



Red Note Ensemble
Benn Lunn

Flute - Richard Craig
Viola - Jessica Beeston
Guitar - Sasha Savaloni
Conductor - Ben Lunn
Narrator - Tayo Aluko

Thursday 22nd October 2020, 2000

Programme

Ben Lunn

Th'forst munth is th'wurst iv awl (2020)

Programme notes

Ben Lunn *Th'forst munth is th'wurst iv awl*

Isolation has a dramatic impact on individuals, but is this the end? Does their spark stop when an individual is taken away from their community?

Drawing upon prison letters from radical voices across the globe, *Th'forst munth is th'wurst iv awl* is a work for narrator and ensemble drawing individual struggle to the present day, and showing isolation does not weaken a person's fervour or spirit, but we can continue to strive and fight and inspire those miles away from us.

Initially starting from a hopeful submission for a call for scores, *Th'forst munth is th'wurst iv awl* takes individual letters from prisoners, all of whom were persecuted for their political activities, and paints a bigger picture about prison experience, about contemplations of isolation and loss, and that spark that refuses to die – even if the individual died at the hand of their persecutor.

The work is built out of a collection of vignettes based around the letters. The overture serves as a rude reminder that these individuals are imprisoned. The macro-structure is in three sections, the opening looking at rather banal or immediate concerns in prison – loss of loved ones, considerations of food and water supplies, and concerns for family outside of prison. The second can be considered more romantic, conjuring images and symbolism outside of the circumstances – questioning a bird's intent or one's relationship to time. The final section is focused on the defiance to continue to live, the refusal to die, and the hope of inspiring others to answer the call to join the struggle.

It should be obvious, what my political stance is of the situation, but regardless the individuals included come from a broad spectrum of circumstances, some from successful revolutions like Ho Chi Minh or Sister Zhu, some whose prison writing has been a long source of inspiration like Ernst Toller, Antoni Gramsci, or Julius Fučík, some from longer term struggles like Bobby Sands or Jose Maria Sison, and some who have been persecuted within the past year or two including Lula, Ibrahim Gökçek, or Mays Abu Ghoush. These individuals have all inspired me in very different ways and as I have felt that my job as a composer is to use my platform to emphasise heroes of my class internationally. So overall, that is my concern of this piece – highlight the heroic struggles of these individuals and show how their struggle relates to us.

Overture
I
II
III
Electronic Interlude I
IV
V
VI
Electronic Interlude II
VII
VIII
IX

Ben Lunn

Th'Forst munth is th'wurst iv awl - Text:

I

Ahmad Sa'adat – “I feel pain when you feel pain, and you are always a source of great pride and respect. From your principled steadfastness through decades in prison, we build our determination, our will and our intellectual conviction; from your head held high, always accelerating our steps to become nearer to the sun of truth and liberation, with you, by you, and with all of the forces of freedom in the world.”

Hassan Hamdan – You are not defeated, As long as you are resisting

II

Ho Chi Minh – The ration of water is half a bowl, to do, as one wishes! For the bathroom or for tea. Do you like to wash? You should abstain from tea; Do you want some tea? Give the bathroom a pass.

Sister Zhu – My brother Zhu An, if the worst should happen to me, I will hand guardianship of my son Yun'er to you. I hope you can teach him to follow in the footsteps of his parents...Anyway, I hope we will be able to see each other soon.

III

Jose Maria Sison – You are my wife and comrade. It is harsh that we are kept apart by a cruel enemy with many snares. We care for each other's welfare...But even in our forced separation we remain one in fierce devotion to the noble cause...For the seed has been sown and the future is well known.

Patsy O'Hara – My heart like yours is breaking, together we'll prove strong, the road I take will show the world, the suffering that goes on.

IV

Ernst Toller – Above me...above me, on the wooden frame on the half-opened barred window which is leaning rigidly into my prison-cell, so as if it were drunk and in reeling had been spellbound by an hypnotic glance, there sits a little pair of swallows sits sways to and fro! Sways to and fro! Dances, dances, dances!

Mays Abu Ghoush – Oh bird, all these (Palestinian) mountains are in front of you, and you come here...Do you come to remind us of our never-ending sorrow, or do you come to revive the memory of freedom in our hearts?

V

Ibrahim Gökçek -"We weren't palace clowns. We didn't kill people. We sang songs. Damn this system."

