

Any Enemy Spotlight Gig

Saturday 25th October 2025, 3pm

St Andrew's Cathedral Church, Aberdeen

Programme

Ronnie MacNiven	<i>Of Bronze — and Blaze (World première)</i>
Naomi McGillivray	<i>Glen Muick (World première)</i>
Amy Simpkin	<i>Populus Tremula (World première)</i>

Any Enemy: Guera Crockett (violin), Laurie Rominger (viola), Alison MacDonald (cello), Gemma McGregor (flute), Fiona Gordon (oboe), Lucy Webster (bassoon), John de Simone (tuba), Aden Mazur (piano) and Brodie McCash (percussion)

Programme notes

Ronnie MacNiven *Of Bronze — and Blaze*

Composed for Any Enemy and the Aberdeen Sound Festival, **Of Bronze — and Blaze** is inspired by Emily Dickinson's brief poem of the same name. The work explores the shifting light and mystery of the aurora borealis, whose flickering movements are mirrored in the strings' opening glissandi. Phrases from the wind instruments evoke the vastness and fragility of existence, contrasting human transience with the 'vaster attitudes' of the universe. Through moments of shimmering stillness and sudden luminosity, the piece reflects on our insignificance and mortality — a blaze of bronze against the cosmic night.

Naomi McGillivray *Glen Muick*

Inspired by the namesake poem by Sheena Blackhall, Glen Muick is nestled where the Highlands meets the edge of Aberdeenshire. A place of towering mountains contrasting with the wide, expanse of Lock Muick, this work takes inspiration from the distinct visuals, drawing on both its grandeur and moments of stillness.

Anchored by a drone taking inspiration from the bagpipes and the unwavering presence of the mountains, melodic phrases emerge and dissolve across the instruments. With a contrasting middle section — freer, unsettled and more

expansive –the drone falls away with the music moving in a more unsettling harmonic setting, evoking the unpredictability of the Scottish weather and landscape. The return of the drone at the close gives the work a circular, enduring quality – ‘nothing endures but the land.’ *Lewis Grassic-Gibbon*.

As a composer, I take great inspiration from the Scots language, the landscape and my natural surroundings. Although no longer living in Aberdeenshire, I feel my experience growing up in such a divergent landscape has ultimately shaped who I am and my creative direction. Glen Muick offers an impression: a meditative experience on place, time and the quiet power of Glen Muick.

Glen Muick by Sheena Blackhall

(poem reproduced with permission from Sheena Blackhall).

*The skies drift doon – a dreepin blur
That maks o ben an brae a shroud;
As if grown weary o the lan,
The mountain coories i’ the cloud.
An naething steers within this warld
O stormy lift, an troubled tarn,*

*bit drooned reflection o the hills –
As lang as Time, as bricht as starn.
In ilka crag’s a favoured face,
In ilka burn’s a frien –
An aa the days we’ve been apairt
Are as they’d niver been*

Amy Simpkin *Populus Tremula* (World première)

Populus Tremula (The Quaking Aspen) takes inspiration from the brilliant movements and sounds of the aspen tree in stillness and in the breeze. The ticking, percussive sounds of its large, flat leaves fluttering up close, combined with the majestic, roar-like wash of sound in the wind from a distance, create a rich natural soundworld and a deeply moving experience for anyone standing near.

I hope to bring this experience of the aspen tree in the breeze indoors to you, using the varied instruments and beautiful sounds of Any Enemy. Please do listen out for what the tree sounds like in stillness, and in the breeze...

Biographies

Any Enemy is a contemporary music ensemble of local musicians in NE Scotland, conducted by Pete Stollery. They meet monthly throughout the year and rehearse a wide range of new music for flexible instrumentation.

