

EXAUDI

Juliet Fraser, Lucy Goddard, Amanda Morrison, Alastair Putt, Tom Williams, Francis Brett, Ben McKee & David de Winter
Conductor: James Weeks

with Tutti Voices (conducted by Pauline Black)

The Lemon Tree, Aberdeen

Wednesday 23rd October 2019, 7.00pm

Programme

Ailie Robertson	<i>Motherhood</i> (world premiere)
Linda Caitlin Smith	<i>Uncertain</i>
Jürg Frey	<i>Out of Chorales</i>
Christopher Fox	<i>Song (24.iv.1916)</i>
Cassandra Miller	<i>Guide</i>

Programme notes

Ailie Robertson *Motherhood*

*Co-commissioned by **sound** and Aberdeen Performing Arts*

Delicately poised between concert and theatre, *Motherhood* explores the complexities surrounding motherhood for women. The work pairs contemporary performance with musical composition to construct a revealing portrait of what is often left unspoken.

Musings, diatribes, recollections and hindsight find voice as three performer-vocalists are fused in choral counterpoint with an assembly of pre-recorded voices, offering multiple perspectives on the contemporary experience of motherhood; issues around infertility, miscarriage, birth, joy, regret, isolation, complex relationships. Built from interviews with people of all ages, *Motherhood* interweaves the complexities, parallels and paradoxes of this most universal of relationships – manifested through the speaking, sounding, singing human voice

Linda Caitlin Smith *Uncertain*

I drew upon writings from *The Years* by Virginia Woolf to create the text for *Uncertain*. Together, these fragments seem to describe that moment at dusk when lamps are being lit, and there is an uncertainty in the air, with the constant possibility of rain. The words also capture, for me, an atmosphere, a feeling of in-between-ness; how it can be neither day nor night, neither clear nor raining, and how one can be surrounded by others and yet apart - a quiet solitude.

Jürg Frey *Out of Chorales*

The backgrounds of the pieces are lists: lists of chords and lists of words. The elements of the lists are not arbitrary, but have loose connections and touch contents, emotions and continuations.

light	shade	birds	long	last snow
fall	view	flew	late	last bird
breeze	trace	south	lost	last plaine
				last tune
				last loneliness
				last shadow
				last sadness

Just as the form of the chorale has a tendency towards the impersonal, I have tried to be unspectacular in the word lists, too, and to put it on the threshold of abstraction and figuration. It gives the piece a kind of intensity and sensuality that can be created with a few tones and subtle connections.

Christopher Fox *Song (24.iv.1916)*

Song (24.iv.1916) commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Easter Uprising against British rule in Ireland. It sets fragments of W.B.Yeats's poem, 'Easter 1916' and was commissioned by CoMA for their 2015 Summer School. The main events of the music are fixed but the number of voices to each part can vary and the recurrent melismatic figures are determined by each singer. Near the end of Yeats's poem there is a litany of names – 'MacDonagh and MacBride/And Connolly and Pearse' – and my score includes a list of alphabet phrases so that the singers can turn their names into melodies.

Cassandra Miller *Guide*

When James Weeks asked me to write a piece for EXAUDI, I knew right away that I would attempt to write a piece about 'the feeling of freedom one gets from singing'. EXAUDI can make anything at all sound like freedom, it's true – but I wanted to write something specifically to amplify this feeling, a piece about EXAUDI.

My first task then was to find a sound that exemplifies this singing-freedom. Eventually I remembered a hymn tune, sung in 'lined-out' style, that I listened to as a kid on one of my mother's folk music albums: 'Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah' as recorded by Maria Muldaur in 1968. The song is Muldaur's imitation of a recording she had heard of an anonymous singer from Kentucky – a melody full of swoops over a large tessitura that, more than anything, sounds like it feels good to sing. From there, I asked the singers of EXAUDI to first memorize the Muldaur recording, as if following an oral tradition. I then gave them a quasi-neumatic score with further instructions such as starting pitch, tempo, and repetitions.

The particular way in which the repetitions function (between three groups somewhat independent of each other) is inspired directly by Bryn Harrison's *eight voices*, written for EXAUDI in 2012. The first time I heard EXAUDI in person, they were in rehearsal, sight-reading an early version of *eight voices* – it was a seminal moment, one that has greatly influenced the course of my musical imagination.

Biographies

Ailie Robertson is a multi-award winning composer, performer and creative curator whose work crosses the boundaries of traditional and contemporary music. Winner of The Sofia International Composition Competition, the SCO iCompose Prize, and 2nd in the Oslo Grieg Competition, Ailie has received commissions, awards and residences from Creative Scotland, Enterprise Music Scotland, the CCA, Culture Ireland, Celtic Connections, EIFF, and CALQ Montreal. She was chosen for the 2016/17 RSNO Composer's hub, awarded a BBC Performing Arts Fellowship and was winner of the 'Achievement in New Music' prize at the inaugural New Music Scotland Awards.

EXAUDI's special affinity is for the radical edges of contemporary music, at home equally with maximal complexity, microtonality and experimental aesthetics. The newest new music is at the heart of its repertoire, and it has given hundreds of national and world premières. As well as performing the acknowledged greats of contemporary music, EXAUDI is particularly committed to the music of its own generation and is also strongly involved with the emerging generation of young composers. As a signatory of PRSF's Keychange initiative, EXAUDI is proud to be committed to gender-balanced programming.

An enduring feature of EXAUDI's programming has been the mixing of contemporary music with the music of the medieval, Renaissance and baroque periods. In 2012 the EXAUDI Italian Madrigal Book was launched as an open-ended project to create new repertoire to stand

alongside the masterpieces of Monteverdi, Gesualdo and others; as well as numerous appearances in the UK, the Book has toured to France, Luxembourg, Belgium and Italy, creating and recording new repertoire with each new instalment.

EXAUDI has appeared at many of the leading European and UK venues and festivals, broadcasts regularly on BBC Radio 3 and European radio stations, and has released fourteen critically acclaimed recordings on the NMC, ÆON, Métier, Winter&Winter, Mode, Confront and HCR labels, including portrait albums of Gervasoni, Finnissy, Fox, Skempton, Weeks, Pesson, Rihm and Nono. Its latest disc, of Gesualdo Madrigals, was released in September 2019 to widespread critical acclaim.

Tutti Voices is Aberdeen Performing Arts' brand new choir formed to compliment the successful, all-embracing Community Choir. Aimed specifically at those who are looking to take the next step into choral singing, it is the perfect opportunity for those who want to hone their skills and develop their talent. Rehearsals began in August, and Tutti Voices are very excited to be making their public debut appearing alongside Exaudi!

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