

Press release for immediate use

Scottish Ensemble, Valgeir Sigurðsson, Pamela Carter and Untitled Projects team up for striking new theatrical project, *We Are In Time*

Tue 25 Feb - Fri 6 Mar 2020

Venues across Scotland



(From left to right: Stewart Laing, Valgeir Sigurðsson, Pamela Carter, Jonathan Morton and Scottish Ensemble musicians)

Images available to download [here](#)

- **Highly-acclaimed team of writer, director, composer and orchestra collaborate on an innovative cross-artform project**
- ***We Are In Time* follows the journey of a transplanted heart, told through the stories of the donor and the receiver**
- **Features a new score from ground-breaking Icelandic composer Valgeir Sigurðsson**
- **Part of Scottish Ensemble's 50th Anniversary Season**
- ***We Are In Time* takes place on Tue 25 and Wed 26 Feb (Perth Theatre; preview on Tue 25) / Fri 28 and Sat 29 Feb (Tramway, Glasgow) / Tue 3 and Wed 4 Mar (Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh) and Fri 6 Mar (Eden Court, Inverness)**
- **Tickets on sale at scottishensemble.co.uk**

About the production

Composer

Valgeir Sigurðsson

Writer

Pamela Carter

Musical Director

Jonathan Morton

Director

Stewart Laing (*Untitled Projects*)

Narrator

Alison O'Donnell

Vocalists

Ruby Philogene

Jodie Landau

We Are In Time is a striking new theatrical production – and a bold collaboration between four forward-thinking companies and artists directed by **Stewart Laing** – founder and Artistic Director of *Untitled Projects*, and one of Scotland's most forward-thinking theatre-makers – the production also features a new score from Bedroom Community artist **Valgeir Sigurðsson** and an ambitious new role for Scottish Ensemble musicians, who will act as an on-stage chorus as well as performing live.

Through song, instrumental music and words, audiences will be told the extraordinary story of a transplanted heart, written by **Pamela Carter**. Led by a narrator (Scottish actress **Alison O'Donnell**, well-known for her roles in BBC crime drama *Shetland* as well as *Holby City* and more) audiences will be guided through the story of two people about to be irrevocably connected through an incredible scientific feat: the transfer of a life from one body to another.

Jodie Landau, from Iceland's renowned Bedroom Community label and a frequent collaborator of Valgeir Sigurðsson, will play the part of the heart donor whilst the highly acclaimed mezzo-soprano **Ruby Philogene** will take on the role of the heart recipient. Each waiting on their separate beds, through song – with a libretto by Carter, set to new music by Sigurðsson – they reflect on the end and beginning of life, set to a backdrop of medical information highlighting the virtuosic, precise, extraordinary feat achieved by a team of surgeons, all moving with perfect synchronicity, all in time.

Researching the piece, Carter spent time in Glasgow's **Golden Jubilee National Hospital** with the **Scottish National Advanced Heart Failure Service** speaking to the medical staff, as well as patients awaiting a heart transplant, about their experiences. She even attended two open heart surgeries, and was struck at how compelling and choreographic the operations were in nature. She drew parallels between surgery staff and the musicians of the SE: both technically skilful, delicate and perfectly coordinated. These characteristics fed into her work on the project, which reflects both human fragility and remarkable human resilience and capability.

The production will feature a new score for strings, electronics and two voices by highly-lauded Icelandic composer/producer **Valgeir Sigurðsson**. Known for creating music that defies categorisation and expectations, Sigurðsson melds contemporary classical and enigmatic electronica to create new sound worlds that are at once minimal and complex, beautiful and absorbing.

Performing Valgeir's score, the 12 Scottish Ensemble musicians will become a living, breathing element of the on-stage world; at once providing the soundtrack, acting as curious witnesses to the unfolding drama, and **doubling as a chorus**. This involves not only singing on stage - a nerve-wracking feat for many people - but also the added challenge of learning a lot of lines. The players of the SE are not unfamiliar with pushing the boundaries of what an orchestra can be, however; in their collaboration with Andersson Dance on *Prelude: skydiving from a dream* last season, the musicians doubled as dancers. It's safe to say, though, that their role in ***We Are In Time*** is the musicians' biggest challenge yet.

We Are In Time will tour to Perth Theatre (25-26 Feb 2020 – preview 25th), the Tramway in Glasgow (28-29 Feb), the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh (3 Mar - 4 Mar) and Eden Court in Inverness (6 Mar).

