

NORWICH



NORFOLK



JESSICA WALKER & LUKE STYLES

## THE PEOPLE'S CABARET

Jessica Walker, voice  
Ian Watson, accordion  
Luke Styles, composer

In 2021 we find ourselves living through times of unprecedented social, cultural and economic change. Well...almost unprecedented. Track back 90 years, and there are striking parallels to be drawn with Europe and America in the 1930s, when Populism was on the rise, and much of the world found itself in the midst of a Great Depression. Back then, composers and writers responded to their times in biting, satirical tone. The songs of Weill, Eisler, Spoliansky, Hollaender and Brecht ranted against racism, capitalism and oppression, until their authors were forced to flee the country, in fear for their lives.

The songs written by these seminal artists are still regularly performed today, as illustrations of a past that must never be repeated, but where are the contemporary responses? Singer/writer Jessica Walker and composer Luke Styles hold a mirror up to the disturbing times we live in, and create a cutting-edge work for our age, integrating some of those great original numbers, with a brand new cycle of songs about discrimination, social inequality, freedom of expression, and the rise of fake news.



## Programme

I ain't got no Home - Woodie Guthrie  
Lavender Song - Spoliansky & Schwabach  
Life's a Swindle - Spoliansky, Schiffer & Lawrence  
The Ballad of Marie Sanders - Eisler & Brecht  
Pirate Jenny - Weill, Brecht & Blitzstein

New songs by Jessica Walker and Luke Styles  
Park Man  
The Other Side  
Glass floor  
Monumental  
Viral

## About Jessica Walker

Jessica specialises in the creation of genre-defying performance. Originally an opera singer, she has over the last few years become known for her distinctive music theatre works, which are commissioned by opera companies, theatres and music festivals alike.

Equally at home in contemporary opera, cabaret and theatre, she continues to perform both nationally and internationally, with recent critically acclaimed performances in New York, Paris, Switzerland and Japan.

## About Luke Styles

Luke Styles is a British and Australian composer. Luke was the first Glyndebourne Young Composer in Residence, represented by IMG Artists and the first composer in residence at the Foundling Museum since Handel. Luke's operas have been performed on the famous Glyndebourne main stage, and the Royal Opera House Covent Garden by the London Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of conductors such as Vladimir Jurowski.

Throughout his career Luke has been heavily involved in creating collaborative and multi-discipline works. These have included works for dancers and circus performers, in the form of Handspun, commissioned by the Royal Opera House Covent Garden and subsequently produced in Oslo, Helsinki, Prague, London and Panama City. Luke has created silent-film scores for the British Film Institute and works for musicians and actors for Kings Place and the Werkraum Festival in Germany.

Luke's most recent opera Ned Kelly premiered to critical acclaim at the 2019 Perth Festival and was a finalist in the 2020 Arts Music Awards.

## **I ain't got no Home**

I ain't got no home, I'm just a-roamin' 'round,  
Just a wandrin' worker, I go from town to town.  
And the police make it hard wherever I may go  
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

My brothers and my sisters are stranded on this  
road,  
A hot and dusty road that a million feet have trod;  
Rich man took my home and drove me from my  
door  
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

Was a-farmin' on the shares, and always I was  
poor;  
My crops I lay into the banker's store.  
My wife took down and died upon the cabin floor,  
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

Now as I look around, it's mighty plain to see  
This world is such a great and a funny place to be;  
Oh, the gamblin' man is rich an' the workin' man is  
poor,  
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

## **Lavender Song**

What makes them think they have the right to say  
what God considers vice  
What makes them think they have the right to  
keep us out of Paradise  
They make our lives hell here on Earth  
poisoning us with guilt and shame  
If we resist, prison awaits so our love dares not  
speak its name  
The crime is when love must hide  
From now on we'll love with pride

