



MEDIA INFORMATION: For Immediate release

Psappa: *Penelope*

Thursday 26 October 2017 at 7.30pm, Hallé St Peter's, 40 Blossom St, Manchester M4 6BF

Psappa, Manchester's professional contemporary classical music ensemble, launches its 2017-18 season on Thursday 26 October at Hallé St Peter's, Ancoats, with the UK première of Sarah Kirkland Snider's *Penelope*. In a programme celebrating music by female composers, Psappa will also present the UK première of Molly Joyce's *Rave* and revisit Anna Clyne's *Steelworks* – three striking works from outstanding US-based composers.

Jessica Walker, vocalist, takes the role of *Penelope* – a woman whose husband appears at her door after an absence of twenty years. A veteran of an unnamed war, he doesn't know who he is and she doesn't know who he's become. While they wait together for his return to himself, she reads him *The Odyssey*, and in the journey of that book she finds a way into his memory and the terror and trauma of war. *Penelope* is conducted by Richard Balcombe.

Tim Williams, Psappa's Artistic Director says of the three pieces: "*Suspended somewhere between art song, indie rock, and chamber folk, the music of Penelope moves from moments of elegiac reflection to dusky post-rock textures in a meditation on memory, identity, and what it means to come home. Joyce's Rave gives the impression of impossible virtuosity, transforming the piano into a multi-dimensional piano/organ hybrid, while Clyne's Steelworks gives a fascinating glimpse into a disappearing world, as the music interacts with film and recorded interviews of employees at the last steelworks factory in Brooklyn.*"

Thursday 26 October 2017

Hallé St Peter's

Penelope: A meditation on memory, identity, and what it means to come home

Molly Joyce Rave (UK première)

Anna Clyne Steelworks

Sarah Kirkland Snider Penelope (UK première)*

Richard Balcombe – conductor*

Jessica Walker – vocalist*

Psappha Ensemble

Tickets: £6.50 to £17.50 (including concessions). Tickets are available through www.skiddle.com (search on Psappha)

Psappha is an Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation and a PRS for Music Foundation Talent Development Partner.

ENDS

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Notes to editors:

Formed in 1991 by Artistic Director Tim Williams, **Psappha** specialises in the performance of work by living composers and music of the 20th and 21st centuries. Psappha has an extensive and varied repertoire of hundreds of works and a reputation for technical assurance and interpretive flair.

Psappha is unique in its artistic offering as the North of England's only stand-alone, professional contemporary classical music ensemble. A National Portfolio Organisation for Arts Council England and a Talent Development Partner for PRS for Music Foundation, Psappha is based at St Michael's, the former Italian Chapel in Ancoats, an inner-city area of Manchester that was once the cradle of the Industrial Revolution.

Sir Peter Maxell Davies was Psappha's Patron for 20 years until his death in March 2016 and the ensemble's inspiration. Psappha gave a special 80th birthday concert for Max in Manchester in 2014 and have performed much of his chamber repertoire including the award-winning music-theatre work *Mr Emmet Takes a Walk* which he wrote for Psappha in 2000.

Psappha has appeared throughout the UK, featuring regularly at most of the country's major music festivals and has made highly successful tours to North and South America, Australia, and throughout Europe, also appearing in the United States and Hong Kong through residencies at Princeton University and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Most recently Psappha toured to the Jerusalem Festival in June 2017.

Psappha launched its own CD label in 2004 and has released seven recordings, most recently a unique, limited edition vinyl recording supervised by Peter Maxwell Davies of his iconic *Eight Songs for a Mad King*.

Psappha supports composers at all stages of their careers, offering a range of opportunities to work with its expert musicians as well as a number of online film-based resources; Composition Lab supports GCSE and A-level music and Psappha Kids supports the music curriculum for 7 to 11 year-olds.

Psappha continually seeks to develop new audiences and break fresh ground. Through its websites Psappha provides more than 100 free-to-view films of live performances. The ensemble's YouTube Channel had over 44,000 views in the last 12 months making Psappha one of Europe's leading providers of new music online.

www.psappha.com

▪ For more information on mezzo soprano **Jessica Walker** and conductor **Richard Balcombe** visit:

www.jessicawalker.me.uk/

www.richardbalcombe.com