

HOPE ON, HOPE EVER - A CONCERT FOR THE WEST CORK HISTORY FESTIVAL 2021
A musical journey inspired by the Franklin Expedition & Irish Polar Explorers - the unsung heroes

Created by Jessie Kennedy & Tess Leak
& performed by The Vespertine Quintet

Jessie Kennedy – vocals, violin and mandola
Tess Leak – vocals and cello
Justin Grounds – vocals, viola, electronic sounds and clarinet
Susan McManamon – piano, vocals and percussions

Introduction by Festival founder Victoria Kingston

I first heard Jessie's version of Lord Franklin (also known as Lady Franklin's Lament) on the CD *We Are the Dark Night Ocean* recorded by herself and Justin Grounds. Jessie and I discovered we were both fascinated by the tragic story of the Franklin Expedition which inspired the song. Franklin and his gallant crew set out in two ships HMS *Terror* and HMS *Erebus* in 1845 in search of the last undiscovered part of the Northwest Passage in the Canadian Arctic but never returned. From our conversation, the idea of a concert developed. Through the lockdowns of 2020. Jessie and I were backwards and forwards on email with notes and background research. I already knew Dr Claire Warrior, curator at Royal Museums Greenwich and 19th century polar exploration expert, through working at Greenwich. Claire, Jessie, Tess and I met on Zoom and Claire provided so much fascinating and inspiring information on Franklin, ship life in the polar regions and polar exploration more generally, as well as indigenous culture in the Arctic. From this and from their own research and conversations, Jessie and Tess have developed the extraordinary songs and music you will hear today.

Hope On, Hope Ever

words by Tess Leak and music by Jessie Kennedy

The song is inspired by the accounts of a sledge flag embroidered with Sir John Barrow's motto 'HOPE ON HOPE EVER' made by Lady Jane Franklin for Lieutenant Bedford Pim. It was flown from HM sledge *John Barrow* commanded by Pim when he made contact with the crew of *Investigator* on 6 April 1853. A replica of the flag has been made for the concert by Tess Leak.



The Traveller's Evening Song

Traditional

This would have been sung on board ship during expeditions, to the lively, optimistic tune of *As Slow Our Ship/Brighton Camp/The Girl I left Behind Me*. The artists use the tune as an instrumental for the *Hope on Hope Ever* piece but some of its adapted words are: 'And whilst this dreary waste we roam/ May conscience oft remind us/ What rapture will be felt at home/ By those we've left behind us'.

The Ascent

by Tom Adams, arranged by Justin Grounds

This is from Adams' ethereal cycle of compositions 'A Start on Such a Night is Full of Promise' (2018) inspired by the first crossing of Greenland made by Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen in 1888 and his account of the expedition. The Vespertine Quintet collaborated on this work with Adams some years ago and felt this piece of music would be fitting to include with the theme of this concert.

Lady Franklin's Lament

Traditional

"Lady Franklin's Lament" first appeared as a ballad around 1850. Found in Canada, Scotland and Ireland, the song was first published in 1878 in *Eighteen Months on a Greenland Whaler* by Joseph P. Faulkner. It may have been inspired by the traditional Irish ballad 'The Croppy Boy', set during the 1798 Rising. Versions of that ballad first appeared shortly after the Rising sung by street peddlers, and are also sung to the melody of the traditional Irish air "Cailin Og a Stor". Made famous in Ireland by the singer Michael O Domhnaill, the concert version of this song is available online on Bandcamp from the album "We are the Dark Night Ocean" (2018) by Jessie Kennedy & Justin Grounds.

Song of the Sledge

Traditional

Sourced from the *Illustrated Arctic News*, provided by Claire Warrior, and one of the songs that would have been sung during the rescue attempts. Sung to the air 'I'm Afloat' by Henry Russell, the lyrics were adapted by the crew: We're away! We're away! On the bleak frozen sea/ When glory's ahead, none so fearless as we/ Danger's our birthright, we have scorned it before/ When friend's need our help, we'll dare it the more'.

