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London Jazz Festival
In association with BBC Radio 3

Mon 19 Nov

Chick Corea & Béla Fleck



Tue 20 Nov

The Steve Reid Ensemble
featuring Kieran Hebden
+ The Heritage Orchestra



Wed 21 Nov

**Tord Gustavsen Trio /
Stefano Bollani & Enrico
Rava**



Thu 22 Nov

**UBS Eclectica:
Fred Hersch Trio**



Fri 23 Nov

Raul Midón



Sun 25 Nov

**Joe Zawinul Tribute
Concert**



Only Connect

Sun 2 Dec

Zbigniew Preisner
Silence, Night & Dreams
With the LSO & special guest
Teresa Salgueiro



Winter Highlights

Sat 1 Dec

Beth Nielsen Chapman
+ Julie Fowlis



Wed 30 Jan

Stan Tracey Big Band
+ Tracey & Keith Tippett

Present Voices



Santa Fe opera production image © Ken Howard



Paris Opéra production image



Theater Erfurt production image © Lutz Edelhoff

Sun 13 Apr 8pm

Oswaldo Golijov
Ainadamar

Haunting memories of playwright
Federico García Lorca and his
violent murder.

Thu 24 Apr 7.30pm

Kaija Saariaho
Adriana Mater

(UK premiere)

A young man seeks revenge for
the violence of his birth but an
unexpected twist brings an
unexpected end.

Thu 12 Jun 7.30pm

Philip Glass
**Waiting for the
Barbarians**

(UK premiere)

In a world of violence one man
seeks to identify the oppressed
from the oppressors.

Tickets from £7 – www.barbican.org.uk/presentvoices – 0845 120 7557

contemporary autumn 07
MUSIC

Plague Songs

Sun 28 Oct 7.30pm

www.barbican.org.uk/contemporary

Free programme



Album cover: Plague Songs

Plague Songs

David Coulter musical director/saw
Leo Abrahams guitar
Michael Blair percussion
Thomas Bloch glass harmonica/cristal
 Baschet/ondes Martenot
Ralph Carney horns
Roger Eno keys
Rohan Kriwaczek violin
Ray Majors guitar
Rory McFarlane bass
Jean Jacques Palix laptop
Kate St. John oboe/cor anglais

Special Guests

Damon Albarn
Kenny Anderson
Sandy Dillon
The Handsome Family
Imogen Heap
Daniel Knox
MC Spooka Tobz & Jackapella
Phil Minton
June Tabor
Rufus Wainwright
Patrick Wolf

with

Sense of Sound Choir
New London Children's Choir
Richard Strange narrator
Chahine Yavroyan lighting designer



Still from Exodus © Penny Woolcock

I first visited Margate with filmmaker Penny Woolcock in January 2002, hoping to interest her in collaborating with Artangel. Something about the place suggested the biblical story of Exodus – an epic and timeless tale of migration and the arduous search for a promised land.

Before we knew it, we had embarked on the planning of a film which would incorporate a series of ambitious live events and involve as many Margate inhabitants as possible. We imagined the ten biblical plagues as songs specially written by some of the world's best, to be played live at the Winter Gardens in Margate by local residents. The briefs we gave the songwriters couldn't have been more open. I'd like to thank them for taking on such an unusual commission and 4AD for putting it out on CD.

For tonight's *Plague Songs* at the Barbican, conversations between myself, Bryn Ormrod and David Coulter have taken the idea a stage further and expanded the range of afflictions to coincide with *EXODUS* at the London Film Festival and on Channel 4 next month.

– Michael Morris
 Co-Director, Artangel
 October 2007

London has seen some extraordinary multi-artist, cross-media, creative music events over the past decade: evenings dedicated to Harry Smith, Leonard Cohen, Nino Rota, Bernard Herrmann and even Walt Disney. Typically such events involve contributors from pop, rock, jazz, the avant-garde and all points beyond and between, and the result can be a magnificent melange of entertainment and art. One common element to such events - in spirit and reality - is the maverick record producer Hal Willner. Another is multi-instrumentalist David Coulter. Both have important roles in *Plague Songs*.

Tonight's event has its genesis in *Exodus*, a project commissioned by Artangel in 2006 that linked present-day migration to the biblical legend. Set in Margate, and involving a large number of locals (both native and immigrant), a series of dramatic live art events were staged for Penny Woolcock's film *Exodus*. One element of the many-stranded venture (another was Antony Gormley's burning *Waste Man*) re-imagined the story of the Plagues of Egypt in song form.

To this end, Willner and Artangel co-director Michael Morris compiled wish lists, and commissioned new pieces from ten musicians/teams: Rufus Wainwright, Imogen Heap, King Creosote, The Tiger Lillies, Klashnekoff, Scott Walker, Laurie Anderson, Cody ChesnuTT, Stephin Merritt and Brian Eno with Robert Wyatt. The recording was released (on 4AD) and Coulter supervised a subsequent concert in which local musicians performed their own versions of these songs at Margate's Winter Gardens.

