

Daphne Oram and 'Oramics'

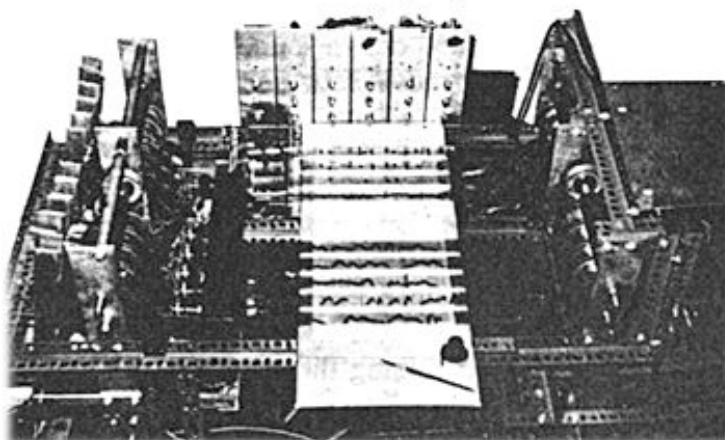
The technique of Oramics was developed by Daphne Oram, an electronic composer working at the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, in England from 1959 onwards. It consisted of drawing onto a set of ten sprocketed synchronised strips of 35mm film which covered a series of photo-electric cells that in turn generated an electrical charge to control the sound frequency, timbre, amplitude and duration. This technique was similar to the work of Yevgeny Sholpo's "Variophone" some years earlier in Leningrad and in some ways to the punch-roll system of the RCA Synthesiser. The output from the instrument was only monophonic relying on multitrack tape recording to build up polyphonic textures.



Daphne Oram in the Oramics studio, 1959

The attraction of this technique was a direct relation of a graphic image to the audio signal and even though the system was monophonic the flexibility of control over the nuances of sound production was unmatched in all but the most sophisticated Daphne Oram continued analogue to use the process throughout the sixties producing voltage controlled synthesisers.

Daphne Oram continued to use the process throughout the sixties producing work for film and theatre including; "Rockets in Ursa Major"(1962), "Hamlet"(1963) and "Purple Dust" (1964).



The 35mm film section of the Oramics Machine.