



GARTH KNOX

MUSIC FOR VIOLA D'AMORE AND ELECTRONICS

THE
NIGHT
WITH...



THE HUG AND PINT

171 GREAT WESTERN RD, GLASGOW, **G4 9AW**

8:00PM 8TH OCT



SCOTTISH STORYTELLING CENTRE

43-45 HIGH STREET, EDINBURGH, **EH1 1SR**

8:00PM 9TH OCT



BELMONT FILMHOUSE

49 BELMONT STREET, ABERDEEN, **AB10 1JS**

8:00PM 10TH OCT



THE BLACK BOX

18-22 HILL STREET, BELFAST, **BT1 2LA**

8:00PM 21ST OCT

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Fantasy on medieval tunes
Simon Mawhinney 'Nendrum'
Olga Neuwirth 'Risonanze'

- interval -

Marin Marais 'Folies'
Nora Marazaitė 'I said' (w.p)
Matthew Whiteside 'Solo for viola d'amore and electronics'

-interval -

Ed Bennett 'Ghosts'
Garth Knox 'Cinq Petites Entropies'

Simon Mawhinney Nendrum

Nendrum is an ancient monastic site which is located on an island in Strangford Lough. It is one of the most atmospheric places in Ulster and a site of archaeological significance. To get to it one must drive through a network of islands which are linked by bridges and causeways. I usually park on the neighbouring island, Island Reagh, and walk along the rocky shore, listening for curlews and watching for seals. There are bigger rocks which make a comfortable seat and when the weather is good you might see a little miracle. One morning I walked there through the colours of dawn. In my imagination I began to hear the harmonies of this piece.

<https://www.cmc.ie/composers/simon-mawhinney>

Olga Neuwirth ...?risonanze!...

In ...?risonanze!... Olga Neuwirth powerfully changes the characteristics of the instrument, achieving an in-depth transformation of the viola d'amore' traditional acoustic characteristics: not only are the seven main strings out of tune with each other, but the sympathetic strings are tuned up a micro-interval - thus less than a quarter tone - above these, changing the characteristic resonance of the instrument.

Performance techniques such as thumping the bridge and slow progressing glissandi stimulate resonances in unaccustomed places - almost like background noises - shifting them in a surprising manner from their traditional position in the world of sound. Such compositional means, but also noise-making techniques, such as plucking with fingernails or bowing down hard on the strings, help to deconstruct the original aura of the Viola d'amore and at the same time to redefine it.

<http://www.olganeuwirth.com/>

Marin Marais Folies

Marin Marais's first version of the variations on the « Folies d'Espagne » published in 1685, is a wonderfully inventive catalogue of how many original atmospheres textures and musical ideas can be constructed over a relatively simple repetitive chord structure. Originally for viola da gamba, the "Folies" are perfect for viola d'amore, playing to its harmonic strengths (two of the four chords involved are the "home" chords of the instrument). The obsessive repetition of the variations leads gently from a "folie douce" at the beginning to a rousing finale more like a "folie furieuse"! (Garth Knox)

Nora Marazaitė 'I said' (w.p.)

Any live solo performance places both auditory and visual focus on the performer onstage. In a way, it's almost like the performer is delivering a monologue...

Ed Bennett Ghosts

Ghosts, for amplified viola d'amore, was written during a residency in Paris in 2008 for Garth Knox. The title refers to images conjured up whilst working in the Irish Cultural Institute (a place with a long history) late at night. The title also refers to an acoustic peculiarity of the viola d'amore itself: beneath its seven strings the instrument has seven sympathetic strings, which create a resonant halo around the bowed tones. These sympathetic strings are amplified in the last section of the piece and asks the player to pluck them directly at the end, allowing these phantom resonators to speak with their own voice.

<http://www.edbennett.co.uk/>

Matthew Whiteside Solo for Viola d'amore and electronics

The Solo for Viola D'amore and Electronics is the result of a year-long collaboration with Emma Lloyd and was described as the 'overall effect is one of meditation – a Japanese stone garden whose raked ripples have been brought into sound'. Within the collaboration we developed a pressure sensitive glove that enabled Emma to expressively control the electronic element that subtly extends the sound of the d'amore. However, it turns out that the glove only works for Emma and everyone else needs to use a foot controller.

www.matthewwhiteside.co.uk

Garth Knox Cinq Petites Entropies

- 1 : Parallèles
- 2 : Parade
- 3 : Pluie
- 4 : Passerelle
- 5 : Passacaille

“Cinq Petites Entropies” was commissioned by Radio France for a program called “Alla Breve” which broadcasts two minutes of music every weekday and a bumper edition on Sundays, when the five two minute slots of the week are pieced together. An obvious solution is to write five miniatures, which was my choice.

