



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS INTERNATIONAL CONCERT SERIES

Tuesday 14 February 2023
Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall

Kate Ledger

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Programme

This concert explores themes of intimacy and care, in and around the piano, via sentimentality, storytelling, and exploration. It will feature two new pieces written for Kate - the European premiere of Michele Abondano's *One Is Too Few* (2022) and the world premiere of Christopher Fox's *Es war einmal* (2022) – alongside pieces by Rebecca Saunders, Lauren Redhead and Ed Cooper.

Rebecca Saunders - *Withinnan* (2019)

Lauren Redhead - *the spark which escapes* (2019)

Michele Abondano - *One Is Too Few* (2022)
(UK Premiere)

Ed Cooper - *...they conjure aglow, movements...* (2020-21)

Christopher Fox - *Es war einmal* (2022)
(World Premiere)

Programme Notes

Rebecca Saunders - *Withinnan* (2019)

Inwardly, into the interior.
Within, amidst, among, betwixt, bounded and enclosed.
Inside, innermost, viscera, core, gut, marrow, pith and pulp.
Intimate, remote, secret and of the soul, inlying, internal and at heart.
Here, in this, in this place.

Lauren Redhead - *the spark which escapes* (2019)

the spark which escapes is a solo piano piece dedicated to the North Macedonian dramatist and screenwriter, and my former colleague and friend, Goran Stefanovski. He died suddenly in 2018; 'The Spark Which Escapes' was the title of a keynote speech that he delivered to the International Federation for Theatre Research Conference just before his death, and which took on a new meaning for those of us who knew him after that time. In a presentation on 'Teaching the Unteachable' in 2015, Goran claimed that, 'Art is the politics of the Impossible' and that, 'only the impossible is worth teaching'. While not a pedagogic piece, I hope that this music captures something of Goran's concept of impossibility, here rendered as indeterminacy, and as brief spaces between the musical utterances.

The music of this piece is much influenced by the piano piece *More Light* (1987-8) by Christopher Fox, and by Ian Pace's performances of that piece, as well as the later piano works of Morton Feldman and their interpretation by the pianist Philip Thomas. These influences do not represent Goran's musical tastes — he was well-known for his enjoyment of 1960s rock music — but rather the sounds that sounds that were meaningful to me as I considered writing a piece *in memoriam* of him.

Michele Abondano - *One Is Too Few* (2022)

"Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert."
Donna Haraway

Ed Cooper - ...they conjure aglow, movements... (2020-21)

always disintegrating but totally focussed; in great conflict with itself; clarity is perceivable but in the future

Christopher Fox - *Es war einmal* (2022)

“Es war einmal was written for Kate Ledger, to whom it is dedicated. The music is based on 21 German folk-tales – all the ones that begin ‘es war einmal’ (‘once upon a time’) – from the first, hand-written collection made by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in 1810. I love how these first transcriptions of the stories plunge us straight into extraordinary situations: ‘Once upon a time there was a little girl and every time she was given flax to spin she could only spin it into gold threads’; ‘once upon a time there was a man who had three sons and the youngest was stupid.’ I have tried to make music that has the same immediacy.

“It’s not important to know what the stories are, just to know that stories are being told, and in the musical retelling each one begins with a direct transcription of the original German text. In other words, the letters of the words become musical notes, played according to the rhythm of the words, and the letters of each story’s title become notes held with the sostenuto pedal, creating a sonic aura. Gradually the music begins to develop its own way of telling the stories and perhaps this is similar to the way in which we, as we hear these stories, start to populate our imaginations not just with words but with images too.”

Biography

Kate Ledger is a pianist, collaborator and educator specialising in embodiment, spirituality, and authenticity via experimental artistic practice. She frequently collaborates with composers to explore the effects of musical notation on the way she moves as she performs. Through her practices of Feldenkrais and yoga, she explores how composers can work with or against her habitual performing movements. This is revealing many ways in which to write for the performing body, enhanced by the uniqueness of each composer.

