

Martin Harris Centre for Music and Drama

Cosmo Rodewald Concert Hall
Walter Carroll Lunchtime Concert Series
Thursday 18 April 2024, 13.10

Songs of Sustainability

Walking Dwelling Thinking

Amy Crankshaw

Wind in Trees

Jasmine Simons

Erysichthon's Forest

Richard Whalley

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Photography and/or recording of this performance are strictly prohibited.

Would patrons please ensure that mobile phones are switched off. Please stifle coughing as much as possible and ensure that watch alarms and any other electronic devices which may become audible are switched off.

Today's Performances

Nina Whiteman – Mezzo soprano

Henry Page – Baritone

Petr Prause – Violoncello

Richard Whalley - Piano

Walking Dwelling Thinking

Amy Crankshaw

- Poetry by Rebecca Hurst

'Walking Dwelling Thinking' is a song setting of the poem by Rebecca Hurst. The music seeks to embody certain physical sensations that might be experienced when visiting a woodland. The piece is an invitation: the woodland is calling us out of our houses, to interact with it, and to re-discover our relationships to its materials, processes, and inherent vitalities.

*This wood has a thousand exits and entrances:
stiles, gates and tripets, gaps and breaches.*

*This wood is hammer-pond, clay and chalybeate,
charcoal and slag heaps, leats and races.*

*This wood hides the boar in a thickety hemmel;
is home to the scutty, the flindermouse, the kine.*

*This wood is cut and coppiced and burned,
chestnut and hazel turned to broom handles.*

*This wood is two green flanks of sandstone
pinched by the link of iron bridge over water.*

*This wood keeps its secrets: the peat-black
knuckerhole where the dragon lies sleeping.*

*This wood scolds with a tawny owl's brogue,
shrucking and shraping, kewick hoo-hoo.*

*This wood is ashen, eldern, and oaken –
a mile from the village, ring-fenced, well-trodden.*

*Daybreak. This wood calls you out of your house
to walk through leaf-fall and bluebells and moss.*

Wind in Trees

Jasmine Simons

- *Poetry by Vona Groarke*

Wind in Trees was written as part of the project Songs of Sustainability – a collaboration between composer Richard Whalley, poet John McAuliffe, the University of Manchester and Manchester Opera Project. It was composed for Simon Grange (bass), Petr Prause (cello) and Richard Whalley (piano). In setting Vona Groarke’s poem, I was inspired by her whimsical yet powerful imagery. I strived to create, in the music, a sense of ‘the wind’ personified: rising and falling lines in direct correspondence with the dramatic structure of the poem.

*Tonight the wind tries on fancy dress
in the attic rooms of trees,*

*crinolines and winkle-pickers,
mustachios and swords,*

*a jewelled fob-watch keeping time
with my shutters’ throb and hum.*

*Silks crinkle precisely at my window
and, at my door, an ivory cane*

*is summoning my name.
I ask will anything ever change.*

*First the trees say ‘No’ to me.
Then the wind says ‘Yes’.*

Erysichthon's Forest

Richard Whalley

- (i) *Erysichthon's Proposal*
- (ii) *Erysichthon's Axe*
- (iii) *Mestra's Lament*

- **Libretto by John McAuliffe**

The story of Erysichthon pulls no punches. In Ovid's version of the tale, Erysichthon cuts down every tree in the sacred grove of Ceres, and the wood nymphs who live there demand revenge. On hearing about this, Ceres bids Hunger to visit Erysichthon and inflict his body with everlasting hunger: a hunger so severe that the more he eats the hungrier he will get.

Nothing can satiate this hunger, despite Erysichthon ultimately selling all his worldly goods to buy food to consume. In desperation, he finally sells his daughter, Mestra, who discovers at this point a talent for shapeshifting, a skill that Erysichthon determines to use to trick traders who think they are buying a slave to give him money. But still the hunger won't go away. If you take this story to its logical conclusion, there is only one possible ending, which is indeed what happens: Erysichthon's hunger is such that the only relief is for him to consume himself, until nothing is left.

This melodrama sets three scenes from the story to texts written by the poet John McAuliffe.

It was written for a project funded by the University of Manchester, in association with Creative Manchester, and produced by Manchester Opera Project.

