

HEBRIDES ENSEMBLE

MEDIA RELEASE: 19 March 2015

Transmitting the twitch of an eyelid to Trieste

Musicians in three European cities break new ground this April as they play together virtually using cutting edge technology for the first time.

Composer James MacMillan and Hebrides Ensemble will run a Masterclass with three advanced horn players located in Edinburgh, London and Trieste. The musicians will play excerpts of MacMillan's virtuosic and tempestuous *Horn Quintet*.

LOLA (LOW LATency) technology will be used to link two conservatoires (Royal College of Music London and Conservatorio G. Tartini Trieste) to Edinburgh Napier University. From there, James MacMillan and Hebrides Ensemble will conduct a masterclass with each remotely located horn player. With the connection running at high speed and with minimal latency, each remote horn player will rehearse 1-3 minute sections of *Horn Quintet*, playing live with Hebrides Ensemble while being able to see and hear James MacMillan and Hebrides Ensemble in Edinburgh.

Part of Hebrides Ensemble's education programme, this pilot project will test how computer networks can assist in bringing performers and composers together from across Europe. Technology such as LOLA has the potential to deliver rehearsal, discussion or high quality learning experiences across widely dispersed venues, and by bringing one of the world's leading composers into this context, Hebrides Ensemble can provide a unique learning experience to composers and performers in Edinburgh, London and Trieste in one afternoon. The additional benefits of LOLA are a much lower carbon footprint due to reduced travel and associated cost savings.

James MacMillan:

"Musicians often work with players from around the world and have an instant connection when they meet in person. They share a universal language. I am interested in finding out how the non-verbal ways musicians communicate, which are so important to working well together, are translated virtually across a network like LOLA. Aspects like peripheral vision, breathing (which can tell you if another musician is ready or not), timing, or the twitch of an eyelid. I can also see the potential of this project to deliver masterclasses by great musicians who are perhaps too old to travel to a venue. Other groups have been using LOLA for individual lessons, but Hebrides Ensemble are the first music group in the UK to do a masterclass using the network."

Hebrides Ensemble's Artistic Director William Conway, and horn player Stephen Stirling, will lead the masterclass with James MacMillan. Stephen has performed with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, the City of London Sinfonia, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe.

MacMillan's *Horn Quintet* features 'hunting' and 'battle' horn exclamations, fast melody and a light, dancing section. The piece received its world première in 2007. In advance of the masterclass, Hebrides Ensemble visit four Scottish venues with their 'Horn Quintets' concert tour, combining MacMillan's *Horn Quintet* with Mozart's *Horn Quintet* and a hidden gem of chamber music, Stanford's *Fantasy for Horn and Strings*.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

BROADCAST/PHOTO:

James MacMillan, Stephen Stirling and Hebrides Ensemble break new ground as horn players in three European cities rehearse virtually using cutting edge technology for the first time. A limited number of press tickets are available to observe the masterclass in the Napier University studio (22 April 2015, from 14:00).

To arrange a broadcast from the masterclass, or to reserve a press ticket, please contact James Coutts on 07510 011 294 or email james@hebridesensemble.com.

HEBRIDES ENSEMBLE:

Hebrides Ensemble, based in Scotland, is a collective of world-class musicians from Scotland, the UK and Europe, renowned for its quality of performance and diversity of repertoire presented in highly imaginative programmes. Flexibility is key with repertoire encompassing a wide range of styles in chamber music, music theatre and chamber opera.

Co-founded and led by its artistic director, the cellist and conductor William Conway, the Ensemble has an impressive list of specially commissioned works (over 70 since its inception in 1991), highlighting its commitment to new music and supporting contemporary composers. James MacMillan, whose 'Since is was the day of preparation...' was premièred at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2012 and received it's European première in the Muziekgebouw in Amsterdam early in 2013.

The ensemble tours frequently to venues and festivals throughout the UK and recent appearances include Edinburgh International Festival; St Magnus Festival, Orkney; Aldeburgh Festival, Suffolk; Kings Place and Wigmore Hall, London; Leeds, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Inverness, Perth and Aberdeen.

Hebrides Ensemble has been nominated in recent years within the Chamber Music Category of the Royal Philharmonic Society Awards.

LOLA:

LoLa is the only audiovisual streaming system that allows musicians to play together in real-time over distances in both audio and video. It runs on a typical multimedia PC. To date, it has been used to connect remote musicians using fast academic research networks.

The Royal College of Music, New World Symphony, the Royal Danish Academy of Music and a number of other organisations around the world use LoLa. This project is the first time a performing group not associated with an academic establishment has used the network for a masterclass. The system was first used in a public performance in the UK in September 2012, in a collaboration between Edinburgh Napier University and the Royal College of Music. Acclaimed music producer and musician T Bone Burnett performed at a country music festival in Chattanooga via LoLa from the University of South California.

The rule of thumb for latency is 1 ms to each foot. For example, the distance between a conductor and the brass section of a large symphony orchestra may be around 30 feet - which is 30 ms latency. It is reckoned to be difficult for musicians to play together successfully in real-time above 30ms latency (although not impossible - it depends on a number of factors - genre of music, type of instrument, experience of the musician).

Available for interview:

James MacMillan, Composer
Jennifer Martin, Chief Executive, Hebrides Ensemble
Gill Davies, Digital Producer, Hebrides Ensemble.

Programme details:

MacMillan *Horn Quintet*

Horn Quintets concert dates, venues and booking details:

Stanford Fantasy for Horn and Four Strings

MacMillan Horn Quintet

Mozart Horn Quintet in E flat major, K.407

20 April 2015 @ 1.00pm

Perth Concert Hall

20 April 2015 @ 6.00pm

Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh

21 April 2015 @ 1.00pm

Brunton Theatre, Musselburgh

21 April 2015 @ 7.30pm

Aberdeen Music Hall

For more information, images or to arrange interviews, please contact James Coutts on 07510 011 294 or email james@hebridesensemble.com.

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www.hebridesensemble.com