



Stephanie Lamprea (soprano) and Jessica Kerr (cello)

Friday 24th October 2025, 7.30pm
Arbuthnott Church, near Laurencekirk

Programme

Marie Dare (b.1902) arr. Amy Simpkin	<i>The Grey Geese</i>
Simone Seales	<i>we have cried for so long</i>
Kate Sagovsky	<i>A note on words for wolf</i>
Rūta Vitkauskaitė	<i>Song of the Shadows</i>
Arr. Sheena Phillips	<i>Tàladh Chrìosda</i>
Georgina MacDonell Finlayson	<i>Clyak (World Première) *</i>
Alicia Ann Spottiswoode (b.1810) arr. Amy Simpkin	<i>Annie Laurie</i>

* Commissioned by sound and the Friends of The Grassic Gibbon Centre with support from the Fidelio Charitable Trust and the Hope Scott Trust.

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Programme notes

N.B. All programme notes have been written by the composers themselves, as have most of the texts (unless otherwise stated).

Marie Dare (b.1902) arr. Amy Simpkin (2024) *The Grey Geese* (3')

The poem 'The Grey Geese' was written by C. Ethel Evans, and later set to music by Marie Dare (1902 – 1976). The first recorded performance of the piece was at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2017 as part of the 5 star Scottish Superwomen of Science show. The

melody meanders in a mysterious manner, accompanied by graceful arpeggios, originally written for harp or piano. This arrangement seeks to depict the beauty of life, and habitat and flight of Geese using harmonics on the cello and various other sounds of nature in the voice.

*The wild grey geese from the fields are flown
To the sea forsaken shore
The feed when the red sun drowns in night
And the moon gleams pale and wan
On the empty stretch of dark wet sand
At the tide's receding edge

Till dawn waking at last flings up her hand
Over the rim of the sea
Scattering petals of light
And the incoming tide creeps up the strand
Then sudden they rise in strong winged flight
And sudden stream out and are gone*

Simone Seales *we have cried for so long* (2024) (6')

we have cried for so long is a poem and lament which I wrote after learning about the caoineag in the Scottish Highlands. Caoineag means 'weeper', and is a female spirit/banshee who foretells death by lamenting in the night at a waterfall, stream, loch, or mountainside. She cannot be approached, questioned, or bargained with. She isn't malicious. Her lament is an omen for the death that will come. I wrote the poem imagining how tired the caoineag must be, crying for the tragedies which we continue to inflict across the world. I imagined that they must be able to see beyond the Highlands now, just as we are able to see beyond our communities through the use of technology and social media. The performers in this piece are each a caoineag, reflecting and crying for the tragedies to come.

*(for Palestine, for Lebanon, for Sudan
for all who are suffering and have suffered)*

*it vibrates
in your head
this
knowing
this
song
wails through
glowing mirrors
headless youth
connected through
hands held
beyond
the highlands
this*

*knowing
this
song
crawls through
your throat
writhes under
your tongue
peels away
your skin
your body knows
this song
could sing
this song*

Kate Sagovsky *A note on words for wolf* (2024) (6')

When you hear words through the hum of distraction – when you hear their shape over sense - you might follow the shape to make up for missing what people are actually saying.

When you come from a place whose Gaelic name holds a myth of a wolf devouring all the children, you might listen to the many words for wolf in Gaelic. You might turn those sounds to music; catching contours, falling vowels ...

Then seized with your word sounds, you might arrange the pitch and rhythmic cues, seeking sense in shapes and stripping the words of the chance to be heard as words, in the way they were meant to be heard, in the voice of the person who told you their words.

Then quite by chance, you have suspended on one note, what you meant to say. Because the only way you can make sense of words as you hear them spoken is to hold them there, just for a moment.

Rūta Vitkauskaitė *Song of the Shadows* (2024) (15')

I have been wishing to use the texts from Gaelic Hymns and Incantations for a long while now, after acquiring a book by Alexander Carmichael 'Carmina Gadelica'. Earlier in my compositional path, I've written a vocal work using Lithuanian healing spells, and it was dedicated to Covid times and healing, and later, while reading through the Gaelic collection of hymns and incantations, it really resonated with my already growing interest in such chants.

When visiting Outer Hebrides a few years ago, coming across still standing Black house, and spending a week talking to the locals of the wonderful village of Bragar, I understood deeply meaning of the fireplace that was traditionally right in the middle of the house, most important and sacred place, peat, kindling, blessing of the fire, and mysterious aura surrounding it from which the Gaelic tales and songs were born.

