

TREE CAROLS

**Helen Martin Studio, Warwick Arts Centre
5th March 2014, 9.30pm**

**Sophie Pullen (soprano)
Thomas Stevenson (baritone)
The Coull Quartet**

Roger Coull, Philip Gallaway (violins), Rose Redgrave (viola) Nicholas Roberts (cello)

Under the guidance of award-winning writer and librettist **Martin Riley** and acclaimed composer **Joe Cutler**, five talented student poets from the University of Warwick have immersed themselves in nocturnal landscapes and dark thoughts to produce colourful, entertaining and thought-provoking new works for voice and string quartet in close collaboration with composers from Birmingham Conservatoire. They will be performed by Warwick's ensemble-in-residence, the **Coull Quartet** and two wonderful young singers: **Sophie Pullen** and Warwick's very own **Thomas Stevenson**. This project has been supported by the University's Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning.

Programme

**Farnborough Main
Poem by Poppy Akers; Music by Kirsty Devaney**

Farnborough Main, Hook, Winchfield, Basingstoke.
Farnborough Main, Hook, Winchfield, Basingstoke.
This suburb of no city,
Within a slow-paced train.
Farnborough Main, Hook, Winchfield, Basingstoke.
I have returned again.
There you are,
Behind this door of mismatched panels –
One odd – that my grandfather mended.
And I know that the knots in the wood of the kitchen table
make lopsided faces,
And the paint from the ceiling is peeled
From blu tacked revision sheets that crashed and burned
The landing paint stained with violet nail polish
Where I dragged my fingers along the rail,
A wired phone that doesn't ring,
Two teaspoons in the sink.
An out-of-date calendar ...
With my name, I am sure - still written there.
Farnborough Main, Hook, Winchfield, Basingstoke.
Caravan in the garden, roof rotting away.
I could always turn.
Farnborough Main, Hook, Winchfield, Basingstoke.
Basingstoke, Winchfield, Hook, Farnborough Main...

Poppy Akers is a second-year English Literature and Creative Writing student, from a small village in Surrey. She is usually a prose writer, currently working on her third novel, but the Tree Carols project sparked her interest as she has always wanted a chance to write lyrics. Her lyrics are inspired by a night in suburbia.

Kirsty Devaney (b.1990) is a Birmingham based composer. Her compositions have been performed by ensembles such as Orkest De Erepijls, Orchestra of the Swan, BCMG and in 2011 her work for CoMA London was shortlisted for a British Composer Award. Kirsty is involved in many education projects in the West Midlands including running a series of workshops for 14-18 year olds at Birmingham Conservatoire and she has received a commission by the ISM to write a new work for 'In Harmony'. She has recently gained a funded research position at Birmingham City University to research composition in education.

I Walked Out

Poem by Hannah Cooperwaite; Music by Ed Denham

How has it been so hard?
I walked out.
On strange boulevards;
I lost myself and can't believe how.
I closed doors on the closest friends
Don't forgive my private mind;
I wouldn't change if I could.
Leave unknown
The darkest words unsaid,
I won't let troubles show
When they rise again.
Don't ask for the truth,
Don't beg me to stay,
I have nothing for you
I'm fighting again.
Yes, I've felt weak
Always beaten down.
And I've had days
I could have used a friend like you around.
But if I should fall then let me fall.
If my body breaks, don't wait for me to call
Your name.
Don't expect me with open arms
To tell you how I was wrong.
I'm gone.

Originally from Southampton, **Ed Denham** is an experienced and versatile composer. He graduated from the University of Nottingham in 2012 with a first class degree in Music and was awarded the Bernard Slee Prize, for outstanding work in the field of opera. His music has been played by BCMG, the Schubert Ensemble, the Allegrì Quartet, the Workers Union Ensemble and his choral music has been performed in venues across the UK and Europe, most recently at the Menin Gate in Ypres, Belgium. Ed was OperaNorth's Young Artist 2013 and has just been accepted on to the RSC's Professional Work Experience Scheme.

My name is **Hannah Cooperwaite** and I'm a second year English Literature and Creative Writing student at the University of Warwick. The *Tree Carols Project* was a new challenge that fascinated me because it brought together my two interests, writing and music. While having a little previous experience in writing for music, I was interested in developing an alternative writing approach and collaborating with a variety of people, from whom I have learnt a lot about the song-writing process.

Nocturne

Poem by Martin Riley; Music by Nadège Desbizet-Engel

Little brother.
Little brother, can you hear me?
Don't be frightened.
It's your sister come to find you;
Didn't mean it, what I said.
I was angry,
But I love you, little brother.
Didn't meant it,
Didn't mean to wish you dead.

Little brother
Come home now. The night is falling.
Can't you see them?
Twisted shapes among the shadows,
Creeping closer. Quickly – run!
Who's that calling?
Someone crying out in terror!
Little brother!
Oh, dear god, what have I done?