For tonight's concert, musical director Coulter (who also plays didgeridoo, musical saw, violin and nearly 20 other instruments) has assembled a line-up of highly individual



Imogen Heap © Jeremy Cowart

vocal and instrumental talents. This includes Wainwright, Heap and King Creosote from the original album project plus June Tabor, The Handsome Family, Phil Minton, 'Voodoo Blues Preacher' Sandy Dillon and Daniel Knox and the Sense of Sound Choir and several artists still to be confirmed at the time of writing.

There are two parts to the event: the first is based on the *Plague Songs* featured in the album, while part two will feature several brand new 'plagueworks', including a Plague of London anthem, composed by The Handsome Family, Roger Eno, Sandy Dillon, Kate St. John, Jean Jacques Palix and Phil Minton.

The ten plagues are Blood, Frogs, Lice, Flies, Death of Livestock, Boils, Hail, Locusts, Darkness and Death of the Firstborn. Many of the songs show a decidedly modern sympathy for the dumb creatures who plague Moses and his posse; King Creosote's Kenny Anderson writes *Relate The Tale* from the 'point of view of the poor frogs' while Imogen Heap's *Glittering Cloud* explains the tragic, Jekyll-and-Hyde existence of the much-maligned locust: 'Save me, save me, save me from myself.' Tabor will perform an unaccompanied version of Laurie Anderson's *Death Of Livestock*.



David Coulter

Margate-based MC Spooka Tobz & Jackapella, a grime / hip-hop / drum and bass trio, will perform Klashnekoff's *Blood*, while veteran improviser Phil Minton will sing Scott Walker's *Darkness with the Sense of Sound Choir*, who will also perform a vocal version of the Eno/Wyatt song *Flies*. Coulter explains: 'Some of the songs will be quite faithful to the originals and others will be twisted in some way. The mix is so exciting. To get to be in a studio for two days with these people is incredible for me.' The Tiger Lillies song *Hailstones* will be performed by Chicago-based David Lynch alumnus Daniel Knox. Coulter describes him as 'a singer-songwriter cinema-projectionist who is the most amazing artist I've heard in a very long time—an incredible discovery.'

Coulter was MD for the Burroughs-Waits-Wilson collaboration *Black Rider* (at the Barbican Theatre) and *Monkey*, Damon Albarn's ambitious music theatre extravaganza for the Manchester International Festival, in addition to his work on Hal Willner projects, which celebrate the work of Leonard Cohen (*Came So Far For Beauty*), Nino Rota and sea chanteys (Rogue's Gallery). 'I have been fortunate to work with Hal on a few projects and have learnt from the master,' he says. 'I have always loved the process as well as the

performance—the alchemy happens when the common aim is to make something that is both a good show and a musical experience that makes people think a bit more deeply about how we listen to songs.'

So to foster such alchemy, *Plague Songs* employs a 'dream band' in which each musician and singer is an originator. The *Plague Ensemble* includes drummer Michael Blair, the lynchpin of one of Tom Waits's classic line-ups (listen to *Swordfishtrombones*) and saxophonist Ralph Carney, another Waits veteran. Other band members include Kate St. John (reeds) and Thomas Bloch (glass harmonica, ondes Martenot and cristal Baschet), both veterans of the *Black Rider* band, and Rohan Kriwaczek, president of the Guild of Funerary Violinists; together with Roger Eno (keyboards) and innovative guitarist Leo Abrahams.

None of the musicians or singers featured tonight was ever hired to play it safe. Coulter says that he is 'trying to factor in an element of danger.' The result is 'Plague Universe' of songs, in which nothing is safe or predictable. Just like Moses's celebrated journey, in fact.

The film *Exodus*, commissioned by Channel 4, will be broadcast on Channel 4 at 9pm on Monday 19 November.

©John L. Walters October 2007

John L Walters writes about music for the Guardian and is the editor of *Unknown Public and Eye*.

Composers' notes

Plague Pieces for Solo Funerary Violin. Dedicated to the art of Funerary Violin, a tradition once at the heart of our notions of mortality but now neglected if not forgotten; the Guild of Funerary Violinists raises

awareness of both the wealth of music composed to accompany the laying to rest of a departed soul and the profundity of ritual and symbolism associated with mortality, that seems to be lacking in today's culture. It is only by staring Death in the face that you can truly say you have known Life; and by losing that which you hold most dear that you can truly say you have known Love; such is the Art of the Funerary Violinist: Nullus Funus Sine Fidula.

—Rohan Kriwaczek (current Acting President of the Guild of Funerary Violinists)

My *Plaguework* is called *We All Fall Down*, and is based on the nursery rhyme *Ring Around The Rosies*.

