Press Release

For release: 8 November 2016

Celebrating 25 years of
Birmingham Contemporary Music Group's pioneering
SOUND INVESTMENT
Classical music's first crowd-funding scheme

Thomas Adès conducts special anniversary concert
Saturday 10 December at 7.30pm
CBSO Centre, Birmingham

In 1991, long before the word 'crowd-funding' had even entered the lexicon, **Birmingham Contemporary Music Group** launched ***Sound Investment***, classical music's first crowd-funding scheme.

Sound Investment was launched with the simple aim of putting music lovers at the very heart of commissioning new music and widening support for composers. The scheme establishes a social framework for contemporary composition by enabling music enthusiasts to follow the creation of a new piece of music from original concept to first rehearsal and performance, and to meet and get to know composers and musicians.

To celebrate the first 25 years of BCMG Sound Investment, former BCMG Music Director Thomas Adès conducts a special concert celebrating its rich past and promising future, at CBSO Centre, Birmingham on Saturday 10 December. Adès's 1997 *Concerto Conci*so, which BCMG will perform later this season*, is amongst the widely performed Sound Investment works. He is one of dozens of composers to have benefitted from the strong vision and support of Sound Investment.

The anniversary concert is centred on the latest *Sound Investment* premiere, a tragicomedy for soprano (**Elizabeth Atherton**) and ensemble by rising Spanish star **Francisco Coll**. The concert also features two works from 2016: **Zoë Martlew**'s barnstorming *Broad Street Burlesque***,** and the world premiere of the complete version of **Richard Baker**'s *Hwyl fawr ffrindiaur/Bant â ni***.** The concert is completed by two popular successes from the first 25 years of *Sound Investment*: **Simon Holt**'s arresting and otherworldly revision of his *Capriccio Spettrale* from 2009 and **Gerald Barry**'s 2000 work, *Wiener Blut,* which he describes as: *"prompted by my idea of mass-producing a Poignancy Grid for sale in supermarkets. Because all the harmonies would have a distilled poignant essence, they could be played in any way and be poignantly foolproof… BCMG was a supermarket and I could not have been happier in it."*

Over the past quarter of a century, over 400 people in the UK and internationally, have supported *Sound Investment*, collectively donating more than a quarter of a million pounds to the creation of new music by purchasing individual £150 sound units. Sound Investors have played a vital role in establishing a vibrant catalogue of more than 85 works from the world's leading composers, many of which have subsequently been heard on the international stage, including performances in Japan, Australia, Brazil, USA, Colombia and across Europe. Investors are drawn from all walks of life, from across the UK, Europe and as far away as the USA – millennials, baby boomers, organisations who have

clubbed together to buy Sound Units, leading figures in UK music, fellow composers, musicians and artists all make up the community of Sound Investors, past and present.

Stephan Meier, Artistic Director of Birmingham Contemporary Music Group comments:
"*Sound Investors share with BCMG a mercurial enjoyment in seeing a new work develop and an inherent sense of adventure. The brilliance of Sound Investment lies in its simplicity; in creating Sound Investment, my predecessors, Simon Clugston and Stephen Newbould, developed a model for engagement and creative fundraising that was way ahead of its time, and which has been admired and replicated in various forms worldwide. Most importantly, it has created an international BCMG family that extends far beyond the concert platform. Our challenging task is to continue to stay ahead of the game and develop new possible forms of investing, something we are very much looking forward to doing."*

Composers comment…

An anniversary fundraising campaign, running throughout BCMG's 2016/17 season, aims to raise £25,000 towards the next generation of new commissions, including works by **Harrison Birtwistle, Helen Grime** and **Colin Matthews**, whose new *Sound Investment* commission for voice and ensemble will close BCMG's 2016/17 season on 10 June 2017. He comments:
"*It's been a joy to see the way Sound Investment has grown and become a vital part of everything that BCMG does. When I wrote the large-scale piece for voice and ensemble, 'Continuum', in 2000, I was thrilled at how the work's 53 Sound Investors became almost part of it through their support and the warmth of their reaction – they followed the work's progress, many were keen ears at open rehearsals and there were Sound Investors in the audience at every stage of a European concert tour. It's a relationship like no other."*

Judith Weir, Master of the Queen's Music, who has written two *Sound Investment* works, adds:
"BCMG's Sound Investment is the best way yet invented to bring new music into existence. The Sound Investors are a valuable sounding board for both composer and performers when a new musical idea takes its first steps in the outside world."

