

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 3 October 2026
1.00pm

Wigmore Hall Voices of Today Patricia Alessandrini

This concert is supported by The John S Cohen Foundation

Marisol Montalvo soprano

Johanna Vargas soprano

Schallfeld Ensemble

Zinajda Kodrič flutes

Chiara Percivati clarinets

Chloé Marine Ryo trombone

Patrick Skrilecz piano

Simon Klavžar percussion

Lorenzo Derinni violin

Sarah Maria Dragović viola

Myriam García Fidalgo cello

Margarethe Maierhofer-Lischka double bass

Andrés Gutiérrez Martínez sound director

José Miguel Fernández electronics

Leonhard Garms conductor

Patricia Alessandrini (b.1970)

A place no one lives for soprano, ensemble and soft-robotic pet
(an extended version for live performance) (2025-6) *world première*

Commissioned by Wigmore Hall (with the generous support of the Marchus Trust and the Wigmore Hall Endowment Fund)
with Marisol Montalvo

Beat Furrer (b.1954)

Aria for soprano and six instruments (1998-9)
with Johanna Vargas

Eda Er (b.1989)

Happily Ever After (2022)

Patricia Alessandrini

Farther from furthest away / As far away as I am for 2 sopranos,
ensemble and electronics (2026) *world première*
Commissioned by Wigmore Hall (with the generous support of the Marchus Trust and the Wigmore Hall Endowment Fund)



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Patricia Alessandrini A place no one lives for soprano, ensemble and soft-robotic pet (world première)

'A place no one lives' is the opening aria of *Vospora*, a cyberfeminist, futurist intermedial music-theatre work in progress based on a libretto by novelist Alexandra Kleeman, featuring a soft-robotic creature that breathes and sings along with the two protagonists. It takes place aboard a spaceship where the first protagonist, O, has spent years alone in outer space with only the creature – the eponymous *Vospora* – for company. As O, played by Marisol Montalvo, gives voice to her feelings of regret, isolation and alienation, *Vospora* breathes and sings along with her empathetically. This work explores the emotional possibilities of our relationships with machines through O's intimacy with a technological being: a cyborg companion that breathes and moves with her, and attunes its voice to hers.

Vospora attempts to reimagine future technologies through a cyberfeminist lens, informed by the writings of Donna Haraway, Judy Wajcman, Octavia Butler and others, both through its implementation of new technologies and its *mise en scène* of those technologies. *Vospora* is a soft, breathing, non-anthropomorphic being, with resonances of the notion of the cyborg; its actions are situated in the realm of emotion, empathy and companionship, rather than labour and service. *Vospora* was created using soft robotics based on biomedical principles during a residency at Le Fresnoy – Studio national des arts contemporains, in parallel with a fellowship at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University. Working with both scientists from INRIA's DEFROST soft-robotics team and experts in soft robotics at Harvard University, Patricia Alessandrini designed the soft-robotic creature – made principally of silicone and 3D-printed recycled materials – with artificial vocal cords and pneumatic membranes modelled on the human larynx and vocal tract: air pushed through these soft tissues sets them vibrating, as breath moves our own vocal folds, and the sound is then shaped pneumatically to imitate the movements of the human palate and tongue. *Vospora* was first shown in video and installation form in Le Fresnoy's Panorama exhibition, where 'A place no one lives' took shape as a trio for soprano, violin and *Vospora*, performed by Marisol Montalvo, violinist Lorenzo Derinni and the creature. In this new ensemble version, *Vospora* is heard only as a pre-recorded voice: its breathing body and means of vocal production, yielding the particularly breathy and plaintive quality of its voice, are left to the listener's imagination to visualise.

This work was realised thanks to Le Fresnoy – Studio national des arts contemporains, INRIA's DEFROST team, Harvard's Reimagining Experiential Education &

Fabrication Lab, and the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study; the artistic research team members who helped create the creature, the video and the installation; Lorenzo Derinni and the members of Schallfeld Ensemble, who made invaluable contributions to the musical material and to the diffusion of *Vospora*'s voice; Laurence Landon's costume design; and Marisol Montalvo's dedication to this long-term collaborative project.

