

Kefala-Kerr, John (2014) Steamsong. [Composition]

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A NEW MULTIMEDIA OPERA

COMPOSED AND DIRECTED BY **JOHN KEFALA KERR**

Saturday 12 July 2014 The Gala Theatre, Durham A very warm welcome to the world premiere of Steamsong, an exciting new co-commission from Brass: Durham International Festival and the National Railway Museum.

Inspired by Mallard's record-breaking 126mph run in 1938, the performance will feature theatrical and vocal performances, projected video, digital sound and live instrumental music. It will be fascinating to see how these elements come together to form this unique piece of work.

Following the preview extract of Steamsong which was performed at Locomotion – National Railway Museum earlier in the year, it will be fantastic to see the final piece presented at the Gala Theatre.

As well as Steamsong, BRASS has a number of innovative new commissions coming up including the premiere of Fractal Sparks, a visual spectacular featuring two of the UK's most original musical talents Jo Hamilton and Lanterns On The Lake, and British Sea Power's Sea of Brass, a brass-inspired performance of the indie rock band's favourite songs from a ten-year back catalogue. There will also be live concerts from jazz trumpeter extraordinaire Jon Faddis, Onyx Brass, The BBC Big Band, The Brighouse and Rastrick Band and The Stars From The Commitments, as well as the return of festival favourite Streets of BRASS, a fantastic and free family event which sees the best UK and international bands bring a party atmosphere to the streets of Durham City.

You can view a full programme of events at www.brassfestival.co.uk

Finally, a huge thank you to everyone involved with Steamsong and to attendees for supporting this event – we hope you enjoy the show.

Councillor Simon Henig Leader of Durham County Council



STEAMSONG

The performance starts at 7.30pm and lasts approximately 60 minutes without an interval

Composer & Artistic Director John Kefala Kerr

Movement Director Paula Turner

Designer Frances Anderson

> Conductor Simon Fidler

Stage Manager Chloe Ribbens

Lighting Design Michael Long

Sound Engineer Chris Prosho

Station Announcer Zoe Lambert

> Frau Sara Lawson

Birdman Chris Vernazza

Driver Joe Euan Williamson

Tommy David Powton

Kinder Charlie Mckeith Tommie Hepplewhite Maisha Rahman

Virtual Kinder Indea Cranner Rebecca Dover Daniel Horne Sam Huish Nicholas Simper Emmanuel Yembe Chorus Hannah Reynolds Emma Banks Alice Robinson Carole King Eleanor Moore Lorna Wright Tim Hockin David Powton Euan Williamson Chris Vernazza Gail Davies

> Violin Ed Cross

Piano Jenny Martins

Harp Janet Bennett

Accordion Amy Thatcher

Double Bass Matthew Rooke

Tuba Will Roberts

Percussion Mark Edwards

Co-ordinator Alison Lister

Filmmaker Alan Fentiman

Original artwork Neil Armstrong

> Design **Sumo**

ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL SUPPORT LOCOMOTION

Stage Manager Dave Bilton Sound Highlights FOR BRASS: DURHAM

Project Lead **Colin Robson** Marketing

Matthew Bateman

FOR LOCOMOTION. NATIONAL RAILWAY MUSEUM AT SHILDON

> Director George Muirhead

> > Events Officer Pam Porter

For the Gala Theatre Manager Robin Byers

Technical Manager Brian Dunn

WITH THANKS TO

Ed Bartholomew **British Film Institute** Alison Burden **Durham Cathedral Professor Agustin Fernandez Alison Grange** Anna Kerr **Denise Kerr** Joshua Kerr James Lancelot **Marine Park Primary School Newcastle University Jackie Palmer Stage School Richard Pearson Ruth Robson Katrin Schulte** Spennymoor Town Band



STEAMSONG

"And she jumped to it like a live thing". With these words, Mallard's intrepid driver, Joe Duddington, described how his "lovely blue streamlined engine" responded during its record-breaking run on the 3rd July 1938. Driver Joe's words (used verbatim in Steamsong) encapsulate one of the opera's key themes: that inanimate things might possess a life of sorts, an idea echoed in the suggestive, shape-shifting forms of that ubiquitous propellant of the industrial age – steam.



