

Press Release

29 July 2021

## LONDON'S ONLY LIGHTHOUSE ILLUMINATED FOR FIRST TIME IN 150 YEARS BY NEW ARTANGEL INSTALLATION: SONIC RAY

Powerful beam of light projects the sound of Longplayer across the Thames  
as Jem Finer's millennial composition turns 21



Sonic Ray. View from Richard Wilson's *Slice of Reality*, 2020. Photograph: Ibrahim Serra-Mohammed and Ascension Films. Courtesy of Artangel.

30<sup>th</sup> September – 21<sup>st</sup> November 2021

Between Trinity Buoy Wharf, Docklands, and *Slice of Reality*, North Greenwich

[artangel.org.uk/sonic-ray](https://artangel.org.uk/sonic-ray)

The lantern room of London's only lighthouse will shine for the first time since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century *Sonic Ray* – a new installation produced by Artangel celebrating the 1,000 year-long musical composition Longplayer, created by artist Jem Finer.

Originally scheduled for 2020, *Sonic Ray* was commissioned to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Longplayer, which began playing from the lighthouse at Trinity Buoy Wharf at midday on 31 December 1999 and will continue to play until 2,999 when it completes its cycle as the longest piece of music in history.

From the lighthouse, a bridge of light is beamed across the river to North Greenwich, encoding and transmitting the sound of Longplayer to a new temporary listening post aboard Richard Wilson's nautical sculpture *Slice of Reality*. A short ferry ride will connect the two locations, allowing visitors to experience Longplayer as a bridge of light across the river at both locations.

Built in 1864 the lighthouse at Trinity Buoy Wharf in East London was known as the "Experimental Lighthouse", a landmark housing the workshop where Faraday conducted his optical tests. It has been the home of Longplayer for 21 years.

**James Lingwood & Michael Morris, co-directors of Artangel, said:** "Originally planned for 2020, Jem Finer's *Sonic Ray* was amongst many arts events worldwide that were repeatedly rescheduled due to the pandemic. During the months that have elapsed, time appears to have been experienced differently, enriching the meaning and value of Longplayer as a paradigm for change. As inexorable as the tide or the movement of clouds, Longplayer seems more than ever a lodestar for our times with *Sonic Ray* as its signal of hope made manifest".

Longplayer grew out of a conceptual concern with questions of representing and understanding the expansiveness of time. Its music changes from day to day, from century to century, conceived to endure and adapt to shifts in the technological and social environment. The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary was marked last year with the **Longplayer Assembly** – an ambitious 12-hour conversation relay between 24 pairs of pioneering thinkers across a range of issues, from public health, climate change and economics, to art, urban design and new technology. You can watch the Longplayer Assembly [here](#).

*Sonic Ray* will form part of Totally Thames Festival 2021 (1<sup>st</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> September), a month-long season of cultural events stretching the whole 43 miles of the River Thames riverfront. For more information visit [thamesfestivaltrust.org](https://thamesfestivaltrust.org).

### **Sonic Ray**

**Commissioned and produced by Artangel**

**Generously supported by the Trinity Buoy Wharf Trust**

**Special Angels: Kieran O'Keefe and another who prefers to remain anonymous**

30<sup>th</sup> September – 21<sup>st</sup> November 2021

Trinity Buoy Wharf, 64 Orchard Place, London, E14 0JW

Standard £7.50 / Concessions £5

Open dusk until late\*

\*Please check the booking page as timings differ weekly to accommodate for adjusted sunset timings

<https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/sonic-ray/>

## Longplayer Assembly

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJwYEcePVTSSZZxQ6CJb8AbunXRtSUQR56>

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## NOTES TO EDITORS

### Longplayer

Longplayer is a one thousand year-long musical composition. It began playing at midnight on the 31st of December 1999 and will continue to play without repetition until the last moment of 2999, at which point it will complete its cycle and begin again. Conceived and composed by Jem Finer, it was originally produced as an Artangel commission, and is now in the care of the [Longplayer Trust](#). Longplayer can be heard in the lighthouse at Trinity Buoy Wharf, London, where it has been playing since it began. It can also be heard at several other [listening posts](#) around the world, and globally via a live stream on the Internet. Longplayer is composed for singing bowls – an ancient type of standing bell – which can be played by both humans and machines, and whose resonances can be very accurately reproduced in recorded form. It is designed to be adaptable to unforeseeable changes in its technological and social environments, and to endure in the long-term as a self-sustaining institution.

