



Sunday 15 October, 7pm  
St Martin's Church

## **THE WHISPERING DOME**

devised by **Jeremy Avis**

### **BREMFB Consort of Voices**

Deborah Roberts *director*

Jeremy Avis *voice, harpsichord*

Simo Lagnawi *voice, guembri*

Suntou Susso *voice, kora*

Sam Stadlen *viol, videographer*

### **BREMFB Community Choir**

Andrew Robinson *director*

Rebecca Askew *voice, animateur*

Children from Elm Grove and  
Westdene Primary Schools

### **Horizon Voices**

Lindsey James *soprano*

Sophie Timms *mezzo-soprano*

James Rhodes *tenor*

Alex Pratley *bass-baritone*

Sound, lighting and projections by  
**Pitch Black mobile stage**

Anonymous arr. **Jeremy Avis**

*Getting fed*

**Jeremy Avis**

*The flight begins*

**Jeremy Avis**

Anonymous from the Lewes Breviary

*South coast UK: crossing the Channel*

**Thomas Ravenscroft 1588-1635**

Brid on a Brere

Worms

Journey On

Dei testis

We be three poor mariners



Scan QR code for programme note,  
texts and performer biographies



Supported using public funding by  
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Brighton Early Music Festival gratefully acknowledges financial support from Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants and our Guardian Angels:

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<i>Heading for Chartres</i> <b>Clément Janequin</b> c.1485–1558 <b>Anonymous</b> Languedoc region	Le chant des oiseaux Dindirrin
<i>Pilgrim routes through the Pyrenees</i> <b>Traditional</b>	La grande chanson
<i>From Zaragoza to Santiago de Compostela</i> <b>Guillaume Dufay</b> c.1397–1474	Alleluia from Missa Sancti Iacobi (Mass of St James)
<i>Forest fires south of Lisbon on the way to Cádiz</i> <b>João Lourenço Rebelo</b> 1610–1661	Lamentations
<i>Across the Straits of Gibraltar: Human migration</i> <b>Jeremy Avis / Rebecca Askew / Surahata Susso</b>	Two Weeks
Interval	
<i>Jewish slave lament on a Turkish galleon</i> <b>Traditional Ladino</b> arr. <b>Jeremy Avis</b>	Galleas
<i>On the way to Casablanca</i> <b>Traditional Ladino</b> arr. <b>Belinda Sykes / Jeremy Avis</b>	A pasar por Casablanca
<i>Passing through Morocco to Mauritania</i> <b>Traditional songs</b> arr. <b>Simo Lagnawi</b>	Chalaba Soudaniman a Yu Shabakuru Eh-Lehla Bambarra
<i>Arrival in Senegal, traditional weddings and onwards to The Gambia</i> <b>Traditional songs</b> arr. <b>Suntou Susso</b>	Massaneh Sisseh and two other songs
<i>Arrival at the philanthropist's house</i> <b>Traditional</b> arr. <b>Suntou Susso</b>	Bamba Bojang
<i>Journey's end... for now</i> <b>Traditional</b> arr. <b>Suntou Susso / Jeremy Avis</b>	Zebele Sewa (Happiness)
<i>Journey back</i> <b>Jeremy Avis / Simo Lagnawi</b>	The Return

At BREMF we have always loved to make people think beyond the musical notes; be it imagining the original context via different, complementary art forms or finding ways to link our emotional responses to the feelings of humans who lived hundreds of years ago. We have certainly presented some unusual spectaculars over the years, often involving members of our local community including schoolchildren, most recently in November 2019 and January 2020 with the medieval Feast of Fools. Jeremy Avis was our 'master of ceremonies' for that show and shortly afterwards we were in lockdown.

It was a terrible time for live music, but a great opportunity for thinking, reflecting and imagining, and during that year, when BREMF took to the screen with BREMF@home, Jeremy had the stirrings of an idea for a story on birds when we asked him to create the finale for an elaborate programme called *The Four Faces of Gaia* (still available on our Vimeo channel [bremf.org.uk/bremf-on-vimeo](https://www.bremf.org.uk/bremf-on-vimeo)), which brought together traditional and early music and dance from four regions of the earth: Africa (specifically The Gambia), India, the Middle East and Europe. Although much of the show was filmed remotely, we did manage to arrange a session with Jeremy, alongside Rebecca Askew, Sura Susso and Debipriya Sircar, to film some rare live musical interaction. The seed for *The Whispering Dome* was sown.

This year we have been able, finally, to let it grow.

### **Deborah Roberts**

The 'Whispering Dome' tells the story of Billie the nightingale's migration journey from a farm in Norfolk to an acacia tree in The Gambia, following the route she took in 2009 that was confirmed by a tiny tracker the size of a button, attached by researchers to her back, which recorded details of her exact position during the different days during her remarkable 7-month round trip.