VI

Julius Fučík – There are not so very many days in human life. And yet you want them to pass fast, faster, as fast as ever possible. Fleeting time, intractable time, which usually bleeds one's life away, is here one's greatest friend. How strange! Tomorrow has become yesterday. Day after tomorrow is today – and then is gone. The suspenders still hang by the door of the cell opposite.

Bobby Sands – "All things must come to pass as one, So hope should never die,
There is no height or bloody might, That a freeman can't defy.
There is no source or foreign force, Can break one man who knows, that his

free will nothing can kill, And from that freedom grows”

VII

Raymond McCreesh – My dear friends I fear, I'll be home before you, For the right of my country things I must do.

Samah Jaradats – To joy we belong and for the sake of joy we die

VIII

Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva – They thought that this long imposed silence would smother my voice forever. But it did not, and it never will. Because we are millions of voices.

IX

Antonio Gramsci: The old world is dying, and a new world is struggling to be born

Kwame Nkrumah – You will have some consolation in the fact that not only was your name on almost every tongue, but that we have made much headway in furthering the cause which you have always stood for

Biographies

Ben Lunn

A triple nominee for the Scottish Music Awards 2020 for his work with Hebrides Ensemble and Drake Music Scotland. Lunn is associate artist for Drake Music and Drake Music Scotland, and Trainee Artistic Director of the Hebrides Ensemble. Current projects include a concerto for piano quartet and string orchestra which he will be developing during residency time at the Britten-Pears Foundation's 'composer retreat' in autumn 2020 and a new work for the Royal Northern Sinfonia, and a theatrical collaboration with Daryl Beeton Productions.

In addition Lunn is inaugural recipient of Creative Scotland's *Create:Inclusion* fund, for which he produced a work for string quartet and electronics, and a work for BSL interpreter and ensemble. In spring 2020 Lunn was elected to the Musician's Union Equalities Committee.

Lunn's music has been described as 'Evocative', 'Restrained Otherworldliness', 'Chilling', 'sophisticated and most importantly obsessive' or 'produces...glorious roaring sounds' and 'desolate monotone'. He has also been referred to as a 'Composer of life music'.

Ben Lunn is a Mackem composer who studied at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama under the guidance of Peter Reynolds, and also the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre with Marius Baranauskas. He has also received mentorship from composers Param Vir and Stuart MacRae. Since graduating from his Master's Lunn relocated to Glasgow, where he currently resides; working as conductor, musicologist, teacher and composer. As a composer, Lunn's music reflects the material world around him, connecting to his North-Eastern heritage or how disability impacts the world around him or his working-class upbringing.

Lunn's work has been featured in many leading international festivals including Vale of Glamorgan, London New Wind Festival, Druskomanija, DaDaFest, Arēna Festivals, Leeds Leider+, Zilele Muzicale Aniversare, HASS FEST, Toronto Contemporary Music Lab, Second Movement's *Rough for Opera*, and Occupy the Pianos. He has had the privilege of working with leading international ensembles and soloists including N.A.M.E.S, Sofia Soloists, Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra, Quadra Quartet, Hebrides Ensemble, Digital Orchestra, NOYO, Ensemble Synaesthesia, Music Theatre Wales, Lore Lixenberg, Ligeti Quartet, ÖeNM, Ensemble X and Y, Nikolai Matsov, Rolf Hind, Francoise-Green Duo, Garth Knox, Lore Lixenberg, Ember Septet, 5K Brass, Zubin Kanga, Martynas Levickis, JVLMA, and Jauna Muzika.

Red Note Ensemble is **sound's** associate ensemble. We work together regularly – sharing ideas, devising projects and commissioning composers. Some of the projects we have worked jointly on have included the Framed Against the Sky community engagement project, Go Compose! course for young composers, a major international joint project with the Orchestre d'Auvergne and Musiques Démesurées (France).

Red Note Ensemble was founded in 2008 by Scottish cellist Robert Irvine, and is directed by John Harris (Chief Executive and Artistic Co-Director) and Robert Irvine (Artistic Co-Director). The Ensemble performs the established classics of contemporary music, commissions new music, develops the work of new and emerging composers from around the world and finds new spaces and new ways of performing contemporary music to attract new audiences.

