

PRESS RELEASE

22 September

London's first 'Singing Boat' to be launched on the Grand Union Canal

A major new artwork will be launched on London's Grand Union Canal this October - its purpose - to encourage people to visit and celebrate one of the capital's best-loved urban community gardens the **Meanwhile Gardens**.

Meanwhile Hydrosiren is a floating, acoustic sculptural boat that will be moored at Meanwhile Gardens in Kensal Town from 14-28 October. Created by artist Professor **Simeon Nelson**, from the School of Creative Arts at the University of Hertfordshire, it will play a soundscape by composer **Rob Godman** that takes inspiration from the inhabitants of the gardens, canal and the local community. The **Canal & River Trust** – the charity that cares for the canal – has commissioned the work which has been curated by **Modus Operandi**.

The project is part of the Canal & River Trust's **Arts on the Waterways** programme which provides artists with space along the waterways where they can slow down, research, make and display ambitious new work. Funding for the project has been provided by an external donor.

Over ten metres in length and carved in the shape of an acanthus lily motif to reflect the local flora, the boat will make its inaugural voyage along the Grand Union Canal on **14 October**, with further performances scheduled for Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoons at Meanwhile Gardens. For Saturday afternoon performances, soprano Elizabeth Karani will be singing live, weaving her voice into the *Hydrosiren* soundscape.

The music for *Meanwhile Hydrosiren* comes from the sounds of the local community, blending the different voices, languages and music of local people with the sounds of the aquatic life within the canal and the insect and animal life within the gardens. 'Sound mirrors' on board the boat will also collect and emit new sounds during the boat's journey.

Meanwhile Gardens is a community garden on the edge of the Grand Union Canal. It was established in 1976 by the artist Jamie McCullough to take the place of derelict wasteland. It is now nurtured by local people and communities and home to a wide variety of wildlife as well as one of London's first ever skateboard 'pit'.

Tim Eastop, executive producer of the Canal & River Trust's *Arts on the Waterways* program comments: "We're so pleased this amazing partnership project is coming to the canal. We hope it encourages people to reconsider and rediscover one of London's secret waterway sanctuaries. It draws together the natural, cultural and social influences along this stretch of the Grand Union. It is an undoubtedly urban area, but discovering the peace and rich mix of Meanwhile Gardens and the waterway will be a real delight for many people. That is what Simeon, together with Rob and all those who have helped to build the boat, are reflecting. I can only encourage people to take a moment to step onto the towpath and discover it for themselves."

Together with artist Simeon Nelson and boat builder Martin Cottis, Canal & River Trust volunteers and University of Hertfordshire students from The School of Creative Arts have been instrumental in the boat's construction and decoration.

Simeon Nelson, adds: "It has been an extraordinary creative process offloading and stocking piles of plywood sheets and timber in a corner of the enormous semi-circular shed that covers the maintenance dock at Adelaide Yard, then experiencing it magically transform over a few short weeks into a boat that feels as large as a London bus. The camaraderie of the wonderful team of volunteers, assistants and builders has been inspirational. The hundreds of hours of cutting and joining has resulted in a truly stunning ornamental barge that will "sing" its way along the Meanwhile reach of the Grand Union Canal."

For further information visit:

www.canalrivertrust.org.uk or

<http://simeon-nelson.com/index.php/hydrosiren-construction/>

Notes to Editors

For more media information contact: joe.coggins@canalrivertrust.org.uk tel. 020 3204 4410

Meanwhile Hydrosiren performance dates:

The boat launch will take place on 14 October 2017, departing Little Venice, Paddington Basin at 3pm and punted to Meanwhile Gardens, Kensal Town.

