

Saturday 21 June 10pm Britten Studio

Juliet Fraser

Lament: A ritual of letting go

Juliet Fraser soprano
Christelle Monney mezzo-soprano
Sarah Saviet violin / viola
Soosan Lolavar santoor
Eliza McCarthy keyboard

Lament: A ritual of letting go (2025), world premiere

Trad. MacCrimmon's Lament
Corsican polyphony Miseremini mei
Corsican song Com'aqua linda
Soosan Lolavar (b.1987) Our Sunken World (2025), world premiere

Johann Paul von Westhoff (1656–1705) Imitazione delle campane (Violin Sonata No.3, 1694)
Josquin des Prez (c.1450–1521) Baissez moy
Kassia (b.~805–c.865) Hymn to Pelagia
François Couperin (1668–1733) Trois leçons de ténèbres (1714, extract)

Catherine Lamb (b.1982) Duo (love) (extract from 'the being/the world', 2023/4)
Luke Nickel (b.1988) O ays f (2025), world premiere
Josquin des Prez Petite Camusette
James Weeks (b.1978) Bird-becoming (2025), world premiere

We invite you to read these notes before or after the performance and then immerse yourself in the ritual as it unfolds.

Please reserve applause until the very end.

Duration: approx 60'
no interval

'Lament: A ritual of letting go' is a Britten Pears Arts
co-commission with Klangspuren and MaerzMusik—Berliner
Festspiele, in partnership with Oxford House in Bethnal Green, and
with the generous support of the Vaughan Williams Foundation

MacCrimmon's Lament

Round Cuillin's peak the mist is sailing
The banshee croons her note of wailing
But my blue e'en wi' sorrow are streaming
For him that will never return: MacCrimmon.

No more, no more, no more forever
In war or peace shall return MacCrimmon.
No more, no more, no more forever
Shall love or gold bring back MacCrimmon.

The beasts on the brae are mournfully moaning
The brook in the hollow is plaintively mourning
But my blue e'en wi' sorrow are streaming
For him that will never return: MacCrimmon.

No more, no more, no more forever
In war or peace shall return MacCrimmon.
No more, no more, no more forever
Shall love or gold bring back MacCrimmon.

A Jacobite song lamenting the loss of the famed MacLeod piper,
Donald Ban MacCrimmon, during the rebellion of 1745.

Com'aqua linda

Com'aqua linda chi corri è chi falla da montagna
Pà soprà i petri lisci di ù campà è mett'in ghjò.

*Like the water that flows and falls down the mountain,
Carrying the smooth stones from the fields to the valley.*

Soosan Lolavar: Our Sunken World

Our Sunken World is a tragic folk song in which a scorned woman drowns her unfaithful lover in the sea. As his body lies lifeless in the sand, a group of waiting sirens entice her to join their underwater world. She falls into the depths and becomes a siren herself, ready to coax the next betrayed woman to a world that is free from pain. It is written for voices and a violin whose strings have been detuned by a major 6th, creating an environment that is loose and unsteady. (SL)

Josquin: Baissez moy

Baissez moy, ma douce amie,
Par amour je vous en prie,
Et non feray. Et pourquoy?
Se je faisoie la folie,
Ma mère en seroit morie.
Velà de quoy.

Kassia: Hymn to Pelagia

Wherever sin has become excessive,
grace has abounded even more,
as the Apostle teaches;
for with tears and prayers, Pelagia,
you have dried up the vast sea of sins,
and through penitence brought about
the result acceptable to the Lord;
and now you intercede with him on behalf of our souls.

Pelagia was a notorious courtesan in 4th-century Antioch. Finding herself in church one day, she was so moved by the sermon that she broke down and begged to be baptised. She then disappeared. After her death it was discovered that she had been living a life of prayer and penance in Jerusalem, disguised as a monk known as Pelagios the Eunuch.

Hymn translated from Greek by Antonia Tripolitis

Josquin: Petite Camusette

Petite camusette, à la mort m'avez mis,
Robin et Marion s'en vont au boys joly,
Ils s'en vont bras à bras, ils se sont endormis.
Petite camusette, à la mort m'avez mis.

James Weeks: Bird-becoming

there I heard naught
but sea roaring,
ice-cold wave...
...swan song...
...gannet's clamour...
...curlew cry...
...gull singing...

storms...beat...
...tern echoed...
... eagle screamed

troubled now
the thoughts of my heart,
that I the high streams,
the saltwave tumult
explore alone...
...far from here...
...seeking

for now
my mind writhes...
my heart
mid sea-flood...
greedy and eager,
lone-flyer screaming

The text is extracted from the Anglo-Saxon poem *The Seafarer*, edited to imply a transformation from human to bird. In the first two sections, the narrator is surrounded by the cries of various seabirds as she travels; in the third and fourth sections she appears to identify with these birds, as a 'lone-flyer' driven onwards across the sea by her 'troubled thoughts'. The recitation guides the four performers through a transition into bird-sounds, leaving behind 'human' forms of music-making as the piece continues, towards a euphoric sense of freedom. (JW)

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Dedicated to the memory of Alastair Putt