

EPHEMERALITY AND RECURRENCE

MONDAY 22 JUNE 2026, 6.30PM
ANGELA BURGESS RECITAL HALL



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Ashkan Layegh (b 1997)

Ephemerality and Recurrence

String Quartet:

Casey-Joan Whyte and Lisa Archontidi-Tsaldaraki violin

Catherine Anushka White viola

Mikołaj Piszczorowicz cello

Pheмо Quartet:

Sam Norris alto saxophone

Gonçalo Maia Caetano bass guitar

Harry Ling drums

Ashkan Layegh piano

Screen Quartet:

Amirhossein Asadi illustrations

Harvey Cullis cinematography

Ashkan Layegh process notes and anecdotes

Ephemerality and Recurrence is essentially three different pieces in one, where each medium has its own independent space of exploration while remaining in constant interplay with the others. However, none of mediums follow one another – neither visualising the music nor musicalising the visuals – but instead share the same underlying structural principles.

The piece explores the notions of cataloguing: more specifically, how power structures use made-up systems to catalogue our subjective and collective morality – whether it is sexuality, gender, race or something else – but also how these systems inevitably fail. So, there is a way that these systems are ephemeral, but because of human beings' endless desire to catalogue, they recur in different ways. And it is through this constant pattern of ephemerality and recurrence that some level of artificiality within these systems is revealed.

The piece is my first radical examination of 'transparent juxtaposition', where I simultaneously employ two separate made-up systems to create a unified self-reflexive structure:

- There are seven different instruments on the stage corresponding to seven main blocks, juxtaposed seven times through a cyclical cut-up algorithm, till we get back to the primary configuration (49 sections in total).
- There are eight performers on the stage; every seven blocks, the octet is split into two quartets, four duos, eight soloists, and then in reverse. The piece finishes exactly where it started.

The same structural principles apply to the screen material, where we have seven distinct blocks (two visuals, two illustrations, two anecdotes and one process notes) in seven different permutations, with eight frames in each block. Through different groupings and transparencies, various levels of disassociation are revealed.

It is never a complete piece. It aims to be encyclopaedic while only representing a very small fraction of possibilities – a fake encyclopaedia. It exists in a state of denial, constantly contradicting itself, interpreting and reinterpreting itself to the point of self-destruction. If the piece is about anything, it is the relentless failure of its maker – and, hopefully, its spectators – in finding a singular structural strategy.

Ashkan Layegh