**Ruaraidh Williams**

**Performance Information**

**Ruaraidh Williams *This Morning I Watched From Here***

Instrumental ensemble Duration 5’ 37”

**Any Enemy Ensemble: Guera Maunder** violin, **Alison MacDonald** cello, **Catherine O’Rourke** flute**, Fiona Gordon** oboe **Lucy Webster** bassoon **Pauline Black** trumpet, **Brodie McCash** and **Peter Ney** percussion

Recorded at The Lemon Tree, Aberdeen in November 2019 as part of the 2019 Sound Festival

**Text**

***Hotel Room, 12th Floor***

This morning I watched from here a helicopter skirting like a damaged insect the Empire State Building, that jumbo size dentist’s drill, and landing on the roof of the PanAm skyscraper. But now midnight has come in from foreign places. Its uncivilised darkness is shot at by a million lit windows, all ups and acrosses

But midnight is not so easily defeated. I lie in bed, between a radio and a television set, and hear the wildest of warwhoops continually ululating through the glittering canyons and gulches— police cars and ambulances racing to the broken bones, the harsh screaming from coldwater flats, the blood glazed on sidewalks.

The frontier is never somewhere else. And no stockades can keep the midnight out.

*Norman MacCaig*

**Programme Note**

*This Morning I Watched from Here* was inspired by a Norman MacCaig poem – *Hotel Room, 12th Floor* – which I was studying in my Higher English class at the time. Immediately I knew I wanted to write a composition for it. The opportunity came when I was selected to compose for Aberdeen's contemporary music ensemble Any Enemy as part of Sound Festival 2019. MacCaig’s poem depicts the bright modernity of 1960s New York, juxtaposing light and dark, ’civilised’ and ‘uncivilised’. The bustling drive of the city and vibrant downtown jazz clubs contend with greater, darker forces.

The process began on the piano with a variation of an Eb major 7 chord which I used to anchor the composition. Improvising around my key chord – gradually building an ostinato – I discovered progressions and harmonic movements that reflect the push and pull of light versus dark. I introduced moments of discordance and rhythmic contention to convey the idea of the ‘inner savage’ and inherent violence within society – not outwith it. The sighing melody of the second half conveys MacCaig’s contemplation of the city night and links the wild west with the ‘frontier’ which is ‘never somewhere else. And ‘no stockades can keep the midnight out’ referring to the violence and unrest he witnesses while in New York.

Along the way I was given the opportunity to test my ideas in rehearsal with Any Enemy. This, in itself, was an inspiration and helped me discover the qualities of the ensemble and how the mix of players and instruments blend. These sessions sparked my imagination, leading to further creativity as I developed and adapted my piece. I jotted down thoughts and ideas during the session and afterwards decided whether to include them. Using these rehearsals as a focus, the piece was almost complete; all that remained was one final draft: edit, adapt, finesse … Finally, the piece was performed at The Lemon Tree in November 2019 and recorded by BBC Radio for future broadcast as part of its new music strand.

**Biography**

Since 2017 I’ve been exploring composition and developing my writing skills and style with composers from a broad range of musical approaches and backgrounds through Get Composing, GoCompose! Sound and Music Summer School and The Commonwealth Resounds. Working with professional musicians such as Red Note Ensemble, I’ve steadily grown more confident in forming and expressing new ideas, putting them to score and bringing them to life. In 2018 I was shortlisted for BBC Proms Inspire Competition, and in 2019 I received a Steve Martland Scholarship from Sound and Music which allowed me to expand my compositional skills in a week-long workshop at Purcell Music School. I was also selected by Sound Scotland to have one of my pieces performed in the Sound Festival by Aberdeen’s new music ensemble Any Enemy; the premiere at The Lemon Tree was recorded by BBC Radio 3 for future broadcast as part of its new music strand.

As a cellist I’ve performed with the National Youth Orchestras of Scotland since 2016, including Principal Cello for NYOS Seniors. I’ve also performed with Grampian Youth Orchestra since 2017, and was recently selected as Principal Cello for their 2021 Berlin tour. Throughout 2018-21, I’ve received the Joan Dickson Cello Scholarship from North East Scotland Music School, as well as a Henry McKenzie Johnston Award (2018) and a Robert Lewin Scholarship (2019) from Awards for Young Musicians. In October 2019 I performed at Haddo Arts Festival (introducing Scotland’s Makar Jackie Kay), competed in the final of Grampian Youth Orchestra’s Concerto Competition, and performed a new composition by Shiori Usui – 'The Silent Forest’ – alongside AYM award winners and musicians from BCMG at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. This year I’ve been selected for NYOS Symphony Orchestra for a second year and accepted an unconditional offer with scholarship to study cello at the Royal Northern College of Music.