

WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 5 February 2025
7.30pm

Memory Box

Elaine Mitchener vocalist, associate artist

Ensemble Klang

Saskia Lankhoorn piano

Pete Harden guitars

Anton van Houten trombone

Erik-Jan de With saxophone

Michiel van Dijk saxophone

Joey Marijs percussion

Raven Chacon (b.1977)

Ella Llorca *UK première*

Mikhail Johnson (b.1989)

Tell! Jonkonnu, Tell! *world première*
Commissioned by Wigmore Hall

Interval

Hannah Kendall (b.1984)

When Flesh is Pressed Against The Dark *UK première*

Jan-Bas Bollen (b.1961)

Floating Islands *UK première*

Thelonious Monk (1917-1982)

Misterioso *arranged by Jeanne Lee & Ran Blake*

Sarah Hennies (b.1979)

Memory Box

Mark E. Smith (1957-2018) & The Fall

Frenz *arranged by Elaine Mitchener & Ensemble Klang*



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'Ella Llorá' grew from a chance find made by **Raven Chacon** on the streets of Albuquerque. While out posting flyers for forthcoming concerts, he spotted a discarded cassette tape and took it to his studio. Chacon discovered that it contained a woman's testimony or deposition heavily punctuated by sounds of crying. 'I did not want to hear the words of the story she was telling,' he recalls. 'But the reason I kept listening was that her crying was oddly musical. So, I transcribed the crying. I got out a sheet of blank staff paper and I wrote the notes down.' Chacon's composition compresses the essence of the woman's 90-minute narrative into three minutes of sounds based on the rise and fall of her crying voice and pauses for breath.

Composer and pianist **Mikhail Johnson**, born in Jamaica in 1989, draws on the deep heritage of Jamaican music, European classical traditions and aspects of the contemporary avant-garde to create works of striking originality. 'Tell! Jonkonnu, Tell!', for mezzo contralto, two soprano saxophones, trombone, electric guitar, percussion and piano, begins with a joyful explosion of instrumental sounds interwoven with an engaging spoken invocation expressed in Jamaican Patois. Johnson's score pays tribute to the traditional Christmastide festival of *Junkanoo* (or 'Jonkonnu' in Patois), a masquerade that originated during the period of African slavery in British American colonies, especially Jamaica, Belize and The Bahamas. 'Jonkonnu', which can trace its roots to the 1700s, is particular to Jamaica's cultural life at Christmas, recalling a time when the enslaved population received a rare break from their enforced labour. The festival's mix of masking, drumming, parading and dancing is infused with influences from West African mask dances, while its name has variously been associated with the folk hero John Canoe or the French expression *gens inconnus*, for the 'unknown people' behind the masks.

A succession of masked characters step forward in 'Tell! Jonkonnu, Tell!' to weave a story of an island's appropriation by Spanish settlers, the slaughter of its native Taino people, the importation of chattel slaves from the western shores of Africa, the advent of the 'age of refinement' that followed Oliver Cromwell's successful mission to capture Jamaica, and the everyday brutality exercised by British colonisers on a population of enslaved Africans that expanded from 10,000 at the end of the 17th Century to over 300,000 by 1800. Mikhail Johnson's libretto also embraces the foliage-clad 'Jack in the Green', a stock Jonkonnu figure, symbol of hope and renewal, and the Warrior, ready to die, ready to fight, ready to gain freedom for himself and for his people.

Hannah Kendall's 'when flesh is pressed against the dark' sets a verse from the sixth chapter of St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, a dramatic exhortation to the emerging Christian church at Ephesus to struggle 'against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world'. The work takes its title from Ocean Vuong's novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, and its spirit from Hortense J. Spillers' 1987

essay *Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book*, a profound analysis of the dehumanising language coined by the white majority population to describe and demean African Americans and a harrowing description of the 'Middle Passage', that stage of the Atlantic slave trade where enslaved Africans were transported across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas. 'This piece is a meditation on the situation of this oceanic suspension,' notes the composer. 'Tiny music boxes carry distant, mysterious tunes across the expanse to the hold of the ship; the nautical signal of a Bosun's whistle becomes distorted; unknown entities from unknown times attempt to communicate; to interrupt the interruption through the radio.'