Her incredible feat of endurance also opened the way to my appreciating the richness of human cultures over which she flew, and the idea emerged to tell her story, using snatches of the songs of the peoples that she would have heard rising up from below at different times in human history as she soared her way south.

The diversity of cultures, Muslim, Christian and Jewish over which she flies and the surprising amount of historical time in the last 1,000 years that musical and cultural ideas have been felicitously shared and elaborated between the cultures en route, allows us to experience through music the uplifting cross-pollination that has been key to all these cultures' artistic development over the centuries.

Trade by sea and land has always brought musical cultures into creative contact and instruments, musical forms, poetic metres and song shapes and themes have always mixed and melded, leading to the creative development of many of the musics, harmonies and themes we listen to today.

Her journey then contains the core idea of the 'Whispering Dome' of songs and styles of the piece's title.

Songs heard in one part of the Dome (as in the Whispering Gallery of London's St Paul's Cathedral) are re-imagined and re-interpreted in other places en route by the means of cultural interaction.

There is nothing as memorable as a good tune, wherever it comes from and of course what I also found was that humans on the route have always looked to the skies as well for their musical inspiration, feeling kinship and connection with the musical outpourings of their feathered brethren, the birds.

Whether it is in the oldest scored English song heard at the beginning of the evening, 'Bird on a Briar', the bird calls scored into Janequin's 'Le chant des oiseaux' or the calls of dawn birds you find inside musical patterns, grooves and creation stories from Senegal, humans have been musically inspired by listening to bird calls as long as they have been drawn to make music themselves.

In this way Billie the bird transcends both time and geography, singing her amazing calls and song fragments all the way from Britain to The Gambia and back, inspiring human cultures to make music and take to their own imaginative skies.

Enjoy the journey!

**Jeremy Avis**

## **The texts**

Much of the music performed tonight is from an oral tradition, but there are some pieces for which the texts and translations may be helpful.

### **Janequin – Le chant des oiseaux**

Reveillez vous, coeurs endormis  
le dieu d'amour vous sonne.  
A ce premier jour de may,  
oyseaux feront merveillez.  
Pour vous mettre hors d'esmay  
destoupez vos oreilles.  
et farirariron (etc...)  
Vous serez tous en ioye mis,  
car la saison est bonne.

Vous orrez, à mon advis,  
une dulce musique  
que fera le roy mauvis (le merle aussi)

d'une voix autentique.  
Ty, ty, pyty. (etc...)  
Rire et gaudir c'es mon devis,  
chacun s'i habandonne.

Rossignol du boys ioly,  
a qui le voix resonne,  
pour vous mettre hors d'ennuy

Awake, sleepy hearts,  
the god of love calls you.  
On this first day of May,  
the birds will make you marvel.  
To lift yourself from dismay,  
unclog your ears.  
and fa la la la la (etc...)  
You will be moved to joy,  
for the season is good.

You will hear, I advise you,  
a sweet music  
that the royal song thrush will sing  
(the blackbird, too)  
in a pure voice.  
Ti, ti, pi-ti (etc...)  
To laugh and rejoice is my device,  
each with abandon.

Nightingale of the pretty woods,  
whose voice resounds,  
so you don't become bored,

vostre gorge iargonne:  
Frian, frian, frian (etc...)  
fûiez, regrez, pleurs et souci,  
car la saison l'ordonne.

Ariere maistre coucou,  
sortez de no chapitre.  
Chacun vous donne au bibou,  
car vous n'êtes q'un traistre.  
Coucou, coucou (etc...)  
Par traison en chacun nid,  
pondez sans qu'on vous sonne.

Reveillez vous, coeurs endormis,  
le dieu d'amours vous sonne.

### Dufay – Alleluia from Missa Sancti Iacobi

Alleluia  
Hispanorum clarens stella  
carismatum Iacob cella  
mundi liminis sis stella  
mare trans fretanum.

### Rebelo – Lamentations

Incipit Lamentatio Jeremiae prophetae.

ALEPH. Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena  
populo!  
Facta est quasi vidua domina gentium;  
  
princeps provinciarum facta est sub tributo.

BETH. Plorans ploravit in nocte, et lacrimae ejus  
in maxillis ejus:  
non est qui consoletur eam, ex omnibus caris  
ejus;  
omnes amici ejus spreverunt eam, et facti sunt  
ei inimici.

GHIMEL. Migravit Judas propter afflictionem, et  
multitudinem servitutis;  
habitavit inter gentes, nec invenit requiem:  
  
omnes persecutores ejus apprehenderunt  
eam inter angustias.

your throat jabbars away:  
Frian, frian (etc...)  
flee, regrets, tears and worries,  
for the season commands it.

Turn around, master cuckoo,  
get out of our company.  
Each of us gives you a 'bye-bye'  
for you are nothing but a traitor.  
Cuckoo, cuckoo (etc...)  
Treacherously in others' nests,  
you lay without being called.