***We Are In Time* is presented in association with Perth Theatre at Horsecross Arts**

Statements from the collaborators

Pamela Carter, Writer, said: *“Working on this project has been a truly unique and eye-opening experience. As part of my research I spent time at the Golden Jubilee National Hospital near Glasgow and was lucky enough to witness open-heart surgery. I was struck by the parallels between the medical staff and musicians of this project: their individual brilliance and their teamwork; their mastery of technologies, and their exquisite timing. Working with music is a new experience for me, and seeing how Valgeir Sigurðsson’s score and the performance of the Scottish Ensemble players fits around the story has been tremendously exciting”*

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Stewart Laing, Director, said: *“I’m directing the project and I’m excited to be staging this original new commission. I’ve directed several operas in the past and this one feels very different and very contemporary – it’s about modern science and advances in medical procedures - and that feels quite unusual for a piece of music theatre. We have two amazing singers in Jodie and Ruby, an excellent group of artists designing costumes, video and light, and the players of the ensemble are world class musicians. It is all coming together thanks to an exceptional team – and I’m very much looking forward to working with them”*

Jonathan Morton, Artistic Director of Scottish Ensemble said: *“For this 50th Anniversary season, we wanted to go back to our roots, and celebrate the practice of story-telling through song which marked the launch of Scottish Ensemble back in 1969 at Ledlanet Nights. We also wanted to explore creative ways of meshing together song, instrumental music, and narrative content - and so gathered the largest team of collaborators to date. Working and developing ideas with Director Stewart Laing, writer Pamela Carter and composer Valgeir Sigurðsson has been wonderful so far, and I am really looking forward to the moment when all of the performers and the creative team meet in the same room and start putting the show together. I hope that the interweaving of a powerful human story, scientific virtuosity, vivid electro-acoustic sound worlds, and distinctive singing voices will cohere beautifully.”*

Valgeir Sigurðsson, composer, said: *“There are so many layers in this production. Firstly, it’s almost a “musical TED-talk” where we hear scientific details and describe the medical procedures in a compelling way. Secondly, it has elements of a religious procession in the teams of surgeons, scientists and hospital staff, who take on a god-like role and go to extreme measures to extend life. And at the centre of all this is the ultra-human story of life and death, and the struggles and complex emotions of our protagonists. I’m trying to use all of these perspectives as the basis for my music.*

We Are in Time presents so many challenges for me as a composer, but it has been thrilling to dig into Pamela’s deep research; the medical procedures and the science and history of organ donation, and it is been an absolute joy to set her text to music. Stewart’s staging will need to involve some complex choreography for the Scottish Ensemble players, who will not only be playing their instruments, but also take on acting- and singing-roles.”

In association with Perth Theatre at Horsecross Arts

Notes for editors

Valgeir Sigurðsson

Valgeir Sigurðsson is an Icelandic composer and producer. His music blends contemporary classical writing and esoteric electronic production, sometimes to a point where one is indistinguishable from the other.

Valgeir worked closely with fellow Icelander Björk, a collaboration which began with her Oscar-nominated score for Lars Von Trier’s *Dancer In The Dark*. He founded the Bedroom Community

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label in 2006 with Nico Muhly and Ben Frost, where he cemented his sonic signature with his own solo work on the label, in addition to albums with Muhly, Frost, Sam Amidon and Daníel Bjarnason, and an extensive collaboration with viola da gamba player, Liam Byrne. His 4th LP DISSONANCE won Album of The Year at the 2018 Iceland Music Awards. Valgeir has performed his work internationally at festivals, concert halls and clubs, and The New York Times named Dissonance Live among the top shows of the 2017 Sónar Barcelona Festival. At Greenhouse Recording Studios, founded by Valgeir in 1997, he has been a collaborator with artists from all over the world, including the likes of Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, Feist, Tim Hecker, Anohni, CocoRosie, Hilary Hahn & Hauschka, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Víkingur Ólafsson and many others, as producer, engineer and arranger.

Valgeir has composed orchestral and chamber music for the likes of the City of London Sinfonia, Winnipeg Symphony, Crash Ensemble, Alarm Will Sound, Nordic Affect and the British violinist, Daniel Piaro. His scores frequently incorporate the use of electronics and have also been performed by the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Spokane Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony and many others. He has written music for stage, dance and screen. His film scores include An Acceptable Loss and the Icelandic feature The County, and his score for the environmental documentary Dreamland (Draumalandið) was nominated for best score at EDDA, the Icelandic Film Academy Awards. His collaborations with German director Falk Richter include SAFE at Stockholm's Dramaten, and Zwei Uhr Nachts at Schauspiel Frankfurt. He produced the music for Robert Wilson's Edda and has composed for contemporary dance productions by Ballet National de Marseilles / ICK Amsterdam and The Stephen Petronio Company. He lives in Reykjavík, Iceland.

Stewart Laing

Currently Associate Director with **National Theatre of Scotland**, **Stewart Laing's** celebrated reputation is entangled with **Untitled Projects**, the company he formed to create one-off, adventurous, truly genre-defying events. His work pushes at the future, probes the social obsessions of the present, and reframes cultural history; it also provokes on an intellectual level, and entertains on a human one.

