

walk 1:

the west silvertown trail: gunpowder, fire and flood

Commentary by Jo Thomas

“ The area around the Royal Docks sings regeneration, energy and desolation. When the Albert Dock opened in 1880 the Royals became the first docks to be lit by electricity and for the next century most of London's electricity was generated in the Docklands area.

In my composition I have tried to weave a tapestry of mechanical and electrical sounds that reflect the industrial revolution and its adoption of this vibrant electrical power. The musical suggestion of trains, cranes and hydraulic power work as transitions, movements in the history we experience through the archive recordings and recorded conversations.

The role of the female voice is especially important within this score. Women did not have a strong visual presence in the docks, but the support of the mothers, lovers and wives of the men that worked there was ever-present, and many women worked in the local factories. I wanted to capture the delicacy and refined nature of the voice of Anne Griffiths in track two, the gentle tremble at the end of every sentence which captures a moment of suspended time. The score starts with a single pitched micro-sound pulsing gently and creating an intimate sound world that captures her presence.

Music by Machines (track three) is all about the sound of machinery. Bill talks about the rollers and the mist created by the flour dust. The Mechanical sounds were created through micro-sound impulse, counterbalanced with the lethal beauty of the mist.

The sound world in Barrier Park initially reflects the micro-climate of the low gardens of the Green Dock - an imaginary sound world of tropical animals, micro-objects and micro-melodies. Next to the river the Blitz Memorial reminds us of those who lost their lives in the terrible bombing here, reflected in a simple melodic line resembling a song blowing through the wind over the docks.

With this music I wanted to capture a sense of vast riverscape, remembrance and voice. The melody finally returns to the theme of electricity, current and light while we consider Andrew Mawson's vision for the this area as a water city. ”

Toby Butler



Toby Butler

1: green electra

Jo Thomas, Andrew Verner, Bill Perry, Alan Spong

2: vast nature, gentle voices

Anne Griffiths, Bill Perry, Jo Thomas, Alan Spong,
Andrew Verner, Eileen Gibbons, Toby Butler, Kevin Murphy

3: music by machines

Anne Griffiths, Bill Perry, Jo Thomas

4: rule britannia

Linda May Bingham, Stanley Rose, Keeley Prowse

5: gunpowder explosion

Toby Butler

6: micro macro spaces

Phil Riley, young people from the Asta Centre

7: closing memories, future visions

Eileen Gibbons, Andrew Mawson

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1: green electro

Stand outside the main entrance of the Excel Centre. Play track 1.

2: vast nature, gentle voices

Stand in the centre of the Bridge. Look at the docks in the direction of City Airport and the Connaught Bridge.

3: music by machines

Stand next to chimney at the top of Mill Rd. Look at the wall of the old flour mill.

4: rule britannia

Stand outside Britannia Village Primary School.

5: gunpowder explosion

Find the war memorial and the explosion memorial that are set back from the road (combined).

6: micro macro spaces

Go into to café, look out through the windows and listen, or sit outside if it is closed.

7: closing memories, future visions

Pass the London Blitz memorial to the edge of the river, where there are great views of the Thames Barrier. Walk and listen along the promenade or stand and listen.