Thereafter there will be performances at the following set times at Meanwhile Gardens:

- Tuesday 17 and Thursday 19 October: moored performances 4pm to 6pm
- Saturday 21 October: moving performance, 4pm to 6pm with soprano Elizabeth Karani
- Tuesday 24 and Thursday 26 October: moored performances 4pm to 6pm
- Saturday 28 October: moving performance, 4pm to 6pm with soprano Elizabeth Karani

The Canal & River Trust

The Canal & River Trust's *Arts on the Waterways* programme was initiated by the Trust in 2012 in partnership with Arts Council England, and more recently with strategic support from the Arts Council of Wales. We work with talented artists and leading arts institutions, which are based near waterways to inspire more people to experience and appreciate our waterways. www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

Modus Operandi Art Consultants

Modus Operandi is a leading independent agency for art in the public realm, based in London and working across the UK and internationally. It aims to deliver excellent art integral to architecture and the public realm, matching the vision of artists to client, audience and place. Modus Operandi curates and delivers permanent and temporary commissions, collaborations and interventions.

www.modusoperandi-art.com / modus@modusoperandi-art.com /tel. 0207 831 1865

Simeon Nelson, Artist

Simeon Nelson is an interdisciplinary sculptor investigating convergences between science, psychology, ecology and mathematics in large-scale sculptures and multi-media interventions. After establishing himself as Hyan artist in Australia and Asia in the 1990s, he moved to London in 2001 and has recently completed projects in Africa, the Middle East, Australia, Europe and the UK. He was a Finalist in the National Gallery of Australia's National Sculpture Prize in 2005 and a Finalist in the 2003 Jerwood Sculpture Prize. *Passages*, a monograph on his work was published by The University of New South Wales Press, Sydney in 2000.

He has received numerous arts council grants in Australia and the UK, two Pollock-Krasner Foundation Fellowships, three Wellcome Trust arts awards, Leverhulme Trust and EU funding. In 1997 he was the Australian representative to the IX Triennial India, New Delhi. His work is held in the collections of the Art/Omi Foundation, New York, the Jerwood Foundation, London, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, The National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne and the Cass Sculpture Foundation, UK. He is currently professor of sculpture, School of Creative Arts at the University of Hertfordshire, United Kingdom. The Canal & River Trust is grateful to the University of Hertfordshire for their agreement to commission Simeon Nelson for this project.

www.simeon-nelson.com

Rob Godman - composer

Rob is Reader in Music at the University of Hertfordshire. He has a passionate interest in how sound behaves acoustically and has developed many techniques for controlling and building virtual spaces for use within live performance and installation. Music for recent films - Sam Jury's *Popehelm* and Kamila Kuc's *Batum* –have received many screenings throughout the world. In 2016, he created a new realization and performance of *Poeme Electronique* by Varese (in collaboration with Kate Romano) and a new partner composition - *Faraday Waves* – for live sound projection and video. He is part of a collaborative team with sculptor Simeon Nelson creating large-scale installation works combining algorithmic sound and light for many of the world's most iconic buildings. 2017 will see them working on a new Artichoke/Wellcome Trust funded initiative *Cosmoscope* (Durham Cathedral 2017 Lumiere).

<http://www.robgodman.com>

Elizabeth Karani

Elizabeth Karani studied at the Royal Northern College of Music and thereafter at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama's Opera Course, finishing in July 2016. Her most recent operatic projects include Musetta *La Boheme* with Opera Holland Park (Christine Collins Young Artist Programme). In 2017/2018 she will sing Tatyana *Eugene Onegin* for Mid Wales Opera and Cino in Vivaldi's *Teuzzone* for La Serenissima in Venice.

<http://www.markkendallartists.com/artist/elizabeth-karani/>

Meanwhile Gardens Community Association -156-158 Kensal Road, London W10 5BN

Meanwhile Gardens is a four-acre community garden site, located in a busy inner city area within the borough of Kensington & Chelsea.

41 years ago, as crumbling canal side terraces were being cleared, a local sculptor named Jamie McCullough wondered if this derelict wasteland could become a community garden. He asked the local authority (Westminster at the time) for permission to turn the rubble into a park. Westminster gave temporary permission – hence the name, Meanwhile. The name stuck and the Gardens prospered. Over the years through the support of many, many volunteers and a dedicated staff team, the Gardens have continued to thrive in what is now a lush oasis in a densely populated part of North Kensington known as Kensal Town/ Golborne Ward.

www.meanwhile-gardens.org.uk

<http://www.mgca.f2s.com/AboutUs.html>