Patricia Alessandrini Farther from furthest away / As far away as I am (world première)

This new work in two parts brings the two characters of *Vospora* together and sets them into dialogue with one another. O, working alone at a remote outpost at the edge of interplanetary communication, passes on messages never addressed to her, until she hears the voice of U, seemingly in a similar situation to her own.

The setting of the scene reflects the repetitive, monotonous nature of O's work: the ensemble, amplified and blended with immersive electronics, cycles through a mechanical pattern, like the inside of a car wash, simulating O's experience aboard the spaceship. Once again, the audience is invited to use their sonic imaginations to picture the setting in space, in the absence of the audiovisual elements to be presented in the staged version. Against this background of machine noise, O half-speaks, half-whispers to herself, repurposing the bureaucratic language of her workplace to describe her situation. It is at this point that a second voice breaks in from offstage, the voice of Johanna Vargas as U, at times breaking up into glitchy radio-like frequencies. As the machine winds down, their dialogue begins, with O seeking solidarity and comfort from her new acquaintance, communicating at a mediated distance through space with mixed results: while at times they finish one another's thoughts, at other times it is difficult for O to read U's intentions, as U expresses her own feelings of alienation through wordplay and metaphor, and at times retreats into herself.

This scene of *Vospora* was realised thanks to a commission from Wigmore Hall and the kind support of the Wigmore staff, in co-production with the Wien Modern Festival for the complete, staged version of the intermedial music-theatre work *Vospora*. It is supported by the Institut de recherche en musique et arts de la scène (IRMAS) for the Co-Créer Connect project, which allowed the composer, singers and the musicians and technologists of Schallfeld Ensemble to collaboratively workshop the vocal and instrumental writing, the amplification and sampling of the instruments, and the immersive electronics. Marisol Montalvo, Johanna Vargas, the members of Schallfeld Ensemble and Alexandra Kleeman were close

collaborators throughout the co-creation process. Costumes are by Laurence Landon.

© Patricia Alessandrini

Eda Er Happily Ever After

Happily Ever After examines marriage as a political institution rather than a romantic ideal. For many women, marriage is not a freely chosen act but a socially enforced transition into a system that regulates their bodies, labor and voice. The work draws a parallel between wedding and funeral rituals: both collective ceremonies marking irreversible thresholds, both demanding submission to inherited norms. Marriage becomes a form of social death, the erasure of identity disguised as celebration. The title is used ironically.

Fragments of the wedding march surface throughout, hummed and distorted until they dissolve into breath, noise and physical strain. Extended techniques foreground the body as a site of endurance rather than pleasure, reflecting how patriarchal structures normalize discomfort and silence as discipline.

Rather than offering resolution, the piece refuses the fantasy it critiques, asking whose voices must be buried for happiness to appear intact.

© Eda Er

Beat Furrer Aria

Place your ear on the desk. With a pencil make a circular movement on the wooden surface. Listen to the changing sounds created by the turning motion.

Or play a note on the violin. Slowly move the bow towards the bridge. Adjust the sound to produce an effect of mere noise. The dynamic models with which Beat Furrer works are simple and familiar. They're musical gestures which resemble everyday hand movements. Taken as such, these gestures don't tell a story. On the other hand, when you place them in a dramatic and scenic context, as is the case in *Aria*, they reveal their narrative potential.