Jan-Bas Bollen's 'Floating Islands' forms the final movement of his song cycle *Blight and Beauty*, written for Elaine Mitchener and Ensemble Klang in 2021. It plunges the singer and her MIDI keyboard companion into chthonic depths, site of an austere dystopia. Bollen's setting of Dorothy Wordsworth's eponymous poem captures life's impermanence and nature's mighty power to overturn human ambition. The opening riff of **Thelonious Monk's** *Misterioso*, audacious, witty, cool, marked its composer's return to the New York's club scene following his conviction in 1951 for possession of narcotics. The piece was recorded in 1958 at the Five Spot Café in New York City's East Village; its subsequent release as the title-track of 'Misterioso' established Monk's place among the most innovative jazz composers of the age. Taken up and adapted by pianist Ran Blake and singer Jeanne Lee, 'Misterioso' gained a new lease on life with the addition of lyrics from Gertrude Stein's 1913 poem *Sacred Emily*.

'Memory Box' was conceived in 2021 as an online Covid lockdown project with students at the University of Maryland. It requires each of its participants to perform a series of five actions chosen from three different categories for a total of 15 events per participant. The categories comprise Sound Events, such as unpitched sounds, noises and environmental sounds; Pitched Events, involving sounds with fixed pitches; and Memory Events, conveyed through speech. Composer and percussionist **Sarah Hennies's** instructions to performers note how each Sound Event should be based on a past memory related to that sound. 'Memory Box', in part, reflects her interest in the ways that biology and brain function influence an individual's musical preferences. Post-punk band The Fall, formed in Prestwich, Greater Manchester in 1976, proved a creative powerhouse thanks to its distinctive guitar-led sound and the equally distinctive, habitually caustic lyrics of its vocalist and founder **Mark E. Smith**, described by *Far Out Magazine* as a 'demented daemon of the demimonde'. Elaine Mitchener and Ensemble Klang channel The Fall's contemporary relevance through their new interpretations of some of the cult band's multi-layered songs.

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Raven Chacon (b.1977)

Ella Llorca

UK première

Mikhail Johnson (b.1989)

Tell! Jonkonnu, Tell!

Mikhail Johnson
world première

INVOKIESHAN

INVOCATION

Krismos Taim!

Christmas Time!

Jos roun Krismos taim,
Yu kian yier di drom, Yu
kian yier di faif, Yu kian yier
di striit dem a pomp
wid laif az dem kom
out ina maask an
kastium a pomp an
prans.

Just around Christmas
time, You can hear the
drum, you can hear the
fife, You can hear the
streets pumping with
life as they come out in
masks and costume to
pomp and prance.

Paried! Paried! dem jomp
an jairiet, Yuuniik
spektakl fram ten
plos karakta
striet.

Parade! Parade! They
jump and gyrate,
Unique spectacle of
over ten characters in
cue.

Som fram fakt, som
fram fikshan. Dat
miin riil laif, an
iluujan!

Some from fact, some
from fiction. That
means real life and
illusion.

An nof taim muor
wail yo si pikni get
fraiñ.

And more often than not,
the children were
frightened,

Nof taim muor wail yo
si adolt amiuuz. An
bitwiin mi an yu? nof
taim muor wail, unu
adolt did
fraiñ tu!

More often than not, the
adults were amused
And between me and
you, more often than
not, you adults were
frightened too.

Kaalin! Kaalen! Kaalin
O!

Calling, Calling, Calling
Oh!

So how egzakli dem com
about? Unu nuo?
No wori man, mi ago
tel unu

So how exactly did they
come about? Do you
know? Don't worry, I am
going to tell you.

Hmm... yo nuo wa?
Mata a fak Mi ago mek
DEM tell unu. Yeeeeees!
ye man! mi ago mek
dem tell
yo.

Hmm... you know what?
As a matter of fact, I am
going to let THEM tell
you. Yes! Yes! I am
going to let them tell
you.

Tell mi unu stuori wuan bai
wuan. How unu riich
ina di Jankunu
clan?!

Tell me your story one by
one. How did you end
up in the Jonkunnu
clan?

CAAL DEM?!... CAAL
DEM?!... CAALING?

Call them!... Call them!....
Calling?!