This enforced uniformity of length gave me the idea to add my own rules of similarity - each miniature should start with the same note (D, the most resonant note on the viola d'amore), should follow the rules of Entropy (meaning developing from simplicity to complexity - or chaos, which is what we call complexity we don't understand) and each title should begin with the letter P (for completely arbitrary reasons).

While following these constraints to ensure unity, I tried to make each piece sound as different from the others as possible, to present and explore the great range of possible sonorities of the viola d'amore.

<http://www.garthknox.org/>

Garth Knox was born in Ireland and spent his childhood in Scotland. He studied with Frederic Riddle at the Royal College of Music in London where he won several prizes for viola and for chamber music. Thereafter he played with most of the leading groups in London in a mixture of all repertoires, from baroque to contemporary music.

In 1983 he was invited by Pierre Boulez to become a member of the Ensemble InterContemporain in Paris, which involved regular solo playing, including concertos directed by Pierre Boulez, and chamber music, touring widely and playing in international festivals.

In 1990 Garth Knox joined the Arditti String Quartet, which led him to play in all the major concert halls of the world, working closely with and giving first performances of pieces by most of today's leading composers including Ligeti, Kurtag, Berio, Xenakis, Lachenmann, Cage, Feldman and Stockhausen (the famous "Helicopter Quartet").

In 1998, Garth Knox left the quartet to concentrate on his solo career. As a soloist, he has given premieres by Henze (the Viola Sonata is dedicated to him), Ligeti, Schnittke, Ferneyhough, James Dillon, George Benjamin and many others. He also collaborates regularly in theatre and dance projects, and has written and performed a one-man show for children.

He has recently become a pioneer of the viola d'amore, exploring its possibilities in new music, with and without electronics, and is in the process of creating a new repertoire for this instrument.

Garth Knox now lives in Paris, where he enjoys a full time solo career, giving recitals, concertos and chamber music concerts all over Europe, the USA and Japan. He is also an active composer, and his «Viola Spaces », the first phase of an on-going series of concert studies for strings (published in 2010 by Schott) combines ground-breaking innovation in string technique with joyous pleasure in the act of music making. The pieces have been adopted and performed by young string players all over the world.

Garth Knox is International Visiting Professor at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

About the Viola d'amore

The viola d'amore is a relatively exotic string instrument which appeared in Europe, somewhat mysteriously, in the 17th century. Halfway between the violin family and the family of viols, it has always been more talked about than known, and on several occasions has been near to extinction.

It's most striking feature is its great number of strings – seven playing strings and seven « sympathetic strings » which are hidden under the fingerboard and which resonate « in sympathy » with the upper strings, giving an ethereal halo and faint echo to the sound. This magical and seductive sound quality is probably what prompted the name of « viola of love ».

My own first experience of it came in the 1980s when I found myself in Padua with some time to spend, and a friend lent me a beautiful old Italian viola d'amore for a few days. I'd never seen one before, but I was quickly seduced by the gentle sweet sound of the playing strings, (so rich in harmonics), and intrigued by the mysterious presence of the sympathetic strings which add an intimate resonance to everything that happens on the playing strings. Each string has its “unconscious” double which responds (or not) to the propositions of the “conscious” strings.

I began by exploring some of the viola da gamba repertoire, and when I discovered the magnificent Pavan by Tobias Hume, it occurred to me that the invention of this hybrid instrument (in the 17th century) had something to do with a kind of nostalgia and indeed a certain jealousy on the part of violin and viola players who wanted to enjoy the multi-stringed, self-accompanying capabilities of the viol family. The instrument is indeed rich in possibilities for both melody and harmony (provide one stays in the right key!) and when used in a certain way, can sound like a small orchestra.

Thanks to Timothy Cooper www.timothy-cooper.co.uk (Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen) and Michael Whan (Belfast) for live sound.

If you are interested in supporting The Night With... in any way please get in touch with Matthew Whiteside: matthew@thenightwith.com

For all press enquires contact Jane Nicolson on jane@thenightwith.com

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