



## Spotlight gig: Con Anima Chamber Choir

Conducted by Tara Leiper & James Weeks

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2023, 2pm

Aberdeen Art Gallery

### Programme

Kassia Bailey	<i>I love you like the autumn (World première)</i>
Pixie Nishina	<i>Two Canons (World première)</i>
Laura Heneghan	<i>Sum and Substance (World première)</i>

In association with Aberdeen Archives, Gallery & Museums  
and Con Anima with support from the Hope Scott Trust.



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### Programme notes

#### **Laura Heneghan *Sum and Substance***

William Wordsworth reflects the beauty of nature in his poem *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*. Wordsworth's poem, a short yet descriptive poem suited my intentions perfectly. The poet describes nature in a beautiful way, and I thought that this could be enhanced further in a choral setting.

*Sum and Substance* reflects the unity of nature and life, which Wordsworth's poem so beautifully encapsulates. The piece begins with a sense of stillness as the sound naturally builds from a serene murmur. Gradually, the work is infused with life when differing aspects of the music and text join together through overlapping motifs. Eventually the music reaches a satisfying rhythmic synchrony, reflecting the harmonious unity of nature and all its moving parts.

## **Pixie Nishina *Two Canons***

The two canons that I wrote explore ideas of home and homesickness. I wrote the first canon using traditional notation. It has a simple and friendly character. The words come are English translations of some of the places I have lived. I wrote a graphic score for the second canon. This was to explore how different typographies inspire different styles of singing. I was inspired by pieces from John Cage's Songbooks. This canon has a much more dense and experimental sound. Each individual singer starts the piece at different times and moves at their own pace. They interpret and sing the typography in their own unique ways. I took snippets of poems and other texts for this piece. I used snippets from Henry David Thoreau's diaries, *Lines Written at Castle Island, Lake Superior* by Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, and *Outcast* by Claude MacKay.

## **Kassia Bailey *I love you like the autumn***

In *I love you like the autumn*, composer Kassia Bailey gives voice to artist and writer Althea Young's poem *Good/Bye*. A riff on the famous sentiment "'Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all" by Alfred Tennyson, *Good/Bye* calls upon the romantic poets of the past, using the timeless motif of "the seasons" to examine Althea's own complex relationship to change. The poem was written when, unexpectedly, the author's life was threatened with exceptional upheaval, forcing her to confront the impermanence of her beloved relationships and her residence in the city she had called home since the age of seventeen. Written originally as a private document of grief and gratitude, *Good/Bye* was resurrected from her private notes when Kassia asked her to write text for this commission.

Here in *I love you like the autumn* Kassia responds to the joy and grief of her close friend in a form reminiscent of the yearning English folksongs she grew up signing. This nostalgic inspiration for the piece was further developed through a harmonic language that, while never truly leaving its folk inspiration, also seeks to push against it and still embody elements of contemporary harmony.

## **Biographies**

**Con Anima Chamber Choir** has been performing in Aberdeen and North East Scotland for over 30 years and is an auditioned Chamber Choir with members drawn from the local area. We are lucky enough to have performed at several prestigious events over the years and have given world premieres of several new works, particularly by composers associated with the University of Aberdeen Music Department.

Our repertoire spans a wide range of sacred and secular music from ancient to modern including music from local composers or with local connections. We typically perform at venues in Aberdeen e.g. St Machar's Cathedral, and St Andrew's Cathedral and also travel further afield around Aberdeenshire and other parts of Scotland. We rehearse on Thursday evenings under our Musical Director, Tara Leiper. Forthcoming concerts include Vivaldi's Gloria with the Aberdeen Sinfonietta (Sunday 19 November), Carols in Union Terrace Gardens (2 December), Aberdeen Art Gallery Lunchbreak Concert (7 December) and our Christmas Concert with the Aberdeen Sinfonietta in St. Machar's Cathedral (16 December).