I. SIELA MAN

I. SAILOR MAN

Siela, Siela, Siela man!
Voiegin tu farin
lan.

Sailor, Sailor, Sailor man!
Voyaging to foreign
land.

On my second voyage!
Sailing West, to get to the
East.

On my second voyage!
Sailing West, to get to
the East.

And to my amazement, new
land! New land! New land
on the horizon! AH! This
land I have heard
described by Cubans
as the land of
blessed gold!

And to my amazement,
new land! New land!
New land on the
horizon! AH! This land I
have heard described
by Cubans as the land
of blessed gold!

But alas, no gold here. But
LOOK! Look at the
mountains! And the land
seems to touch the sky.
Look at the valleys,
fields, and plains!
The fairest island
to any eye.

But alas, no gold here.
But LOOK! Look at the
mountains! And the
land seems to touch
the sky. Look at the
valleys, fields, and
plains! The fairest
island to any eye.

What is your land called
again? Xaymaca! No need,
it's ours, we'll name it:
Santiago! What is your
name? What are you
called? Taino! Well, you
work for us now!
We'll assert our
dominance and station
here.

What is your land called
again? Xaymaca! No
need, it's ours, we'll
name it: Santiago! What
is your name? What are
you called? Taino! Well,
you work for us now!
We'll assert our
dominance and station
here.

Song continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly as possible.

This fairest island lush and green, I shall hold as a gift for the King and Queen! This land I found of wood and sea, let me hold it for you Your Majesty! But for now, an estate for my family.

Siela, Siela Siela man, Xaymaca nou Spanish lan! Siela, Siela Siela man, Santiago iz nou oua lan.

II. KING AN KUIIN

You've found land, you say?!

Duty demands, we take what's not ours, King and Queen retain superiority!

Initiate the conquest? Say, we discovered... Shall we steal their paradise? We found a No man's land.

Duty demands we take what's not ours, that we retain superiority. At the expense of their freedom for our greed, and our insecurity.

POR DECRETO REAL, TAKE THEM! [LANDS] POR DECRETO REAL, BRING THEM! [SLAVES] POR DECRETO REAL, Subdue them! [THE INHABITANTS] POR DECRETO REAL! CLAIM THEM!

Claim what's not ours! We must retain superiority. At the expense of their freedom for our greed, and our insecurity.

Tek evriting nais! Tried di suga, di cafi, di spais, di cocoa, di rom, di rais!!

This fairest island lush and green, I shall hold as a gift for the King and Queen! This land I found of wood and sea, let me hold it for you Your Majesty! But for now, an estate for my family.

Sailor Sailor Sailor man, Xaymaca is now Spanish land! Sailor Sailor Sailor man, Santiago is now our land.

II. KING AND QUEEN

You've found land, you say?!

Duty demands, we take what's not ours, King and Queen retain superiority!

Initiate the conquest? Say, we discovered... Shall we steal their paradise? We found a No man's land.

Duty demands we take what's not ours, that we retain superiority. At the expense of their freedom for our greed, and our insecurity.

BY ROYAL DECREE, TAKE THEM! [LANDS] BY ROYAL DECREE, BRING THEM! [SLAVES] BY ROYAL DECREE, Subdue them! [THE INHABITANTS] BY ROYAL DECREE!... CLAIM THEM!

Claim what's not ours! We must retain superiority. At the expense of their freedom for our greed, and our insecurity.

Take everything nice! Trade the sugar, the coffee, the spice, the cocoa, the rum, the

Antaganaiz, KRAMP! an PARALAIZ!

III. APACHE INDIAN /INDIAN CHIIF

A uu dem?!

A uu dem a com tuwaad mi?! Farina, aprochin!

STOP! STOP MI SE! STOP! dem disobie mi atoriti.

At frrs dem befren, an wi did mek dem welcom. Den dem staat fi mok, an mek cliem fi chienj wi lan niem. An a se a fi dem majesti, Bot mii a di Don Dada! Mi a chiiif! Yu ansa tu mii.

So wi staat fi push bak wid wi buo an aro. Dem tek gon shuut wi, Sen daag fi hont wi. Den dem ensliev wi, staa an ova wrk wi.