So my piece, Song of the Shadows, is about that, trying to summon that spirit that is so fragile and rarely encountered in our modern world. I am using authentic Gaelic incantations for blessing the fire, and I also use an authentic Lithuanian spell that has

been used to prevent one's house from burning down. The piece is inviting audience participation at the start and at the end, who create an environment of semi-present spirits in the house, and you will see the singer walking in a triangle, imitating the original ritual of laying the peat in the fireplace.

Smaladh an teine

*An tri numh
A chumhnadh
A chomhnadh
A chomraig
A tula
An taighe
An teaghlaich
An oidhche
An nochd
O! An oidhche
An nochd
Agus gach oidhche
Gach aon oidhche
Amen*

Smoothing the fire

*The holy three
To guard
To help
To protect
At the hearth
Of the house
Of the family
The night
Tonight
Oh! The night
Tonight
And every night
Every single night
Amen*

SATOR

AREPO

TENET

OPERA

ROTAS

[From Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms by Daiva Vaitkevičienė]

Benched beo-thachaidh

*TOGAIDH mi mo theine an diugh,
An làthair aingheal naomha neimh,
An làthair Airil is ailde cruth,
An làthair Uiril nan uile sgeimh,
Gun ghnu, gun tnu, gun fharmaid.
Gun ghiomh, gun gheimh roimh neach fo'n
ghrèin,
Ach Naomh Mhac Dé da m' thearmad.*

*Dhe fadaidh féin na m' chridhe steach,
Aingheal gràidh do m' choimhearsnach,
Do m' nàmh, do m' dhàmh, do m'
chàirde,
Do 'n t-saoidh, do 'n daoidh, do 'n tràille.*

*A Mhic na Moire mìn-ghile,
Bho 'n nì is ìsle crannchàire,
Gu ruig an t-Ainm is àirde.*

Blessing of the Kindling

*I WILL kindle my fire this morning
In presence of the holy angels of heaven,
In presence of Ariel of the loveliest form,
In presence of Uriel of the myriad charms,
Without malice, without jealousy, without envy,
Without fear, without terror of any one under
the sun,
But the Holy Son of God to shield me.*

*God, kindle Thou in my heart within
A flame of love to my neighbour,
To my foe, to my friend, to my kindred all,
To the brave, to the knave, to the thrall,*

*O Son of the loveliest Mary,
From the lowliest thing that liveth,
To the Name that is highest of all.*

[From Carmina Gadelica, Vol. I & II, Hymns and Incantations by Alexander Carmichael]

Arr. Sheena Phillips (2024) *Tàladh Chrìosda* (4')

Tàladh Chrìosda This simple and beautiful traditional Gaelic song from Scotland addresses the Christ child with the most gorgeous and endearing words. The Gaelic lyrics – which are attributed to Ronald Rankin, a Catholic priest – were first published in the 19th century. The song was originally sung to a different tune, but is now generally sung to the one used here. *Tàladh Chrìosda* was one of the first songs that Sheena arranged for choir, and has a special place in her heart for that. This simple arrangement for soprano and cello is loosely based on the choral arrangement.

Tàladh Chrìosda Mo ghaol, mo ghràdh is m'eudail thu,

M'iunntas ùr is m'éibhneas thu,

Mo mhacan àlainn ceutach thu,

Chan fhiù mi-fhéin bhith 'd dhàil.

Aleluia

Mo ghaol an t-sùil a sheallas tlàth,

Mo ghaol an cridh tha liont' le gràdh;

Ged is leanabh thu gun chàil

Is lionmhor buaidh tha ort a' fàs.

(Traditional)

Translation:

Lullaby to the Christ Child

My darling, my love and treasure, you,

My new-found wealth and ecstasy, you,

My gorgeous handsome wee son, you,

I am unworthy to be in your presence.

My love the eye that gently sees,

My love the heart that's filled with affection.

Although you are a helpless child

Many virtues are growing in you.

(English lyrics © copyright Peter Hill and Sheena Phillips (paraphrase of the original Gaelic))

Georgina MacDonell Finlayson *Clyak* (2025, World Première) * (6')

This piece was commissioned to commemorate 90 years since the death of James Leslie Mitchell, known by his pseudonym Lewis Grassie Gibbon (1901 - 1935), and to be premiered at Arbuthnott Church, where he is buried.

'Clyak' (Scots) 1. The last sheaf of corn to be harvested at the end of the harvest season. From Scottish Gaelic caileag ('girl'). 2. The end of something.