(i) Erysichthon's Proposal

Erysichthon: *Here we are, at my old wood, my wood,
where, as a child, you played*

Mestra: *I did, father,*

Erysichthon: *By this old oak, Mestra,
I remember it too, hatching plans here...*

Mestra: *Remember the acorns I'd pick from the oak for you.
And bare winter days, I'd climb it into the blue.
Coming here I felt like part of its family
It's good to be back under this tree.*

Erysichthon: *And I'm still making plans, and where better to tell you.*

Mestra: *What is this plan, father, I heard you roaring earlier,*

At the supervisor, on the factory floor?

Erysichthon: *Mestra, listen. This land is paid for, mine,
Ours. If I plan to burn it down
And tear the earth, I can, it's mine.*

Mestra: *Is that your plan, father?*

Erysichthon: *The wood I cut, Mestra, I will not burn;
this wood will be the makings of a new town,
and best of all, the wedding hall
where one day you will be married.*

Mestra: *Where I get married?*

Erysichthon: *A shining, gleaming wedding hall,
in the middle of my new town
perched on that little hill,
overlooking all I own.*

Mestra: *Father, its true
that the Planner decides,
but this wood, father,
is it nor sacred?
Sacred to a god,
the god who must bless
a wedding hall.*

Erysichthon: *Forget Her! Watch me make,
with my bare hands and this sharp axe,
your shining gleaming wedding hall
in the middle of my new town,
perched on that little hill,
overlooking all I own.*

(ii) Erysichthon's Axe

*My axe waits for the oak,
its fat shadow on the field,
its point growing
on the blue and clouds
and the tinkling glitter
of its swaying ornaments*

*what crosses me and mine
I will take out*

*under this same discriminating tree
you fear, which spreads,
year on year,
across my forecast growth.*

*No one gets to sit this out,
all are part of my big picture,
that I'll hang
on my word. Here
is the strong trunk and branch
of my nights and years*

*this gleam I'll take
to the obscure hours
which filter light
and baffle sound:
what presides over us
will end*

*with this sharp question
making its impossible offer.*

(iii) Mestra's Lament

*Where's the tree I hid under,
branches robins warned me thinly from
when he'd seek me out, my father?*

*who will bring him to his senses?
in this massacre of branches,
where the robin once was?*

*now the earth's a bare drum,
clear as a horizon
his step lands heavily on.*

*where I must follow him,
through the forest's slaughter,
my father's daughter.*

The Performers

Amy Crankshaw

Amy Crankshaw's music has been described as having “a real feeling of ecstasy” (Planet Hugill); “carrying images and sensations” (Ôlyrix); and as “an act of love” (Opera Now). Amy's compositions are performed internationally at venues and festivals such as Barbican Concert Hall, La Scala Paris, Radio France Auditorium, Centre in the Square, Silk Street Theatre, Vorarlberg Museum, Festival Présences, Aix en Juin, Grahamstown National Arts Festival, and Bloomsbury Festival. Her work has been commissioned by Radio France, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, South African Music Rights Organisation, Guildhall School of Music & Drama, and Ensemble Matters, among others. Amy has been appointed to the London Symphony Orchestra's 2023-2024 Soundhub Scheme. She is the 2023-2024 winner of the Richmond Concert Society's Muriel Dawson Composition Award. She has held residencies with Académie du Festival d'Aix-en-Provence and the London City Orchestra, was awarded the Priaux Rainier Composition Prize in 2015, and second prize in the South African Music Rights Organisation's Overseas Scholarship Competition in 2014. Amy is a current DMus (composition) candidate at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and is funded by the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust and the Guildhall School Trust. Previously, she studied composition at the South African College of Music.

Vona Groarke has published thirteen books with The Gallery Press, including eight original poetry collections, and two translations from the Irish, most recently *Woman of Winter* (2023), a version of the much-loved Irish poem usually known in English as, 'The Lament of the Hag of Beare'. She published *Hereafter: the Telling Life of Ellen O'Hara* with New York University Press (2022). A Cullman Fellow at the New York Public Library 2018-19; former editor of *Poetry Ireland Review* and selector for the UK's Poetry Book Society, she has taught at the University of Manchester since 2007. She is the current Writer in Residence at St John's College, Cambridge, and otherwise lives in Co. Sligo in the West of Ireland.