Den at laas, dem gi wi diziiz. Wuan bai wuan, dem kil wi. To hexthinkshon, dem liiv wi.

Farina tek uova.

IV. SET GRRLS

Enter the age of refinement,

We set girls bow and curtsy in garb and gowns with red trim fancy.

Opulence and income thanks to those in the fields. We are the heritors

rice! Antagonize, CRAMP and PARALYZE!

III. APACHE INDIAN /INDIAN CHIEF

Who are they?

Who are they coming toward me? Foreigners approaching!

STOP! STOP I SAID! STOP! They disobey my authority.

At first, they befriended us and we did make them welcome. Then they started to mock us and made a claim to change our land's name. Also, saying it is for their majesty, but I am the Don Dada! I am Chief! You answer to me.

So we started to push back with our bows and arrows. They took guns and shot us, sent dogs to hunt us. Then they enslaved us, starved and overworked us.

Then at last, they gave us disease. One by one, they killed us. To extinction they left us.

The foreigners have taken over.

IV. SET GIRLS

Enter the age of refinement,

We set girls bow and curtsy in garb and gowns with red trim fancy.

Opulence and income thanks to those in the fields. We are the

of wealth and power.

heritors of wealth and power.

Listen! We are the set girls with blue trim. Representing sons and daughters, a destined kindred wealthy in hope for freedom.

Listen! We are the set girls with blue trims. Representing sons and daughters, a destined kindred wealthy in hope for freedom.

You cowards are the benefactors of oua welt an powa. We celebrate ourselves while mocking you!

You cowards are benefactors of our wealth and power. We celebrate ourselves while mocking you!

Com iin wid wi staiill!

Come in with our style.

Looking forward to the age of enfranchisement.

Looking forward to the age of enfranchisement.

V. HAWS HED

V. HORSEHEAD

Back to work, you horrid Negroes! Dat dem did a se.

Back to work, you horrid Negroes! That is what they were saying.

No, fun! What are you doing? Where are you going? Back to work.

No, fun! What are you doing? Where are you going? Back to work.

Di tings haws hed hav siin:
Di biuti, di singin,
di daansin, di blod fram ponishin.
Di keos, di hontin, di shoutin, di fawmin, plenty fawmin.
Di scriimin, di flogging, di blod fram ponishin
Di pongent dinaial a diisensii, Di pongent dinaial a digniti.
No humanity,
Ai of muor valiu dan shii—dan hii.

The things horse head have seen: The beauty, the singing, the dancing, the blood from punishing. The chaos, the hunting, the shouting, the farming. Plenty farming. The screaming, the flogging, the blood from punishing. The pungent denial of decency, the pungent denial of dignity. No humanity, I am of more value than she—than he.

Im skiel mi bak wid wip in han, an flog di ensliev bak to tendin di lan.

He scales my back with whip in hand and flogs the enslaved back to tending the land.

Faasta! Faasta! Hia!

Faster! Faster! Hia!

Si dem a mount mi haws fren dem wid gon an sen out houn. Ongl det wen yr

See them mounting my horse friends with guns and have sent out hounds. Only death is

wrk wil bi don.

when your work will be done.

VI. JAK IN DI GRIIN

VI. JACK IN THE GREEN

Mi a fiid yo maastas, miinwail unu get skrap.

I am feeding your masters, meanwhile you all get scraps.

Mi a bier frut fi welti dem kaaz.

I bear fruit to wealthy their cause.

Haid hir, haid hir mi se! Mi did a wispa “haid hir,” bot no mach fi di houn dem.

Hide here, hide here I said! I was whispering “hide here,” but no match for the hounds.

Aal a unu blod a ron tru mi vien.

All your blood runs through my veins.

Bot siit de mi a haid yu mrdara, Mi de shelta yo opresa, An praspas yo capchara.

But see, I am hiding your murderer, I am sheltering your oppressors, And prospering your captors.

An it hawnt mi.

And it haunts me.

VII. WARIA

VII. WARRIOR

Fram di madalan, dee separeeted ai fram ai famili. Yet somhou ai sovaivd di wrrs a di enemi.

From the motherland, they separated me from my family. Yet somehow, we survived the worst of the enemy.