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Steamsong's narrative embeds several vignettes, thematically linked and brought together in time and space. Associations are made between a piping hot cup of station tea and the morning mist of the Yorkshire dales, between the compressed fist of vapour driving Mallard to glory and those vulnerable wisps of 'fearful breath' that, four months later, escaped the mouths of German Jews persecuted during the infamous Kristallnacht pogrom of 9th November 1938.

"Who'd dare say lightning never strikes in one place twice?" asks the mucky-faced LNER crew, alluding, on the one hand, to Albert Einstein's famous 1916 thought experiment in which lightning strikes a moving train at both ends 'simultaneously', and, on the other, to the twin bolts of coincidence that saw the First World War replayed on the same ground a quarter of a century later.

In Part X of Steamsong the Station Announcer conjures a wild-haired Einstein travelling in one of Mallard's carriages. The iconic scientist might have sided with German sceptics over the veracity of the British locomotive's achievement, but when driver loe Duddington and fireman Tommy Bray delivered the second bolt for British steam culture by blasting through Little Bytham at 125.88 mph (the first having been delivered four years earlier by the Flying Scotsman as it passed through the same Lincolnshire village at 100mph) the scientist might have waved enthusiastically (being a pacific sort of chap) to an observer watching from the platform. He might even have laughed at the thought of himself playing a bit part in one of his own fables racing "end to end, violin in hand, playing tomorrow's flashy cadenzas", as the plucky narrator puts it.

Breath-driven and metallic, the sound of brass plays a prominent role in Steamsong's twelve brief 'scenes'. Rendered raw and treated, live and virtual, brass is invoked in the words of the libretto, in the dynamic presence of the tuba – lending weighty tonnage to the antique video images of locomotives, lost property and driving coupling rods. Brass features too in the opera's accompanying soundtrack, where time-stretched chords form an acoustical backdrop to a duet between the soprano and the violin, creating an appeasingly dreamy rendition of Vaughan Williams' English pastoral, Serenade to Music, composed in 1938. Amid the newly-composed material in Steamsong is a small pile of 'lost property' to be (re)discovered: British Transport Film Archive footage, fragments of pre and post-war music, 'Prime Minister Chamberlain's umbrella', the sound of an A4 Pacific class locomotive's chime whistle, the words of the modern-day residents of Little Bytham and, as already mentioned, the testimony of driver Joe himself. We might wish to add to that list the Kindertransport children, depicted here in live and virtual form.

The last word in the opera is given over to the inhabitants of a modern-day Little Bytham, who begin Part XI by giving voice to their thoughts, feelings and grievances about living now.

All these elements are represented through a combination of music and sound, voice and language, gesture and action, object and moving image. Thus Steamsong might be thought of as an operatic poem with a structure not unlike that of an umbrella – when open the lines of narrative converge, but when closed the fabric and folds of history face one another and touch.

In creating the piece, I had the pleasure of observing the workings of a railway museum at close quarters. Spending time at Locomotion in Shildon and visiting the National Railway Museum in York on several occasions taught me much about steam culture (including the significance of plasticene and aniseed stink bombs). I talked to visitors, staff, railway artists, train restoration experts and gualified train drivers, and was given privileged access to one of Sir Nigel Gresley's beauties (Union of South Africa) to make a recording of its distinctive chime whistle (it took over seven hours for the boiler to generate enough pressure for the whistle to deliver more than a mere whisper). I attended a steam gala, took a ride in the driver's cab of a steam locomotive, shovelled coal using an authentic fireman's shovel, attended lectures and numerous model railway exhibitions (shooting and editting hours of video footage in the process); I searched Ebay for Acme Thunderer whistles and marvelled when, during an early rehearsal of Steamsong at Locomotion, the trains were put to bed to the sound of my music. Much generosity, friendliness and patience was shown by staff at Locomotion, and unstinting support came from Durham County Council's arts team, which, in partnership with the Museum, commissioned the work.