Now on land and sea descending

By G.F. Handel, 1737

Originally a four-part song adapted to the Minuet from 'Berenice' this version by the Vespertine Quintet has been re-imagined as a clarinet solo accompanied by cello and piano with a single, distant haunting voice: "*Now on land, and sea descending, brings the night in peace profound.. let our Vesper hymn be blending, with the holy calm around.*"

Testimonies

written by Tess Leak

This uses Inuit testimonies collected by Jimmy Qirquut of Gjoa Haven and Louie Kamookak, one of the most respected Inuit historians. With thanks to Claire Warrior, Royal Museums Greenwich for this.

Hold Onto the Oars and Row My Boys

written by Justin Grounds

A rowing tune written for the West Cork explorers, namely the McCarthy Brothers from Kinsale. A mountain in Antarctica is named after Mortimer McCarthy. His brother, Tim, was with Shackleton and Tom Crean on the legendary rescue voyage for the Endurance crew from Elephant Island in 1916.

With Each Breath, Hope

written by Jessie Kennedy

Inspired by Irish polar explorers, and in particular West Cork explorer Patrick Keohane from Courtmacsherry. Keohane has been described as the "forgotten Irishman of Antarctic exploration". He played a central role in Scott's ill-fated Terra Nova South Pole expedition, sharing a tent with Scott for part of the journey. When asked by Scott during the interview for the expedition why he was volunteering, Patrick replied that he: "always wanted to see what was on the other side of the hill". This song is sung as a duet imagining Patrick thinking of his love from the Antarctic, where "the Loon calls the dawn", while his love in West Cork, Bridget Mary Ivy O'Driscoll, thinks of him "where the Curlew cries out".

Jessie Kennedy



Jessie is an Irish vocalist, multi-instrumentalist and writer from West Cork. She has released four studio albums to date, including the acclaimed "The Carbery Songs". Jessie has performed and collaborated with many artists including sixties legend Donovan, Interference, James McVinnie, Nigel Kennedy, Sacha Puttnam, Glen Hansard, Jeremy Irons, John Spillane. She has headlined venues such as The National Concert Hall, Dublin, Cork Opera House, St. Andrews in London, National Digital Week and St. Barrahanes Classical Music Festival. Her cover of Bruce Springsteen's song "Devils and Dust" is this year to be released on a compilation album of female artists singing Springsteen songs, which also features Emmy Lou Harris, Patti Smith, Anna Calvi and Lucinda Williams. Jessie is a violinist and vocalist with The Vespertine Quintet.

Tess Leak



Tess is a visual artist and musician who often collaborates with composers, dancers, poets and puppeteers. She is a graduate of both the BA in Visual Art on Sherkin Island and the 'Curious School of Puppetry' in London. Tess has worked as part of the Arts for Health Partnership Programme in West Cork since 2010, developing cross-artform projects in collaboration with participants in healthcare settings. Tess performs as a cellist with groups such as The Vespertine Quintet and Barefoot Baroque.

The Vespertine Quintet

The Vespertine Quintet is a collection of musicians from West Cork, comprising the traditional string quartet and piano with added electronic sounds, born during a long West Cork winter as an idea by violinist Justin Grounds to gather some friends and play some sparse and wintry minimalist music by Icelandic composer Olafur Arnalds and Estonian Arvo Pärt. They put on a series of house concerts, gathering friends in houses in West Cork, sharing warm food and wine and playing their program. Word soon got out and the quintet were invited to play to a sold out audiences at venues like Glebe Gardens, Lissard House for the Skibbereen Arts Festival, a winter series of collaborations with well-known solo artists at DeBarras Clodagh Simonds of Fovea Hex, Poet and Peacemaker Pdraig O Tuama, Farewell J.R., Liam O Maonlaoi, composer Tom Adams, Choice Music Award winner Adrian Crowley and many others.



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Adam Kennedy for filming and livestream
Justin Grounds for live sound
And to the unsung heroes of polar exploration, in West Cork and beyond.....