

FROM WORD TO SOUND

Literature as Muse
in 21st century composition



Hezarfen
ensemble

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Literature has inspired some of composers' most poignant creations, whether by providing programmatic shape, imagery, rhythmic and sonic material or pure inspiration. This collaborative project celebrates literature as the muse for music, recalling pre-classical Ancient Greece's concept of Mousike (Art of the Muses) which contained both word and sound. Central to our programme is the evocative *Oneiroi* by young UK composer Charlotte Bray, inspired by descriptions of these figures thought to have populated dreams in Ancient Greece. Neal Farwell's 'Shroud' deconstructs texts of George Mackay Brown, and rearranges them into pure sound, while Frederic Rzewski weaves a text of Homer, into a striking duet with flowerpots for solo percussionist. Onur Türkmen's *Hat* explores commonality between music and literature in the shape of calligraphy and the notion of line and abstraction common to both music and that ancient art form, while Michael Ellison's *Ariadne's Thread* weaves a labyrinth of subtle paths through the piano and percussion's registral terrain. Two new commissions, one to Mert Kocadayı, and one to UK composer Benedict Todd, reveal young Turkish and UK composers' responses to each's poetic literature —on David Gascoyne, Can Yücel and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, respectively.

Turkey and the UK each boast extremely talented younger generations of composers who work today with a variety of stylistic approaches, and often influenced by each other's music. This project builds a bridge between some of today's most exciting talent in the UK and Turkey, with Hezarfen Ensemble commissioning works by young composers in both countries, with a programme full of exciting, inspiring new chamber works.

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Performers:

Müge Hendekli (piano)

Amy Salsgiver (percussion)

Cem Önertürk (flute)

Word to Sound was first performed at Bilkent New Music Days, May 19 2015, sponsored by British Council

Benedict Todd – Yeşil Gece Müziği
(after Can Yücel and Ahmet H. Tanpınar)*

Charlotte Bray – Oneiroi **

Frederic Rzewski – To the Earth (on a Homeric hymn)

Mert Kocadayı – Cubical Domes (after David Gascoyne)*

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Onur Türkmen – Hat for piano and percussion**

Neal Farwell – Shroud (with electronics)**

Michael Ellison – Ariadne's Thread

*Commissioned for Word to Sound project

**Turkish Premiere



HEZARFEN BIO

Since its formation in January 2010, HEZARFEN ENSEMBLE has had an enormous impact on the contemporary music scene in Istanbul. It has given countless Turkish premieres of works by composers from around the world in innovative formats, while presenting Turkish works to European audiences as well as in Turkey itself. HEZARFEN has appeared on major European festivals including MÄRZMUSIK, (Berlin, 2013), ROTTERDAM OPERADAGEN (2012), KLANGZEIT FESTIVAL MÜNSTER (2013), ISTANBUL MUSIC FESTIVAL (2011/12/16) and at BORUSAN MUSIC HOUSE (2010-2015), AKBANK SANAT (2011), BOGAZIÇI UNIVERSITY (2013), BILKENT UNIVERSITY NEW MUSIC DAYS (2011/15) INSTITUT FRANÇAIS (2011), SAYGUN CENTRE (Izmir, 2012), KOÇ UNIVERSITY (2015) and GOETHE INSTITUTE (2011-15) in Turkey, helping Essen celebrate its year as European cultural capital along with Istanbul in 2010. Two projects in 2015-16 will introduce HEZARFEN to audiences in Trieste and Rome, Italy, for the first time. HEZARFEN's interdisciplinary work ranges from integrating electronics, text and video (*Music of Displacement*) to projects with dance, Music Theatre and chamber opera. From 2015-2020, HEZARFEN ENSEMBLE will take part in *Beyond East and West* a European Research Council (ERC) grant, awarded to world-leading research projects based in Europe, to facilitate HEZARFEN's long-term goal of integrating Turkish traditional instruments and voices into contemporary music. In June 2016, together with NOHLAB (Istanbul) and Zeynep Tanbay, HEZARFEN premiered Michael Ellison and Simon Jones' Total Music Theatre version of Yasar Kemal's *Deniz Küstü* on the ISTANBUL MUSIC FESTIVAL to widespread acclaim.

HEZARFEN ENSEMBLE has commissioned and premiered new works by Onur Türkmen, Turgut Pöğün, Özkan Manav, Chatschatur Kanajan, Yannis Kyriakides, Samir Odeh- Tamimi, Taner Akyol, Ed Bennett, Kamran gnce, and Adrian Hart, amongst many others, and collaborated with VOCAALLAB (NL), YURODNY (Ireland), and ADAPTER (Germany), working with guest conductors such as Lucas Vis, Gergely Madaras, and Daniel Cohen. HEZARFEN was named 'Best Chamber Music Ensemble' by ANDANTE MAGAZINE (Turkey) in 2012. Through its residency at MIAM and its educational programmes across Turkey in partnership with British Council, it plays a key role in the development of new musical voices, providing workshop, commission and performance opportunities to young composers from within Turkey and beyond.

-PROGRAMME NOTES-

Benedict Todd – Yeşil Gece Müziği (2015)*

This piece was written as part of the British Council-sponsored 'From Word to Sound' project. It is inspired by two pieces of Turkish poetry. The striking, vibrant imagery of Can Yücel's *Green Poem (Yeşil Şiir)* strongly suggested a very particular musical soundworld, influencing both my choice of instrumentation and my exploration of primarily colour- and texture-focussed compositional language. The more abstract aesthetic of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's *Beyond Time*, meanwhile, mainly contributed to the fine, phrase-level detailing and shaping of the musical material. The enticing narrative arc of the *Green Poem* also greatly informed the large-scale structural shape of my piece which could, almost, be considered a direct setting of the text, even though neither of the performers ever speaks or sings a word.



