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© Ben Goldscheider / Richard Uttley (Cathy Pyle)

Richard Uttley + Ben Goldscheider

Sunday 24 November 2024
1pm, St Paul's Hall

Richard Uttley piano
Ben Goldscheider french horn

Laurence Osborn (UK, 1989)

Halali, or, The Kill (2023) 6'

Solo horn

The 'Halali' in the title of this piece refers to a call that appears in numerous collections of hunting calls from 17th century France. 'Halali' is called as the exhausted animal is surrounded and killed by huntsmen with knives. The reality of the hunt – ritualised slaughter with the veneer of nobility – is important to this piece. But so are the immediate, embodied aspects of horn-playing, the physical exertion that the music demands, and the progressive exhaustion written into the music's incrementally flattening pedal tones.

Commissioned by Smorgaschord Festival 2023. © Laurence Osborn

Johanna Eränkö (Finland, 1981)

Tired Light (2010/2013) 10'

When composing, I'm often inspired by visual ideas. For Tired Light, I was particularly drawn to the concept of kaleidoscopic forms – structures made up of constant elements that are nevertheless always changing. In my work, there are episodes where motifs repeat and loop simultaneously, but the loops vary in length, causing the texture to continuously transform, never repeating in exactly the same way.

The piece begins with a falling solo line that is both declamatory

and slightly melancholic, a theme that reappears later in the work. While composing, I was reading about the concept of tired light, a long-discredited astrophysics theory. The idea of light traveling through a galaxy, with certain wavelengths tiring and refracting, resonated deeply with the mood of my piece. © Johanna Eränkö

Vykintas Baltakas (Lithuania, 1972)

(how does the silver cloud s)ou(nd?) (2006) 5'

Solo piano

This is part of *Ouroboros – Zyklus I*, where I take a closer look at certain musical found objects, delving deeper to discover specific tendencies, develop them, and turn them into independent expressions. Initially, I started working on a version for piano and tape, using the original piano part from my ensemble work.

However, after some time, I realized that I no longer needed the tape. The texture of the piece had become filled with question marks – something is always suppressed, never fully expressed, or only hinted at. This is why the texture is fragmented, with contrasts, sudden changes in density, and large, unexpected pauses. It feels like hearing only one side of a conversation with an imaginary dialogue partner – the second part is left to be anticipated or filled in with your own imagination. © Vykintas Baltakas

Oliver Leith (UK, 1990)

Eeyore (2024) 11' **World Premiere**

Eeyore is tediously, comedically, joyfully sad. So resolute in sadness that it becomes a different thing. The horn, usually a coiled heroic tube billowing gold here brays wobbled sad songs, whuffles one-note laments with tiny shimmering blemishes – emoting within a very limited band of notes. Saying as much as donkey can. A duet between donkey and a piano. Triumphantly sad. © Oliver Leith

Justina Repečkaitė (Lithuania, 1989)

Sturnus vulgaris cohibitus (2020) 9' **UK Premiere**

Piano and electronics

The impact of the lockdown on nature was pronounced, as people were confined at home, animals began to feel freer in cities, pollution and noise levels decreased and birdsong became more audible. Confined at home, I began to watch starling flocks in my garden and listen to their (by my first impression) non-melodic songs. I wanted to capture their voices, turning them into a virtual instrument.

Sturnus vulgaris cohibitus reflects on the idea of confinement. The piano part has a developed rhythmical language and is treated as a percussion instrument with prepared strings inside the big resonating box. Tiny speakers inside the piano play the brief starling calls which have a timbre function, creating a reverb and later a delay of a played instrument. Expanding its register, the piece progresses keeping the dependency between piano and tape while symbolising a bird trapped between the strings, only making sound when struck by piano hammers but still hoping to break free. © Justina Repečkaitė

Zoë Martlew (UK, 1968)

Nibiru (2024) 10'

*Horn and
electronics*

The Nibiru cataclysm is a supposed disastrous encounter between Earth and a large planetary object prophesied to take place in the early 21st century, a topic explored in depth through ancient Babylonian mythology by Sumerian academic Zecharia Sitchin.

Believers in this doomsday event refer to the offending planetary object as *Nibiru* or “Planet X”. In 2015, Caltech astronomers found mathematical evidence suggesting that such a planet may indeed exist deep in our solar system...

Rich fuel for sonic drama, my take on this fabulous space legend opens with nuclear armageddon, while the solo horn, harbinger of apocalypse, calls to the heavens for the salvation of humanity. Prayers for world peace (including real-life clips from the Dalai Lama, prayers in Ukraine, Hebrew, Celtic, Sanskrit and from Aboriginal and Hopi tribes) are offered up as the sole survivor (luckily carrying a French horn) rockets into the vast unknowns of deep space.

From the depths of shifting dimensional awareness, a new Eden emerges, represented here by the last known recording of a male Kauai O’o bird in Hawaii, calling for a mate that never came....

Commissioned for Camerata Pacifica by Judith Vida-Spence in memory of her late husband Stuart Spence. © Zoë Martlew

Richard Uttley (UK, 1987)

Aufschwung (2022) 13'

Aufschwung was born of a deep musical collaboration and familiarity, and a desire for a large-scale, single-movement work that would connect to and recontextualise the expressive vocabulary of some of the older music that Ben and I regularly play. The title alludes to the Robert Schumann piano piece of the same name (from the *Fantasiestücke*, op.12), which is usually translated as ‘Soaring’. The word here pertains to the singing quality of the horn lines as well as a preoccupation with various forms of motion; it is also a gesture towards Schumann’s music, the spirit of which – particularly its poetic, often seemingly chaotic approach to form – obliquely informs aspects of the work. The structure could be outlined as follows: prelude – exposition – waltz variations – barcarolle – toccata scherzando – recapitulation – epilogue. In the epilogue, the sense of hard-won ascent built up in the previous section transmogrifies into one of gliding ease. © Richard Uttley

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