

HEART THIS AND THOUGHT OF YOU

Project Overview

James and I are musicians who have spent our lives creating possibilities and audiences for the instruments we love. This project takes our existing duo, and amplifies the potential and audience for our music by working alongside three theatre practitioners and a producer, all of whom have a rich history of musical collaborations.

We have been working as a duo for nearly five years. During this time, we've developed a body of repertoire, toured it extensively, and recorded an album for ABC Classics. Alongside the recording project, we commissioned a series of letters from well-known Australian writers, who we knew to be music lovers. We sent each writer a track of music with the request that they write a letter to someone real or imagined, using our music as inspiration, and the idea 'heard this, and thought of you...'

As a duo, we're at home with many styles of music - we commission, arrange, improvise, create, as well as perform other people's music. As performers, we've both spent time separately working on stage in contemporary dance, opera and theatre productions. Our collaborators for this project are extremely experienced devisors and makers, who have been working both in experimental and mainstream forums for years.

Our desire is to take this material, and turn it into a genuinely theatrical experience for audiences. We're not interested in an actor simply narrating text before each piece of music, but intend instead to create a completely integrated piece of theatre. There's

no generic term that really describes our vision for this material, but we look to the work of people like Laurie Anderson, Heiner Goebbels, Peter Sellars and Robert Lepage, Simon McBurney as extremely different examples of creating deeply theatrical experiences, emanating from sound or music.

We seek to do this because we have a passion for creating opportunities and audiences for our music, and a strong desire to constantly reinvigorate and develop our art form. Recorder and accordion are an unlikely combination, not exactly an obvious box-office winner or marketer's dream! Commissioning the letters for the album meant that we had a much broader audience - people heard about the CD not just via the usual music channels, but also because of the writers involved. The deeply human, intimate words provided ways into music that could otherwise have been harder to approach - contemporary Australian and Scottish repertoire, little-known early music, idiosyncratic corners of folk music. The richness of the texts we commissioned, and the response of readers-listeners encouraged us to think about taking the material into a live, theatrical performance.

James, Andy, Michaela and I have already spent four days together workshopping this idea. This exchange was challenging and inspiring, and we emerged determined to find ways to continue this work. With support from our partners, we are now embarking on the first of multiple stages to create this new work. The emphasis for these workshops is not on the creation of content, but the creation of a genuinely experimental form, to hold the music and texts already commissioned.

In our initial workshop, we explored ways to challenge and transform the physical and emotional capabilities of a duo, and played with blurring boundaries between performance art-

installation-music-text-theatre. We learnt very quickly that to do this idea justice will take serious time, careful investigation, skill and courage. We are determined to make this into an extremely nuanced theatrical experience. It would be all too easy to wrap some evocative words around a concert performance.

Central to the creation of this work will be the creation of a form that amplifies the emotional intensity of the sounds that it holds, and allows listeners to meet them in new ways. The music will drive the theatre, but we hope that the theatre will illuminate the music, and make its presentation such that it can be discovered by a rich mix of listeners.

We are so excited to be taking the next step of this artistic research in beautiful UKARIA.

Genevieve Lacey

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