Any Enemy gave their inaugural performance at *soundfestival* in 2018 which included works by Gemma McGregor and Rose Dodd. At *soundfestival 2019* they premiered new works by three young Scottish composers, which led to an annual composer development opportunity, and also joined forces with the Red Note Ensemble for the world premiere of “Fire and Ice” by Linda Buckley. Both concerts were recorded and later broadcast by BBC Radio 3. During lockdown, Any Enemy gave several performances from their own homes via Zoom. These reached distant audiences and brought about a Trans-Atlantic Zoom concert with Brandon University New Music Ensemble. Any Enemy were joined by local musicians of all ages and Aberdeen

University's Spectrum Ensemble for CoMA's Contemporary Music for All festivals in 2022 and 2024 and they also enjoy working with community projects such as **sound's** Get Creative contemporary music-making workshops for young musicians.

To date they have given world premieres of 23 works they have supported or commissioned.

Pete Stollery studied composition with Jonty Harrison at the University of Birmingham and was one of the first members of BEAST (Birmingham Electroacoustic Sound Theatre) in the early 1980s. Following several years as a schoolteacher in Kent, he moved to Aberdeen to work in teacher education at the former Northern College which later merged with the University of Aberdeen. From 2000, he was part of the team which re-introduced music programmes at the University of Aberdeen, including the introduction of doctoral programmes in Composition and the development of the electroacoustic music studios. He was Head of the Department of Music for many years and he retired as Professor of Composition and Electroacoustic Music in 2022.

In 2004 he was part of the setting up of sound, where he has appeared regularly as composer, performer and conductor, especially with Any Enemy, where he is Musical Director. In February 2026, he will conduct the Aberdeen City Orchestra in the premiere of a new work by Joe Stollery, as well as Sibelius Fifth Symphony and music by Piazzolla. His compositional work exists as electroacoustic compositions, sound installations, web-based sound art, as well as instrumental/vocal compositions. He recently completed commissions for Inverurie and Learig Orchestras (*Un Pensamiento Triste Que Se Baila*) and *Content* for the University of Aberdeen Chamber Choir.

Ronnie MacNiven is a Scottish trombonist and composer whose music spans classical, jazz and contemporary styles. A graduate of The Royal Academy of Music and The University of Glasgow, he has performed internationally with ensembles including The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra, working alongside Maria Schneider and Joe Lovano. His compositions have featured at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival and the Sound Festival, Aberdeen. Notable works include Tanabata, Cassiopeia Dances, Milton Inventions and February Moon. His recent focus is a series of solo woodwind pieces inspired by birds. Outside music, he enjoys detective fiction, philately and Sudoku.

Naomi McGillivray is a composer and educator from Aberdeenshire, Scotland. An MMus graduate from the University of Edinburgh (supported by The Cross Trust), Naomi's music has featured at Nordic Music Days, Klangwerkstatt Festival Berlin and soundfestival. Her work, inspired by nature, language and landscape, reflects her deep connection to place and culture. Naomi's work is inspired by her natural surroundings and culture. Language, landscape, nature and architecture all feed into the influence of her music. She currently works as a Music Teacher in West Lothian and regularly leads creative music making workshops around Scotland.

Amy Simpkin is a composer, workshop leader and piano tutor. She studied composition at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland with David Fennessy and Ailie Robertson and has written for ensembles including The Marian Consort, Juice Vocal and Red Note Ensemble, with performances at The Night With..., Sound Festival and Music at Oxford. Her music explores nature, emotion, harmony and repetition, aiming to move and connect with listeners. Passionate about community music-making, she leads workshops for children across Scotland and composes for community groups. Her faith inspires her work, and she enjoys leading worship and writing songs for her church in Glasgow.

*This concert is part of our **sound**communities programme, supported by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, & part of our **sound**creators programme (nurturing new music creators with year-round artistic & skills development opportunities). The **sound**creators overall programme is supported by Creative Scotland, PRSF Talent Development Network, Aberdeen City Council & Pear Tree for Music Fund, & this particular composer development opportunity concert is also supported by Hinrichsen Foundation, Idlewild Trust, Leche Trust & the Vaughan Williams Foundation.*

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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 **sound**festival, 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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