Lewis Grassie Gibbon is a Scottish writer best known for his trilogy *A Scots Quair*, and in particular the first book *Sunset Song*, set in North East Scotland in the early 20th century. It tells the story of Chris Guthrie, a young woman who lives and works on her family farm in the Mearns, in the fictional area of Kinraddie. It portrays the hardships and way of life of a rural crofting community who live their lives by the rhythms of the land and cycle of the seasons. Grassie Gibbon himself grew up in a farming family in

the North East of Scotland, and his writing often reflects on the way of life of these people, whose existence was so deeply entwined with the land. They are a part of the land as much as it is a part of them.

Harvest season is an important time in the agricultural year. I found this word 'clyak' in the glossary for *Sunset Song*. I was drawn to how it conjures up a connection to the land - a harvest tradition which has a strong sense of community, embracing practices of generosity, reciprocity and stewardship of the land - but also that it comes from the Scottish Gaelic word for girl.

In harvest traditions across Scotland, the last sheaf of corn from that year's harvest would be bundled together to form a 'corn dolly', believed to contain the 'spirit of the corn'. In Scottish Gaelic, this would sometimes be called the caileag or 'girl', resulting in 'clyak' in Scots. 'Clyak' also signifies the end of something - the end of an era, a life, a community, a tradition.

Georgina MacDonell Finlayson

Alicia Ann Spottiswoode (b.1810) arr. Amy Simpkin (2024) *Annie Laurie* (6')

Annie Laurie was a poem claimed to be written by William Douglas about his feelings towards young Annie Laurie, whose father disapproved of the two's relationship due to William's ties with the Jacobites. On further research it appears that the poem was actually rewritten, with the third verse and music added by Alicia Ann Spottiswoode (1810 – 1900), later known as Lady John Scott .

When arranging the song, I was intrigued by the two contrasting versions of the text, the former distinctly focusing on the woman's body and appearance, and the latter celebrating Annie Laurie's voice. In this arrangement, the music explores from Annie's point of view the idea of being conformed to such expectations, then through a shift in harmony and changing timbre, musically partnering with Spottiswoode to release Annie Laurie into her own voice.

Biographies

Colombian-American soprano **Stephanie Lamprea** is an architect of new sounds and expressions as a performer, composer, and multidisciplinary artist, specializing in contemporary classical repertoire. Trained as an operatic coloratura, she uses her voice as a mechanism of avant-garde performance art, creating “maniacal shifts of vocal production and character... like an icepick through the skull” (Jason Eckardt). She has performed as a soloist at Roulette Intermedium (New York City), Constellation Chicago, Sound Scotland, Kings Place (London), Southbank Centre (London), the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, the National Concert Hall (Dublin), the Centre for Contemporary Art (Glasgow), the Hidden Door Festival (Edinburgh), and the Casa da Música (Porto). She has collaborated with leading new music ensembles and bands including the Riot Ensemble, International Contemporary Ensemble, the City of London Sinfonia, Sō Percussion, and Post Coal Prom Queen.

<http://www.stephanielamprea.com/>

Jessica Kerr (cellist) is originally from Nottingham. She moved to Glasgow in 2005 following an undergraduate music degree at Bristol University and postgraduate study with Hannah Roberts at the Royal Northern College of Music.

Jessica is exploring the intersection of the arts with nature, positive climate action and environmental social justice. Recent projects in this sphere include Stories of People and Trees, a commission from the Scottish Ecological Design Agency Song shall be our Measure, and a joint commission by Cove Park and the Argyll Community Rainforest Network for artistic engagement in the temperate rainforests of Scotland.

Cellist with Glisk, the Kentigern Quartet and the GRIT orchestra, Jessica has a wide range of orchestral experience within Scotland and beyond, and is a Senior Musician at Big Noise Govanhill. She plays on an English cello dating from 1810 by Furber, and was generously supported by the Arts Trust of Scotland in acquiring the instrument.

www.storiesofpeopleandtrees.com

Illuminate Women's Music is a project created by composer Dr Angela Elizabeth Slater dedicated to the promotion of music, both historical and contemporary, composed by women. Also supporting talented female performers, Illuminate arranges repeat performance opportunities across the UK through an annual concert series. This year they have brought their series to Scotland for the first time in collaboration with Illuminate Scotland director Dr Ruta Vitkauskaitė.

We gather feedback to find out whether you've enjoyed the event and to better understand our audiences and their demographic. Short forms will be distributed at the event, but if you're happy to fill in a longer online feedback form you can access it here:



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