Directing credits with Untitled Projects include: J.G. Ballard Project, blind_sight, Slope, An Argument About Sex, The Salon Project, Paul Bright's Confessions of a Justified Sinner, Slope Redux. Further credits include: The Maids (Citizens Theatre); Ten Plagues (Traverse Theatre); Les Parents Terribles, Titus Andronicus (Dundee Rep); The Sewing Group (Royal Court); Creditors (Lyceum). Opera includes: La bohème, Così fan tutte (Scottish Opera); The Breasts of Tiresias and L'Heure espagnole (Grange Park Opera); Tosca (NorrlandsOperan); La fanciulla del West, Faust, Dead Man Walking (Malmö Opera). Stewart originally trained as a theatre designer at Central School of Art and Design and has designed throughout the UK, internationally and for the West End and Broadway, winning a Tony Award in 1997 for the musical Titanic.

Pamela Carter

Pamela Carter is a playwright and dramaturg.

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Her work as writer for untitled includes: Paul Bright's Confessions of a Justified Sinner, An Argument About Sex and Slope.

Other plays include: Fast Ganz Nah (Almost Near) directed by Elias Perrig and premiered at Dresden Staatshausspiel April 2013; meat for Peep/Natural Shocks, Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2012 & 13; Skåne (directed by Tim Carroll at the Hampstead Theatre Downstairs in October 2011; winner of the New Writing Commission at the Berliner Festspiele Stückemarkt 2012); Wildlife for Magnetic North Theatre Company (2011); What We Know (directed by Pamela in a co-production with Traverse Theatre in 2010; published by Nick Hern Books);

She also works as writer with Swedish conceptual artists Goldin+Senneby on The Nordenskiöld Model, their long term-investigation into hedge funds, algorithmic trading and the nature of financial reality. So far 'scenes' have been staged in Bucharest, Vilnius, Rotterdam, Stockholm, New York, Aachen and Copenhagen.

Her work as a dramaturg includes: Saturday Night (2011) and the award-winning Interiors (touring internationally since 2009) by Vanishing Point Theatre Co; and, for untitled The Salon Project (2011).

Alison O'Donnell

Alison O'Donnell is an actress from Lanarkshire in Scotland. She is perhaps best known for playing the character DS Alison 'Tosh' McIntosh in BBC One's extremely popular *Shetland* series since 2012. Other TV work includes *Holby City*, while a prolific stage career includes performances in *The Sewing Group* (Royal Court), *Incognito* (Bush), *Boys* (Soho Theatre) and *My Romantic History* (Traverse).

Scottish Ensemble

Scottish Ensemble (SE) is the UK's leading string orchestra; a core of outstanding string players who perform together under Artistic Director **Jonathan Morton**. Based in Glasgow, Scotland, SE inspires audiences in the UK and beyond with vibrant performances which are powerful, challenging and rewarding experiences, crossing genres, styles, musical periods and artistic forms to offer fresh perspectives on classical music.

SE regularly **collaborates with high-profile guest artists**, from trumpeter Alison Balsom and mezzo-soprano Sarah Connolly to cellist Pieter Wispelwey and violinists Patricia Kopatchinskaja and Nicola Benedetti. SE is also becoming increasingly known for its **international collaborations with artists from other disciplines**, from dance and theatre companies to visual artists. Starting in 2014, their series of annual cross-artform collaborations has so far included immersive projects with **visual artist Toby Paterson**; Swedish contemporary dance company **Andersson Dance**; electronic-classical crossover composer **Anna Meredith** and visual artist **Eleanor Meredith**; and, Scottish theatre company **Vanishing Point**.

Alongside performances across Scotland, SE presents concerts across the UK, London and the globe. Recent invitations to tour abroad have resulted in engagements in Taiwan, China, Brazil, the USA and across Europe, performing at prestigious venues from the **Shanghai Concert Hall** (China) and the **John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts** (USA) as well as festivals including the Edinburgh International, Edinburgh Fringe and Thuringia Bach Festivals.

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SE is also **committed to expanding the string repertoire**, with recent commissions including new works from John Tavener, James MacMillan, Sally Beamish, Martin Suckling and Anna Meredith.

Listings

Tue 25 (preview) & Wed 26 Feb at 7.30pm

Perth Theatre

Book online: <http://bit.ly/2Sw87W1>

Call 01738 621 031

Fri 28 & Sat 29 Mar at 7.30pm

Tramway, Glasgow

Book online: <http://bit.ly/2ZB4y3e>

Call 0845 330 3501

Tue 3 & Wed 4 Mar at 7.30pm

Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh

Book online: <http://bit.ly/2L3SEeb>

Call 0131 228 1404

Fri 6 Mar at 7.30pm

Eden Court, Inverness

Book online: <http://bit.ly/2FksaBb>

Call 01463 234 234

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