

Calefax and Matthew Barley

The Lemon Tree, Aberdeen

Saturday 2nd November, 7.30pm

Programme

Joost Buis	<i>The Swimmer</i>
Carola Bauckholt	<i>Zugvögel (Migratory birds)</i>
Giovanni Sollima	<i>Lamentatio</i>
Graham Fitkin	<i>Tracking Yesterday's England</i> (UK Premiere)

Programme notes

Joost Buis *The Swimmer*

For this programme, Calefax and Matthew Barley gave two composition commissions – one to an English and one to a Dutch composer. Calefax bassoonist Alban Wesley got to know Dutch composer Joost Buis as a subtle arranger of pieces for the David Kweksilber Big Band, and years earlier during a project at the North Sea Jazz Festival. With Buis, a world of sound enters this project that might be called typically Dutch: headstrong, improvisational, transverse and fresh. Buis' work *The Swimmer* exudes the spirit of an icon of this style, the pianist and composer Misha Mengelberg, who died in March 2017. That same year, Buis had reread the writings of Mengelberg's childhood friend Kristofer Schipper from Zhuang Zi, a Chinese Taoist philosopher who lived around 360 to 300 BC (Schipper once claimed that Mengelberg was the only true Taoist in the Netherlands). An episode from this book served as an inspiration for the *The Swimmer*. Zhuang Zi describes how Confucius sees a swimmer surviving a dive in a swirling waterfall. Confucius runs to the swimmer and asks him how he did it. "With the vortex I go down and with the counter current I come up again; I follow the path of the water, and there is nothing that I do myself. That way I can stay in it". Confucius asks for an explanation and is told, "I was born on solid ground, and I feel at home there, so that is what I got from the beginning. I grew up with the water, and there I started to feel at home, that has become my nature. I am like that, but I don't know why I am like that, and that's destiny."

These three elements are reflected in the shape of the piece. Improvisation is discussed at three solo and three tutti moments. To Buis's surprise, when it was finished, the piece turned out to be 333 measures long. The notes of the main theme (c-a-es-c-a-d-e) refer to the word "cascade". In the last part, the fondness for Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn which Buis shares with the members of Calefax is clearly heard.

Carola Baukholt *Zugvögel (Migratory Birds)*

My ears need fresh sounds, which I usually find outside the music. When I hear something that fascinates me, I dedicate myself in my pieces to this listening experience. This frees me from reproducing clichés of whatever music. The more photographic I stay with the acoustic experience, the better. I transcribe sounds and translate them to ordinary instruments. With this transfer, the playing technique and the palette of tone colours must expand - with the participation of the musicians. The reeds of the Calefax Reed Quintet encourage me to investigate a certain world of sound. My job is to work out the essence of the sounds. For that, I also must imagine and describe the environment; to create spaces.

Whooper swans scream with every flap of their wings. They move in circles before they leave. They cross an immense airspace. Strict rules of conduct. Morphogenesis. Pelican, Mourning Duck, Canada Goose, Cormorant, Hawk, Great Diver, Collar Duck ...

The piece is dedicated to the brilliant musicians of the Calefax Reed Quintet. When I look at the concert calendar of the ensemble, the title of migratory birds seems to suit them.

Giovanni Sollima *Lamentatio*

I first heard *Lamentatio* on YouTube and it had instant appeal as it is obviously a fantastic piece to play – a real cellists' piece and audience piece at the same time. In the opening section you have to hum while playing two other notes which is tricky to get in tune, as you are listening to three lines simultaneously, but it's very effective. The opening section is the core of the lament, and the ensuing fast and furious music is the emotional release that follows – fiendishly difficult and exhausting, and full of colour and effect. Sollima, one of the most characterful and virtuosic cellists currently playing, is a huge inspiration to many of us and in *Lamentatio* he has created a great addition to the solo cello repertoire - something new and full of genuine life.

(Matthew Barley)

Graham Fitkin *Tracking Yesterday's England (UK Premiere)*

The English composer who was approached for this project is Graham Fitkin. In 2010, Fitkin wrote a very challenging piece for Calefax entitled *Compel*. Since Barley is also an admirer of Fitkin's work, a commission from him followed shortly after. The commission came with a request: whether Fitkin could include in his new work a reference to English consort music

from the 16th and 17th centuries. Fitkin turned out to be an admirer of composers such as William Byrd, Henry Purcell and particularly Christopher Tye, and elements of the latter's *Sit Fast* are used in this new work for reed quintet and cello.

Calefax contacted Fitkin in the days when the potential impact of Brexit and the political intrigues surrounding were foremost in the minds of many British creative artists. His response to the initial contact was significant: "I'm well, thank you, though I can't speak for the UK as a whole." The title of the work, *Tracking Yesterday's England*, can also be read as a subtle reference to the departure of the United Kingdom from the EU, although it is not shown in the musical notes. Cello and reed quintet collaborate fraternally in the energetic sound world we are familiar with from Fitkin, who studied with Louis Andriessen at the time Calefax was founded in Amsterdam. The reference to Tye has on the one hand a literal musical side with Fitkin's use of the notes e-f-e, especially in the second part of his composition (and exactly as in the opening of *Sit Fast*). In addition, Fitkin includes a more general reference, something he describes as "a tension between the vertical harmonies and the horizontal lines that makes Tye's music so fascinating".

Incidentally if you look at the initial letters of the title of his piece (**T**racking - **Y**esterday's - **E**ngland), it is striking that Fitkin has honoured Christopher Tye even in the work's title.

Biographies

Calefax is a close-knit ensemble of five reed players united by a shared passion. For more than three decades they have been acclaimed in the Netherlands and abroad for their virtuosic playing, brilliant arrangements and innovative stage presentation. They are the inventors of a completely new genre: the reed quintet. They provide inspiration to young wind players from all over the world who follow in their footsteps. Calefax can be defined as a classical ensemble with a pop mentality.

Cello playing is at the centre of **Matthew Barley's** career, while his musical world has virtually no geographical, social or stylistic boundaries.

Matthew Barley's passions include improvisation, education, multi-genre musicmaking, electronics, and pioneering community programmes. He is also a world-renowned cellist, who has performed in over 50 countries, including concertos with some of the world's major orchestras. With Viktoria Mullova he recently premiered and toured *At Swim-Two-Birds*, a double concerto by Pascal Dusapin across the world. Matthew has also given premieres by Roxana Panufnik, James MacMillan, Thomas Larcher, Detlev Glanert, Dai Fujikura and many other prominent composers, including with prominent Indian musicians in a new project with the Philharmonia Orchestra.

Matthew has collaborated with a wide range of musicians from different genres, appearing in venues ranging from Ronnie Scott's and the WOMAD festivals to London's Wigmore Hall, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Vienna's Konzerthaus and Zürich's Tonhalle. His new music group, *Between The Notes*, has undertaken over 60 creative community projects with young people and orchestral players around the world.

In 2013 Matthew undertook a 100-event UK tour celebrating Benjamin Britten –accompanied by a CD release, *Around Britten* – to a wide range of unusual venues. Future projects include Brazilian jazz, several Indian collaborations, further tours to Australia and New Zealand, improvisation projects with Swedish Chamber Orchestra and the Kuopio Symphony, the premiere of a new concerto written for him by Misha Mullov-Abbado with the BBC Concert Orchestra and a major Beethoven project for 2020. His latest release on Signum was a highly acclaimed recording of Tavener's *The Protecting Veil* with the Riga Sinfonietta.

www.matthewbarley.com

Tonight's concert is supported by the Performing Arts Fund NL

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