

# Music We'd Like to Hear

## Friday 3 December 2021

Programme:

Lara Agar | *This Unquiet Autumn* (11')

Laurence Crane | *Natural World* (45')



Rachel Carson (1907-1964) published her first book eighty years ago, in 1941. *Under the Sea-Wind* was swiftly followed by two more books to form the 'Sea Trilogy', and then, in 1962, by *Silent Spring*. Struck by Carson's distinctive voice, which endures as a beautifully poetic yet urgent clarion call in defence of the natural world, soprano Juliet Fraser launched 'The Carson Commissions', a project that pays tribute to and celebrates Rachel Carson and her work. This programme presents the first two commissions: *This Unquiet Autumn*, a setting of Carson's written and spoken words by Lara Agar, and *Natural World*, a partial catalogue of birds and marine life by Laurence Crane, who celebrates his 60th birthday this year.

Lara Agar | *This Unquiet Autumn* (2021)

*This Unquiet Autumn* takes inspiration from the spoken and the written words of American marine biologist, conservationist and writer Rachel Carson. In a quietly urgent re-telling of Carson's warnings, the piece is both a nod to the stormy reactions and controversy surrounding her seminal book *Silent Spring*, and a tapestry of fragments of text from her immensely detailed and gently joyful first book, *Under the Sea-Wind*. In 1962, following the publicity around the publication of *Silent Spring*, Carson spoke to the National Women's Press Club: she warned of the gulf in communication between the scientific community and the general public, and the dangerous dilution by the media and industry of scientific knowledge. Carson urged her audience to educate themselves and not to shy away from 'hard uncomfortable truths'. Six decades later her words still resonate today.



In an assemblage of form, this music is not a narration, nor is it a perfect description of Carson's legacy. Rather, here is an attempt at an experience: uncomfortable, unfinished and unquiet, quietly humorous, a muttering or pondering on Carson's

own voice set amongst a cyclical rumination on the sea, tidal patterns, journeys from birth to death. And, finally, it is a reflection on my own personal (although not unique) failure to do anything to save the natural world, as we know it, from this wild summer.

Lara Agar

Laurence Crane | *Natural World* (2021)



*Natural World* is an unbroken span of music lasting around 45 minutes, which nevertheless can be felt as three distinct movements or large sections. These are individually titled 'Field Guide', 'Chorus' and 'Seascape'.

As in a number of my other compositions for voice, this new work attempts to explore the poetic nature of factual or list-based texts. For the most part, the words that I have compiled and written for this piece are drawn from catalogues of birds and

marine life. In 'Field Guide' the words come from *The Observer's Book of Birds*, a pocket-sized handbook to British birds. 'Seascape' is a response to the work of Rachel Carson and, in particular, the three books that became known as her 'Sea Trilogy'. The texts for this movement are derived in various ways from these books.

*Natural World* is composed for – and dedicated to – Juliet Fraser and Mark Knoop. It is written for soprano and piano but also incorporates a number of electronic elements, mainly through the use of a sampler keyboard. These become more prominent as the piece progresses.

Laurence Crane



Juliet Fraser | soprano Mark Knoop | piano

[www.musicwedliketohear.com](http://www.musicwedliketohear.com)

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**The Carson Commissions** have been generously supported by Arts Council England's National Lottery Project Grants, PRS Foundation's The Open Fund for Music Creators and the RVW Trust. Co-commission partners include Musica Sacra and Oxford Lieder (Crane) and Juliet Fraser (Agar). The project is also supported by Canongate, publishers of a new edition of Rachel Carson's 'Sea Trilogy'. Thanks go to Katie Huckstep at Canongate and Meg Davies at Ki Agency.

Soprano **Juliet Fraser** and pianist **Mark Knoop** have been performing as a duo since 2013. Recent engagements include hcmf // , Cafe OTO, Transit (Leuven), Time of Music (Viitasaari), Klangspuren Schwaz and MaerzMusik (Berlin). Their first programme featured the music of Mauricio Kagel and Laurence Crane, alongside a new song cycle written for them by Matthew Shlomowitz. In 2016, they commissioned new cycles from Bernhard Lang and Michael Finnissy, subsequently released on Kairos and Hat Hut Records respectively.

[www.julietfraser.co.uk](http://www.julietfraser.co.uk)

[markknoop.com](http://markknoop.com)

**Lara Agar** (b. 1995) is a composer and violinist from Suffolk, now based in London. Much of her recent work explores vocality, honing in on accidental, intuitive, instinctive and intimate music-making. A keen collaborator, Lara has worked frequently with artists of other disciplines, most notably choreographer Anthony Matsena. Her work has been performed by ensembles such as Orkest de Ereprijs, Plus-Minus Ensemble, EXAUDI and Quatuor Bozzini. Lara studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Paul Newland and Cassandra Miller, and was subsequently a Junior Fellow of Composition there (2019/2020), studying with Laurence Crane.

[www.laraagar.com](http://www.laraagar.com)

**Laurence Crane** (b. 1961) lives and works in London. He is closely associated with Apartment House, Plus-Minus Ensemble, Ives Ensemble, Cikada Ensemble, asamisimasa and Quatuor Bozzini. Recent works include *Cobbled Section After Cobbled Section*, premiered by the BBCSSO and Ilan Volkov at Tectonics Glasgow; *Pieces About Art*, written for EXAUDI and performed in the PRS Foundation's New Music Biennial; and *Song for Europe*, commissioned by the Risør Kammermusikkfest. *Octet* was shortlisted for a Royal Philharmonic Society award in 2008, and in 2017 Laurence was the recipient of a three-year Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award. He teaches composition at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

[festival-of-laurence-crane-2021.com](http://festival-of-laurence-crane-2021.com)