**James Weeks** (\*1978) is a composer, conductor and artistic director, based in the North of England. His music has been performed and broadcast worldwide, and seven portrait discs have been released to date: *Book of Flames and Shadows* (Winter&Winter, 2022) *Summer* (another timbre 2021), *windfell* (another timbre 2019), *Mala punica* (Winter&Winter, 2017), *Signs of Occupation* (Métier 2016), *mural* (confront 2015) and *TIDE* (Métier 2013). His work also appears on the Wandelweiser, HCR and NMC labels.

Collaborators and other performers of his work have included Quatuor Bozzini, Explore Ensemble, London Sinfonietta, Royal Northern Sinfonia, BBC SSO, Ives Ensemble, Plus-Minus, An Assembly, Talea, EXAUDI, Ekmeles, CoMA, Mira Benjamin, Saviet/Houston, Apartment House and Anton Lukoszevieze. In 2002 he co-founded EXAUDI, now regarded as one of the world's leading vocal ensembles for new music. As well as maintaining a busy international touring and recording schedule with EXAUDI, he works regularly as a guest conductor, working regularly with instrumental ensembles and orchestras such as Royal Northern Sinfonia, BBC Singers and many others. He lectures in Composition at Durham University.

**Laura Heneghan** (b.1999) is an Irish-born, Glasgow-based composer and pianist, who predominantly composes instrumental and choral works. She completed her Bachelor of Arts degree (Music) in the University of Galway in 2022, where she worked on her compositions with Dr Amanda Feery. Soon after, she moved to Glasgow to pursue master's studies in composition at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland where she has worked with Dr Bekah Simms and Dr David Fennessy.

Laura's most notable work has been performed by the Gaia Duo, Chamber Choir Ireland, Contempo Quartet, and Dutch-Hungarian Duo Rosanne Phillippens and Zoltán Fejérvári. As a result of winning the Seán Ó Riada Composition Competition 2023, she currently holds the Seán Ó Riada trophy and had work premiered by Chamber Choir Ireland at the Cork International Choral Festival. She is particularly interested in cross-disciplinary collaboration and composed a piece in collaboration with St. Andrews researcher, Holly Fleming. The piece was based on Holly's research topic titled 'To Know or Not to Know. What are the ethical, legal, and social implications of early cancer diagnoses?' She has also composed music for students in the film, ballet, and vocal studies departments within the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and plans to continue cross-disciplinary collaboration in the future.

**Pixie Nishina** is an Aberdeen-based musician. She is studying music at the University of Aberdeen. Her pieces have been performed by Spectrum, the University's new music ensemble, which she also performs in. In 2023, she was part of the Sound and Music Summer School where she was tutored by Laura Bowler. She helps Sound and Music improve their support for young people as one of their Young Voices. As part of the WayWORD festival this year, she helped deliver a workshop exploring music, poetry, and improvisation with John De Simone and Noon Salah Eldin.

You can find her playing the tuba in various ensembles around Aberdeen. She is also interested in conducting, writing poetry, and playing the baroque recorder.

## Kassia Bailey

Kassia Bailey is a Glasgow-based queer composer whose love of stories – past, future, fiction or truth – finds a home in her programmatic musical style. Intertwining contemporary practice with historical styles and influences, she delights in works that cherry-pick past and present techniques to create a sound world all its own. Kassia's eclectic musical taste extends from Belarussian folk songs and West-country sea shanties to historically themed power metal and retro videogame soundtracks. This latter influence, in particular, has led to a recent interest in electronics, sculpting works in development.

Originally from London, Kassia first honed her compositional skills under the guidance of Darren Bloom at the junior department of Trinity Laban Conservatoire, winning their composition award. Kassia has since continued her studies in Glasgow under the mentorship of Oliver Seale and Bekah Simms at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where she is pursuing her MMus degree. Kassia's music has been played from the Cadogan Hall to the Tate Modern to the Stevenson Hall; and has been performed by groups such as the Red Note Ensemble, GAIA duo and the Ossian Ensemble.

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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

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