Trees, Walls, Cities

In the end, the trees have it. Every living city spills beyond its walls and heads for the trees. The wall that was built to divide or repel is left standing as a monument or ruin. In Derry the trees had it from the start. Its name in Irish – *Daire* – means 'grove of oak'. And the proud 'maiden wall', never breached in its history, was overrun by cascades of houses headed for the Foyle and across to Waterside to trees that know no religion. The orange brick shards of London's Roman Wall, built in Celtic *lond* – the 'wild place' – to protect imperial invaders, now point outwards through a pulsating metropolis of many cultures to bright lights and lines of trees.

The Romans also built Utrecht's first fortifications (*traiectum*, 'river crossing', the Dutch *trecht*) but the walls were breached in grim civil wars (1483) and internal strife. Berlin's Wall (*birl* – Old West Slav for 'the marshland') was also built by Cold Warriors to divide the city. But now fragments of the wall are sold as tourist souvenirs, and the remaining lime trees of Unter Den Linden march obliviously from the Brandenburg Gate to the re-planted birches of the Tiergarten. In 1529 the walls of Vienna (Celtic *vedunia*, 'forest stream') turned the tide of European political history when they withstood the assaults of Suleiman the Magnificent, but the sounds of the janissary cymbals could be heard through the gates and changed the course of Western orchestral music. When Mozart, the great maker of 'Turkish' music, died in gentlemanly poverty, he was buried beyond the walls, among the trees.

In the 1991 bombardment of Dubrovnik – another city of the 'oak grove' (Old Slav *duba/dubrava*) – the walls were spared, but its cypresses and pines were burnt to ash. In happier days, argosies plied the waves from the Old Harbour eastwards to Venetian protectorates such as Nicosia (*Lefkosia*, 'city of whiteness'), famous for its star-shaped wall with eleven bastions. Now there is another wall in Nicosia – a 'green line' (an insult to the trees!), crossing the only divided capital city in the world. The beautiful walls of Jerusalem (Canaanite city of Shalem or of 'peace', Arabic *Al-Quds*, 'the Holy') were built by the same Suleiman who failed to breach the walls of Vienna, but a less lovely wall now winds its way through farmers' fields, among the ashes of olive trees. Inspirational artists like the Israeli-Palestinian Duo Amal (Tuesday 2 July, Haberdashers' Hall) may not solve many problems just now, but they sow the seeds of hope and human harmony.

Walls may rise and fall, but you cannot defeat the trees or the musicians with them – and the trees will have it in the end.

Nigel Osborne
Composer

> For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth… yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant.

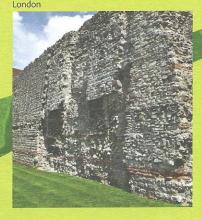From *The Book of Job*

Tree Trail

Trees for Cities and the City of London Festival have created a Tree Trail aiming to provide a fascinating and fun guide to some of the most interesting trees and heritage sites the City has to offer, accessible to all visitors, workers and residents – young and old.

The City is a great showcase for the diverse range of trees that can grow within the often harsh and challenging urban environment. The Square Mile is well known for its iconic London Plane trees, which are the most common tree planted in the City. However, the City also has much more to offer its visitors; there are nearly 2,500 individual trees in the City, made up from around 70 different species.

By following the trail you will learn that trees are a vital part of cities, they absorb pollution and carbon dioxide; attract a diverse range of wildlife; absorb water and so help to reduce flooding; bring city dwellers into contact with nature; provide places for children to play; create peaceful spaces for people to relax and socialise; provide shade; and can even reduce the air temperature in hot summers.