John Kefala Kerr, 2014



MOVEMENTS

I Prologue

II Cups of Tea III Soot

IV Live Thing

V Fearful Breath

VI Move Again

VII Acme Thunder

VII Speck of Ash

IX Umbrellaby

X Sleepers

XI Little Bytham

XII Epilogue

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Vanished Musicians by Albrecht Dümling (Böhlau); The Kindertransport Association, New York; Serenade to Music by Ralph Vaughan Wiliams (Oxford University Press); Warsaw Concerto by Richard Addinsell (Novello & Co.); Mallard: How the Blue Streak Broke the World Steam Speed Record by Don Hale; The Indian Railways Fan Club (Signs, Whistle Codes, Flag and Hand Signals); Songs of the Rail by Alexander Anderson (Simpkin & Marshall); Railway Stories (National Railway Museum Archive); How to Drive the World Record-Breaking Steam Train Mallard (Mail Online); WW2 People's War (BBC); Dear Mutti: Letters from the Kindertransport (Jspace); Radio Prague; The Gresley Society; LNER Encyclopedia; www.acmewhistles.co.uk; The LNER Society; Rutland & Stamford Mercury; www.greatenglishchurches. co.uk; The Sun; www.thebythams.org.uk; www.hornby. com; The Evolution of Physics by Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld (The Scientific Book Club).

Please join John Kefala Kerr, Caro C and Eve Harrison in the foyer bar from 9.30pm for an informal discussion hosted by fellow musician and composer Andy Jackson.



DON'T MISS THESE EXCITING BRASS EVENTS COMING UP THIS WEEK...

JON FADDIS

with The Andy Champion Quintet Tuesday 15 July, 7.30pm Gala Theatre FRACTAL SPARKS with Jo Hamilton and Lanterns On The Lake Friday 18 July, 7.30pm Durham Cathedral

Once declared the 'best ever' by his mentor Dizzy Gillespie, Jon Faddis evokes the sounds of Louis Armstrong, Roy Eldridge and Miles Davis, all while remaining true to his own. Don't miss this internationally renowned trumpeter extraordinaire as he performs in one of only three UK dates in 2014. Prepare to see Durham Cathedral in a new light with Fractal Sparks, a groundbreaking visual effects spectacular accompanied by specially-arranged songs from Jo Hamilton and a brass-inspired performance from Newcastle-upon-Tyne based Lanterns On The Lake.

Tickets: £15 – £28

Tickets: £12

BRASS:Pitch is a series of newly commissioned works submitted by artists and performers from across England. Each work sets out to challenge our perceptions and understanding of brass music, either through exploring its historical and contemporary social contexts or expanding the boundaries of the genre by creating new forms of music production. The following unique and creative pieces are sure to capture your imagination.

CONNECTIONS

by John and Karen Topping Locomotion – The National Railway Museum at Shildon and Durham Railway Station Standard opening hours

The first permanent artwork to be commissioned by BRASS, Connections presents a traditional brass plaque etched with a railway map of County Durham including branch lines axed on the recommendations of the Beeching Report in the 1960s. Stations have here been replaced with QR codes plotting the locations of the twenty-two senior brass bands still active in the county and taking you directly to a video of a band performing a piece of music of their choice.

HJEM (HYEM)

By Edwin Mingard and Isaac Sakima The Music School, Palace Green Friday II – Sunday 20 July, I 2noon – 5.00pm

A collaboration between film maker Edwin Mingard, composer Isaac Sakima and the Craghead Colliery Band, Hjem (Hyem) celebrates and explores the North East's historic outward focus, and the way this interacts with values of community and belonging. The piece gives a nod to contemporary pop music which is juxtaposed with the traditional, and classically beautiful, surroundings of the Durham University Music School.