We're not afraid to be queer and different  
if that means hell - well, hell we'll take the chance  
they're all so straight, uptight, upright and rigid  
they march in lockstep we prefer to dance  
We see a world of romance and of pleasure  
All they can see is sheer banality  
Lavender nights are our greatest treasure  
where we can be just who we want to be  
Round us all up, send us away  
that's what you'd really like to do  
But we're too strong, proud, unafraid  
in fact we almost pity you  
You act from fear, why should that be

What is it that you are frightened of  
The way that we dress  
The way that we meet  
The fact that you cannot destroy our love  
We're going to win our rights  
to lavender days and nights

## **Life's a Swindle**

Papa swindles  
Mama swindles  
Grandmama's a lying thief  
We're perfectly shameless  
But we're blameless  
After all it's our belief  
Nowadays the world is rotten  
Honesty has been forgotten  
Fall in love but after kissing  
Check your purse to see what's missing  
Everyone swindles some  
Most of us are on the run

Life's a swindle, yes it's all a swindle  
So get what you can from your fellow man  
Girls and boys today would rather steal than  
play  
And we don't care  
We tell them - get your share  
Life is short and greed's in season  
All mankind must have its reason  
Life is good so knock on wood

Shops will swindle  
Shoppers swindle  
Every purchase tells a tale  
The price is inflated or regulated  
To ensure the shop will fail  
Wheel and deal and pull a fast one  
Knowing you won't be the last one  
Get the goods while they are going  
Grab the cash while it is flowing  
Everyone swindles some  
What the heck - go bounce a cheque

Life's a swindle...

Politicians are magicians  
They make swindles disappear  
The bribes they are taking  
The deals they are making  
Never reach the public ear  
The left betrays the rights dismays  
The country's broke and guess who pays  
But tax each swindle in the making  
Profits will be record-breaking  
Everyone swindles some  
So vote for who will steal for you

## **The Ballad of Marie Sanders**

In Nuremberg, they made a law  
Giving women cause to weep  
Who had been sleeping with the wrong men

The people crouch in their tenements  
And hear the beating of drums  
God above could there be something wrong  
tonight  
Listen – here it comes

Marie Sanders, does your boyfriend have  
raven hair  
If so, you'd better had make sure  
It is the end of the affair

The people...

Mother, hand me the keys please  
Everything will be alright  
The moon looks like it always does

And at nine one morning she rode  
through the city in her slip  
With a board around her neck  
Her head shaven  
The crowd jeering  
Her eyes cold

And people lined up along the streets  
The Anti-Semites are in town  
God above if men only used their ears  
They would know who did what and to whom

## **Pirate Jenny**

Ahh you people can watch while I'm scrubbing  
these floors  
And I'm scrubbing these floors while you're  
gawking  
Maybe once you tip me and it makes you  
feel swell

In this crummy southern town  
In this pit of hotel  
But you'll never guess to who you're talking  
No  
You'll never guess to who you're talking  
Then one night there's a scream in the night  
And you wonder: "who could that have been?"  
And you see me kind of grinning while I'm  
scrubbing  
And you say "what she got to grin?"  
I'll tell ya

There's a ship  
The black freighter  
With a skull on its mast-head  
Will be coming in  
You gentlemen say: "Hey gal, finish them floors  
What's wrong with you? Earn your keep here"  
You toss me your tips and look to the ships  
But I'm counting your heads as I'm making the beds  
'cause there's nobody gonna sleep here tonight  
No  
Nobody  
No-one

Then one night there's a scream in the night  
And you say: "who's that kicking up a row?"  
And you see me kinda staring out the window  
And you say: "what she got to stare at now?"  
I'll tell ya  
There's a ship  
The black freighter  
Turns around in the harbour  
Shooting guns from her bow  
Well you gentlemen can wipe those smiles off your  
face  
'cause every building in town is a flat one  
This whole frigging place will be down to the ground  
Only this cheap hotel standing up, safe and sound  
And you yell: "why do they spare that one?"  
All the night through with the noise and to do  
And you wonder: "who is that person that lives up  
there?"  
And you see me stepping out in the morning  
Looking fine with a ribbon in my hair  
Well just look at me now

And a ship  
The black freighter  
Runs a flag up its mast-head  
And a cheer rings the air.  
By noon-time the dock is a swarming with men  
Coming out from the ghostly freighter  
They're moving in the shadows where no-one can  
see  
And they're chaining up people  
And delivering 'em to me  
Asking me: "kill them now or later?"  
Asking me: "kill them now or later?"  
Noon by the clock and so still at the dock  
You can hear a fog horn miles away  
And in that quiet of death I'll say:  
"right now!"  
"right now!"  
And they pile up the bodies  
And I'll say: "that'll learn you.  
That'll learn you."

