



Simon interviewing Amble Skuse

Simon:

So I'm here with composer, Amble Skuse, who is err, in Brittany. Just tell us a bit about your background.

Amble:

Um, OK. So I'm a composer. I, um, started off playing lots of instruments and then I started working as a sound engineer and did that for quite a long time and then got into production. And then I got really ill about 12 years ago, um, I came down with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis and Fibromyalgia after a really bad virus and I went from being super strong and lifting massive PAs to not being able to make a cup of tea. So had to really re-think my approach to life radically and I realised I'd always wanted to be a composer but I just never quite had the nerve to do it. I'd always skirted round the edges of it and I, it was something I could do from my bed. So I set up my laptop, started writing stuff and sending it off and people invited me to do stuff which was awesome, it was super nice. Um, So that was mainly writing for instruments and then as I went along I sort of started playing more with Logic and putting processing in and figuring out how I could do that live stuff and put live processing in on string quartets and stuff like that. So mixing like my sound engineering background with my composing I guess. And I'd always felt when you've got a big PA in front of you and there's so much more you could do with it than make it sound nice and turn it up you know. It's like I wanna use all these machines and make it sound mental. And you can't cos you're not being paid to do that. But when you're a composer you can, so I guess I sort of took my knowledge of sound engineering and then kind of applied that knowledge of processing and filtering and compressing and you know layering and all of that stuff and added that into my composing so that's kind of how I got going and now I do a bit of everything really. I make some sound walks, some installations, um, we wrote an opera last year, um, and that was we had to rehearse it and record it all over Zoom, so we had to post kit to the singers and the musicians and get them to set themselves up and then we'd do the Zoom rehearsal and the recording, they'd record it live, they'd record it live in the house and then send me the audio and I'd have to try to make it sound like we were all in the same room talking to each other. Um, and instead of performing it live we actually made it as an audio piece and it has captioning, creative captioning, so we have an amazing visual artist who, it's basically like sub-titles but the way she does it is like really creative, so she like a piece of paper that rips and behind, you've got the words or maybe she brings it up like a message box on the screen and she types into it as the people are singing, or it's like a text message comes up on the screen and as one person singing that she's got the image of the text messages and stuff. And we had that performed at Sound Festival last year and at the International Disability History Month, it was aired as part of that as well. So yeah all sorts of things really, live instruments, improvisation, electronics, um, remote stuff, installations ...

Simon:

Fantastic. So you mentioned string quartets, and you mentioned processing. Some people listening might not know what that means. But could you paint me give me a brief what would

you do to something to make it sound different from what it was, perhaps you could give an example of?

Amble:

Yeah, sure. So when you go to a live gig you're hearing what the singer's doing for example, but you're also hearing what the sound engineer has done to the singer's voice. So they might put a bit of reverb on it, they might um, eq it as they take out some frequencies that are a bit boxy and put other frequencies in to kind of brighten it up, and also like if you hear an electric guitar player, the actual sound of the guitar is very clean and then all the other stuff that you hear is all done with pedals. So basically that's what I'm doing but with other instruments like orchestras and and and, um, string quartets. There's one bit I really like in one of the pieces where I get the cellist to do a slide down her bottom string and so she goes "booo" and as we do that we fade up the sub-base and the octave drop slider, so it starts off as this thin cello note and by the end of it it's this massive kind wall of sub-base so it's using what are effectively guitar pedals but they live inside my computer, and we put the original sounds through that, we turn some of those up and turn it into a kind of electronic sound world.

Simon:

Fantastic.

Amble:

I actually did do a sound walk in Nantes. You know, 44 isn't Brittany, um, but yeah I've got a connection with Apo-33 who are in Nantes and they're fantastic, so I've done a gig for them with the Mimu Gloves and I make a sound walk. So if you're in Nantes and you want to do the sound walk you can just have a look on my website, download the tracks, follow the map

Simon:

Well, thank you very much for talking to us and look forward to seeing something and hearing something quite soon.

Amble:

Thank you for inviting me.