The trail is a celebration of the diverse tree population and history of the Square Mile. It is also intended to highlight the importance of urban trees across the world and the need for people to continue planting and caring for them. For more information on the tree trail and to download the pocket guide see colf.org
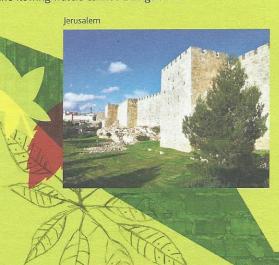
Trees, Walls, Cities: the composers' viewpoint

London

Once There was an Island
by Christopher Norby

In Derry, the image of ancient oak trees and city walls represents a political and social divide, and the current official name 'Derry~Londonderry' embodies this divide. The original name for the area, dating back to the 6th century, is 'Doire', Irish for Oak grove. During the British plantation of Ulster in the 17th century, London erected walls around the city to keep the Irish opposition of the occupation at bay.

The town was renamed Londonderry. Today the walls stand as an image of repression for some or an image of ownership and national pride for others. In this song, the trees are used to represent the history of uprising in the area. In setting Matt Jennings's words to music I avoided a national sound. The problems of imperialist oppression, sectarianism, religious dogma, and nationalism that have so negatively impacted Ireland continue to affect our whole world.

Song of Songs
by Habib Shehadeh Hanna

I find much that is impressive in Solomon's *Song of Songs* but I had to choose just a few sentences, to gather these together and to make a small drama out of the text. It is about a beloved woman entering the gates of Jerusalem to find her lover and asking the guards about his whereabouts; after passing them and wandering through the streets she finds him. She asks the young women of Jerusalem not to wake him up and continues talking about love: related to our understanding of Christianity, love is as powerful as death and flowing waters cannot extinguish it.

Jerusalem

Pyramus and Thisbe
by Jocelyn Pook

While studying at Guildhall School of Music & Drama I would often walk along London Wall, with its skyscrapers and roaring traffic. The name of this street gives a clue to its past — ancient fragments of the City of London's fortified walls lie preserved nearby. Walking past, I would wonder what memories lay embedded in the wall's layers of stone and moss. So it was a nice surprise to be given London Wall as one of the starting points for this piece, along with the mulberry tree and cities.

I teamed up with the librettist Richard Thomas and we had several brainstorming sessions with the mezzo Loré Lixenberg, discussing various possibilities for style and text. I was thrilled with how Richard developed these into such a moving, political and evocative poem. I then set to work on the musical ideas, incorporating allusions to nursery rhymes and medieval history. Richard and I have both previously worked with Loré and had similar ideas about wanting the piece to work as a drama gradually unfolding, allowing her to harness her considerable talent for dramatic expression, contrast and quirkiness using her range of vocal timbres.
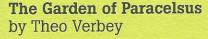
As a fellow viola player I enjoy writing for string quartet and am thrilled to have this piece brought to life by such a fantastic team.

Ian Ritchie
Festival Director

As we embarked upon our journey towards the creation of this new song cycle for voice and string quartet, the themes had already chosen themselves in reflecting all the main ideas of the 2013 Festival: conflict and resolution — trees — walled cities. The starting points, of course, had to be the cities of Derry~Londonderry and London as part of our close collaboration this year; Utrecht, with whom we are helping to celebrate the 300th anniversary of its historic international peace Treaty, followed naturally; and five more great cities, with their different walls and distinct histories of conflict, completed our map. The composers belonging to these eight cities were selected with great care and invited to choose their poetic

Walls Have Ears
by Yannis Kyriakides

Walls Have Ears is a piece based on the poem *Wartime* by my friend the great Turkish Cypriot poet Mehmet Yashin. It deals with the issue of language in the time of conflict, and how as a Turkish Cypriot growing up in a minority community in the sixties, the fact of speaking his mother-tongue becomes a complex and sensitive issue. Like myself, Mehmet was displaced and lived in exile as a result of the conflict in 1974, and because of this, and the ongoing political situation in Cyprus, as he writes in the poem: 'could never be the poet of any country, because I belonged to a minority'. The form of the song is based on a metaphor of the inner voice. A language wall that is built between one's thoughts and how one can express them. There is a disparity developed through the piece between the text one hears in English, spoken by the quartet, and the incomplete Turkish phonemes that are quietly voiced by the singer, as if the one voice is being split into two worlds, an inner and an outer.

