

SPA SONGS

Fay Nicolson



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The Brunel Museum
8pm Monday 10 September 2018

Performed by:

Alistair Coffey, Rachel Horwood,
Sarah Johns, Jenny Moore, Fay Nicolson,
Colleen O'Brien, Louise O'Connor.

Commissioned by:

DKUK

Invocation

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Bermondsey Motet

Leaden and Deadly

The Wall is a Road

Things can be Difficult
(when they are overladen with meaning)

Bermondsey Motet

Take me down to the silt upon the shore
Tide is out and the air is raw
Take me down to the foam upon the waves
Tide is in and there's nothing left to save

There's a place below the surface where I know I'll want you more
On the bed there is an amulet I used to wear before
I lost it by the river, my talisman, my ring
If you place it on my mouth I can eat and breathe and sing

Oh, oh oh oh
Oh, oh oh oh
Oh, oh oh oh
Oh, oh oh oh

If I reach you I will burn
If I don't reach you I will drown
If I reach you I will drown
If I don't reach you I will burn
(x2)

Bur ur ur ur ur urn
(x4)

The mood has changed, the river swells
Flowing forth, n gushing n gasping

Tears of tan, milk of lime
Sulphide, Cyanide and Amine

Two whole weeks, you were alight
Abbey, warehouse, workhouse, my house

Sweet retreat to total decline
Deeper water, cheaper labour

(x2)

.....labour

(at the same time as repeated 2nd verse)

Take me down to the silt upon the shore
Tide is out and the air is raw
Take me down to the foam upon the waves
Tide is in and there's nothing left to save

Leaden and Deadly

textures

waves: D#-E / F#-G# / A#-G#

My leather bound
feet pierce the cold
body of water.

My weight drags me.
My hair swirls around my panicked face,
mouth full of algae
and oily water.

Layers of cloth are black and heavy.
My high heels are no longer sexy,
they are leaden and deadly.

Leaden and deadly

Leaden and deadly

*They thrash, clanking corrugated iron,
my coat is a shroud and my jeans are sodden.
Flesh pin pricked and frozen
but adrenalin makes me **feel on fire**.*

Suddenly, without control, I surface
Gasping I raise a hand
and squeeze the water from my stinging eyes.

I can see the edge.
The dock is near enough
to swim to
but as I struggle forward,
breathless,
I sense its height.

*Too high for me to reach,
Too high*
I can never get out,
nothing to grasp, (fuck)

I know I am stuck
and I start to sink again.

Cold black. A small light behind
The surface hints
that there is life,
acknowledgement
and power

**But it cannot wake up,
It cannot register.
It cannot turn on.**

Ka ka ka-a (F#-G#) / k k k k k (A#-G#)

**Communication is communion
Communication is communion
Communication is communion
Communication is communion**

The Wall is a Road

The fine line
between
creation and destruction

Is a high wall
that leads
to nowhere but to itself.

I run along
this boundary
Both compelled and repelled

by fear of failing
To keep
the balance between them both.

Its end and beginning
Collide to render each other
Obsolete

He tore down the wall
that we used to
keep each other
at a distance

(x4



Things can be difficult

We dance
 closed eyes raised arms
We dance
 closed arms raised eyes

We dance
 closed eyes raised arms
We dance
 closed arms raised eyes

I look weak I am weak
he takes a swig of water
spits it out all over
me. My dress is soaked.

Am I ashamed or angry
That boy should know better
But I am lost and light and
it floats over me

A girl gives me her number
But I never called her
dark nights of indulgent
possibilities

How did we get home?

We are dancing
We sleep we wake
We fuck I faint
I fit I'm falling

We are dancing
We sleep we wake
We fuck I faint
I fit I'm falling

Deep below the stream drives lost turbines
Deep below the stream drives lost turbines

Down down down down
Down down down down
Down down down down
Down down down down

Things can be difficult when they are loaded with meaning
Things can be difficult when they are loaded with meaning
Things can be difficult when they are loaded with meaning
Things can be difficult when they are loaded with meaning



SPA SONGS is song cycle composed as an intuitive and abstract response to Bermondsey and the surrounding area. Nicolson focuses on motifs that recur throughout Bermondsey's history; communities of retreat; tidal rhythms of flooding and burning; polyphony and palimpsest. As an avid and eclectic listener, Nicolson has developed an acoustic perspective of Bermondsey, imagining Motets spilt from the Cluniac Abbey, Folk from the dock in bloom, Punk from its decay, and melancholy House from the Woodmill a decade ago. These influences have been melted and channelled into a sensitive polyphonic work that offers a personal perspective on place and voice.

Nicolson drew on her experience of the Dalcroze method of music education to teach **SPA SONGS** to a group of performers, incorporating simple movement and costume into the final work.

SPA SONGS originally exists in the form of 4 demos (which are also loose scores). Nicolson has arranged these works for 7 voices and invited 6 performers, who are also as artists and musicians, to realise this piece as a live work. The performers bring their varied skills and experience to the project, many being long-term collaborators.

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SPA SONGS is commissioned by **DKUK** and takes place alongside a solo exhibition, **Sound Before Symbol**, on until 16 September 2018.

Nicolson's exploration of the Dalcroze method has been funded by an a-n Artist Bursary 2018. The performance and solo exhibition are supported by ACE via **DKUK**.

Fay Nicolson (b. Derby 1984) graduated from the Royal College of Art 2011 and CSM 2006. She lives and works in London.

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Still Photography: Alex Rimmer
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Annie Hannam-Pearson, Eleanor Roser
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