

Synonyms for Divergence

Jacob Sam-la Rose (poet) and the Solis Ensemble

Sunday 2nd November 2025, 1pm

Cowdray Hall, Aberdeen

Programme

Kurtág	Extracts from <i>Signs, Games and Messages</i> with poetry by Jacob Sam-la Rose
Zoe Martlew	<i>Völuspá</i>
Luke Styles/Jacob Sam-la Rose	<i>Synonyms for Divergences</i> (World Premiere) *

* Commissioned by sound with support from the Hope Scott Trust

Solis Ensemble: Tristan Gurney, Violin - Fiona Winning, Viola - Ben Michaels, Cello

Programme notes

Kurtág Extracts from *Signs, Games and Messages*
with poetry by Jacob Sam-la Rose

Signs, Games, & Messages is a collection of brief enigmatic works that exemplifies Kurtág's minimalist and deeply expressive style. Composed between the 1960s and 2000s, these miniature pieces reflect Kurtág's fascination with fragmented forms, intimate gestures, and personal expression. Each piece is like a musical aphorism, often lasting only a few minutes or even seconds, but packed with emotional depth and meaning. The title itself offers insight into the work's nature: *Signs* suggests coded

communication or a personal language; Games refers to the playful and experimental approach Kurtág often takes, a nod to his larger series *Játékok* (Games); and Messages evoke a more introspective, intimate dialogue. Many of these miniatures were written in memory of friends, colleagues, and mentors, giving them a highly personal, almost confessional character.

Kurtág's music, with its economy of notes and gestures, invites the listener into a space of contemplation, where silence and sound interact in profound ways, and where even the smallest musical gesture can carry great emotional and intellectual weight.

Zoe Martlew *Völuspá* (2008) (12mins)

Inspired by the mysterious standing stones and goddess lore that abounds in the beautiful Dorset countryside surrounding Smedmore House (venue for the premiere of the trio) I've taken the title of this piece, "Völuspá", from that of the Poetic Edda, the old Norse collection of anonymous poems in which the Norns appear, the three shadowy goddesses who weave Fate at their looms. In this light it is appropriate that there are three performers, spinning time with their strings...

Zoe Martlew

Luke Styles/Jacob Sam-la Rose *Synonyms for Divergences* (2025) (20 mns)

At the heart of *Synonyms for Divergence* is a curiosity about how we become who we are, and how we remain in motion. The poems move through questions of identity, inheritance, contention, and belonging. The work resists the comfort of a single narrative. It is drawn to the margins and intersections, the moments when language strains to name what is changing, or when a story veers away from expectation. The poems explore divergence not only as separation, but as expansion: a proliferation of perspectives, opening towards the unknown.

Formally, the writing is restless and exploratory. It moves between fragment and accumulation, and sometimes disrupts its own logic in order to reveal new connections. Across the sequence, echoes and motifs evolve and recur, creating an internal counterpoint that mirrors the dialogue with the music. A layering of voices and possibilities rather than a single, linear line.

Jacob Sam-la Rose

The music for *Synonyms for Divergence* acts to support, engage and enter into dialogue with the poetry that is performed. The music creates a backdrop of texture, it suggests tensions and equilibrium, it can give a sense of forward motion and of multiple strands diverging. The interludes between poems respond to the text we have heard and anticipate to some degree the next poem, though all this in an abstract form.

Jacob and I have known each other for over a decade and collaborated on several occasions, this is our first work together of this kind where music and poetry have been created together for the same work.

Luke Styles

Biographies

Solis Ensemble is a UK-based multidisciplinary collective presenting classical music alongside contemporary works and new commissions. The ensemble brings together some of the finest artists of their disciplines—including principal players from London’s orchestras, award-winning composers, and celebrated poets.

Founded in 2025, Solis is committed to curating programs that pair classical repertoire with new artistic perspectives. Through collaborations that span music, poetry, and movement, the ensemble creates performances that are both innovative and grounded in artistic integrity.

With a focus on quality, collaboration and connection, Solis Ensemble performs in both traditional and nontraditional venues, offering a dynamic and inclusive approach to live performance.

Jacob Sam-La Rose is a poet, educator and editor. His poetry collection *Breaking Silence* (Bloodaxe, 2011) was shortlisted for several awards including the Forward Prize and his poems have been widely anthologised and published in journals. His enthusiasm for using poetry as a tool for education and interaction has made him a renowned and inspirational figure in the poetry and educational communities alike and he is actively involved in facilitating a range of creative writing and spoken word programmes in schools and arts centres across the UK. As a performer, he has appeared at a wide range of venues and festivals across the world.

Luke Styles is a British / Australian composer and artistic director. His operas have been performed on the famous Glyndebourne main stage, and the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. He is the artistic director of the Deal Festival in the UK. Luke has collaborated with many of the world’s top soloists and his music has featured at festivals and in venues across the world. Throughout his career Luke has been heavily involved in creating collaborative and multi-discipline works.

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