Free



THE COMPANY





JOHN KEFALA KERR Composer/Artistic Director



PAULA TURNER Movement Director

John is a graduate of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the University of Sussex. His output includes instrumental, dramatic, orchestral and multimedia works, several of which have been performed and broadcast at festivals and venues in the UK, USA, Europe and Japan. John is a past recipient of the Guildhall School of Music Composition Prize, the Dio Award, the Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust Contemporary Music Prize and the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival Composer's Prize. In 2003 he received the Arts Council Encore Award and in 2006 his orchestral work, Panagia, won the gold medal in the Volos International Composition Competition. His cycle of four ritual operas, Beyond Belief, was commissioned in the wake of the 2001 Cumbrian foot and mouth crisis. Recent work includes Eight Bells, a piece developed in collaboration with marine scientists at Newcastle University's Dove Marine Laboratory, and a new work for brass ensemble written in response to working with prisoners in HM Prison Frankland. John's sound opera, A Sign in Space, received a Journal Culture Award in 2012, and his first novel, Thimio's House, was published by Perfect Edge Books in 2013. He recently created a site-specific sound installation for BRASS: Durham International Festival/ Lindisfarne Gospels Exhibition in Durham Cathedral and is currently working on his second novel.

Paula is a movement practitioner and performer whose professional practice is rooted in helping communities engage in creative activities. She works in nurseries, schools, hospitals, day centres and pupil referral units as well as in theatres, studios and galleries. A Churchill Fellow, Paula is also lead artist for Creativity Matters and the founder of Grand Gestures - Company of Elders, a dance ensemble that practices improvisation in public spaces. Paula has worked as an atelierista at Marine Park Primary School, South Shields, since 2005, working with children and staff to find ways of making learning a vital experience. She regularly collaborates with artists from other disciplines, academics, teachers and health professionals. She is currently collaborating with Doctor Trish Winter of Sunderland University on the Somatic Ethnography of Grand Gestures Elders Dance Group project.







Frances is a Northumberland based artist living in Alnwick. She studied fashion and textiles at Northumbria University and takes her inspiration from the natural world, in particular the coastline and the water. She works across a wide range of disciplines including print, photography, film, kitemaking, textiles costume and lighting design. She swam the Channel in 2008 and will be swimming the Gibraltar Straits in 2015. Her love of the sea and water forms the basis of much of her current photography and printmaking, which explores what it means to be submersed in the water, to feel a deep connection and almost become part of it.

One of Frances' images was selected for the Royal Photographic Society 2013 International Images for Screen Exhibition. She recently held a solo exhibition at the Customs House South Shields and received an Honourable Mention in the 2013 International Photography Awards. Her kites have been seen at festivals internationally in France, Italy and Germany as well as in the UK, and her lighting and prints are featured in selected UK galleries. She has exhibited work in group exhibitions in the UK and Germany.

Frances is co-founder of Dry Water Experimental Arts – an artistic partnership that delivers creative engagement programmes to local communities as well as training for artists and teachers, including training in Early Years. She co-facilitated Arts Lab for the Sage Gateshead and has been joint artist-in-residence (atelierista) at Marine Park Primary School since 2004, working throughout the school from Foundation Stage to KS2. Other work includes cinematographer/ documenter for Grand Gestures Dance Company, documentary photographer and filmmaker for community and arts projects and set consultant and album designer for Jinski and Lucky Smile Records. Zoe is originally from Yorkshire but has lived and worked in the north east of England for 26 years. She has worked with several theatre companies, including Live Theatre (Cabaret, Tales From The Backyard, Personal Belongings, Live Witness, First Draft and the 2013 performance of Tyne); Northern Stage (Wind In The Willows, Threepenny Opera, and many shows for young children); Open Clasp, (Twist Of Lemon, Rattle and Roll, Swags and Tales); The November Club (Teacups, Zebras and Dancing Kaisers, Doctor Mullins' Anatomy of the Theatre Royal, Operation Pied Piper); Tender Buttons (Alice In Bed); New Writing North (We Love You Arthur); Northumberland Touring Company (Tartuffe, As You Like It, Dawn Of The Firefawn). Nationally, Zoe has worked with Northern Broadsides (The Bells, Sweet William, Comedy Of Errors); West Yorkshire Playhouse, The Edible City); Bolton Octagon (The BFG, The Twits, Firebird).

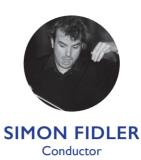
Zoe is currently developing her own work with Carl Kennedy, Mr Doom And Mrs Bloom's Story Emporium, which has been performed at Darlington Jabberwocky Festival and The Late Shows at the Cumberland Arms. Zoe's TV and film credits include Emmerdale, Tracy Beaker, The Royal Today and School for Seduction. She is delighted to be part of Steamsong and has developed a fascination for trains!





