

Ensemble Haar

Thursday 22 October 2026, 12.45pm

Cowdray Hall, Aberdeen

Programme

John De Simone:	<i>Metacrisis 2</i> (World Première)
Pixie Nishina	<i>Sappho Fragments</i>
Gemma McGregor	<i>Breathing</i> (World Première)
Kristain Rasmussen	<i>Death Grip: Knife Policy</i> (World Première)
Helen Grime	<i>Shadowplay</i>
Lliam Paterson	<i>co-leađiđ (molten imaginary)</i> (World Première)

Ensemble Haar: Lliam Paterson, piano | Emily De Simone, cello | Andrew Birse, violin | Lewis Banks, saxophone

Programme notes

John De Simone *Metacrisis 2*

Metacrisis 2 brings together ideas about living in an uncertain world and my experience of becoming a father later in life. It draws on patrescence: the process of becoming a father and adjusting to the changes in identity and responsibility that come with it.

For me, this happened suddenly, but not suddenly. There was time to anticipate becoming a father, but understanding what it meant has been a slower process. It has also changed how I think about the future and the wider crises that form the background to our lives.

The piece explores this transitional phase through a sense of stillness. It reflects the experience of being in the middle of a significant change, while still working out what that change means.

Pixie Nishina *Sappho Fragments*

Sappho Fragments was inspired by a piece of poetry by Sappho, fragment 105a. This fragment reads: “Like a sweet-apple / turning red high / on the tip /of the topmost branch” (translated by Julia Dubnoff). This piece started as a short sketch for three voices. I came back to what I had written a few years later and played around with the material I had already written, pulling out melodies that I liked and pushing and pulling at them. I came up with a lot of different ideas. In the end (and with some inspiration from the Five of Wands) I decided to embrace the fragmentary nature of all the bits and pieces I had come up with to explore what would happen if I put them all together.

Gemma McGregor *Breathing*

Breathing is inspired by the poem, *Spell of the Air*, by Elizabeth Jennings.

Kristain Rasmussen *Death Grip: Knife Policy*

This piece is part of an ongoing collection titled *Death Grip* that Kristain is currently working on. The *Death Grip* collection provides an intimate insight into Kristain’s biography that digests, confronts and reflects upon a turbulent time in his mid-teens. *Knife Policy* is the fourth piece in this collection, and the music is a reflection upon living in a near constant uncertainty and fear. The compositional process of this piece mimics the idea of a saxophone sonata, this instrument features heavily, while the rest of the ensemble work to either support or subvert the saxophone line. The saxophone’s music is inspired by the music of Leo P and Michael Brecker and seeks to take jazz inspirations into the contemporary classical setting.

Helen Grime *Shadowplay*

Shadowplay for soprano saxophone and piano was commissioned by Audrey Innes. The work was premiered at the World Saxophone Congress XVI in St Andrews, Scotland, in July 2012 performed by saxophonist Rocio Banyuls Bertomeu and pianist Audrey Innes.

Lasting around six minutes, the piece falls into three short movements. In the first, a long saxophone melody gradually emerges from loud, resounding piano chords. At first very quiet and gentle, the melody becomes more ornate and active, rising from the instrument’s lowest register and reaching an impassioned climax very high up. Retracting into the resonance of the piano once again, the saxophone line becomes more playful. Surrounded by deep bass notes and melancholy chords in the piano, this movement gently disperses. The second

movement is for unaccompanied saxophone. Cadenza-like in character, muted melodic fragments are juxtaposed with quicker, more aggressive outbursts.

Towards the end of the movement the two materials combine leading directly into the final section of the piece. The third movement is fast and lively with virtuosic passages for both players. The piano begins alone with a lively staccato figure interrupted by bursts of faster material. The saxophone joins in with the muted melody reminiscent of the second movement while the piano contrasts this with spikier gestures before the two come together in an animated final section.

Lliam Paterson *co-leaðið (molten imaginary)*

This piece was inspired by a trip to Reykjavík last year and is part of an ongoing artistic project of reimagining Scotland as a Nordic nation. The ‘molten imaginary’ is the fluid imaginary space where the volcanic-shaped geology of Iceland and Scotland meet musical exploration.

The title *co-leaðið* is a continuation of a preoccupation in my vocal work of deconstructing and combining languages. Here the Gaelic and Icelandic for ‘molten’ are fused together: language as volcanism.

Biographies

Ensemble Haar

Headed by Kristain Rasmussen and Lliam Paterson Ensemble Haar are a contemporary music collective based in Aberdeen. We seek to connect the voices of North-East composers with the rest of Scotland and the UK, championing cultural exchange between the unique contemporary music scene of the North-East and both national and international contemporary work. A cornerstone of our mission is to develop work with emerging Scottish and Scotland-based composers, to present works in touring concerts alongside established composers' work. We believe in transforming the contemporary music world's focus on premieres to an ethos of repeatability and sustainability: new works we commission and support in development will be performed across multiple concerts in multiple locations. Our core ensemble consists of saxophone, violin, cello and piano.

Follow us on social media for up to date information and festival news



soundscotland



@soundfestival



@soundscotland.bsky.social

#soundfest26

sound is a new music incubator based in north-east Scotland encouraging new music creation and discovery. We run the annual **soundfestival**, 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



soundfestival 2026 gratefully acknowledges the support of:



soundfestival is also supported by the Vaughan Williams Foundation, The William Syson Foundation, the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation, The Radcliffe Trust, The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, the Garrick Charitable Trust, and the Scops Arts Trust.