Longplayer grew out of a conceptual concern with problems of representing and understanding the fluidity and expansiveness of time. While it found form as a musical composition, it can also be understood as a living, 1000-year-long process – an artificial life form programmed to seek its own survival strategies. More than a piece of music, Longplayer is a social organism, depending on people – and the communication between people – for its continuation, and existing as a community of listeners across centuries.

An important stage in the development of the project was the establishment of the [Longplayer Trust](#), a lineage of present and future custodians invested with the responsibility to research and implement strategies for Longplayer's survival, to ask questions as to how it might keep playing, and to seek solutions for an unknown future.

<https://longplayer.org/>

### Artangel

Artangel produces and presents extraordinary art in unexpected places in London, the UK and beyond. For over 30 years Artangel has generated some of the most talked-about art of recent times, including projects with Jeremy Deller, PJ Harvey, Roger Hiorns, Michael Landy,

Steve McQueen, Taryn Simon and Rachel Whiteread. *Afterness*, a new project comprising new sculpture, drawing, poetry, sound, music and video opens on site on Orford Ness, Suffolk, and online on July 1 2021. Appearing anywhere from empty prisons to underground vaults, from daytime TV to the sky at night, Artangel produces art that surprises and inspires and wouldn't be possible within the confines of a gallery. Artangel is generously supported by Arts Council England and the private patronage of Artangel International Circle, Special Angels, Guardian Angels, and The Company of Angels. Visit [artangel.org.uk](http://artangel.org.uk).

### **Jem Finer**

Jem Finer is a UK-based artist, musician and composer. Since studying computer science in the 1970s, he has worked in a variety of fields, including photography, film, music and installation. *Longplayer* represents a convergence of many of his concerns, particularly those relating to systems, long-duration processes and extremes of scale in both time and space. Among his other works is *Score For a Hole In the Ground*, a permanent musical installation in a forest in Kent. Self-sustaining and relying only on gravity and the elements to be audible, the project continues Finer's interest in long-term sustainability and the reconfiguring of older technologies.

### **Trinity Buoy Wharf Trust**

In 1998, London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) set up the Trinity Buoy Wharf Trust with a 125-year lease to hold the land and their vision in trust for the people of London, while the freehold was passed to the LB Tower Hamlets. The TBW Trust holds a 125-year lease from LB Tower Hamlets and Urban Space Management in turn has a 124 lease from the Trust. The terms provide for 25% of the Wharf's income to be paid to the Trust to use for promoting arts activity in the area. To date the Trust has supported and funded a wide range of arts projects and organisations.

[www.trinitybuoywharf.com](http://www.trinitybuoywharf.com)

### **Thames Festival Trust**

Thames Festival Trust's vision is for rivers in cities to be recognised as outstanding urban space platforms for arts, culture and heritage, accessible to all and enjoyed by all. Its mission is to increase the appreciation of the River Thames in particular, and rivers in general, and their importance to us all by creating and promoting river and river-related art, education and heritage events as well as sporting, cultural, community and environmental activities.

Totally Thames is an annual season of surprising, diverse and accessible arts and culture throughout the month of September on, beneath and along the River Thames curated and managed by the Thames Festival Trust.

Thames Festival Trust is supported by Arts Council England and Port of London Authority. The Trust gratefully acknowledges the support of the British Council, City of London,

Coventry City of Culture, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Royal Docks, Rothschild Foundation, Stockton International Riverside Festival, Team London Bridge, Uber Boat by Thames Clippers, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Tideway and WaterAid.

### **Totally Thames 2021**

**Wednesday 1st – Thursday 30th September 2021**

[www.thamesfestivaltrust.org](http://www.thamesfestivaltrust.org)

### **The Line**

The Line was co-founded by Megan Piper and the late regeneration expert Clive Dutton OBE (1953-2015) whose life's work was rooted in a commitment to improving the quality of life for people in urban environments and putting art and culture at the heart of regeneration.

The Line went from being the seed of an idea to opening to the public in just 18 months, in May 2015. The inaugural loans, which included Damien Hirst, Eduardo Paolozzi and Thomas J Price, came through an open submission and were selected by a panel that included Turner Prize-winning artist Mark Wallinger. The Line currently includes works by 17 artists. Many of these are loans from artists, galleries and private collections but The Line also highlights a number of pre-existing works along the route, including Richard Wilson's *A Slice of Reality*. In 2020, The Line celebrated its fifth anniversary with the extension of its route into Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, the launch of a new website and digital guide with Bloomberg Connects and new site-specific projects, including a sound commission - Sanko-time - by Larry Achiampong which can be experienced on the Emirates Air Line cable car. In 2021, the programme of new projects includes the addition of works by Tracey Emin, Virginia Overton and the renowned outsider artist, Madge Gill [www.the-line.org](http://www.the-line.org)