Rebecca Hurst is a writer, opera-maker, and illustrator, and author of *The Fox's Wedding* (The Emma Press, 2022). Born in East Sussex, and for 13 years a resident of the US, she now lives in Greater Manchester. In 2021 a selection of her poems were published in the *Carcanet* anthology, *New Poetries VIII*. Her first collection of poetry, *The Iron Bridge*, is forthcoming with *Carcanet* in 2024.

Rebecca has a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Manchester, and an MA in Creative Writing for Personal Development from the University of Sussex. In 2022-23 she was a Creative Manchester knowledge exchange fellow, researching Creative Writing for Wellbeing. As an undergraduate she attended Smith College, in Massachusetts. Rebecca is a founder member of the *Voicings Collective*: an Arts Council England funded ensemble creating exploratory choral theatre. She teaches creative writing in museums, schools, universities, libraries, and the wider community.

John McAuliffe is a professor in Modern Literature and Creative Writing, and Co-Director of the Centre for New Writing at the University of Manchester. His main interests are in poetry, creative writing, contemporary literature and Irish Studies, and he is interested in supervising research in any of these areas.

He published his first collection of poems, *A Better Life (Gallery)*, in 2002, which received a major bursary from the Irish Arts Council / An Comhairle Ealaíon and was shortlisted for the Forward First Collection Award. His second collection *Next Door* was published in June 2007, and he has also published poems in the *TLS*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Metre*, *PN Review*, *Poetry London* and *Poetry Review*.

John writes essays and reviews of contemporary poetry for journals and newspapers in Ireland and the UK, including reviews and short essays on W.B. Yeats, Paul Muldoon, Derek Mahon, Cesare Pavese, Conor O'Callaghan, David Harsent, Peter Sirr, Thomas McCarthy, Mark Doty, contemporary British poetry and Patrick Kavanagh. He has also published critical essays on post-colonial literatures, Victorian travel writing and twentieth-century Irish poetry and fiction.

He previously taught at a number of Irish universities and The Open University, as well as at creative writing workshops at UCD and Birkbeck College and residential courses including the Aran Islands Festival, the Cuirt Festival and the Arvon Foundation.

He was programme director of Ireland's biggest poetry festival *Poetry Now* at Dun Laoghaire until 2007 and is a contributing editor to the journal *Metre*. He is also a member of the Irish and Scottish Studies Research Group and co-ordinates and chairs the Irish Times Poetry Now Award, the only award of its kind which awards 5000 Euros to the best collection of poems published by an Irish poet each year.

Henry George Page is a British musician who works as a composer, singer, accompanist and continuo cellist. He completed a MusB in Music at the University of Manchester and a Masters in Composition at the Royal Northern College of Music studying with Emily Howard and Laura Bowler, where he won the Patricia Cunliffe Composition Prize in 2020, and the RNCM Gold Medal in 2021. He has written for various ensembles, including collaborations with the BBC Singers; Devon Philharmonic Orchestra; House of Bedlam; CoMA; Nottingham Youth Orchestra; and Ludlow English Song Festival.

As a performer, Henry maintains a diverse portfolio in singing, accompaniment, direction and continuo. He originated principal roles at the Grimeborn and Tête-à-Tête opera festivals, and appeared as Adonis in Blow's *Venus and Adonis (Ad Parnassum)*, Colonel Calverly at the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival (MUGSS), as well as participating in world premieres of works by Roxanna Panufnik, Paul Mealor, Judith Bingham and Sir James MacMillan; as a conductor and director, he directed the SET Collective, a New Music ensemble at the RNCM and previously served as Director of Music to St Matthew at the Elephant on London's Southbank. He has worked as a peripatetic singing teacher and accompanist at The Royal Ballet School's White Lodge in Richmond and currently accompanies the mezzo-soprano Rebecca Anderson; together, they won the RNCM Emmanuel Prize in 2020. As a singer, Henry currently maintains a role as a Bass Scholar St Olave's, Hart Street, and deputises regularly with KCL Chapel Choir; he has worked on recordings for Signum, Delphian and Chandos Records. He studies with Hilary Summers, and is due to undertake a PG Diploma at the RNCM in 2022.

Petr Prause was born in Ostrava, Czech Republic and started to play the cello at the age of six with Miroslav Dolezil and Ivan Merka. He progressed to the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, where he was taught by Miroslav Petras and members of the Smetana Quartet, graduating with master's degree.

