the issues explored through the day, and proved a fascinating supplement to his ICLI keynote address. Issues explored by this group of ‘creative extremophiles’ included questions of hybrid spaces, processual rather than static approaches, the modelling of agency rather than agents, the subverting/diverting/hijacking of mapping techniques, fracture and layering, potential futures, rhetorical devices.

PAPERS by Chris Kiefer
The academic programme spanned three paper sessions and a poster/demo session. The presenters approached the conference themes from diverse angles, often musical, and also enveloping audiovisual arts, coding, dance, education, machine listening, virtual environments and tangible interface design. Many submissions also included interactive demos; the demo/poster session was a lively, loud and engaging event, and a hands-on meeting point for the academic and performance strands. Together, the interdisciplinary mix of projects at ICLI 2016 highlighted and exposed thought provoking themes for future research in live interfaces.