And the ship  
The black freighter  
Disappears out to sea  
And  
On  
It  
Is  
Me!

### **Park Man**

Narrator voice:  
He might be old  
He might be young  
It's very hard to say  
His hair is long  
His face obscured  
His beard is coarse and grey

Sometimes you'll find him on a bench  
Or lying on his side  
His cardboard mattress torn and stained  
From so much beating rain

He wears an antique golden ring  
A sign of richer times  
It hurts to see a man so low  
A life in such decline

Park Man voice:  
Wait a fucking minute  
Don't give me your pity  
This is my city

I had a job and a family  
It's not as if  
This was  
My destiny

Rent got higher  
I was fired  
Marriage fell apart  
Before you know it  
I was mired  
In debt

No one to help  
Nowhere to go

Until I came here

Narrator:  
This park is his home now  
He's lived here for a year  
He knows when to hide out

And when he's in the clear

People pass by quickly  
It's rude to stop and stare  
Sometimes they hand out money  
To show him that they care

Park Man:  
That's right  
Hold your nose and look away  
Clasping your expensive lattes

I am you  
And you are me  
You think this is a meritocracy?

(You see a tramp  
A homeless man  
You don't see  
The life I had)

Narrator:  
It's a shame but it's too bad  
Some people can't fit in  
He's probably an alcoholic  
Either that, or he has a habit

Park Man:  
I drink to keep warm  
And to cut through the fear  
It can get scary out here

Narrator:  
Their lives become shambolic  
He's clearly an alcoholic

Park Man:  
Sometimes it's really scary out here

### **The Other Side**

The times are dark  
We understand your fear  
We're here to reassure you  
A better life draws near

We know there is hardship  
And little food to eat  
That some days you are forced to choose  
Between a meal and heat

Many of you suffer  
Your voices are not heard  
You feel that you're neglected  
That no one heeds your words

We are here to tell you  
We hear you, we applaud  
So lift your voices now  
With our mantra to the cause:

Up with truth  
Down with lies  
Beware the other side!

You know they are corrupt  
And aiming to disrupt  
Their statements are absurd  
You can't believe a word

When they try to trip us up  
And say we are to blame  
We must fight the bloody battle  
To drain their filth away

We will not be deterred  
The truth is on our side  
Remember what we fight for  
Shout it out with pride

Up with truth  
Down with lies  
Beware the other side

Yes we've been your government  
For a decade now  
But they always spoil it  
We've never been allowed...

To do the things we wanted  
To sow and plant the seeds  
To make our country great again  
To give you what you need

Don't be fooled!  
Down with lies  
Smash the other side

I'm here to state today  
The time for words has passed  
It's them or us, my friends  
We must attack, and fast

Believe me when I tell you  
The other side is mad  
The other side is evil  
The other side is sad

The other side is stupid  
The other side is weak  
The other side are rapists  
The other side are freaks

Down with scum  
Out with lies  
Smash the other side

Down with scum  
Out with lies  
Smash the other side

### **Glass floor**

I take the night bus at Two am  
To stop number twenty-five  
My soaring building of steel and lights  
So pretty as she  
Illuminates the city night

Mr Security waves me through  
Glued as always to his phone  
I click-clack across the silent foyer  
Of marble and chrome

Down to the basement  
And into my lair  
My cleaning cupboard under the stairs

I glance up at the ceiling of glass  
I know it's built to last

Still - I often panic  
It will suddenly crack  
Come crashing down upon me  
In a thousand painful pieces