He also studied at the International Menuhin Music Academy in Switzerland, and with Raphael Wallfisch at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, where he was awarded the Concert Recital Diploma (Premier Prix). He taught cello at the Prague Conservatory of Music and was Principal Cellist of the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, while performing as a soloist throughout the world.

From 1997 until 2019, Petr Prause was a member of the Talich Quartet. He also joins other outstanding musicians in all kinds of chamber music formations and gives masterclasses at a wide range of international institutions. He was invited to the Jury of international competitions in Lyon and Munich.

Petr Prause plays an exquisite cello Giovanni Grancino (1710) which he has on loan from the Czech National Museum Collection as well as a Martin Stoss cello, Vienna, 1821.

Jasmine Simons is a composer and clarinettist based in Saltaire, West Yorkshire. She studied towards both her MusB Music and MusM Instrumental and Vocal Composition at the University of Manchester, graduating from the MusM programme in December 2018.

During her time at university, Jasmine's compositions were publicly performed by ensembles such as Vonnegut Collective, Quatuor Danel and members of Manchester University Music Society. Since graduating, she has been particularly motivated by the role of composition within music education: delivering composition and musicianship workshops at Leeds Junior Conservatoire alongside composing for chamber ensembles in Manchester and Leeds. She was commissioned by Yorkshire Late Starters Strings to develop her work 'Fantasia for Strings' in collaboration with the mixed-ability string orchestra, which premiered in July 2022.

Richard Whalley is a composer and pianist living in Manchester, where he is a Senior Lecturer in Composition at the University of Manchester. His compositions are noted for their combination of timbral and textural exploration, their varied approach to musical line and formal innovation. He is particularly fascinated by the evocation of time and memory and finding musical analogies for shapes, processes and textures found in nature. As a pianist he regularly performs classical and contemporary music as a soloist and ensemble player and has given numerous premieres.

His music has been performed by numerous outstanding soloists and ensembles, including Gavin Osborn, Marc Danel, Clare Hammond, Caroline Balding, Richard Casey, Psappa, Trio Atem, Ensemble 10/10, the Quatuor Danel, the Ebonit Saxophone Quartet and the London Symphony Orchestra. He was a finalist in BBC Young Musician of the Year 1992 and Gaudeamus 2001, had works selected for ISCM World Music Days in Flanders in 2012, Milan Expo in 2015 and the BASCA British Composer Award shortlist in 2016. His scores are published by Composers Edition and many of his works have been commercially recorded. Various recordings can be found on YouTube, and more information can be found at <http://www.richardwhalley.com/>

Nina Whiteman is a composer, vocalist, and multimedia artist based in Manchester, UK.

As a singer, she is known for her interpretations of contemporary solo, chamber and operatic repertoire, as well as her work as an experimental improviser and collaborator.

Nina sings in and co-directs Trio Atem (flute, mezzo, cello), who specialise in performances of new and recent repertoire with an emphasis on commissioning new work and cross-genre projects. Engagements since their founding in 2007 have included the Bridgewater Hall (BBC Philharmonic Ink Still Wet series), Kings Place, and York Late Music Festival.

Her current collaborative project, BELOW GROUND, is an interdisciplinary investigation of the subterranean (funded by Arts Council England in 2023), and has included multisensory multimedia performances as well as 'sonic gardening' workshops in the community.

She is Artistic Director of Manchester Contemporary Youth Opera, an organisation she co-founded to trail blaze creation of new opera by young and emerging artists.

Nina teaches at the RNCM, and is Reader in Composition and Composition Lead at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Coming up at the Martin Harris Centre

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www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/martinharriscentre

Walter Carrol Lunchtime Concert: Trio Atem presents: "Atem x Atem"

Date: Thursday 2 May 2024
Venue: Cosmo Rodewald Concert Hall
Time: 13:10
Price: FREE

Walter Carrol Lunchtime Concert: Artur Pereira - "(Re)discovering the music of Mozart and Luiz Costa"

Date: Thursday 9 May 2024
Venue: Cosmo Rodewald Concert Hall
Time: 13:10
Price: FREE

Gamelan Music from West Java

Date: Friday 10 May 2024
Venue: Cosmo Rodewald Concert Hall
Time: 13:10
Price: FREE

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