The basis of Furrer's *Aria* is the scene 'At the open window' from Günter Eich's radio play *Geh nicht nach El Kuhwehd*. The subject is an abandoned woman crying out to her lover:

'Do you hear me? See, I can speak to you as if you were here, – yet the night lies between us as a black mountain range, and every moment is a new cliff of separation, insurmountable, more final by the hour! And yet you are here, ever closer to me, and never could I speak to you as I do now. You came from a solitude and continue into the next, – every kiss makes you stranger, every embrace poorer. – I greet you, as a cliff greets its eagle, flying away, the wings

disappearing in the icy distance, where its claws rested, a stone loosens and falls into the deep, that is all, and the forests took no notice. You desire to be there, longing for the apartments of people, for the comforting language of the wind in the branches, just as I desire it. Do not listen to your heart and plug your ears with wax, – for you will never obtain what you long for. Not here and nowhere. But go further, never return! Your solitude doubles mine.'

In this brief text (which Furrer calls a 'letter of farewell') the protagonist leaves her lover and breaks free from him. She goes through a process which is rooted in immediate proximity and ends in total isolation. In *Aria* this evolution is tangible above all in the vocal part. 'The crux of the sound is the voice,' says Furrer. 'This is deployed to display every possible vocal quality. At the start there are whole syllables and words that are spoken, so fragments of this text are comprehensible. The piece then follows a path towards sung sound. At the end there are only long sung sounds. This movement towards song was one of the work's themes.'

The work's salient passages are above all those where the soprano sings clearly and freely. At these moments the protagonist escapes the rhythmic straitjacket imposed by the ensemble. In the spoken parts she contributes to this straitjacket with lisping and occlusive consonantal sounds. In *Aria*, song marks the moment where separation, liberation and farewells are accomplished, and where the woman finds peace in her solitude.

'Then something else appears': thus Furrer confirms the emotional quality of song while objecting that 'the sung sounds only emerge slowly, in a crescendo produced by the instruments. It's the gesture of calling superimposed on other gestures – with, for example, extremely long stretches of laughter.' This superimposition of different gestures contrasts with the narrative's tendency to absolute linearity. Furrer draws a contrast between literary narration and a personal, specifically musical narrative form. The story doesn't unfold according to events, but is developed in such a way that 'everything is always present in a latent state, and can appear at certain moments, like when one opens a window'.

The simultaneous presence of different gestures becomes manifest through the multiplicity of rhythms. The language – 'a heterogeneous mixture of rhythmically complex sounds' – is set in opposition to mechanical repetitiveness. A morse code effect produced by a muffled touch in the highest register of the piano and regular violin pizzicati makes for a lively superimposition of sounds, in a simple rhythm. 'Other sounds are integrated and interpolated as the work proceeds,' even within the morse code. What is static is gradually transformed into something animated.

Aria is constantly in motion. The most obvious evolution is 'the movement that derives from the

complex nature of the transition from speech to song. This complexity is broken up stratum by stratum, in each section.' At the end of the piece the soprano, accompanied by the clarinetist, moves away from the ensemble. These two musicians leave the stage and simultaneously free themselves from the ensemble's rhythmic straitjacket. The singer continues her sustained call.

Together with the clarinet she maintains a very calm tempo, independent of the ensemble which continues as before. Furrer has conceived the protagonist as having 'several voices from the outset'. With what he describes as 'very tightly interwoven sounds' he has transposed some of her voices into the instrumental ensemble. Only at the end does sung sound become clearly separated from the general noise.

Furrer works with elementary models of movement: with abrupt sound effects, for example, or with unvoiced stop consonants and grating fricatives that make the soprano seem hemmed in, and which she

finally slows down. Or with a continual transformation of the harmonic spectrum, with the isolated brushing of wooden plaque, or a violinist who 'produces the same series of sounds while moving the bow constantly towards the bridge'.

Aria is a dramatic scene, 'a woman alone'. Music and text depict an evolution, a farewell or, if you will, a liberation. But *Aria* is also a melody, a moment of contemplation: 'it's the moment where reality stops, and is reflected upon, where a person unifies within herself numerous inner voices, in an almost schizophrenic way.'

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Translated by Richard Wigmore

The artists are grateful for the support of Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia.