Awake, sleepy hearts,  
the god of love is calling you.

Alleluia  
O clear star of the Spaniards,  
James, storehouse of spiritual gifts,  
may you be the star at the end of the world  
to those hastening across the sea.

Here begins the Lamentations of the Prophet  
Jeremiah.

ALEPH. How lonely sits the city that was full of  
people!  
How like a widow has she become, she that  
was great among the nations!  
She that was a princess among the cities has  
become a vassal.

BETH. She weeps bitterly in the night, tears on  
her cheeks;  
among all her loved ones she has none to  
comfort her;  
all her friends have dealt treacherously with  
her, they have become her enemies.

GHIMEL. Judah has gone into exile because of  
affliction and hard servitude;  
she dwells now among the nations, but finds  
no resting place;  
her pursuers have all overtaken her in the  
midst of her distress.

DALETH. Viæ Sion lugent, eo quod non sint qui  
veniant ad solemnitatem:  
omnes portæ ejus destructæ, sacerdotes ejus  
gementes; virgines ejus squalidæ, et ipsa  
oppressa amaritudine.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad  
Dominum Deum tuum.

DALETH. The roads to Zion mourn, for none  
come to the appointed feasts;  
all her gates are desolate, her priests groan;  
her maidens have been defiled, and she  
herself suffers bitterly.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy  
God.

## The performers

### **Jeremy Avis** *voice, harpsichord*

Soloist, composer, session singer, musical director: Jeremy has worked in all these roles during his eclectic musical career. He is a regular musical director at Shakespeare's Globe, vocal coach for feature films and a long-time soloist with Orlando Gough's vocal big band, The Shout.

[jeremyavis.co.uk](http://jeremyavis.co.uk)

### **Simo Lagnawi** *voice, guembri*

The UK's foremost exponent of Moroccan gnawa music, Simo arrived in the UK from Rabat in 2008 and has made it his mission to bring the sound of gnawa music to the UK and beyond. He has performed on festival stages from Scotland and Lithuania to Dubai and Morocco, as well as live radio and TV sessions on BBC Radio 3 and Africa Today.

[waulkrecords.com/simo-lagnawi](http://waulkrecords.com/simo-lagnawi)

### **Suntou Susso** *voice, kora*

Multi-instrumentalist, kora player, producer, composer, teacher and songwriter Suntou was born a Griot in a 700-year-old tradition. The kora, a harp-lute with 22 strings, is unique to the Griots of the Mandinka people. Griots have a unique societal role as oral historians, transmitting and preserving a people's culture through the generations in song, music and poetry.

[suntoususso.com](http://suntoususso.com)

### **Rebecca Askew** *voice, animateur*

Rebecca is an experienced freelance performer, composer, vocal animateur, musical director and theatre maker with a background in jazz and improvised music. She has performed at home and abroad, in venues large and small including Shakespeare's Globe, the National Theatre and jazz clubs up and down the country.

[rebeccaaskew.co.uk](http://rebeccaaskew.co.uk)

### **Sam Stadlen** *viol, videographer*

A viol player, lecturer, musicologist, filmmaker and audio engineer based in the UK, Sam has performed across Europe, the US, Canada, and in South America. He has been a member of Fretwork since 2015 and appeared with them in *Secret Byrd* at BREMF a few days ago.

[samstadlen.co.uk](http://samstadlen.co.uk)

### **Horizon Voices**

**Lindsey James** *soprano*

**Sophie Timms** *mezzo-soprano*

**James Rhodes** *tenor*

**Alex Pratley** *bass-baritone*

Horizon Voices is a professional vocal ensemble seeking to broaden musical horizons through a programme of education workshops, outreach projects and interactive performances. Horizon Voices was a BREMF Live! ensemble in 2022/23.

[horizonvoices.com](http://horizonvoices.com)

### **BREMF Consort of Voices**

**Deborah Roberts** *director*

BREMF Consort of Voices is an ensemble of solo and consort singers formed from semi-professional, student and experienced amateur singers. The choir is dedicated to giving dramatic and exciting performances of music from the Renaissance and early Baroque.

[bremf.org.uk/ensembles/bcv](http://bremf.org.uk/ensembles/bcv)

### **BREMF Community Choir**

**Andrew Robinson** *director*

BREMF Community Choir is an enthusiastic and friendly group dedicated to studying and performing a wide range of repertoire from medieval through to classical periods, as well as traditional and folk music from around the world.

[bremf.org.uk/ensembles/bcc](http://bremf.org.uk/ensembles/bcc)

Children from **Elm Grove** and **Westdene** Primary Schools

Brighton Early Music Festival is committed to taking music into schools across Sussex and inspiring the next generation of audiences and musicians. Led by Rebecca Askew, we have been working with Year 4 and Year 5 children from Elm Grove and Westdene primary schools this term and are looking forward to performing with these enthusiastic young singers this evening.