Di wrrs of travl, di wrrs of wrrk, In di wrrs condishans, An di honspiikabl wrrs of wrrs.

The worst of travel, the worst of work, in the worst of conditions and the unspeakable worst of worse.

Wrrs of wrrs illtriiement Wrrs of wrrs a di riep and biitin, Wrrs of wrrs a di stoolen children...

Worst of worse ill-treatment, Worst of worse of the rape and beating, Worst of worse of the stolen children...

Song continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly as possible.

Inof! Inof a biiin skeerd! Tu
waar tu fait ai hav
priipeerd.

Enough! Enough off
being scared! To war to
fight I have prepared.

Nuo langa afried tu dai, Ai
fait! Fi Ai friidom, Ai fait!
Fi di friidom a Ai
piipl, Ai fait!

No longer afraid to die, I
fight! For my freedom, I
fight! For the freedom
of my people, I fait!

So no mour! No mour!

So no more! No more!

VIII. HOUS HED

VIII. HOUSE HEAD

I am house and I stand a
landmark of the
capturer's abiding city.

I am house and I stand as
a landmark of the
capturer's abiding city.

The reminder of the wealth
and land that was stolen
and now will never be
yours to own.

The reminder of the
wealth and land that
was stolen and now will
never be yours to own.

Look at how this wealth will
fortify many a generation
in the master's lineage,
but not for the enslaved
and most certainly
not for the first inhabitants
of this land: The
Arawaks, the
Tainos.

Look at how this wealth
will fortify many a
generation in the
master's lineage, but
not for the enslaved
and most certainly not
for the first inhabitants
of this land: The
Arawaks, the Tainos.

Look at me! Gorgeous
architecture you see? Fine
china, silk drapes,
crystal ware and
chandeliers....

Look at me! Gorgeous
architecture you see?
Fine china, silk drapes,
crystal ware and
chandeliers....

Bot siit de nou, rivuolt afut.
A com dem a com
fi com tek
mi dong.

But see now, there is a
revolt afoot. They are
coming to take me
down.

Som plantieshan a go muor
lokia dan mi. Com to tink
af it, dem jos mait
riibil mi.

Some plantations may be
luckier than me. Come
to think of it, they might
just rebuild me.

Yo nuo? Lets se a fi
di histri.

You know? Let's say it's
for history.

IX. DEVL

IX. DEVIL

Mi? Mi? Nuo, no bliem mi
fi a dratid ting!

Me? Me? No, don't blame
me for a dratted thing.

A unu av di chais inu?
A unu av di
powa.

It is you who have choice,
you know? It is you who
have the power.

A unu griidi, A unu
bad main, A unu
caaz di haarm.
A unu griidi,
A unu red yiai,
but unu com fi
taak ow di devl
trang.

You are the greedy ones,
the jealous ones, the
ones that caused the
harm. You are the
greedy ones, the
envious ones but you
come to talk about how
the devil is strong.

Lef mi aluon! No bliem mi fi a
dratid ting Fi du wid it mi
av noting. Noting
fi du wid it at
aal.

Leave me alone! Don't
blame me for a dratted
thing. I have nothing to
do with it. Nothing to do
with it at all.

Aal in aal, Mi jos de ya fi luk
hogli an fraitn pikni! Man,
Mi de ya a trai get
pan krampos levl
wid mi likl
pich faak.

I am just here to look ugly
and frighten the
children! I am here
trying to get on
Krampus's level with
my little pitchfork.

X. BELI UMAN

X. BELLY WOMAN

Bouns it! bouns it! Mi a
beli uman!

Bounce it! Bounce it! I am
Belly Woman!

Muuv mi beli op an doun.
Muuv mi beli roun
an roun.

Move my belly up and
down. Move my belly
around and around.

Yo tink se mi a
muuv a yuman
biin? Gi dem
a likl trik
kriet a siin.

You think that I am
moving a human
being? Give them a
little trick create a
scene.

Bouns di beli mi se
bouns it op an doun,
roun an roun Sevn
mont? iet mont?
nain mont? Roun
lef rait roun op
roun Roun lef rait
an op an d
ong!

Bounce the belly, I say
bounce it up and down,
around and around.
Seven months? eight
months? nine months?
Around, left, right,
around, up, around,
Around, left, right, and
up and down.