Patricia Alessandrini (b.1970)

A place no one lives for soprano, ensemble and soft-robotic pet (an extended version for live performance) (2025-6)

Alexandra Kleeman

Ten years.
What did I think would be here?
Staring out,
Dangling where there once was heaven,
A place no one lives.
One long bright night,
Ten years long,
Watching,
Waiting.

Beat Furrer (b.1954)

Aria for soprano and six instruments (1998-9)

Günter Eich

Frau: Hörst du? Sieh. Ich
kann zu dir sprechen, als
wärest du hier, – und liegt
doch die Nacht zwischen
uns wie ein schwarzes
Gebirge, und jeder
Augenblick ist eine neue
Felswand von Trennung,
unübersteigbar,
endgültiger mit jeder
Stunde! Und dennoch bist
du hier, immer näher bei
mir, und nie konnte ich so
zu dir sprechen wie jetzt.
Du kamst aus der einen
Einsamkeit und gehst in
die andere, – jeder Kuss
macht dich fremder, jede
Umarmung ärmer –

Woman: Do you hear me?
See, I can speak to you
as if you were here, –
yet the night lies
between us as a black
mountain range, and
every moment is a new
cliff of separation,
insurmountable, more
final by the hour! And
yet you are here, ever
closer to me, and never
could I speak to you as I
do now. You came from
a solitude and continue
into the next, – every
kiss makes you
stranger, every
embrace poorer. –

Ich grüsse dich, wie eine
Klippe ihren Adler grüsst,
der davonfliegt, seine
Schwingen werden
unsichtbar in der eisigen
Ferne; wo seine Krallen
ruhte, löst sich ein Stein
und fällt in die Tiefe, das ist
alles, und die Wälder
bemerken es nicht.
Dorthin gelüftet es dich,
nach den Wohnungen der
Menschen, nach der
tröstlichen Sprache des
Windes im Geäst, ebenso
wie es mich gelüftet.

I greet you, as a cliff
greet its eagle, flying
away, the wings
disappearing in the icy
distance, where its
claws rested, a stone
loosens and falls into
the deep, that is all, and
the forests took no
notice. You desire to be
there, longing for the
apartments of people,
for the comforting
language of the wind in
the branches, just as I
desire it.

Höre nicht auf dein Herz und
verstopfe mit Wachs deine
Ohren, – denn nie wirst du
das erreichen, was du
ersehnt. Nicht hier und
nirgendwo. Aber geh
weiter, kehre nie zurück!

Do not listen to your heart
and plug your ears with
wax, – for you will never
obtain what you long
for. Not here and
nowhere. But go
further, never return!

Deine Einsamkeit
verdoppelt die meine.

Your solitude doubles
mine.

Eda Er (b.1989)

Happily Ever After (2022)

Patricia Alessandrini

Farther from furthest away / As far away as I am for 2 sopranos, ensemble and electronics (2026)

Alexandra Kleeman

Farther from furthest away

O: The evacuation of a task, the extermination of a goal.
Nowhere to go, nothing to do but watch the moments
leave me.

U: (voice offstage)...leave me. Time to leave, time to...
(connection breaks off)
It takes years to go farther from furthest away.

O: I know what you mean.
(Laughter)

O: Are you living...

U: Living, living, time for living.

O: ...in a fish bowl?
Are you looking for me?

U: Looking, someone to... find, someone to... looking to
find me.
The shipment is delayed.

O: I know.

U: The shipment is dismayed.
(Laughter)

O: What did you think would be here?

As far away as I am

Both: I will tune to you.
Lost in the woods,
My mind is tuned to you.
Just as far away as I am.
Thrown, like a ball
No one to catch,
Stuck in the air.

O: I know...

U: Myself, no, I do not know.

O: I feel I know you like myself.

U: No,

O: I feel you like...

U: do not, myself.

O: ...I know you myself.
As tender as a steel-lined womb.

U: As warm as a frozen tomb.

O: Sometimes I feel like...

U: Floating in a hole in my mind.

O: Do you hear me? Do you?

U: You do not.

O: I know, I know.

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