



THE MUSIC OF THE FOREST

BOWLAND SONG CYCLE

Lord Kings of Bowland (trombone introduction)

Bowland Sun (alto voice)

Lord of the Fells (featuring Old Norse Kenning)

Sons of Setanta (featuring the carnyx)

Bowland Sun (baritone voice)

Lord Kings of Bowland (trombone finale)

This four-part song cycle by Lakeland composer Christopher Gibbs has been specially commissioned by William, 16th Lord of Bowland, as a setting for William's verses exploring the history and landscape of the Forest of Bowland. It receives here its world premiere, performed by the Renaissance Singers of Blackburn Cathedral under the baton of Samuel Hudson. Internationally acclaimed trombonist and experimental musician, John Kenny, will play the *carnyx*, an ancient Celtic war horn whose haunting sound has not been heard in the Forest of Bowland for more than two thousand years.

THE SONGS

Lord Kings of Bowland celebrates the succession of English monarchs who held the lordship of Bowland between 1399-1660.

Bowland Sun is a song written to celebrate Henry of Bowland, William Bowland's young son, heir to the lordship of Bowland.

The third song, *Lord of the Fells*, is a depiction of Bowland in Viking times during the bloody rule of the Norse chieftain Agmundr. This includes a short verse or kenning in Old Norse which is declaimed rather than sung:

Myrkts, hvern meira orkar, mér, alls greppr né sérar, — harðrs í heimi orðinn hrafngrennir — þrek jöfnum. Ert gat óslætt hjarta (eljunfims) und himni mest (hefr mildingr kostat minni hvers grams vinnur)

“In the darkness of this moment of death, we must ask who will equal the strength and valour of this warrior, Raven-Feeder. In heaven and earth, there was not a bolder or keener heart within living memory to compare”.

Providing a dramatic climax to the cycle is John Kenny, who, in *Sons of Setanta*, plays the Deskford carnyx, an ancient Celtic war horn whose haunting sound has not been heard in the Forest of Bowland for more than two thousand years.

This will be followed by a short instrumental piece, *Cú Chulainn*, originally composed by John Kenny in 2015 for the Tintignac carnyx but here performed on its Deskford counterpart.

The Music of the Forest closes with a triumphant reprise of the opening anthem.

AUDIENCE NOTES

JOHN KENNY

John Kenny (b. 1957) is a British trombonist, actor, composer and multi-faceted performer of contemporary solo repertoire, modern jazz and early music. As a composer, he has received commissions from the London Contemporary Dance Theatre, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, and in 1989, was Strathclyde Composer in Residence to the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

A student of Harold Nash at the Royal Academy of Music, John Kenny became the first person in modern times to play the *carnyx*, Scotland's 2,000-year-old Celtic boar-headed horn. He now performs and lectures regularly with the instrument.

John is a professor at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London and lecturer at Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart. He lives in Edinburgh with his wife, Irene and his two children, Patrick and Ruairi.

John playing the *carnyx*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVAWwWi0DbE>

CHRISTOPHER GIBBS

A composer since the age of seven, Christopher Gibbs (b. 1938) studied at Trinity College of Music (Gladys Puttick) and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (Carey Blyton) in London. He has taught music for many years and lectured for the University of Birmingham. Until his recent retirement he taught piano and composition in Grange-over-Sands, and led weekly classes in improvisation (classical, jazz and contemporary) with young instrumentalists at Cartmel Music Centre, near Grange-over-Sands.

His recent compositions include a large scale Violin Concerto, several shorter pieces for orchestra, a piece for brass quintet ("*Over Sands*"), a cantata ("*Viking Runes*") for soprano, mixed chorus and orchestra, about 35 pieces for string orchestra, wind quartet, string quartet, brass band, choir SATB, piano solo, organ solo, piano and instrumental duo, and some songs. His one-act music drama *Across an Unknown Sea* received its first performance at the Sedbergh Festival in summer 2004. In 2016, he was given a commission by the Lord of Bowland to write a series of choral pieces *Music of the Forest*, and this is to receive its first performance in June 2017.

http://www.lakelandcomposers.org.uk/c_gibbs.htm

THE RENAISSANCE SINGERS OF BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL

The Renaissance Singers are one of the leading choral ensembles in the North West. The group give a varied annual programme of concerts each year at Blackburn Cathedral (where they are based). Samuel Hudson is their current Director. He took up the post of Director of Music at Blackburn Cathedral in September 2011, where he leads one of the country's most ambitious Cathedral Music programmes. Before coming to Blackburn, Samuel simultaneously held posts as Director of Chapel Music at Girton College in Cambridge, College Organist at Haileybury School in Hertfordshire, Assistant Organist at St Sepulchre-without-Newgate in London, and Assistant Director of Music at All Saints' Church in Hertford.

<http://www.renaissancesingersblackburncathedral.org>

WILLIAM BOWLAND

William Bowland (b. 1960) is the 16th Lord of Bowland, a lordship that dates back to the eleventh century. Since 2009, William has dedicated himself to good causes in the Forest of Bowland, including support for the Slaidburn Village Archive, schools visits, public lectures, official openings, charitable fundraising and sponsorship.

<http://forestofbowland.com/Lordship-Bowland>