

News

Composer and filmmaker create musical portrait of Brighton for arts festival

Among the highlights of this year's Brighton Festival announced today (17 Feb 2016) is a specially commissioned film about the city made by two University of Sussex academics.

Brighton: Symphony of a City, directed by [Lizzie Thynne](#), a Reader in Film, with a musical score by Professor of Music [Ed Hughes](#), is a rhythmic, poetic portrait of a modern city.

The commission is part of the Festival's 50th anniversary celebrations, and receives its world premiere on Wednesday 11 May at the Dome in Brighton.

The 45-minute silent film includes some familiar Brighton activities - such as the skate park at The Level, the annual Pride and Burning the Clocks processions, and Brighton Swimming Club taking their daily plunge - but through vivid juxtaposition of music and image makes us see them anew.

As well as the pleasures and rhythms of work and play, the film also highlights the growing problem of homelessness facing the city.

Performing Professor Hughes' score will be the [Orchestra of Sound and Light](#), featuring professional classical musicians together with music students from regional schools and colleges and rock musicians from the Brighton Institute of Modern Music.

The project was inspired by Walther Ruttmann's 1927 silent film, *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*, with a score later written by Edmund Meisel, although the process of producing the Brighton version was quite different.

Professor Hughes says: "Rather than writing a score after the film was made, Lizzie and I worked collaboratively during the making of it – going back and forth with images and music sections, working out the rhythmic possibilities until we had built up a picture of a day in Brighton. It was a fascinating process."

As well as new footage, shot between November 2015 and January 2016, the film features scenes of Brighton from the last century, which Thynne and Associate Producer Catalina Balan sourced from Screen Archive South East at the University of Brighton. The film also includes video contributed by staff and students of the School of Media, Film and Music.

"I wanted to link the present to the past," says Thynne, "but I wanted to do it quite subtly. So the archive footage is seen mainly through another screen or a lens. For instance, We look through a seafront telescope to see the swimming pool at Black Rock, no longer there."

She adds: "Making the film has made me realise how much I love Brighton. One of the most exciting moments was filming the Brighton Swimming Club at dawn in December. They are such a comradely bunch. Swimming in the wintry sea must do something for your soul."

For Professor Hughes, whose compositions have featured in previous Brighton Festivals, the archive footage helps to give the film and his score an extraordinarily rich texture. "I am particularly struck by how contemporary the past can feel in this context. There are scenes of people returning from the Spanish Civil War, and marches celebrating the 21st anniversary of the Soviet Union. You realise how little people knew what was about to come on the cusp of the Second World War."

Following its premiere, the film will be made available on DVD and shown at international film festivals. Further performances of the work will take place on the University of Sussex campus at Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts (ACCA).



Brighton Swimming Club are among those who feature in 'Brighton: Symphony of a City'