

# Craig Armstrong and Calum Martin

## The Edge Of The Sea



**Modern Recordings/BMG**  
**VÖ: 28. August 2020**

### Track listing:

Ballantyne  
Movement 1 – Stone  
Movement 2 – The Edge Of The Sea  
Movement 3 – Ballantyne 1  
Movement 4 – Ballantyne 2  
Movement 5 – Your Shadow  
Movement 6 – Ballantyne 3  
Movement 7 – Grace Notes  
Movement 8 – Ballantyne 4  
Movement 9 – Before Last  
Movement 10 – Nightfall  
Movement 11 – Tidal

Martyrdom (Movements 1 to 8)  
12. – 19.

**Craig Armstrong's** first release with the newly formed imprint Modern Recordings (BMG Germany) is a beautiful and primal result of a collaboration over several years with Hebridean composer Calum Martin. ***The Edge Of The Sea***, brings together for the first time the traditionally heard acapella Gaelic psalm singing with Armstrong's exquisitely informed orchestral working performed by the Scottish Ensemble. This unique album features two new works calling softly to mind both the ever-changing island landscape and the emotive history of the ancient knowledge of Gaelic psalm singing.

**Gaelic Psalm Singing** has long been a very important tradition in the canon of music in Scotland. It is a uniquely Scottish "Sean Nós" old vocal style, which has been nurtured in its natural environment of family worship. This unique traditional vocal style is sadly facing a real danger of disappearing for good and we see this unique recording as an opportunity to both archive and introduce a new audience to the tradition with a strong sense of it's history and future at it's core.

It was agreed at the outset by **Craig Armstrong** and **Calum Martin** that any music based on the Gaelic psalms would be respectful of the tradition and that the composition written to

accompany the singing would allow complete freedom of expression for the singing style. This has been achieved in a beautiful way and made possible by bringing together in an inspiring and supportive collaboration; the congregation and the **Scottish Ensemble** players.

**Ballantyne**, was originally commissioned by Alex Macdonald from the Lewis arts centre, An Lanntair as part of their Creative Places Awards concert in August 2016.

*Ballantyne* is originally based on the Ascension story of The Acts of the Apostles (chapter 1, verses 6-11). Compositionally *Ballantyne* also contains a melody by Calum Martin and features original composition by Craig. It is dedicated to Craig's father, John Armstrong and features **Duncan Chisholm**, one of the leaders in traditional Highland fiddle music.

**The Martyrdom Variations** is based on an existing traditional melody, Martyrdom, from the late eighteenth century and is still used in Gaelic church services today. The combination of its melody and the variations created by the composer was to become the beginning of a unique collaboration between Craig and Calum. This was an original commission from Diageo and first performed at Edinburgh Castle in 2014.

**Craig Armstrong explains**, "I first heard Gaelic psalm singing as a young child in Ross-shire at the church in Hilton where my mother's parents were born.

We visited Balintore several times on holidays as a child, these villages were known as the Seaboard villages in Ross-shire.

Many years later after studying composition at the Royal Academy of Music in London, I returned to Scotland to work as a professional composer.

There I continued my fascination with Gaelic psalm singing and managed to obtain recordings from Edinburgh University.

In 2014 at Celtic Connections, Donald Shaw introduced me to Calum Martin and with that the idea that we might collaborate on a project together. Calum was instrumental in my understanding of Gaelic psalm singing and on my visits to Lewis he was so generous with his time and knowledge. It's been very special to be given the opportunity for Calum and I to work together on this unique project. I know we are both very grateful to all of the amazing musicians we were fortunate to work with."

**Calum Martin continues**, "Gaelic Psalm Singing has been part of my life for as long as I can remember, and I was always hoping to meet a composer who I could collaborate with to bring the musical ideas I had fermenting in my brain to fruition in one form or another, but not as part of some "add-on" gimmick to a modern music style but as a legitimate and unique art form which retains its authenticity and at the same time explores its amazing "Sean Nós" vocal style possibilities in an orchestral setting."

