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## Preview: Headspace, The Sage, Gateshead

By **Michael Church**

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For his recital at Dartington Summer School last year, Professor John Kenny picked up in turn an alphorn, a conch, an ocarina, three recorders, three types of trombone, sundry stones and the instrument he'd brought back into circulation after it had been silent for 2,000 years: an Iron Age Celtic war horn known as the carnyx.

Its next sighting will be at the Sage Gateshead, but the instrument it will be accompanying, which Kenny has helped to devise, is even more remarkable. The Headspace is essentially a laptop, but no laptop ever did what this will do for the man who "plays" it, the trumpeter Clarence Adoo, who is paralysed from the neck down after a car accident, and who is now making a comeback.

"He'll stare at the screen, which shows four miniature keyboards, each key being about the width of a matchstick," explains Kenny. "He will have a 'third eye' in the form of an electronic beam in the centre of his forehead, which he'll project on to a mouse-cursor for those keyboards. He will also have a drinking straw fixed in the mouthpiece of a smoker's pipe, through which he will direct streams of air that will dictate rhythm, volume and sound duration.

"In other words, with his eyes he will select the type of sound, and with his head he will select everything else a trumpeter would normally do with his instrument."

The Headspace could have commercial mileage, as it can be played by anyone rendered quadri-plegic through illness or accident, Kenny says. "Each person's difficulty is different, but what's true of all is the need to communicate on a level that's not simply verbal."

Brass-players, he adds, inhabit a world full of its own lore, "and when I started working with Clarence in this way, we were just a couple of brass-players again. The disablement was not an issue. This is not music about disablement; it's about a disabled person making music."

Thursday, 1pm (0191-443 4661; [www.thesagegateshead.org](http://www.thesagegateshead.org))

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