Little brother?
Is that you there in the darkness?
I'm so frightened.
It's your sister come to find you.
Didn't mean it, what I said.
Let's be friends, yes?
Love you so much, little brother.
Please don't leave me.
Didn't mean to wish you dead.

Little brother,
Why so quiet? Let me hold you.
Why – you're ice cold!
I'm your sister and I love you.
Please forgive the words I said.
I am cold, too.
Let us sleep now, here together,
Little brother:
Never leave you, till I'm dead.

Martin Riley's writing spans theatre, television and opera but is grounded in his work in the community, in schools, in pubs, at festivals – on the beach! Martin is a founder director of Alive & Kicking Theatre, Leeds which specialises in interactive drama and theatre for children.

Martin's many TV credits include *Grange Hill* and *Emmerdale* and his own series, *Gruey*, *Kevin's Cousins*, *Wilderness Edge* with John Coombes and *The Worst Witch* (BAFTA nominated). Amongst his theatre libretti are a best-selling dramatisation of *The Canterbury Tales* published by *Oxford University Press*, *Gwyneth & The Green Knight* (*Academy Award*) and *House of The Gods* for Music Theatre Wales, *The Face In The Mirror*, for Welsh National Opera, and *Captain Blood's Revenge* with Lynne Plowman for Glyndebourne in 2013. Martin's collaborations with composer Stephen Deazley include *Dr Ferret's Bad Medicine Roadshow* for Scottish Opera and *Death's Cabaret, a Love Story* for Matthew Sharp. *Chanticleer & The Opera Fox* with Joe Cutler was nominated for the 2012 British Composers and Songwriters Awards

Nadège Desbizet-Engel

From a mostly classical background which includes her current study of a discipline called 'Ecriture' (composition of pastiches, study of ancient styles) at the Paris Conservatoire, Nadège Desbizet-Engel is nevertheless particularly interested in discovering new ways of thinking and writing : if her background was more orientated towards technical and historical concerns, she has come to the UK to experiment with conceptual art, thanks to the wonderful musical and pedagogical context of the Birmingham Conservatoire where she is doing an Erasmus Exchange this year, and to do some research about cognition (Master essay about perception in film music).

Her curiosity towards interaction between music and other art forms like dance, cinema, literature and graphic arts brought her to participate in projects such as musical tales in Strasbourg's Christmas Festival, traditional folk dance animations in Eastern France, and the Tree Carols project.

Night Cure
Poem by Thomas Stewart; Music by Mel Moore

Pulling you from the waves
onto the wet sand
in the rain, in the dark
holding you
dying.

And a voice says
"tell him you love him."
"Tell him he's the most wonderful thing in the world."

I love you'
'You're the most -'
'You're the most important -'
'Important -'

"Tell him he will always be important."
"Tell him you're sorry."
"Tell him nobody will replace him."

'You will always be important."
'I'm...I'm...sorry.'
'Nobody will ever, I promise, you're...'

"Just that. Nobody will ever replace him."
"And tell him you'll never leave him."

I will never leave you..."

You open your eyes
take a breath
and the world is yours again
"you'll never leave me"
you say
and smile,
your smile.

This is your world again,
but ours?

I look up.
No-one there.

"I don't know."

Thomas Stewart, freelance writer by day, fiction writer by night, is a graduate from the University of Glamorgan and currently on the MA in Writing Program at Warwick. As tempestuous as his relationship with poetry was in the beginning, it has now become a beloved monster. He enjoys horror films, suburban literature, clocks, astronomy and folk music.

Mel Moore is currently studying for a PhD at Birmingham Conservatoire under Joe Cutler and Andrew Toovey. The main focus of his studies is Art Song in both the English and Irish languages. He particularly enjoys working with contemporary poets and has set works by Chrys Salt, Colette Nic Aodha, Liz Cashden and now, of course Thomas Stewart. Mel is about to start a major song cycle in Irish by Áine Ní Ghlinn.

The Trespasser
Poem by Eve Ryan; Music by Zach Dawson

My forest, my haven, my exile home
One wish I was granted: to be left alone
Now broken as enters *you*, weedy young boy
You'll never escape me; I'll make you my toy.
My labyrinth of roots slither and rise
To whip at your ankles, now trip up my prize!

So you dared enter my forest?
Trespasser! I'll make you squirm.
Run until your legs surrender –
Run you little squealing worm!

My monsters awaken, together unite,
The Werewolves are prowling, they drool for a bite.
Now hear the Ogres, their song is for you,
Their bottomless stomachs are starving for stew:
“A boy with some flesh! That meat we desire –
Let's take 'im and break 'im and toast 'im in fire.”

So you dared enter my forest?
Trespasser! I'll make you squirm.
Run until your legs surrender –
Run you little squealing worm!