**The recording took place** at the stunning acoustic space at **Dundee Caird Hall** with the Scottish Ensemble, conductor Cecilia Weston, guest fiddle Duncan Chisholm and the congregation curated by Calum Martin from Lewis and Harris featuring solo voice by Isobel Ann Martin and Calum Iain Macleod. The live recording is by **award winning** (Grammy, BAFTA, Classical Brits) **Floating Earth engineer Mike Hatch**.

This album is a unique historic work in its combination of instrumental music with the Gaelic psalm singing, which is always traditionally unaccompanied. We are extremely happy through the financial support of **Creative Scotland and the PRS Foundation** that this recording has been able to happen to create this special album.



### About Craig Armstrong

Craig Armstrong OBE is a Scottish composer of orchestral music, electronica and film scores. He graduated from the Royal Academy of Music in 1981, and has since written music for the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the London Sinfonietta. His score for Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* earned him a BAFTA for Achievement in Film Music and also an Ivor Novello. Armstrong also collaborated with the director on his musical *Moulin Rouge!*, winning the 2001 American Film Institute's Composer of the Year award, the Henry Mancini Award from ASCAP and a Golden Globe Award for Best Original Score and a BAFTA. Armstrong was also awarded a Grammy for Best Original Score in 2004 for the biopic, *Ray*. His opera *The Lady From The Sea* for Scottish Opera won the Herald Angel award at the Edinburgh International Festival and most recently Armstrong was commissioned by the Organ Reframed Festival at Union Chapel to compose a new work with the London Contemporary Orchestra, titled *Painted In White*.

[www.craigarmstrong.com](http://www.craigarmstrong.com)

### About Calum Martin

Calum has been involved in Gaelic Music for most of his adult life in one capacity or another. Calum has recorded as a solo artist with the release of two all Gaelic albums: *The Megantic Outlaw* in 1983 and *Gael Force* in 1988 before commencing a new career as a full time Gaelic Music Instructor in Primary and Secondary schools on the Isle of Lewis in 1992.

A further three Contemporary Gaelic Albums followed in 2007 with a reworking of the Original *Megantic Outlaw* Album as well as " *An Dealachadh*" from 2010 and his latest Album "Frayvn" released in 2015, all these recordings were in collaboration with musicians from both Scotland and Nashville.

Calum has a special interest in Gaelic Psalm Singing and was involved in producing the highly successful *Salm* CDs Vol 1 & 2 which explore the unique sound of Gaelic Psalm Singing in its natural setting as well as the *Salm & Soul* CD which was recorded live at *Celtic Connections* in 2005 exploring the connection between American Gospel Music and Gaelic Psalm Singing.

In addition, he continues to teach Gaelic Song in various workshops on the island including the Feis movement, as well as teaching Gaelic song and Gaelic Psalm Singing in various places such as St Louis Missouri and Ireland. [www.leummusic.com](http://www.leummusic.com)

[www.leummusic.com](http://www.leummusic.com)

[www.bethesdaospice.co.uk](http://www.bethesdaospice.co.uk)

### About the Scottish Ensemble

The UK's leading string orchestra, Scottish Ensemble (SE) inspires audiences in the UK and beyond with vibrant performances which are powerful, challenging and rewarding experiences. Based in Glasgow, SE is built around a core of outstanding string players who perform together under Artistic Director Jonathan Morton. The group is becoming increasingly known for its international collaborations with artists from other disciplines, from dance and theatre companies to visual artists. Starting in 2014, their series of annual cross-artform collaborations has so far included immersive projects with: visual artist Toby Paterson; Swedish contemporary dance company Andersson Dance; electronic-classical crossover composer Anna Meredith and visual artist Eleanor Meredith; and, most recently, Scottish theatre company *Vanishing Point* on a production centred around the music of Arvo Pärt.

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