The Garden of Paracelsus
by Theo Verbey

The Garden of Paracelsus, is based on a text by the German poet Peter Huchel. Huchel (1903 - 1981), a friend of composer Ernst Bloch, worked for the East German Radio after the end of WWII. In the first half of his poem, we see the garden of the medieval alchemist Paracelsus, where lively discussions once took place. While composing this piece for *Trees, Walls, Cities* I reflected on what 'The Wall' means to me as a Dutchman.

I was born in 1959, and grew up thinking it was normal to have two Germanys. For me, the tearing down of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the re-unification of Germany is the most important political event of my life. In 1977 I travelled by train with a group of fellow students through East Germany and Poland, to work on the upkeep of Auschwitz. We worked together with left-wing German students. I can still picture the East German soldiers standing with submachine guns on the roof of the Berlin train station as we passed through the border.

Derry~Londonderry

partners or texts, metaphorically speaking, by reaching across their respective walls (like mature tree branches). The results are wonderful and varied.

The ninth composer, Nigel Osborne, was invited to compose the music for string quartet to link the songs, the cities and their cultures into what may be the first truly circular song cycle. It has been designed so that one can enter the new work through any one of many gateways and travel around the songs from different starting points. We shall start the songs in Derry and finish in Jerusalem, but others in the future may decide to begin in Nicosia, for example, and end the journey in Dubrovnik – it means going full circle in any case.

When God Created Dubrovnik
by Isidora Žebeljan

I have chosen the verses from the poem *When God Created Dubrovnik* by the Dubrovnik poet Milan Miliši, because I longed to be in the Dubrovnik of my childhood once again, to touch its rough, scorching stone; longed to hear the wonderful, loud, brisk, incessant, bird-chatter-like calls of the women of Dubrovnik; longed to have before my eyes one more time that shimmering, blurred line in which the sky and the sea merge, disperse and disappear; longed to hear the microtonal flutter of olive trees, cypresses and bushes. I also wanted to infuse new life into verses written by a poet whose life was tragically taken away in Dubrovnik, on the first day of the war, by combatants of that nation which was his by origin. Poems live on and they help us to hold on, to survive, to be saved.

Berlin

Just Outside
by Søren Nils Eichberg

When Paul Cassidy approached me and suggested that I write a piece for the *Trees, Wall, Cities* project, one of our first ideas was to centre my contribution around a re-interpretation of Schubert's *Lindenbaum* in one way or another. Both because of the song's quintessential import to *Winterreise*, an inspiration for the project, but also because of the iconic meaning of the linden tree itself to the city I would represent: Berlin and its famous boulevard Unter den Linden, which was famously cut in half by the Cold War Berlin Wall at Brandenburger Tor.

The language of the original *Lindenbaum* poem by Wilhelm Müller is deeply rooted in the style of his particular time and its heavy romanticisms. Since I like incorporating elements of popular culture in my compositions (climbing over other walls, if you will), I had the idea to imagine the concept of his poem taken through a time machine and transformed into lyrics as they could typically be written by a singer-song-writer today.

While I decided not to use Schubert's original melodies itself, feeling that this would have been too much of a creative limitation, I did chose to re-use elements of his accompaniment.

Wien, Flakturm Esterházy-Park
by Gerald Resch

During World War II, several flak towers were built to defend Vienna: indestructible towers of tremendous walls of concrete, 3.5 metres thick. After World War II, one has unsuccessfully tried to blast them. Because of this, they influence the urban image of Vienna in various quarters as a kind of memorial. They are partly empty today and act as nesting place for thousands of birds (two of them in the immediate vicinity of my flat: in the baroque Augarten-park). Some of them have been reconstructed: among others the flak tower in the Esterházy-park, which accommodates the museum Haus des Meeres (house of the sea). The US-American concept artist Laurence Weiner wrote a distinctive anti-war-saying in 1991 on the upper floor of Haus des Meeres: "smashed to pieces (in the still of the night) ". This saying has been translated to German by Ferdinand Schmatz congenially on the opposite side of the flak tower: "Zerschmettert in Stücke (im Frieden der Nacht)". I asked Ferdinand to attach a poem to these first two lines, which speaks in a quite abstract manner about force and walls, and their overcoming by the organic, lively and creative.

