

MEMORIAL GROUND



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14-18-NOW
WW1 CENTENARY ART COMMISSIONS

SPECIALY COMMISSIONED CHORAL WORK FROM DAVID LANG TO COMMEMORATE THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME CENTENARY AND TO GENERATE HUGE NATIONWIDE SINGING EVENT

Co-commissioned by East Neuk Festival and 14-18 NOW with the support of Creative Scotland

World Premiere 2 July 2016, Cambo Barn

Paul Hillier, Theatre of Voices, SCO Chorus and Fife Choirs

Nationwide Community Choir Events 11-13 November 2016

A century ago, on 1 July 1916, the Battle of the Somme began with the bloodiest day in British military history. Over four months later, after more than a million combatants had died or suffered injuries, the Allied offensive was called off. It was a battle that marked the turning point in people's attitude to the War – few communities across the UK were untouched by it.

Records of the Somme regularly mention singing – whether it is the stories of individual singers whose beautiful voices cheered their companions in the trenches, or whole companies of soldiers who went over the top singing to keep their spirits up. To mark this centenary, East Neuk Festival has therefore chosen to put the spotlight on singing for a significant new commission and a major UK-wide choirs project with a keen human interest aspect.

Together with **14-18 NOW** and with the support of **Creative Scotland**, the Festival has co-commissioned **Memorial Ground** from Pulitzer Prize winning American composer **David Lang**. This is in keeping with ENF's commitment to premiere a specially created new work each year that brings together amateur musicians from the community to perform alongside internationally renowned professionals. **Memorial Ground** will be directed by **Paul Hillier** and performed by his acclaimed vocal ensemble **Theatre of Voices** and the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra Chorus** (under **Gregory Batsleer**), plus Fife choirs comprising 150 singers. The concert will take place on 2 July at 5pm in Cambo Barn, the Festival's favoured venue for large-scale events with its dramatic acoustics.

With community spirit in mind, David Lang is also inviting the public to suggest text for solos that he will incorporate into the piece. His work is in two parts: a simple hymn-like tune, or 'ground', and a series of solos which will be sung over the ground. These solos will be based on melodic fragments that Lang will post online (www.memorialground2016.com) for anyone to add words to - and from these submissions he will shape the premiere version of *Memorial Ground*. Lang says his aim is not to make people sad but inspire them to think about themes of sacrifice and remembrance, of remembering those who gave their all so that we can live the lives we do today. So texts may include any kind of germane material including poems, diaries and letters from The Front, roll calls of the Fallen etc. Interested parties can explore the project and register for updates online at www.memorialground2016.com from 20 January 2016.

Lang has also written *Memorial Ground* to encourage choirs across the UK to make it their own. Following the premiere (2 July 2016), Lang's score, instructions and additional audio and video material will be launched online for free download to enable choirs to create their own versions. ENF will also be working with five regional choirs to create sample versions of *Memorial Ground*, ranging from the most simple to more complex versions, to offer exemplars to choirs of every level (also available online). The logistics of registering, provision of music, guidance and assistance will be provided with the help of the highly successful **Big Big Sing** organisation (also led by East Neuk Festival Artistic Director, Svend Brown).

The culmination of the project will fall during the weekend of 11-13 November 2016 (the weekend before the last day of the Battle on 18 November) with unlimited choirs throughout the UK performing their own versions of *Memorial Ground*. The period from premiere performance to this weekend of Remembrance is the same as the duration of the Battle of the Somme.

Svend Brown comments: *"No one text or piece of music can respond to such a scale of loss that resulted from the Battle of the Somme. So we have created a project that enables many different people to voice their own response to war and loss: singing groups of all sizes and abilities can customise David Lang's basic piece to make it their own. They can choose or create the texts and shape the music itself according to their own thoughts, resources, location, circumstances and scale. It can be as simple as a few voices singing for three minutes to hundreds singing for an hour or more."*

"Big Big Sing champions singing together not only as a musical activity but also as a social, wellbeing and community activity. Human beings have always shared both joy and sorrow through singing and we hope that many vocal groups and choirs will join up for this unique nationwide event."

Further press information on *Memorial Ground* and East Neuk Festival:

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Notes to Editors:



TIMELINE 2016

20 JANUARY to 2 JULY: Choirs to register for the project. Background material and information will be added to the website and advice and ideas will be available to anybody thinking of planning and performing their own *Memorial Ground*.

