



Martin Read Foundation
presents...

Annual Festival of
Contemporary Music
Festival concert
Sunday 23rd April 2023
St Lawrence Church,
Church Street, Alton, Hampshire



Artwork:
Gill Robinson
www.gill-robinson.co.uk

PROGRAMME

6.30pm Bar - donations to Martin Read Foundation

7.30pm Festival Concert

Grateful thanks to East Hants District Council
and to St Lawrence Church for supporting this concert.

Welcome... to this 9th year of the MRF scheme *Supporting Young Composers*. Established in 2014 in the wake of Martin's premature death, 2012, MRF has so far supported over 15 young composers, setting them on a path to the undergraduate study of composition. The festival is the annual culmination of the Foundation's work.

This year MRF has branched out, in a bid to generate interest in composition at a younger level, through its first *Tomorrow's Composers* project. We've worked with year 9s in a school in the New Forest, on a project writing music for 1-minute films. From their positive feedback, the students are keen to continue composing. We hope to see their names in our Festival Concert programme in the future.

Thanks to the growing number of MRF alumni who have been writing for the Festival in recent years, this Annual Festival has, rightly, become all about the young composers, and less about Martin's music. However, to mark Martin's 10th anniversary, we decided to include a work by Martin in Festival '23. The piece we have chosen - his highly acclaimed work: *The Death of Colonel Boles*, written for Alton, where Martin taught, has determined the focus for this year's Festival: **War**. Thus Festival '23 links contemporary composition with this unique event in Alton's Civil War history.

Congratulations to our 4 awarded young composers for 2023: Joe Jolliffe, Josh Clark, Felix Sladen-Jewell & William Dear. Aged 16 - 17, they each live and, or study in Hampshire. Their composing brief was to write a short work for solo cello, with the focus of War, past or current.

Our alumni have also been busy writing for this Festival:

- Freddie Hodkin, Cornish-based composer, ex Cardiff Uni & Alton College:
Lorem Ipsum - for choir SATB.
- Samby Anderson, studying composition at Trinity Laban, ex Brockenhurst College:
Make the Sound of War - for Flexible Ensemble

Our performers:

Joseph Spooner - cello: 'extraordinary talent and enthusiasm' - Musicweb international;

Paul Sheehan - Baritone: a permanent member of ENO Chorus since 2012;

David Gibson - conductor: freelance for the past 18 years, working with many of the top orchestras in the country;

Claire Woodhead, Sarah Lewin, Beccy Read, Glyn Evans and David Maycock - recorder quintet;

Carl Clausen - drum: Director of Hampshire Youth Orchestra;

Choir - we are delighted to welcome back members of Oxford-based *Commotio* (MRF Festival '19), who are joined by members of Winchester-based *Southern Voices* and local singers;

Flexible Ensemble - came together today to workshop and perform.

Festival Concert programme

With the exception of *The Death of Colonel Boles*, the pieces in this concert are each receiving their premieres. This can be a lot to ask of the audience - and of the performers! We therefore felt it would be fitting and rewarding for all involved, to develop a sense of familiarity during the performance - which can be a key element to an enjoyment of music. Therefore, *Lorem Ipsum* and *Make the Sound of War* will each be performed in each half.

Concert item:

Welcome

Performed by:

Beccy Read

Freddie Hodkin: *Lorem Ipsum*

Choir, conducted by David Gibson

Two premieres for solo cello:

Josh Clarke - *Elegy for War*

Felix Sladen-Jewell - *A New Twilight*

Joseph Spooner - cello, Josh, Felix with Simon Speare.

Samby Anderson: *Make the Sound of War*

Flexible Ensemble, Samby with Alison Willis

Two Premieres for solo cello:

Joe Joliffe - *Elegy for a Dead Soldier*

William Dear - *The War Machine*

Joseph Spooner - cello, Joe, William with Simon Speare.

INTERVAL - 20 mins

Bar open for donations to MRF

Freddie Hodkin: *Lorem Ipsum*

Choir, conducted by David Gibson

Samby Anderson: *Make the sound of War*

Flexible Ensemble, Samby with Alison Willis

Martin Read: *The Death of Colonel Boles*

Paul Sheehan - baritone, Joseph Spooner - cellist, choir, recorder quintet, Carl Clausen - drum, David Gibson - conductor & Beccy.

Programme notes – in concert order

Freddie Hodkin - *Lorem Ipsum*.

The words of this piece come from a passage of corrupted Latin which is commonly used as placeholder text in digital document templates. The war of today, and probably tomorrow, happens so often alongside and/or as a result of cyberwarfare, malicious attacks on the digital worlds of companies and nations. Using the human voice to portray this primarily computerised text reminds us that there are people behind the machines, often potentially more deadly than anyone holding a physical weapon. The juxtaposition of this dark theme with the beauty of chordal harmony and texture is striking, with moments of dissonance in there to hint at the pain and torment war can bring. Perhaps it can act as a symbol of peace, of what can be achieved by different people when we work with, rather than against, each other.

