

**scottish
ensemble**

An Evening with: Craig Armstrong

Wednesday 2 December 2020: 19:30



'The past in the future' – An Introduction from Craig

How the musical life of your early years affects the musical language you develop later on in your career.

As a composer you are often the sum of your musical experiences, which have had an effect on you throughout your musical life. In my work I have been influenced by classical music, jazz, popular music, film and electronic music. It has become of feature of my work whether in film or classical compositions, in how to let these different influences become a personal style.

At the beginning in the 1970's I studied composition at the Royal Academy of Music in London firstly under the avant-garde composer Cornelius Cardew. At this point I wasn't thinking about merging different influences. My studies at the Academy were classical but when I went to Ronnie Scott's I would listen to Jazz. The connection between the two at the time eluded me. However, there were connections; the free improvisation of Stockhausen's aleatoric scores had much in common with the free jazz in London I listened to at that time. I also have a passion for cinema where very simple musical expressions could have a massive emotional impact.

As a young boy there were many different types of music in my parents' house. My mother had a very eclectic record collection ranging from pop, classical to opera and jazz. My father sung in the church choir where I listened to and was moved by the beautiful harmonies of the hymns and psalms. My Aunt Bella who taught me piano from an early age (about 9 years old) was blind and read music by braille and she instilled in me a great love of Bach. My violin teacher Mrs Whitelaw nurtured in me an enduring passion for strings and the orchestra.

When I first attended the Glasgow Schools Orchestras as a teenager, going from the 3rd orchestra to the 1st orchestra I was surprised how few fellow students listened to a wide variety of music. In fact, it was common for them only to listen to classical music.

I think these early non-judgemental musical memories directly influenced my music and to this day I find elements from the different genres becoming part of my compositions.

As a composer I have worked extensively in film and written many classical works. Ranging from Scottish director and actor Peter Mullan's directorial debut *The Close Trilogy* to the BAFTA, Ivor Novello and Golden Globe winning award scores for Baz Lurhmann's *Romeo and Juliet*, *Moulin Rouge!* and *The Great Gatsby*. Collaborating with Oliver Stone for *The World Trade Centre* and *Snowden*. And many other scores including *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, *Far From The Madding Crowd* and a Grammy film score award for *Ray!* directed by Taylor Hackford. Alongside classical works for the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Hebrides Ensemble, Capella Nova and the Scottish Ensemble.

Visconti was a commission from the London Sinfonietta and the Barbican, premiered at the Stockhausen Festival in 2002 and is an homage to both the film director Luchino Visconti and the composer Gustav Mahler. The violin concerto *Immer*, for the violinist Clio Gould was recorded by Virgin Classics, which was premiered at the Saint Denis Festival in Paris in 2008.

My first Scottish Opera commission, *The Lady From The Sea*, premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2012 and won the Herald Angel Award.

I hope in listening to the list below that these influences can be heard in some ways.

Here are some of my own works from film and classical:

[The Edge of The Sea: Ballantyne Movement 6](#) - recorded with *Scottish Ensemble*.

[Immer](#) - violin concerto for *Clio Gould*

[World Trade Center: Cello Theme](#) - with *Alison Lawrance*

[The Great Gatsby: Magic Tree and I Let Myself Go](#)

[Far from The Madding Crowd: Opening Theme](#)

[Dirt Music: Tidal](#)

And some of the musical signposts I have loved and cherished:

The Beatles	<u>The Long and Winding Road</u>
J.S. Bach	<u>The Well-Tempered Klavier: Prelude 4</u>
Leoš Janáček	<u>String Quartet No. 2: Intimate Letters</u>
György Ligeti	<u>Atmosphères</u>
Massive Attack	<u>Sly</u>
Anna Thorvaldsdóttir	<u>Ariality</u>
AGF	<u>Let's Make Our Own Movies</u>
Claire Singer	<u>Solas</u>
Chet Baker	<u>For Heaven's Sake Let's Fall In Love</u>
Maurice Ravel	<u>Piano Concerto in G Major - Adagio assai</u>
Nico Muhly	<u>I Archive</u>
Ennio Morricone	<u>Love Theme: Cinema Paradiso</u>
Andreas Scholl & Tamar Halperin	<u>The Twilight People</u>
John Tavener	<u>Eternity's Sunrise</u>