Sara trained at both the Royal Northern College of Music and Royal Academy of Music, gaining a First Class BMus Honors Degree and a Post-Graduate Diploma with Distinction. She then gained a place on the professional development programme at English National Opera.

As a soloist Sara has performed throughout the UK, including The Royal Albert Hall, Harrogate International Centre, The Barbican, Bridgewater Hall and Buxton Opera House. Roles performed include Tatyana (Eugene Onegin) Mimi (La Boheme), Fox (The Cunning Little Vixen), Bianca (La Rondine), Mona Morales (Bandanna) and Eartha Waites (Hollow Hill). Sara has been the recipient of various prizes and awards including The Dame Eva Turner Award, The Anne Ziegler Prize, Ludmilla Andrews Russian Song Prize and the Amanda Roocroft Award for the highest final recital mark.



Simon is a choral conductor based in the north east of England. Educated in Newcastle upon Tyne and Sheffield, he is the music director and founder of Voices of Hope, the award winning chamber choir. With premiere performances of new works by Agustin Fernandez, lan Stephenson, Kathryn Tickell and John Kefala Kerr, and collaborations with Sage Gateshead, Northern Chords and Newcastle University, the choir has become one of the most sought after in the UK.

Simon has conducted Royal Northern Sinfonia and Northern Sinfonia Chorus, including an annual Join in and Sing event at Sage Gateshead that regularly attracts up to 800 singers.

Whilst an undergraduate, he founded Newcastle Sinfonietta, a chamber orchestra intended to bring student musicians together with players from the wider musical community. He is the music director of several other choirs: Leeds College of Music Choral Society, Philharmonic Voices, Project: Singing, Femme Chorale and two choirs for Sage Gateshead's Silver programme. He directs Sunderland University Choir, Streetwise NE Opera Chorus and the Music in the Minster Chorus and is a regular guest conductor with the Newcastle University Symphony Orchestra and All Saints Choir, Gosforth. He has also directed Lemington Male Voice Choir and the University choirs of Northumbria and Newcastle.

Simon is one of four British musicians involved in Singing Cities, and this year will travel to Namsos, Brussels and Berlin to work with other conductors, performers and composers on schemes to make singing accessible to all. His Come and Sing days are in demand – he delivers them regularly for Sage Gateshead, 20,000 Voices and U3A, and this year for Leeds College of Music and the West Cumberland Choral Society. Simon is a Lay Clerk at Newcastle Cathedral and studies singing with Alison Barton and Rebecca Coulson.



VOICES OF HOPE

Voices of Hope has been singing together since 2010 when its members assembled for a one-off memorial concert in Newcastle upon Tyne. On that evening the choir raised money for the British Heart Foundation, a charity that calls donations Gifts of Hope. Each year the choir performs at least one concert in aid of the BHF, and the name Voices of Hope has remained since that first performance. The choir has guickly established itself as one of the most versatile and sought after vocal ensembles in the UK.As artists-inresidence at the Newcastle University, the group has performed twice in the King's Hall lunchtime concert series and has enjoyed working with the university's Bolivian composer/professor, Agustin Fernandez. In the summer of 2013 the choir performed his opera, Prison Letters, with musicians of Royal Northern Sinfonia in a festival of art at the university.

With a wide and varied repertoire, Voices of Hope particularly enjoys performing new music. In 2013, the group took part in Create Choral, where North East folk musicians were commissioned to write new arrangements of traditional songs, working with various local choirs. The project culminated in a performance in the Great Hall of the Discovery Museum in Newcastle as part of the Festival of the North East. Voices of Hope was partnered with the world-renowned folk guitarist, lan Stephenson, performing his stunning arrangement of Water of Tyne. Ian has since become a great friend of the choir, and in 2014 dedicated his setting of William Blake's On Another's Sorrow to the group. During Create Choral, Voices of Hope also performed premieres of works by John Kefala Kerr, Kathryn Tickell and Agustin Fernandez. Since then the choir has performed a world premiere performance of Tickell's arrangement of Here Dwells my Heart at Sage Gateshead and formed the chorus of John Kefala Kerr's opera, Steamsong in preview performances at Shildon's Locomotion Museum.

