# SPA SONGS Fay Nicolson

# SPA SONGS

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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 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.

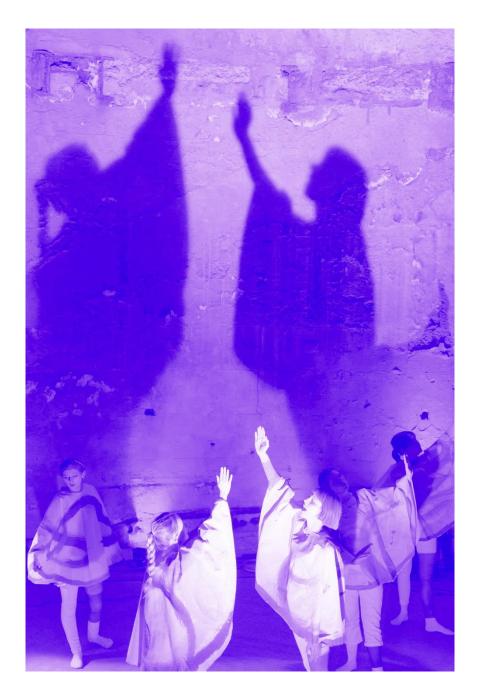
I run along this boundary Both compelled and repelled

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

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.

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

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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.* 

Camera and sound: Johnston Sheard Still Photography: Alex Rimmer Assistance: Josh McCauley, Annie Hannam-Pearson, Eleanor Roser Curatorial Support: Heather Blair Commissioned by DKUK

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