Sound Investors say…

Sound Investors, many of whom have supported multiple works, are also vocal in their praise for the scheme. **Michael Squires**, who has supported numerous *Sound Investment* works over the past two decades became involved because the scheme coupled his love of music with a desire to get more involved "*notwithstanding my complete lack of music talent. Most of my involvement with music (most of most peoples I suspect) up to then had been passive. To see a piece of music come into existence – and then attend the premiere – becomes a drug!"*

Sound Investor **Anne Fletcher** comments: *"I love the first rehearsal, with the sense of rapport between players and conductor, the nervous pride of the composer, hearing the effect of minor (and occasionally major) adjustments. I also greatly value the sense of belonging, of equality of esteem that leaves me free to express an opinion from the depth of my ignorance."*

Fellow Sound Investor, **Jenna Kumiega**, adds: *"I would say to anyone thinking of becoming a BCMG Sound Investor, go for it, definitely, you will never regret it. The value you experience from it, in so many ways and on so many levels, far outstrips other more trivial ways of spending that money".*

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*BCMG will perform Thomas Adès' *Concerto Conciso* as part of Thomas Adès Day at WIgmore Hall on Saturday 25 March 2017

A BCMG *SOUND INVESTMENT* ELECTRONIC PRESS PACK, INCLUDING SOUND CLIPS, IMAGES, QUOTES AND FULL LISTS OF WORKS AND COMPOSERS IS AVAILABLE AT www.bcmg.org.uk/SI25

Programme Details

Simon Holt: *Capriccio Spettrale* (BCMG Sound Investment revision 2009)
Richard Baker: *Hwyl fawr ffrindiau / Bant â ni* (World premiere of complete piece/BCMG Sound Investment commission)
Francisco Coll: *Ceci n'est pas un Concerto* (World premiere / BCMG Sound Investment commission) *
Zoë Martlew: *Broad St. Burlesque* (BCMG Sound Investment commission 2016)
Gerald Barry: *Wiener Blut* (BCMG Sound Investment commission 2000)

Conductor: **Thomas Adès**
Soprano: **Elizabeth Atherton** *

Booking Details

Tickets for all BCMG evening concerts at CBSO Centre, Birmingham are priced: **£18 full price; £16 concessions; £8 18-30, not in full time education; £5 students; £1 under 18s.** Tickets include a £3 ticket commission/donation, and include a free concert programme in the ticket price.

To book:
In person via The Town Hall and Symphony Hall Box Office, Broad Street, Birmingham, B1 2EA
Call the Box Office on 0121 345 0491 **Online** at bcmg.org.uk

ABOUT BIRMINGHAM CONTEMPORARY MUSIC GROUP

Birmingham Contemporary Music Group emerged from within the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in 1987 and quickly established a reputation for exciting performances, innovative audience building and learning initiatives, and a central commitment to composers and the presentation of new work. The Group thrives on innovation and invention and is critically acclaimed for championing the most forward-looking music regionally, nationally and internationally.

As a world-leading contemporary ensemble, BCMG has premiered over 170 works, most commissioned through its pioneering Sound Investment scheme, with a family of Investors supporting each new piece. In addition, BCMG's extensive Learning and Participation Programme supports young people as composers, performers and listeners of new music through an exciting range of projects in- and out-of-school. BCMG is committed to talent development and the BCMG/ Sound and Music Apprentice Composer-in-Residence scheme provides access for emerging composers to the full range of the Group's work.

BCMG features on numerous CDs, including an ongoing series of NMC discs devoted to British composers, with recent recordings of music by Charlotte Bray, Oliver Knussen, Tansy Davies, Alexander Goehr and Richard Causton. The Group has two Artists-in- Association, Oliver Knussen and John Woolrich, and Sir Simon Rattle is the Group's Founding Patron.

Birmingham Contemporary Music Group is supported with public funding by Arts Council England.