

PRESS RELEASE

These Days - The Manchester Peace Song Cycle

Celebrated Manchester poet **TONY WALSH** with a team of outstanding composers create an unique first for Manchester.

In this special centenary year, this modern classical song cycle embraces all that we honour in our great city, creating a legacy for our time. Set in **Heaton Park** the '*people's park*' and told through the eyes of the beloved lions, *These Days* fuses music, poetry and drama and will take audiences on a beautiful journey from sunrise to sunset, sharing the tears of war and the joy and laughter of all that we value in peace time.

With libretto by TONY WALSH, commissioned and directed by CAROLINE CLEGG and musical direction by THOMAS D HOPKINSON *These Days* commemorates the park's role in the First World War and its cherished place at the heart of our community. From Suffragette rallies, Grimshaw's joyous gramophone concerts, the Manchester Pals Battalions, the 1939 RAF base, Pope John Paul II's visit, picnics, to Oasis concerts and generations of photos beside the lions. It revels in the sunshine days of childhood and commemorates our universal search for concord.

Composed by a team of outstanding composers, all with Northern connections, whose combined experience covers over five decades: NICOLA LEFANU, EMILY HOWARD, AILIS NI RIAIN, ANNA APPLEBY, LIZZY GUR, LUCY HALE, FREYA IRELAND, GRACE MASON, CARMEL SMICKERSGILL.

Performed by: Chamber ensemble, ADAM RIDING (violin), AMY SURMAN (cello), EMILY WILSON (clarinet), DANNY MILLS (trumpet), PAULA O'MALLEY (percussion), JENNY CARSON (soprano), CHRISTOPHER LITTLEWOOD, (tenor), JOSEPH JORDAN (actor) the HALLÉ TRAINING CHOIR and CHEETWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL.

This is a first for Manchester and the ten songs will be gifted to the community to be used in schools and community groups across the North West.

Additional words and poetry by kind permission of Simon Armitage, the Wilfred Owen Society, Cathy Crabb and Lindsey Williams.

Tony Walsh said:

"Heaton Park is within a mile of my home and I have many great personal and family memories of special times in this beautiful green oasis. It's been fascinating for me to research the park's importance in the lives of generations of Mancunians and the important role it played in WW1 and WW2 and across the decades. The park is the setting for a million stories and I've enjoyed telling a few of them in this important piece. To hear them brought to life by these amazing composers and performers is sure to be a powerful and memorable experience for us all."

Manchester City Council's Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure, Councillor Luthfur Rahman, said:

"Heaton Park has been a favourite destination for generations of Mancunians and is one of our city's greatest green assets. We look forward to hearing this very special combination of stirring music and lyrics, which will be a fitting tribute to a much-loved place with both a wonderful history and an exciting future ahead."

Caroline Clegg founder of Feelgood Productions said:

"It has long been my wish to create something special for Manchester to commemorate the many untold stories of ordinary men and women who have sacrificed so much that we might enjoy peace in our lifetime. Heaton Park is the faithful 'people's park' and it has played such a pivotal role in so many major events in the last 100 years bringing people together to serve, to campaign and to enjoy family life. It has been a pleasure to work with Tony Walsh, the composers and performers to capture the heartbeat of those memoirs and to create something that I hope will be sung in schools and community groups across the region for many years to come".

ENDS:

To Sarah Gormley: sarah@treecomunications.co.uk or on 07919 886488.

Interviews can be arranged with Caroline Clegg, Tony Walsh, composers and performers. If you would like to attend on Wednesday 21st November please let us know.

TICKET INFORMATION:

Public World Premiere Wed 21st November, 7.45 pm

Box Office RNCM: 0161 907 5555 <http://www.tickets.rncm.ac.uk>

Tickets: £15 / £8 concs.

Booking fee of £1 per transaction. No booking fee if purchased in person at box office.