6 FEBRUARY: Lang's 'Memorial Ground' main score and melody scores available online. Full East Neuk Festival programme announced for 2016.

2 JULY: world premiere of *Memorial Ground* at the East Neuk Festival – Paul Hillier's Theatre of Voices, SCO Chorus/Gregory Batsleer and Fife choirs. Sheet music, audio and video resources released for free download (available for duration of the project), including exemplars by five regional choirs.

11-13 NOVEMBER: Participating groups perform *Memorial Ground* during the weekend of 11-13 November for Remembrance Sunday Services and any other commemorative occasions (but they are free to perform the piece at any time after 13 November too).

DAVID LANG *composer*

David Lang is one of the most highly-esteemed and performed composers writing today. His works are heard in concert halls and theatres around the world and also on film: notably he has worked with Peter Greenaway and Paolo Sorrentino, including the sound track to Sorrentino's Oscar-winning *La Grande Bellezza* and his new film *Youth* which stars Michael Caine as a composer (opening 29 January in UK cinemas). Vocal music has long been key to David Lang's work. He won the 2008 Pulitzer Prize in music for *the little match girl passion*, based on a fable by Hans Christian Andersen. He has created works for the world's leading ensembles including Theatre of Voices (whose recording of *little match girl passion* won a Grammy Award), Trio Medieval and Anonymous 4, and also numerous works for amateur performers including CROWD OUT for "1,000 people yelling." <http://davidlangmusic.com>

PRODUCING PARTNERS

14-18-NOW

WW1 CENTENARY ART COMMISSIONS

14-18 NOW is a programme of extraordinary artistic experiences connecting people with the First World War. The programme takes place from 2014 to 2018 and is timed to mark the centenary of the War, which raged across Europe, Asia and Africa from 1914-1918. 14-18 NOW is commissioning artists from the UK and around the world, from all art forms, to look afresh at this conflict and to create shared experiences exploring this significant moment in time. Cultural organisations across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are participating by commissioning new art, theatre, film, dance, digital, music, poetry and mass-participation events. Some projects are happening throughout the commemoration period, such as the Poppies and Dazzle Ships, with additional major live seasons across the UK marking the Battle of the Somme in 2016 and the end of the war in 2018. **East Neuk Festival's Memorial Ground is the key classical music project in the 2016 programme as well as being the major community event.** 14-18 NOW is an independent programme hosted within Imperial War Museums and receives public funding from the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England, and from the UK Government. <http://www.1418now.org.uk>

WW100 SCOTLAND: World War One touched the lives of millions of Scots at home and abroad, and continues to resonate today. Of the 700,000 Scots who joined the forces, more than 100,000 died. Nearly every village, city and town in Scotland has some form of memorial displaying the names of their war dead. WW100 Scotland aims to inform people about Scotland's unique contribution to World War One and help them discover the effects of the war on their local communities and its lasting impact on life in Scotland today. The commemorations, which mark the 100th anniversary of the war, are a chance to remember the sacrifices made and reflect on what we can, and should, learn from the war meant to end all wars. <http://www.ww100scotland.com>

EAST NEUK FESTIVAL: East Neuk Festival was founded in 2004 to present world-class music in the beautiful coastal area of Scotland known as the East Neuk of Fife. Distinguished artists who have appeared there include the Alban Berg Quartet, Christian Zacharias, The Tallis Scholars, Tokyo String Quartet and Paul Hillier. A key feature of the festival is that it commissions work for leading composers for performance by amateur and professional musicians side by side. *Memorial Ground* stands in this tradition and previous projects include 2015's successful *Across the Distance* by John Luther Adams. www.eastneukfestival.com

BIG BIG SING: Big Big Sing was founded in 2013 to promote community singing both as the most universal and accessible form of human artistic expression, but also as a health activity. It was inspired by the significant volume of academic research that evidences singing's myriad benefits to individuals' mental and physical health as well as showing it to be a powerful tool for social cohesion e.g. countering isolation and loneliness. Originally commissioned as part of the Glasgow 2014 Cultural Programme and Festival, BBS delivered events across the UK, online resources, training and research, reaching well over 574,000 people in its first year. www.bigbigsing.org

Memorial Ground is co-commissioned by East Neuk Festival and 14-18 NOW: WWI Centenary Art Commissions, supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England and by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, with the support of Creative Scotland.

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