While the *Plague Songs* album identifies each individual curse, I wanted to write a song that celebrates all ten plagues together. Embracing both bubonic and modern day ailments, the piece attempts to redress the balance by saying, 'we're all in this together, so lets go out singing!'

—Sandy Dillon

The more I thought about picturing a plague, the less I liked the idea. Plagues kill people—they're certainly not entertainment. I wanted to improve people's lives, perhaps for just a few minutes. I therefore began to think on cures rather than illustrations. I decided we need a remedy for 'busyness', as this seems to be a modern plague. What a diabolical trick it is to get people to work on the train whilst travelling to work and then work on the way back as well. I am going to attempt an antidote!

—Roger Eno

Plague of Isolation and Old Age. Loneliness and old age is nothing new but by 2050 there will be twice as many over 85s as there are now. Medical advances prolong life but the quality of life has not kept up.

Nowadays there are myriad forms of isolation experienced by the elderly exacerbated by plagues of super bugs and the ravages of dementia and strokes. A life without dignity, outliving your friends and sometimes your children can be a terrible existence not a blessing. Longevity comes with a price.

I cease being us
And am again this I
With its burden of winter
And emptiness.
(Poem by Claribel Alegria)
—Kate St. John

As my main activity is to compose music and soundscapes for film and dance, my role in this concert is to create abstract sceneries for these ten calamities.

Disease, the special electroacoustic piece I score, evokes plague as an epidemic disease which was probably what happened with the livestock (5th plague). As in Albert Camus's French novel, *La Peste*, this affection works as a metaphor.

—Jean Jacques Palix

A Plague of Humans, an apocalyptic hobo-billy number, yodels its way to the end of the world. It celebrates Homo Sapiens unique ability to ruin everything. These days even the irradiated zone of Chernobyl has become a haven for wildlife due to the refreshing lack of humans.

—The Handsome Family

I've always been terrified of germs. But, like it or not, our bodies are filled with them and we share bacteria as often as we share each other's company. In *Boils*, our narrator lists his symptoms while wondering if they could be the manifestation of some inner crime. He falls apart while everyone else goes on with their life and little animals cart him off to be given back to the Earth. In my sickest

moments I've wondered if I were being punished by God, but then I remember the terrible things humans are capable of and I blame them instead.

– Daniel Knox

Joyous and Jubilant, Now I Go Better On My Way.

Phil Minton

This piece is referential to Minton's development of his brainchild The Feral Choir. He runs a series of workshops leading to performance, not only for singers but for anyone who enjoys the freedom of experimentation. He says, 'I encourage participants to take a vocal leap and explore vocal possibilities through exercises and improvisations. This new piece is an exploration of my conviction that the human voice is capable of far more than is generally understood. *A Plague of Voices for London.*'

–David Coulter

Plague of Apathy.

At twenty four, half my life has been without internet and the other half with. A new generation comes into social networking information at the same time the world falls into a state of neurotic terror, causing countries to attack or destroy each other's ideologies. Many mothers' sons die on burning soils in the Arabian deserts. As a daughter counts her friends on a social networking device, a son races cars with joysticks to kill computer-generated streetwalkers. The count of casualties rises. The plague continues to spread. The world loses a generation of human lives.

– Patrick Wolf

Plague: Title tbc

Damon Albarn

I hoped by chipping away over the last few months I'd irritate Damon into writing a new

piece for this evening's event. When in his new studio, last Tuesday, he and I discovered a new way of playing a new instrument using 4 hands, I realised that he was creating something very original and yet that sounded ageless. We laid down tracks of piano, drum machine, saw and a French keyboard/monochord from 1888 (the year Jack The Ripper murdered 6 women within spitting distance of where you are sitting tonight) played with eraser-headed pencils, and made it a twisted plague-pit-fairground of a song. When Damon put a guide vocal down it was like being electrocuted in the control room. I was shocked and moved by its beauty, anger, the celebration and sadness. As I write, the song is not yet complete, the text not written but by the time you hear it a new plague era may have started?

– David Coulter

Produced by the Barbican in association with Artangel.

www.margateexodus.org.uk

Artangel

Media Partner Plan B



Plague Songs is part of the **Only Connect** series, the Barbican's innovative series that brings together the worlds of film, music and art by inviting exceptional musicians, composers, artists and filmmakers to develop collaborations and present new work.

There will be an interval in tonight's concert. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on the Barbican premises. No cameras, tape recorders or any other recording equipment may be taken into the hall.



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featuring contributions from:

- Brian Eno with Robert Wyatt
- Imogen Heap
- King Creosote
- Rufus Wainwright
- Scott Walker
- Stephin Merritt (The Magnetic Fields)

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www.margateexodus.org.uk

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