Goblins so foul and grotesque join the chase,
The ugliest devils you ever will face!
A belching erupts, such noises repeat
From ten slimy Toadmen that hop round your feet.
I'll teach you a lesson, as sobbing you crawl –
Don't trespass the darkest Magician of all!

My name is **Eve Ryan** and I'm from Torquay, Devon. I'm in my second year at Warwick University, studying English Literature. I have a strong interest in art and music, but primarily literature and creative writing – mainly short prose and poetry. In the near future I plan to take a Masters in Children's Literature or Creative Writing and eventually hope to pursue a writing career!

Zach Dawson was born in Brighton in 1990. He is currently based in Birmingham, studying composition as a Masters student under the guidance of Seán Clancy and Ed Bennett. Zach also plays the trumpet.

Adrift

Poem by Ella Tebay; Music by Bobbie Gardner

On the shore of the last bedtime story, flotsam gathers:
buttons, beads and baby-teeth.
On the waves, with moorings cut,
My little craft - adrift
Its shadow bobs along the wall
Through angry sea-spray.
Toys, torn from me, are hurled skyward
into the squalling rain.
So dark, so far from land.
My bedside lamp, lit somewhere long ago,
Drowned out, or smashed.
Only the dark night now.
Torn sails, cracked timbers;
Raw gales whip away the sheets.
With one hand I reach up,
From a heap of sailcloth pillows
And trace the outlines of creatures
Writhing on the wallpaper.
Sea monsters, squirming, lash their tails.
The waters seethe below...
My little boat, in all its innocence
Cracks and splinters on the rocks

Ella Tebay

Originally from Oxford, I am a first-year English Literature student at Warwick University. This is the first piece I have written to be performed; usually I write poetry, and occasionally short fiction, however since coming to university I have also started to write a novel and to explore scriptwriting. Next term I hope to run a project with a team of writer/performers to put on a show, following the other performances I have taken part in with the Codpiece drama society.

Bobbie Gardner is a composer and community musician. In 2013, Bobbie received commissions from Fierce Festival to create ringtones for "Fun with Cancer Patients", led by performance artist Brian Lobel, and has composed and performed in audio visual project "X" as part of Vivid Projects' 33 revolutions programme. Bobbie is currently composing string arrangements for soul singer Lizzie Emeh's second album and is studying under Joe Cutler, Michael Wolters and Howard Skempton for post-graduate studies in composition at Birmingham Conservatoire. www.bobbiejanegardner.com

Tonight's Performers

Sophie Pullen

Sussex born soprano Sophie Pullen graduated with a Distinction and the Postgraduate Prize for Excellence from Birmingham Conservatoire of Music in 2013. Whilst at Birmingham she performed a number of lead roles including Lauretta – *Gianni Schicchi*, Galatea – *Acis and Galatea* & Rose Murrant – *Street Scene*. Recent performances include a range of Mozart works: *Exsultate Jubilate*, *Mass in C Minor*, *Donna Elvira* – Opera Scenes and *Bastienne – Bastien und Bastienne* for Wastepaper Opera; additionally she performed the soprano solos of *Carmina Burana*, *Elijah*, Rutter's *Requiem* and Vivaldi's *Gloria* with a range of choral societies.

An early member of Glyndebourne's Youth Opera programme Sophie also holds a First Class Mathematics degree from Leeds University and has sung with British Youth Opera, Leeds Youth Opera and in a student chorus at The Royal Opera House conducted by Sir Mark Elder. In recital she has sung at the *In & Out Naval & Military Club, Hastings Museum & Art Gallery* and in Birmingham Symphony Hall's *Beyond Classical Series*. In 2013 she was a soloist for *Music in the Abbey* at Dorchester Abbey with the Orchestra of St Johns, a Finalist in the Dean & Chadlington Festival Singing Competition and performed at the International Student Lied Duo Competition in Holland. Sophie's upcoming performances include song premieres with The Coull Quartet at Warwick Arts Centre, Mozart arias with The OSJ at St John's Smith Square, London and Strauss & Rachmaninov Songs at the *Ashmolean Proms*, Oxford.

Thomas Stevenson

Thomas Stevenson has been a singer at Warwick since his undergraduate degree. Having taken lessons with Llyndall Trotman for a few years, he is involved in Warwick Chamber Choir, is the current librarian for Warwick Chorus, and has participated in seven Opera Warwick productions thus far.

The Coull Quartet

Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Warwick since 1977, the Coull Quartet has performed and broadcast extensively throughout the world. In the UK the Quartet gives an annual series of recitals at the Warwick Arts Centre, where they are actively involved in the University of Warwick's flourishing musical life. They have an impressive discography, have commissioned many major new works, and in 2012 were chosen to take part in the PRS Foundation for Music's 'New Music 20x12' project for the Cultural Olympiad.