Dubrovnik

Monday 24 June 7.30pm

Drapers' Hall, Throgmorton Street, EC2

Brodsky Quartet

Daniel Rowland *violin*
Ian Belton *violin*
Paul Cassidy *viola*
Jacqueline Thomas *cello*

Loré Lixenberg *mezzo-soprano*
Cathal Breslin *piano*

Philip Hammond Chanson d'Automne
Nevermore - Chanson d'automne - Un grand sommeil noir

Elgar Piano Quintet in A minor Op 84
Moderato – Adagio – Andante / Allegro

Interval

Song Cycle Trees, Walls, Cities *(World première)*:

Christopher Norby & Matt Jennings *Once There was an Island*
(Derry~Londonderry)

Jocelyn Pook & **Richard Thomas** *Pyramus and Thisbe* (London)

Theo Verbey & **Peter Huchel** *Der Garten des Paracelsus* (Utrecht)

Søren Nils Eichberg *Just Outside* (Berlin)

Gerald Resch & **Ferdinand Schmatz** *Wien, Flakturm Esterházy-Park* (Vienna)

Isidora Žebeljan & **Milan Miliši** *When God was creating Dubrovnik*
(Dubrovnik)

Yannis Kyriakides & **Mehmet Yashin** *Walls have Ears* (Nicosia)

Habib Shehadeh Hanna & **Solomon** *Song of Songs* (Jerusalem)

Nigel Osborne *Prelude, Interludes, Postlude* for string quartet

Loré Lixenberg

Three of the Festival's themes for 2013 – issues of *conflict and resolution*, our partnership with Derry~Londonderry and an environmental focus on trees – come together in tonight's concert. This begins with the song-cycle *Chanson d'automne* (Autumn Song) by Northern Irish composer Philip Hammond, who says: 'I have aimed at recreating the atmospheric impressionism of [Paul Verlaine's] texts… suggesting the insidious way in which memories of the past can darkly impinge on conscious awareness, initiating an introverted spiral of emotional disquiet.' Hammond's description also suggests the haunted emotional world explored by Elgar in his Piano Quintet, composed in a cottage in Brinkwells in Sussex towards the end of the First World War. A Spanish-sounding theme in the first movement relates to a local legend that some Spanish monks had died there, and had been transformed into the trees of Brinkwells (like the mythical transformations described in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: see Friday 12 July, 7.00pm and 9.00pm, page 47).

Finally comes the world première of *Trees, Walls, Cities*, a major new song cycle linking eight walled cities, all with histories of conflict and partition: Derry, London, Utrecht, Berlin, Vienna, Dubrovnik, Nicosia and Jerusalem. The composers commissioned in each city – Christopher Norby, Jocelyn Pook, Theo Verbey, Søren Nils Eichberg, Gerald Resch, Isidora Žebeljan, Yannis Kyriakides and Habib Shehadeh Hanna – have commissioned or selected texts drawing on the symbolism of trees (peace and wisdom) and walls (defence and misunderstanding). Linking material by Nigel Osborne 'circles' the work as the walls encircle the cities themselves.

Tickets £10, £20 ♀
⊖ Moorgate or Bank

In partnership with British Council, Culture Company 2013 and the Walled City Music Festival. Supported by the PRS for Music Foundation and The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

● ● **BRITISH**
● ● **COUNCIL**

2013
Derry~Londonderry
UK City of Culture

BBC RADIO 3 90–93FM

This concert will be broadcast live on BBC Radio 3

The walled city was heavy and grey
Like a mountain in the distance
No life grew on this island of walls
That was not granted by decree
But after a while, a tree began to grow
At the foot of the outer wall
Its roots grew strong and its branches spread wide

Matt Jennings from *Once There was an Island*