Voices of Hope enjoys a special relationship with Sage Gateshead and has performed its annual Christmas concert twice in the venue's Hall Two. In 2012, VoH performed live on BBC Radio 3 as part of their In Tune programme, broadcast live from the Northern Rock Foundation Hall at the Sage Gateshead. Recently the choir performed David Lang's The Little Match Girl Passion in a late night concert as part of Northern Chords annual festival.

In 2013 Voices of Hope won St Oswald Hospice's Let's Get Lyrical choir competition held at Castle Gate. As a result of this success, the choir has been invited to perform at the annual Light up a Life service at Newcastle Metro Radio Arena. The choir had its first taste of recording last year, producing a CD of festive music for young people, written by composer Paul Kean.







ELECTRO-BRASS

The performance lasts approximately 15 minutes

Electro Brass is a playful collaboration between performing composers Caro C (experimental electronic) and Eve Harrison (contemporary classical). Expect an immersive, spatially-aware world of electronics with lush acoustic harmonies, driving brass riffs and emotive fanfares.

Brass players work for years to disguise or refine the physical processes of playing their instruments to allow nothing but the purity of the musical sounds to speak. Electro-Brass unpacks the physicality, the gurgles, the breaths, the strain of muscle and the spit with the goal of allowing audiences to further appreciate the purity of the music they enjoy.

"We aim to take the audience on a journey from non-musical inner mechanical sounds of the brass instruments through pure, lyrical brass melodies and harmonies culminating in uplifting, beat-led classical and electronic music. Naturally great projectors, brass instruments were initially used in contexts that required sound to travel long distances and arouse listeners. Using contemporary tools and techniques we are able to explore this quality from a fresh and exciting perspective". – Caro C

There are three sections to Electro-Brass, making the most of these composers' distinctive and usually separate skillset. Most of the electronic sounds you hear are recordings taken from the brass instruments – for example the valve action, the nice resonant ping of the bell and the 'helicopter' tonguing. These raw sounds were then creatively manipulated by Caro C and mixed with live playing by the brass trio – Eve Harrison (trumpet), Helen Beauchamp (French horn) and Matt Krenning (Euphonium). Section A draws us into the Electro-Brass sound world with a music concrète (found sound) ambient soundscape gently introducing the brass instruments. Eve Harrison composed Section B that develops rhythmic and melodic fragments from the opening into a soaring and unified virtuosic acoustic brass sound. The final section was devised as a collaboration between the two composers, employing traditional electronic dance music formulae such as 'the drop' into a rather unique context and producing what we hazard to exclaim is the first Electro-Brass fanfare!



With over ten years of live electronic music performance experience, Caro C has been described as a "onewoman electronic avalanche" as well as being dubbed the "British Bjork". Caro's unique and innovative sets allow her to improvise her performances and not only use found sounds, but perceived nonmusical objects to create magical music and sounds. Her category-defying performances have seen her play throughout Europe and release a number of acclaimed albums and soundtracks internationally.



With a strong foundation and training in classical composition, Eve Harrison brings much experience and creativity to the project. Her music has been criticallyacclaimed nationally for bringing "a sensitive and refined imagination" alongside "wit, flair and dash" and her work with artists from other genres has created exciting results such as Alveolar Ridge, a fusion of beat-boxing and clarinet into a sound inspired by Indian classical rhythms.







10th Anniversary Steam Gala

20 and 21 September, 2014 – 10am to 5pm

FREE ADMISSION and FREE PARKING

FREE STEAM RIDES as part of our STEAM WEEKEND EXTRAVAGANZA

Marking 10 years since the opening of Locomotion, the National Railway Museum at Shildon – with guest locomotives including the working replica of George Stephenson's Rocket and the Haydock Foundry 0-6-0 Well Tank Bellerophon.

For more information visit **www.nrm.org.uk/locomotion**

Email locomotion@nrm.org.uk Tel. 01388 777999

