



## Stephanie Lamprea (soprano) and Jessica Kerr (cello)

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2025, 4pm

The Salmon Bothy, Portsoy

### Programme

|  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Sonia Allori   | <i>The Goddess of Ballachulish</i> |
| Kate Sagovsky  | <i>A note on words for wolf</i>    |
| Angela Elizabeth Slater                              | <i>My skin: A Selkies Tale</i>     |
| Arr. Sheena Phillips                                 | <i>Tàladh Chrìosda</i>             |
| Marie Dare (b.1902) arr. Amy Simpkin                 | <i>The Grey Geese</i>              |
| Georgina MacDonell Finlayson                         | <i>Clyak*</i>                      |
| Alicia Ann Spottiswoode (b.1810)<br>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).

#### **Sonia Allori *The Goddess of Ballachulish* (2024) (7')**

A five-foot-tall, 2500-year-old wooden carved effigy of a woman was dug up from the peat on the shores of Loch Leven, Perthshire in the 1880s in most excellent condition.

There has been much speculation regarding her purpose and how she ended up there. I like to leave the why to your imagination! The Goddess of Ballachulish imagines her discovery and awakening after long centuries of slumber. It is a lament in part but also tinged with hopefulness. I had a lot of fun writing this and giving the wonderful performers lots of room for their interpretation of directions such as “Heavy and dragging, not beautiful”. Consequently, the work begins heavy and leaden in mood. The sound is almost ugly at the start and as each verse is played things become increasingly lighter, clearer in tone and more kindred to beauty. The remains of the effigy are stored at The National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh where sadly she is now in a sorry state.

*I lie under peat  
To the west of the loch  
Waiting to be discovered  
Or not ...  
I am woman  
Made of wood and stone  
I was loved  
Once ...  
I don't remember  
Why I was made?  
I don't remember  
What I am for?  
A sharp noise overhead  
Voices ...  
A sudden glimpse of sky  
I am reborn!*

### **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.

**Angela Elizabeth Slater** *My skin: A Selkies Tale* (2024) (13')

My skin takes its inspiration from the poignant tale of a selkie—a mythological creature that can transform from a seal into a human by shedding its skin. The story revolves around a selkie woman who has her skin stolen by a fisherman, forcing her to live on land, separated from her true home in the sea. This folktale is told in many guises, and here Kendra Preston Leonard (writer, poet and librettist) and I have strived to give to the female protagonist a voice as she grapples with the loss of her skin and her connection to the ocean. It explores themes of longing, betrayal, and resilience representing the Selkie's initial despair to her daring escape with her daughters, ultimately returning to her watery home beneath the moonlit sky.

In giving voice to the selkie's powerful tale, *My skin* celebrates the strength and resilience of women, and the enduring bonds of sisterhood that carry them through even the darkest moments. This composition aims to transport audiences to the enchanting world of myth and folklore while exploring universal themes of identity, self-discovery, and the enduring strength of women.

Text: *My Skin*, Kendra Preston Leonard

*My skin, my skin! Where is my skin?  
Where is my skin, you coward?  
Where does it dry and crack?*

*I am born to the tides,  
seal—girl, girl—seal, seal and girl and girl-seal.  
I swim and I gleam beneath the auroras  
until the day that he comes and  
takes my skin,  
while my kin scatter, tiny suns under the water.*

*I am bare and alone  
and yet  
he carries me away with him  
and hides my skin from me.  
Where is my skin?*

*I ask, I plead, I beguile  
in desperation as hot as a star:  
where is my skin?*

*Without it, I am just half—  
a selkie, raw and rent down the middle.  
Human man, where do you hide my skin?*

*He cuts away the finger-webs  
of the children that I bear him,  
and when my sister Flora comes,  
he slays her at the door.  
But Flora's death gives me a gift,  
for with her skin I make coats for my daughters—*

*my girls, who hear me nightly ask,  
where oh where is my skin?—  
and find it themselves in the floor of the shed—  
my skin, the saving of me.*

*Tonight we escape.*

*Kirsty acts as lookout,  
and Maggie brings her gun,  
just in case, and  
Grace drives the car.  
Together we go to the shore,  
and above  
the moon welcomes me home to the sea.*

*I dress my daughters in my sister's hide,  
and the women's eyes are  
suddenly rich with salt.*

*In our dappled coats,  
my seal-girls, girl-seals and I slide  
into the water's loving rocking,  
and swim and swim and we become the sun  
under the sea of Skye.*

**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 mhac an 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))

**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*

**Georgina MacDonell Finlayson *Clyak* (2025) (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.

### **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](http://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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