

## CELTIC WAR HORN RETURNS TO BOWLAND

An ancient Celtic warhorn, the *carnyx*, is returning to the Forest of Bowland for the first time in 2000 years.

In a surprise move, William Bowland, 16<sup>th</sup> Lord of Bowland has announced the world premiere of a specially-commissioned choral work featuring the *carnyx*.

Written by Lakeland composer, Christopher Gibbs, *The Music of the Forest* will receive its world premiere in Slaidburn on Thursday 15 June 2017. The four-part song cycle evokes the landscape and history of the Forest of Bowland and will be performed by the Renaissance Singers of Blackburn Cathedral under Samuel Hudson's baton. Internationally acclaimed trombonist and experimental musician, John Kenny, will play the *carnyx*.

Says composer Christopher Gibbs: "William Bowland has given me the opportunity to write this landmark song cycle whose world premiere will feature a unique expert on the *carnyx*, John Kenny. It is a piece that is likely to change the way we think about the Forest of Bowland and its history".

Says William Bowland: "In the past, I have described my love of Bowland as "nostalgia for the future". In commissioning this song cycle and hosting its world premiere in Slaidburn, I want to put Bowland firmly back on the cultural map".

Says John Kenny: "I am delighted to be given the opportunity to bring the haunting sound of *carnyx* back to Bowland after 2000 years. Chris Gibbs' composition and William Bowland's lyrics offer a rich and exciting backdrop for this ancient Celtic war horn".

Elliott Lorimer, principal AONB officer at Lancashire County Council, said: "This promises to be a very memorable concert. This is a very exciting project and we are very much looking forward to hearing this ancient instrument in the Forest of Bowland for the first time in 2000 years."

Booking is essential for this event at Slaidburn Village Hall. Tickets are priced at £7.50.

For further information, contact the AONB office on 01200 448000 or email [sandra.silk@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:sandra.silk@lancashire.gov.uk) or [enquiries@slaidburnarchive.org](mailto:enquiries@slaidburnarchive.org)

## NOTES FOR EDITORS

### 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 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

Christopher Gibbs (b. 1938) has been a composer since the age of seven. He studied at Trinity College of Music under Gladys Puttick and at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama under Carey Blyton. He has taught music for many years, including lecturing at the University of Birmingham. Until his recent retirement he taught piano and composition in Grange-over-Sands and held weekly classes in improvisation (classical, jazz and contemporary) with young instrumentalists at Cartmel Music Centre. His recent compositions include a large scale violin concerto, several shorter pieces for orchestra, works for string quartet - including the popular *Forest of Bowland Suite* - a piece for brass quintet (*Over Sands*), a cantata for soprano, mixed chorus and orchestra (*Viking Runes*), about 35 pieces for string orchestra, wind quartet, brass band, choir, piano solo, organ solo, piano and instrumental duo, and a number of solo songs.

[http://www.lakelandcomposers.org.uk/c\\_gibbs.htm](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 16<sup>th</sup> 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>

## THE MUSIC OF THE FOREST

The song cycle is in four parts: *Lord Kings of Bowland* celebrates the procession 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 sérat, — harðrs í heimi orðinn hrafngrennir — þrek jǫfnum. 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 internationally acclaimed trombonist, John Kenny, who in *Sons of Setanta*, plays 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 Music of the Forest* closes with a triumphant reprise of the opening anthem.