Yo tink mi beli cuda com
fram wrrm ar
rom?

You think my belly is
because of worm, or
rum?

A cuda ball, ar a baluun
tai dong. Mi se mi
bieli cuda fit di frak,
Di wie di beli big i
bruk mi bak.

It could be a ball, or a
balloon tied down. I tell
you I barely could fit the
frock. The belly is so
big it broke my back.

XI. POLIIS MAN

Srrv an protek! Srrv an protek!
Nobadi muuv!

Yu hav bin kawt spiidin wail paakin on di said a di ruod. Mi affi rait yu op, Yu nuo dat? Jos gimì a lonch. Gimì a lonch fi di tikit expunj nuh?

Sumadi jos get kild a di side a di roud. Mi kyaa get to it naow caaz mi de pon mi lonch.

Af cours di kila esciep in nierby bushis. An di craim hotline aaf di huk. Indeed we are very VERY busy.

Bot ENIWIE! Srrv an protek! Srrv an protek Srrv an protek!
NOBADI MUUV!

FINALE

Hiir dem loud an klier! Mi kaal dem wuan bai wuan fi dem shier. Di fak, Di fikshan, Di riil laif, Di illuujan.

Jump! Prance! Daans wid laif! Com iina dis wid drom an faif. Naou yu get a gud jis a di luor, taim fi roun it out wid ow wi did nou it bifuor.

Tell, Jonkunnu tell!

Jak Mandora Kaalin O! Jak Mandora, a kaalin O! Tel Jonkunnu se, * “Jak Mandora, mi no chuuz non!”

XI. POLICE MAN

Serve and protect!
NOBODY MOVE!

You have been caught speeding while parking on the side of the road. I have to write you up you know that? Just give (buy) me lunch. Give me lunch for the ticket to be expunged?

Somebody just got killed on the side of the road. I can't get to it now because I am on my lunch break.

Of course, the killer escaped in nearby bushes. And the crime hotline is off the hook. Indeed, we are very, VERY busy.

But Anyway! Serve and protect! NOBODY MOVE!

FINALE

Here them loud and clear! I called them one by one to share. The fact, the fiction, the real life, the illusion.

Jump! Prance! Dance with life! Come in this [parade] with drum and fife. Now you've got a gist of the lore, it's time to round it out with how we knew it before.

Tell Jonkonnu Tell!;/e>

Jack Mandora I'm calling! Tell Jonkonnu that * “Jack Mandora, I'm not choosing anything!”

Interval

Hannah Kendall (b.1984)

When Flesh is Pressed Against The Dark
UK première

Jan-Bas Bollen (b.1961)

Floating Islands

UK première

Harmonious Powers with Nature work
On sky, earth, river, lake, and sea:
Sunshine and storm, whirlwind and breeze
All in one duteous task agree.

Floating, Floating, Floating Island,
Island, Float, Float

Once did I see a slip of earth,
By throbbing waves long undermined,
Food, shelter, safety there they find,
There

There berries ripen, flowerets bloom;
There insects live their lives — and die:
A peopled world it is; in size a tiny room.

Floating, Floating, Floating Island,
Island, Floating, Floating,

And thus through many seasons' space
This little Island may survive
But Nature, though we mark her not,
Will take away — may cease to give.

Buried beneath the glittering Lake!
Its place no longer to be found,
Yet the lost fragments shall remain,
To fertilize some other ground.

Song continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly as possible

* An expression that means no blame should be attributed to listener, storyteller or writer of the story.

Thelonious Monk (1917-1982)

Misterioso

Gertrude Stein

arranged by Jeanne Lee & Ran Blake

I am Rose my eyes are blue.

I am Rose who are you?

I am Rose and when I sing

I am Rose like anything.

Sarah Hennies (b.1979)

Memory Box

Mark E. Smith (1957-2018),

The Fall

Frenz

arranged by Elaine Mitchener & Ensemble Klang

My friends, Gonna tell you about my friends

My friends ain't enough for one hand ...

Due to copyright reasons, we are unable to reproduce the text of this song.

Selected verses from the poetry 'Floating Island' by Dorothy Wordsworth, with additional original composition by Jan-Bas Bollen.