Mert Kocadayı – The Cubical Domes (2015)**

The Cubical Domes is a piece composed after the poem of English poet David Gascoyne. The poem is written in 1936 and it is one of the first examples of surrealist poetry in English Literature. As the poem gets blur in meaning and opens itself up to a more clear-expressionist style, music aims to reach the same quality by creating a grotesque atmosphere where incomplete or quite short melodic lines can turn into something more concrete or abstract but follows their path into big scale to enrich their existence in form.

BEYOND TIME – Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar

I am
not within time,
nor entirely beyond;
but in the flux
of an all-embracing, complete,
indivisible moment.
All forms in a trance
of strange dream-tones,
even a windblown feather is not as light as I.
My head a vast mill, grinding out silence;
my heart a dervish
naked of cloak or goatskin,
who has reached his desire.
I perceive the world become
a creeping ivy, rooted in me;
I swim at the centre
of a deep blue light.

Translated by Ruth Christie

Can Yücel – The Green Poem

The more you look
the more the stars multiply,
To count them you'll need
more fingers than you have.
Some stars are audible, some are not,
The more you listen,
the more you'll find in the night.
Sounds come, Some come quickly,
Some take time.

Translated by Feyyaz Kayacan Fergar

Frederic Rzewski – Hymn to the Earth (1985)

Holy Earth, undying Spirit,
So it is with those whom you honor:
Hail to you, Mother of life,
You who are loved
by the starry sky,
Be generous and give
me a happy life in return
for my song,
So that I can continue
to praise you
with my music.

Neal Farwell – Shroud

Seven threads make the shroud,
The white thread,
A green corn thread,
A blue fish thread,
A red stitch, rut and rieving and wrath,
A gray thread
(All winter failing hand falleth on
wheel) The black thread,
And a thread too bright for the eye.

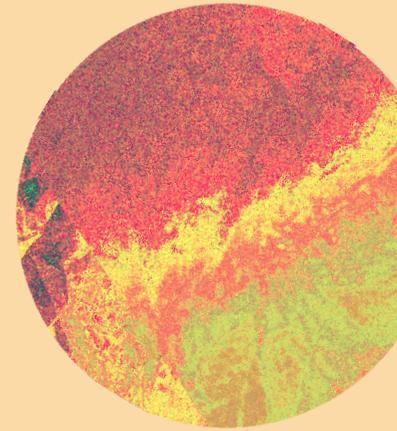
from *Fishermen with Ploughs* by
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Michael Ellison – Ariadne's Thread (2010)

Ariadne's Thread was commissioned by Duo Arcobaleni: Maurizio Ben Omar and Silvia Belfiore and premiered 2 October 2010, Festival "Omaggio alla musica del mare" in Acqui Terme, Italy, for their project *Mediterraneus*. Aside from a short, atmospheric introduction and one interruption, the piece takes a single descending motif in an essentially polyrhythmic setting, and spins the 'thread' of this motive through a series of subtle tempo modulations in an ever-downward spiral for the entire duration of the piece. –*Michael Ellison*

Charlotte Bray – Oneiroi (2013)**

In Greek mythology, dreams are personified by dark-winged spirits called Oneiroi. They emerge at night from their cavernous home in Erebus, the land of eternal darkness beyond the rising sun. According to Homer, the Oneiroi passed through one of two gates: the deceitful dreams through a polished ivory gate, while the prophetic, god-sent dreams issue from a transparent gate made of horn. Since dreams are essentially a private inner space, a hidden dialogue of thoughts and emotions, the parallel of the Oneiroi is fitting in viewing the piece as a Spirit of dreams.



Onur Türkmen – Hat (2010)

"Hat: a line for two musicians." Hat is a compositional approach that is not constructed through a dialectic on the oppositions, contradictions and polarizations of the musical material(s) but rather on a dialectic between composers psyche and hat. Hat- a "line" of maqams penetrating and merging into one another – is gradually sought, communicated with and eventually revealed by the composer. Being inextricable from its single unity, this line is only a phenomenon restricted by composer's seeking, communication and revelation. Therefore its beginnings and endings are ambiguous; it is not a structure; any instance that occurs within the hat does not dictate the existence of another consequent moment. Although there are reminiscences, a hat does not incline towards a reference to a certain culture. Rather it is just another occurrence within a universe with no other diversity than itself: a simultaneous unity of time and space that ceaselessly continues and expands.



HEZARFEN ENSEMBLE

Ilyas Celebi Sokak N9 D8
Kilicalipasa Mahallesi
Cihangir/Beyoglu
34433 Istanbul/Turkey

+90 (0)212 243 5762
info@hezarfenensemble.com

DIRECTORS

Michael Ellison

+90 538 065 3619 / +44 791 043 7747
michael.ellison@hezarfenensemble.com

Ulrich Mertin

+90 530 490 8364 / +49 177 280 5995
ulrich.mertin@hezarfenensemble.com

MANAGEMENT

Şafak Üstündağ

+90 533 9274762
safak.ustundag@hezarfenensemble.com

www.hezarfenensemble.com

 facebook.com/HezarfenEnsemble

 soundcloud.com/Hezarfen-Ensemble

 youtube.com/hezarfenensemble

 Instagram: hezarfenensemble