Red Note's performing ensemble is drawn from the deep talent pool of Scottish new music expertise, and counts amongst its players some of the very finest performers working in the UK today. Red Note undertake a Spring and Autumn season each year comprising tours, site-specific work and collaborations with other companies within Scotland, around the UK and abroad, and run regular new music series showcasing the work of new composers (Noisy Nights and Noisy Words). It is also extensively involved in the education sector, particularly at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow, as well as **soundfestival** in Aberdeen. The company is now developing collaborations and new work with companies abroad.

Red Note is Associate Contemporary Ensemble at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow, an Associate Company of the Traverse Theatre Edinburgh and Associate Ensemble of **soundfestival** Aberdeen.

"Red Note Ensemble is a Scottish success story" Anna Picard, The Times

"(Red Note's pianist) Simon Smith knocked off outrageously elaborate figuration as though a tune on a pub piano" Paul Driver, Sunday Times

Richard Craig studied at flute at RSAMD (now the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) with Sheena Gordon and later with Richard Blake. After graduating with honours, he continued his studies at the Conservatoire de Strasbourg, France, with Mario Caroli.

Richard has performed with groups such as ELISION, Musikfabrik, Klangforum Wien and Das Experimentalstudio ensemble, which has taken him to international festivals such as Maerzmusik Berlin, Wittener Tage für Neue Musik, the Venice Biennale, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, the Festival D'Automne in Paris and the Lincoln Center Festival New York. Equally active as a soloist, Richard has given recitals throughout the world performing new work and presenting his collaborations. At the centre of Richard's work in contemporary music is the development of new repertoire for the flute, and he is involved in commissions with both with established composers and the younger generation. As an chamber musician, Richard has performed with Distractfold Ensemble, the winners of the 2014 Kranisteiner prize, and is a member of the Spanish ensemble SMASH.

As a lecturer he has given masterclasses and seminars in University Maryland Baltimore, Huddersfield University, St Andrews University, Aberdeen University, the Royal Northern College of Music, the Royal Scottish Conservatoire, Lawrence University Wisconsin, and was appointed as Visiting Fellow in Performance at Aberdeen University 2009-11. From 2012-2014 he was a visiting lecturer on the Post-Graduate performance course at Huddersfield University, and further to this

he was appointed as Honorary Research Fellow at the same University. Between October 2015 - 2019 he was Head of Performance at Bangor University, Wales.

Richard has recorded for the BBC, WDR Cologne, YLE Finland, Radio France, Radio Nacional de España, Swedish Radio, ARTE, Icelandic RUV, Wergo, Another Timbre. His solo debut disc INWARD was released on the Métier label in 2011 to critical acclaim. INWARD has since been nominated as the only classical music disc for the Scottish Album of the Year in 2012. He is currently preparing a second disc with Métier for release in 2015, with support from Creative Scotland. Alongside his three monograph discs, he has performed participated in recordings with ensembles musikFabrik, Ensemble Octandre, SMASH ensemble, Distractfold ensemble and Grizzana Ensemble. As an improviser he has performed with Barry Guy, the Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra and recorded with the group alongside Evan Parker.

As a performer/composer, he released the disc AMP/AL in collaboration with Rodrigo Constanzo and artist Angela Guyton in 2013.

Jessica Beeston has recently returned to Scotland having been based in London and Salzburg. She is in much demand as a chamber musician and plays with ensembles including Hebrides Ensemble, the award winning Nephele Ensemble, and Red Note. She was a member of the Edinburgh Quartet from 2011-14, a mentor for the Mendelssohn on Mull Festival directed by Levon Chilingirian and has taken part in the IMS Prussia Cove and Wye Valley Chamber Music Festivals.

Jessica enjoys period work with the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique directed by John Eliot Gardiner, and freelancing as a guest principal player with orchestras including the London Mozart Players, Britten Sinfonia, the Royal Scottish national Orchestra, and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

In 2012 Jessica was a prize winner of the Park Lane Group award for chamber music and in 2010 the Tunnell Trust Award with the Nephele Ensemble, was the only violist to appear in the string finals of the Royal Over-Seas League Music Competition in 2009, won the Waddell Trust Prize in 2006, and in 2007-2009 performed in venues across the UK as part of Live Music Now duo with pianist Andrew Johnston.

Jessica studied with Thomas Riebl at the Salzburg Mozarteum and graduated with a first class performance degree. She gained much experience in Europe from regular tours and performances with Camerata Salzburg, the Salzburg Chamber Soloists, and as a member of the Giraldi String Quartet.

Sasha Savaloni is the 1st prize winner of the prestigious Sevilla International Guitar Competition in 2018.