Josh Clark - *Elegy for War*

Upon receiving the commission brief of writing for war, I knew that I wanted to write an elegy, as I would have the chance to write music in the style of my favourite composers, such as Shostakovich and John Williams. The dramatic opening depicts a battle, and what follows is the aftermath, it has moments of sorrow, hope and triumph before returning to the original state of despair. This has been a wonderful opportunity to write a widely emotive piece of music, and I am very thankful to MRF to supporting me in my journey as a composer. I hope you enjoy my piece.

Felix Sladen-Jewell - *A New Twilight*

A New Twilight is a piece about the mental impacts of war. The piece showcases the initial dread and nerves before going into battle, as well as the adrenaline and panic experienced during the battle followed by the aftermath. In this piece I used repeating eighth notes to represent marching into war as well as high harmonics to illustrate the ringing in the ears one might experience during battle. My main influence for this piece was the Vietnam war. I listened to the traditional folk music of Vietnam and used this as a basis for my composition, incorporating scales and microtones used in this type of music. I am very grateful for this opportunity the Martin Read Foundation has given me and it has really helped me develop as a composer and experiment with new ideas.

Samby Anderson - *Make the Sound of War*

I wrote this piece in response to the concert's theme of war and in an attempt to construct a framework within which musicians have the freedom to explore what sounds they think best express the mental states associated with conflict. The piece narratively portrays a battle between two parties and is constructed out of simple

rhythmic and melodic figures interspersed with sections of free, individual improvisation in response to prompts such as 'make the sound of violence' or 'make the sound of defeat' etc. This allows all performers the freedom to express their interpretations of these ideas in the way that feels the most natural to them, regardless of the instrument being used, and will hopefully lead to a diverse set of juxtaposed, distinctive interpretations of the prompts that all coexist, contrasting and highlighting each other to create a multi-faceted portrayal of a battle - between two opposing sides and many unique individuals.

Joe Joliffe - Elegy for a Dead Soldier

The piece encapsulates the suffering of a WW1 soldier through contrasting a main mournful theme with horrific and agitated material, the beauty of the Cello's tone quality and timbre serves to highlight the beauty of the life the soldier has lost unnecessarily, juxtaposed by the harsh dissonances in the middle section of the piece. The piece tells a story of war propaganda, disillusionment, and a harsh reality, ending in a lament for the dead soldier. An overconfident, pompous fanfare heralds the beginning of the dramatic middle section.

This was my first time writing for a solo instrument and this pushed me to focus on melody writing leading to the main "Soldier's theme" that prevails within the piece. Through this project I have discovered a storytelling element of composition and how to incorporate this with the particular qualities of the Cello as a solo instrument.

William Dear - The War Machine

In *The War Machine*, instead of examining a particular war or conflict, I've opted instead to more broadly explore the relationship between the innocent, powerless individual and the great, faceless and destructive machine of war, through a relationship between two imbalanced and battling voices. I've greatly enjoyed my time working with the MRF, my mentor Tom Armstrong, and tackling the challenge of writing for a solo instrument. Playing primarily keyboard instruments myself, creating a full and rounded sound from a limited number of isolated lines was my greatest difficulty, but I have found it to be an invaluable learning experience.

Martin Read - The Death of Colonel Boles

Having arrived in Alton in 1981, Martin spent his working life inspiring countless young local people through his teaching of music at Eggars School and at Alton College. In this 10th year since his death, the focus of this special annual festival is to be Martin's highly acclaimed Cantata: *The Death of Colonel Boles*, his setting of the true story of the murder of Colonel Boles in St Lawrence Church in 1643 during the Civil War.

Commissioned as part of Hampshire's Millennium celebrations, on a libretto by Philip Sealey, it was premiered in St Lawrence in 2000, in amongst a re-enactment of the Battle of Alton. This 2023 performance of the Cantata takes place on that same spot as that Civil War murder and follows a year on from the latest re-enactment of the Battle of Alton, April '22.

The work is scored for baritone solo representing Colonel Boles, solo cello, double choir, 3 solo voices, recorder quintet and solo drum.

NEWS: we are delighted to confirm that *Commotio* will be recording *The Death of Colonel Boles*, summer '23, under their director Matthew Berry, with Paul Sheehan and Joseph Spooner, along with Martin's 16-part motet *Death Be Not Proud*.

Martin Read Foundation

Trustees:

Freddie Hodkin, Alex Ling, Beccy Read, Simon Speare & Alison Willis.

Mentors for '23:

Tom Armstrong, Laura Jurd, Pande Shahov, Simon Speare & Alison Willis.

Patrons: Gwyneth Herbert, Howard Skempton and Judith Weir
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MRF runs on a shoe-string!

We are seriously impressed by trustee Alex Ling's:
100 Miles for Martin, 9 - 14th April. Thank you, Alex!

Funds are needed to ensure the continuation of this unique support for young composers, filling the gap between local music service provision and undergraduate study.

You can still support Alex' Crowdfunder - go to
www.crowdfunder.co.uk/search/projects key in: 110 Miles for Martin.

Donations are also welcome direct to the MRF account - either a one-off amount, or a regular amount by direct debit:

MRF acc. no.: 67199909 sort code: 089299 www.martinreadfoundation.org