

# Hannah Peel & Paraorchestra with Charles Hazlewood

**Doors:** 7pm

**Lloyd Coleman & Paraorchestra: Latent Bloom:** 7.30pm

**Interval**

**Hannah Peel & Paraorchestra: The Unfolding:** 8.25pm

**End time:** 9.25pm

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

## **Arwa Haider spoke to conductor Charles Hazlewood about Paraorchestra's collaborative new project with acclaimed electronic musician, Hannah Peel.**

Elemental forces align and intertwine in *The Unfolding*: a new work by Mercury and Emmy-nominated musician and composer Hannah Peel for the acclaimed Bristol-based ensemble Paraorchestra, conducted by its Artistic Director Charles Hazlewood. This music sounds elegantly reflective, subtly powerful, beautifully uplifting, and deep-rooted in a collaborative process that commenced several years ago and naturally came to fruition. *The Unfolding* yielded an album release last month (on the Real World label), and tonight, it's performed live in its entirety in the Barbican Hall.

Paraorchestra, who also feature Hazlewood's new 6-part documentary series for *Sky Arts, Reinventing The Orchestra* airing weekly from 6 June, were originally founded by the conductor as an ensemble of disabled and non-disabled professional musicians with an expansive creative scope. He explains: 'Paraorchestra is about levelling the playing fields and shining a bright light on the injustice that disabled people are fundamentally overlooked in the music industry. But it's also more practical than that; it's saying: why would you miss out on talent, because a person doesn't fit a certain mould? It's a dizzying, world-changing opportunity to embrace all these sounds from conventional orchestras, and really explore that sweet spot between where the acoustic instrument stops, and the digital or analogue instrument begins.'

When Hazlewood approached Peel to compose for Paraorchestra, the project was fuelled by mutual respect and excitement, and grounded in Paraorchestra's 'research and development' process, where ideas were collectively explored and intuitively shaped.

'I was struck by the amount of energy that Paraorchestra have onstage,' says Peel. 'They're not an ensemble of session musicians; you're scoring more for individuals and personalities. It was about finding something that meant that I could connect with them together as a group. And that, fortunately, turned out to be *The Unfolding*.

'I just went from a place of where I find solace, which is in nature. I wanted to draw out the finer, tiny details and the quieter moments, because we all have them.'

Peel adds that she'd also been inspired by Robert MacFarlane's psychogeography book *The Underland* (with its observation that 'to understand light, you need first to have been buried in the deep-down dark'). While *The Unfolding* emerged within the fragmented timeframes of the pandemic era, the music irresistibly began to gel:

'The title track starts with Victoria Oruwar's soprano voice, which is underpinned by a flute, completely in unison,' says Peel. 'I wanted a kind of universal language, that almost felt like you're finding the words in your voice for the first time; that feeling of springtime, rooting and blooming again, and flight, really set the tone for the magnitude of *The Unfolding*.

'I'd gone into R&D (research and development) really wanting to explore geology and where we've come from – applying that to the Paraorchestra and the body in human form. I kind of wanted to create the underworld and get instruments that sounded like to me that they could come from there; the low wind section felt almost like the breathing of the earth.'

'*The Unfolding* is really epic in scale and length and breadth; it's a fantastically ambitious and wide-ranging,' says Paraorchestra Associate Music Director and clarinetist Lloyd Coleman. 'I love the way that Hannah collaborates with people; she genuinely wants to create new soundworlds from the musicians that are presented to her.'

barbican

Coleman was also enlisted by Hazlewood to create a 'parallel world' to *The Unfolding*; his composition for Paraorchestra, *Latent Bloom*, opens tonight's concert, and explores the entangling of nature, science and technology, with a nod to musical influences ranging from computer music visionary, Laurie Spiegel, to contemporary classical and prog rock works.

*Latent Bloom* also takes its title and inspiration from a visual art collection from Coleman's long-time friend, photographer Jack Latham, who processed floral images through an algorithmic programme, creating mesmerizing patterns and 'blossoms'.

'*Latent Bloom* relates to Hannah's interest in the natural world, but also speaks to another theme I'm really interested in, which is AI and algorithms, and how these mysterious, highly mathematical structures impact our life in the modern world,' says Coleman. 'I wanted to give Steve Varden [Paraorchestra electronic multi-instrumentalist] a key role in it; he's a phenomenal musician, with a whole bank of effects pedals, sound generators, all kinds of things, and it explores the intersection of algorithms, nature and beauty.'

Latham's images form a visual backdrop to tonight's opening set, while *The Unfolding* features atmospheric lighting from design studio Flat-e ('They give a kind of radioactive glow to the show, a vibe you don't necessarily associate with an orchestra,' says Hazlewood). The concert will be BSL (British Sign Language) interpreted.

'One of the things that's come across in performing *The Unfolding* is how optimistic it is,' says Peel. 'There was obviously a certain anxiety and craziness going on when we were in pandemic lockdown, and at that time, I thought I was writing something quite dark – but now, experiencing it, you realise it's come out as this beautiful kind of unity and celebration of life.'

'The sense of a collective building, through colour and texture is ecstatic,' enthuses Hazlewood. 'I love that *The Unfolding* has a long period where it's very minimalist, sparse and delicately perfumed, like a flower pre-budding – and then, other moments where it's kind of Amazonian and fiery. 'Our soprano, Victoria, does her trademark 'floating' above textures, as if she's viewing the landscape from very high up, perhaps even in space. It's a really delicious, sort of *gentle* rollercoaster ride.'

## Performers

**Hannah Peel** composer, vocals, synths & electronics

**Charles Hazlewood** conductor

**Charlotte Harding** orchestration

**Lloyd Coleman** composer (*Latent Bloom*)

**Chloe Vincent** flute & alto flute

**James Risdon** recorders

**Guy Passey** clarinet & saxophone

**Lloyd Coleman** clarinet & bass clarinet

**Linton Stephens** bassoon

**Steve Varden** electronics

**Jonny Leitch** drum kit

**Harriet Riley** percussion

**Hannah Peel** synthesisers

**Hazel Mills**

**Victoria Oruwari** voice

**Hazel Mills**

**Tom Wraith** cello

**Hattie McCall Davies**

**Patrick Phillip** double bass

Produced by the Barbican

The Unfolding, Hannah Peel & Paraorchestra, released on Real World Records  
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