As a soloist he has given concerts in Italy, Spain, France, Cyprus, Iran, Ireland and throughout the UK, performing recitals in venues such as the Kings Place (London), Sage Gateshead (Newcastle), City Halls (Glasgow), Stevenson Hall (Glasgow), Holyrood Palace (Edinburgh), DIT Conservatory (Dublin) and the Leeds College of Music as well as performances in festivals such as the London Guitar Festival, St Magnus International Festival, Sul Tasto Paris, Festival de la Guitarra de Sevilla, Big Guitar Weekend, Festival Corde d'Autunno, Les Garrigues Memorial Emili Pujol, Bath Guitar Festival, Shrewsbury Guitar Festival, Plug New Music Festival and the Ullapool Guitar Festival.

He has performed as a soloist with orchestras such as the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the European Union Youth Orchestra. He has also performed and given interviews for BBC Radio Scotland's Classics Unwrapped programme.

Sasha has won numerous awards and prizes; including 1st Prize at the Sevilla International Guitar Competition (2018). In 2015 Sasha was also awarded the Second Prize, the Audience Award and Prize for the Best Performance of the Contemporary Work at the Miguel Llobet International Competition in Barcelona.

Other prizes and awards include Park Lane Group selected artist (2019), 1st Prize winner of the Chanterelle Guitar Award (2010), James Caird Bloch Prize for Best Performance by a String Player (2017), Simon Young Memorial Award at the London International Guitar Competition (2016), 2nd Prize winner of the Ivor Mairants International Competition (2015) as well as being selected for International Guitar Foundation's Young Artist Platform (2014). Sasha is a Live Music Now Scotland Artist.

A committed Chamber musician, Sasha has worked with numerous musicians and ensembles, including collaborations with the Red Note Ensemble, trumpeter Mark O'Keeffe, guitarist Ian Watt, flautist Lee Holland and soprano Alison McNeill with whom they were the 2015-2017 recipients of the prestigious 'Enterprise Music Scotland Residency Project Artists'.

Sasha is a lecturer at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. He is also pursuing a Doctoral degree at the RCS focusing on performance of Schubert's music on guitar.

Tayo Aluko was born in Nigeria. Previously an architect, he is a playwright, actor and singer who has performed several lead and solo roles in musical theatre, opera and oratorio. His two one-man plays, *CALL MR ROBESON* and *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* have taken him as far afield as the North West Territories of Canada and Australia and New Zealand, and to New York's Carnegie Hall. His short play *HALF MOON* has been performed several times in the UK. His audiovisual piece on West African History before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is part of the permanent exhibit at Liverpool's International Slavery Museum. He has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star*, *NERVE Magazine*, *Modern Ghana*, *Searchlight Magazine* and *Counterfire*.

Forthcoming events

Organ Recital | Fri 23 October | 1030

Compilation of recent sound commissions performed by Roger Williams

Digital Horn | Fri 23 October | 1200

Music for horn and electronics performed by BBC Young Musician of the Year 2016 finalist Ben Goldscheider

Lonesingness | Fri 23 October | 1600

EXAUDI vocal group refinding connections and bridging distances in a time of isolation

COVID-19 Sound Map | Fri 23 October | 1730

Pete Stollery provides a walk-thru of the changing soundscapes of lockdown

Ben Goldscheider/Huw Watkins | Fri 23 October | 2000

Music for horn and piano by Widmann, Kirchner, Watkins, Roxanna Panufnik and Bissill

Any Enemy | Sat 24 October | 1200

Performance including the premiere of two movements from John de Simone's *Ups and Downs*

The Big Picture | Sat 24 October | 1400

Film of last year's performance of Judith Weir's work which celebrated the re-opening of Aberdeen Art Gallery

Guild of Horn Players | Sat 24 October | 1600

Works by Tim Jackson, Thomas Hewitt Jones and Tippett

Ten Wee Drams | Sat 24 October | 2000

Ten specially commissioned pieces for bass and contrabass clarinet played by Sarah Watts

Gaia | Sun 25 October | 1200

New music for flute and voice by Laura Bowler and Ruth Morley

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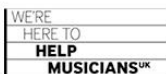
sound is a new music incubator based in north-east Scotland encouraging new music creation and discovery. We run the annual **soundfestival**, as well as year-round activity supporting a wide range of composers, engaging with local communities and providing educational opportunities

Find out more: www.sound-scotland.co.uk

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