

Arthur Russell's Instrumentals Directed by Peter Gordon

AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE

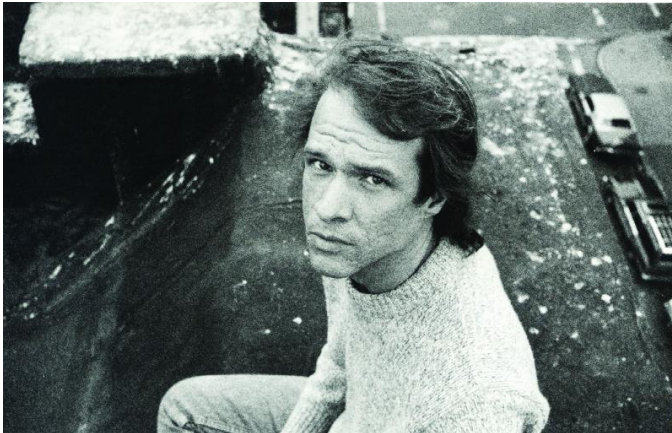


Photo: Charles Arthus Russell Sr, courtesy of Matt Wolf

"In it, you can hear the gentle lope, twanging guitar ostinatos, and sweeping strings of 70s soul, the crosstown yearning of someone like Bobby Womack"

Pitchfork

"I think he's really somebody who was writing music in the 70's and 80's that was very far ahead of his time, very far ahead"

Philip Glass

The late **Arthur Russell's** masterpiece *Instrumentals* will be performed for the first time in Australia as part of Sydney Festival in a remarkable restaging of the original concerts staged between 1975-1979, and will feature the same core ensemble – including long-term collaborators **Peter Gordon** and **Ernie Brooks**, and composer **Rhys Chatham**.

Instrumentals sound as gorgeously crisp, playful and unhurried as in their first performance over 40 years ago. Such is the genius of Russell, the beloved Iowa-born cellist, pianist, composer, singer and downtown NYC icon whose life's work encompassed avant-garde minimalism, disco, pop music and country and has informed such dynamos as **David Byrne**, **James Murphy**, **Björk** and **Sufjan Stevens**.

First performed in Berkley, California in January 1975, *Instrumentals* was originally intended to last 48 hours. As the Wall Street Journal put it, *"It was an amorphous work for any number of musicians—from sextet to orchestra—comprising some 150 measures, to be played and cycled through by its performers in an improvised manner, meaning every performance would be unique."*

Inspired by the nature photography of his Buddhist teacher **Yuko Nonomura**, *Instrumentals* pioneered the pairing of pop and concert hall aesthetics and one of the recordings, *First Thought, Best Thought*, was heralded as a masterpiece by Pitchfork.

The seminal musician died long before his time in 1992 aged just 40, with only one album (*World of Echo*) released under his name at the time. Thousands of hours of unfinished music were found at his home which led to the posthumous release of a further seven celebrated albums. Russell was a prolific recording artist, who spanned wildly different genres and collaborated with such esteemed and disparate artists as **Talking Heads**, **Steve Reich**, **Allen Ginsberg**, **Robert Wilson** and **Philip Glass**. Today, Russell assumes an almost cult like figure, with recent performance tributes from the likes of **Robyn**, **Jens Lekman**, **Tracey Thorn** and **Jose Gonzalez**.

Peter Gordon and Arthur Russell met in New York City in 1975 and bonded over a shared love of instrumental pop music. As well as playing keyboards, Gordon also worked closely with Russell on the notation and arrangement of *Instrumentals*. As such, many parts of the original *Instrumentals* score are in Gordon's handwriting. Talking about the work Gordon said, *"The piece is about process and a social process between musicians. You've a community of eight or nine musicians coming together to play the piece, but*

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there's that opportunity to go in so many different ways."

Peter Gordon went on to form the *Love Of Life Orchestra* and has composed music for theatre and film. A retrospective of his work with the *Love Of Life Orchestra* was released on the DFA label in 2011.

Gordon returned to the project in 2012 for a sold out show at New York's renowned downtown performance space, The Kitchen and has performed *Instrumentals* only a handful of times since.

This will be a unique opportunity to celebrate a true New York City luminary at a rare performance of his pioneering masterwork.

Where	City Recital Hall
When	16 January at 8pm
Duration	75 minutes no interval
Price	Premium \$65 A Reserve \$55 / \$50 B Reserve \$39 / \$35
Bookings	Sydney Festival on 1300 856 876 City Recital Hall 02 8256 2222 http://sydneyfestival.org.au/russell



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