Armed with bucket, mop and broom  
I take the lift  
Swing open the door  
The ceiling of glass is now my floor  
The acres of space and time  
I nightly polish and shine

Glass floor  
Littered and stained  
Engrained with dirt from the day before

It's funny, that  
Because from below  
You never see the dirt you know  
It's opaque  
Which makes it pristine  
From underneath

I sweep away the stale crumbs  
Of other people's yesterday  
Scoop up their discarded work  
Pocket coins, my little perk

I save that change in a china pot  
One day I'll empty it  
See what we've got  
Enough for the trainers my son asked for  
That what I win from my glass floor

(I'm a demon with the mop  
Never stop  
Time is short  
I don't like to get caught here  
As they start to come in  
A little before seven

But) Tonight's glass is tricky  
There's something unyielding and sticky  
I can't imagine what thrills they spilled  
To make that stubborn puddle

I've barely finished my final polish  
When I hear an admonishing voice  
City boy on the phone  
Feeling his way into the day  
With his loud and confident tone

I slip away  
Down the service stairs  
Back to my basement lair

Look up once more  
Big black shoes  
Marching across my shining floor  
Men making their coffee  
Making their money  
Lives rich with opportunity

While I'm down here  
Trapped and unseen  
Their floor will always be  
My ceiling

### **Monumental**

Sinking, drowning  
Down, down  
Deep, Deeper

It happened so fast  
I'd been minding my own  
Surveying the city from my granite throne

I'm not saying conditions were perfect  
Sometimes people sat on me  
Sometimes pigeons shat on me  
The odd graffiti  
Adorned my chest

Still  
I was elevated  
Venerated  
And quite right too  
After what I did  
For this city

But before you know it  
A baying crowd  
Ropes and heave-ho  
Pushing, shoving  
Tipping me into the dock  
Plop!

Sinking, drowning  
Deep sleep  
Slip slop

I thought  
That's where I'd remain  
Wedged into a bed  
Of harbour silt  
Obscured from view  
Misbegotten  
Eternally banished  
And forgotten

Until – happy day!  
Resuscitated  
Reanimated  
Brought to this opulent place  
Displayed for all in a Perspex case

I'm in a grand room  
Filled with heirlooms  
Burgundy walls  
Thirty foot tall

It's pleasant here  
Warm and clean  
A civilised venue  
For observing  
Although sometimes  
That can be unnerving

People stop and stare  
They shake their heads  
And shout abuse  
I'm glad  
I cannot be cut loose

I feel myself suddenly  
Sinking, drowning  
Slip slop  
Plip plop

With an overwhelming yearning  
To return to my shitty city plinth  
Overseeing my generous gifts

I was big in trade you see  
First fruit and wine  
Then over time  
Slavery

What were we supposed to do  
When they collapsed or died en route?  
The stench of flesh could not be ignored  
We had to throw them overboard

Sinking, drowning  
Down, down  
To a deep  
Unending sleep

I gave so much to this city  
It's a terrible pity...  
Things were different then  
Slaves were goods, not men

Down down  
Deep, deep  
Unending sleep  
Slip slop  
Plop

### **Viral**

When Robbie died  
It didn't go viral

His friends were there  
The ones who still cared  
The ones who'd stuck by him  
Through thick and thin

Acquaintances briefly  
Displayed

Virtual grief  
Shared a picture  
A memory  
Scrolled down  
To see  
What he died from  
Before moving on

When Robbie died  
It didn't go viral

Those of us there  
For his downward spiral  
Could not bear to share  
His end  
To pretend  
It had been  
Serene

There were not the words  
To describe  
The pain  
Of seeing a friend  
So barely alive

When Robbie died  
It didn't go viral

There is no vaccine  
Made for AIDS  
Although so many have succumbed  
Pills make more money  
In the long run

You have to weigh up  
The economics  
This new pandemic  
Attacks our growth  
And we cannot risk going broke

When Robbie died  
It didn't go viral

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