

To the Vanished Molendinar

SEQUOIA:

Alice Rickards Violin

Sonia Cromarty Cello

Maria Antelmi Spoken Word

The University of Glasgow Chapel Choir directed by **Katy Cooper**

Holy Water

On a beautiful sunny Sunday in March we met with Catherine Mooney for a 3-hour guided walk along the Molendinar Burn, from its source at Stepps north-east of Glasgow all the way to the Saltmarket where it joins the River Clyde. Throughout our walk Catherine shared 6th century stories of St Kentigern, Glasgow's patron saint (fondly known as St Mungo), who walked with two oxen and a cart carrying the body of a holy man named Fergus from Carnock in Fife to St Ninian's consecrated graveyard on the banks of the Molendinar.

The area where Fergus was buried became known as 'Glas-gu', meaning 'green hollow'. St Kentigern built a small wooden monastery there in the spot where the cathedral now stands, establishing it as a place of pilgrimage and leading to the birth of Glasgow as a medieval settlement. Running water was important to early Christian missionaries and the burn would have been used for sacraments of baptism and ablution as well as providing fresh water for everyday needs. In this way the Molendinar was the lifeblood of medieval Glasgow, nourishing our forebears both physically and spiritually.

Musica Scotica ed. **G-M Hair** & **B I Knott** *Sprouston Breviary* (c.1300)

Responsorium IV Olim fete archam Dei

Responsorium In Septentrionali

Lectio III Erat Igitur * (text **John Purser**) / **David Bissett** European Robin field recording

Responsorium II Mirantes pavent emuli * / **Kathy Hinde** Hydrophonic field recordings collected along the course of the Molendinar (2015)

Subterranean Water

The Molendinar was once a fast flowing flourishing river and as we walked we could see how it had shaped the landscape carving its way through rock, most dramatically next to the Cathedral at the *Bridge of Sighs*. Molendinar means 'to mill' and for centuries the burn was a strongly pulsing artery driving a range of industries along its length, from grain mills to tanneries and distilleries.

In medieval times the water was a rich habitat for species such as salmon and trout, but by the Victorian period years of human activity had taken their toll, leaving the exploited burn heavily polluted and culverted into underground tunnels to make way for the city to expand. Today 95% of the burn is hidden- when you cross the Bridge of Sighs a road flows below you and the burn is a mere trickle far beneath the tarmac. Sometimes we would crouch beside a manhole cover and listen for it. As we walked under the concrete canopy of the M8 Catherine pointed out islands of trees dotted along the motorway, cryptic signs of the life-force flowing beneath.

This hidden hydrology is mysterious. In 2002 many homes in the East End had to be evacuated after flash flooding, the culverted Molendinar unable to cope with the surface water run off. Can water really be contained and controlled without consequence in an era where we have changed the weather?

Robert Frost *A Brook in the City* (1923)

Rev. Robert MacOmish / Geo. Henry Martin *The Molendinar: The Burgess Song of Glasgow* ** (1937)

Lesley Harrison *Burnhead* (2020) / **Kathy Hinde** *Molendinar Cumbernauld Culvert* hydrophonic field recording (2015)

William Sweeney *Mar ròs a chaill* for solo violin (2022)

The title translates as 'a rose which has lost its roots' and refers to the operatic character of Diarmid, who has descended to the underworld to retrieve Grainne, but 'looks back', loses her and is himself destroyed.

Veronica Strang *Water beings* (2023)

John Peterson *Diabolic dance* (1991)

The title refers to the 'diabolus in musica', the medieval name given to the tritone (the augmented fourth), an interval that is emphasised throughout the piece.

Glasgow Herald *Mud larks* (7th April 1848)

Juan Arroyo *And the Darkness Dances, Mov II* (2020)

Dorianne Laux *Evening* (2019)

Ailís Ní Ríain *Doomed. Done For. Damned. And Still...* for Amplified Cello, Vibrator & Fixed Audio (2023)

It can often be difficult to connect to the climate crisis: as some have said, it can feel too far in the future and ultimately that we are already too trapped within it to do much or change anything.

INTERVAL

Three pieces from the East End

Aileen Sweeney (McEwen Commission 2024)

This piece explores a sense of nostalgia that I experienced as I followed the route of the Molendinar, a culverted burn in Glasgow. The path of the burn travels through areas in the East End of Glasgow where I have strong connections to my maternal grandparents. They lived in these parts of town most of their lives and raised my own mum here as well. Since their passing, I haven't ventured to these parts of town until now. Following the path of the burn has taken my mind back to my childhood and the times I spent in these places or the stories I remember my Grandparents telling me about them.

I. Alexandra Parade

Where my mum lived with my grandparents on Coventry Drive until the age of 7 before moving to Easterhouse, one of the 'New Towns'.

II. Wishart Street

The street where The Glasgow Royal Infirmary is located and also the site of 'The Bridge of Sighs,' which the Molendinar once flowed beneath.

III. Hogganfield Loch

A spot where we often took my Gran on our weekly Saturday visits if the weather was good (and also, where my mum and dad got their wedding photos taken!) Lots of good memories were had here!

Daylight

Dr Drew Hammond from the Glasgow University Music Department suggested the Molendinar as a muse for this project; before this time we didn't know of its existence. The more we walked on that Sunday, the more nostalgic we felt about the burn and looked eagerly for glimpses of it in the few remaining places where it returns to daylight; a fenced off grated pipe where it passes from Hogganfield Loch under the road, a community park where it zig zags through cement shapes dotted with litter, and finally a small trickle through a grate as it joins the River Clyde. What would St Mungo make of this ghost burn? And what would it take to scrape back the layered structures and daylight the Molendinar, freeing this imprisoned protagonist of Glasgow's past and enabling it to flourish again... some sort of miracle?

Edwin Morgan *The Glass* (1997)

Eddie McGuire *St Ninian's Chant* for solo violin (2002)

My piece is an imaginary exploration of what St. Ninian's meditative themes may have been. That is the starting point, from which the soloist soars and embellishes, often with flavours of Scottish traditional style.

Anon. *The Lif of this World* (c.1340)

Stuart MacRae *The Lif of this World* (arr. 2024)

Andrew Ford / Sarah Holland-Batt *What Desire Knows* from Red Dirt Hymns ** (2020)

* Arranged by Sequoia

** Arranged by Katy Cooper and Sequoia

Molendinar Culvert photographs by **Ben Cooper**

Thanks go to: University of Glasgow, Dr Drew Hammond, Katy Cooper, University of Glasgow Chapel Choir, Robert Davies, Calum Scott, Catherine Mooney, Maria Antelmi & Rik Evans at Treehorn Studio

Programme Notes (C) Sonia Cromarty & Alice Rickards

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