



## James Weeks: *Blue Hours* (world première)

GBSR Duo: George Barton (percussion) and Siwan Rhys (piano)

Sunday 26th October 2025, 6-9.30am

Phoenix Hall, Newton Dee Community, Bielside, Aberdeen

(co-commissioned by **sound**)

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*Blue Hours* is an immersive work lasting 3 hours 30 mins. We want you to be as comfortable as possible throughout, but we understand that you may occasionally need to get up or leave the room. If you do, please be as discreet as possible.

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The blue hour is the period just before sunrise (or just after sunset) when blue wavelengths from the sun's light dominate the visible spectrum.

The hours either side of dawn are a sacred time. They are associated with vigil: of keeping watch while others sleep; of prayer, of readiness to experience the miraculous return of light. A 'thin' time, in the sense of 'thin places' – where the boundary between the spiritual and physical world is perceived to be especially delicate.

*Night is the absence of the Sun, when it is concealed by the Earth's shadow from the time it sets until the time it rises again...*

*...There are, in fact, seven parts of the night...Dusk [crepusculum] is uncertain light, for we say that something doubtful is "murky" [creperum], that is, between light and darkness. Eventide [vesperum] is when the star of the same name appears, of which the poet says: The evening star [vesper] would close the gates*

*of Olympus against the day... The first part of night [conticinium] is when everything is hushed, that is, silent. Dead of night [intempestum] is midnight, when, in the deep sleep of peace, there is no time for activity for any creature. Cock-crow [gallicinium] is when the rooster lifts up its song. Early morning [matutinum] is between the departure of darkness and the arrival of dawn. Daybreak [diluculum] is when a bit of light first appears; also known as Dawn, it precedes the sunrise...*

*...Day is air which is lit up by the Sun...*

Bede, *The Reckoning of Time*, tr. Faith Wallis, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999

## Biographies

**GBSR Duo** – George Barton (percussion) and Siwan Rhys (piano) – combines two of the UK's finest young contemporary chamber instrumentalists: “a wonderful, adventuresome, sensitive pair of musicians” (Kate Molleson, BBC R3).

Known for their fearless, intense performances, GBSR's work ranges from the twentieth-century modernism of Stockhausen and Ustvolskaya to music by Brian Eno and Aphex Twin; from the exquisite delicacy of composers like Morton Feldman, Eva-Maria Houben and Barbara Monk Feldman to the cracked virtuosity of Alex Paxton and Arne Gieshoff; and from the classic experimentalism of John White and Christopher Hobbs to the contemporary cross-genre work of Oliver Leith, Laura Bowler and CHAINES.

Their collaborators range from team-ups with leading soloists and ensembles such as the Heath Quartet, EXAUDI, 12 Ensemble, Twenty Fingers Duo, Sean Shibe, the Basel Sinfonietta and the LA Philharmonic, to inventive cross-disciplinary pairings with artists like Angharad Davies and Dejan Mrdja.

GBSR's recordings are praised for their exceptional fidelity and variety, whether bringing new depths of appreciation to existing repertoire through benchmark recordings of Stockhausen (*The Guardian* Album of the Week; “the best spatial audio purchase I've made this year” Seth Colter Walls, *The New York Times*) and Barbara Monk Feldman (“achingly beautiful” Christian Carey, *Sequenza 21*) – or highlighting new works in premiere recordings of Oliver Leith, Eva-Maria Houben, Lisa Illean, Alex Paxton, Lawrence Dunn, Julius Aglinskas and others.

Regular performers at Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Kings Place and London's Bold Tendencies, they have also performed at venues including the Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, Royal Opera House Linbury Theatre and Walt Disney Hall, and at festivals including Festival d'Aix-en-

Provence, Darmstädter Ferienkurse, Muzikos Ruduo Vilnius, Presteigne Festival, Sound Aberdeen, Spitalfields Music Festival, No Bounds, Cheltenham Festival, Norfolk and Norwich Festival and Three Choirs Festival.

GBSR are hcmf Fielding Talent artists and were the winners of the Royal Philharmonic Society 2025 Young Artist award where the judges commended them for a “commitment to new music that’s thrilling in its fearlessness...their programmes and collaborations fizz with style, energy and invention”.

**James Weeks** (\*1978) is a composer, conductor and artistic director, based in the North of England.

His music typically explores pared-down musical materials, microtonality and Just Intonation, and ideas of duration and temporality, embodiment, and plain-speaking. His most recent work has focused increasingly on a deeply embodied relationship with the natural world.

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, NMC and New Focus 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.




Awards include a British Composer Award (2018) for *Libro di fiammelle e ombre*, written for EXAUDI, and an Ivors Academy Composer Award (2019) for *Leafleocht*, written for Quatuor Bozzini.

In 2002 he founded EXAUDI ([www.exaudi.org.uk](http://www.exaudi.org.uk)) with soprano Juliet Fraser, now regarded as one of the world’s leading vocal ensembles for new music, with whom he maintains a busy international touring and recording schedule. He was Associate Head of Composition at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London from 2012-17, and took up his present position at Durham University in 2017, where he is currently Associate Professor of Composition.

[www.jamesweeks.org](http://www.jamesweeks.org)

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