

...the vivid speechless air... (2019)

Pete Stollery

solo contrabass clarinet – 2'41”

For Sarah Watts and the people of the Island of Raasay

Much of my recent music and sound art has examined a relationship with place, usually places I have visited, or have grown to know well. I have never been to Raasay, but having been asked to compose a short piece which “takes its influence from Raasay” and which would be “accessible to the islanders”, I decided to reflect on this place I had never visited, trying to imagine its sounds, smells and sights, whilst reading and listening to reflections of others who had been there.

My imaginary version of Raasay is particularly influenced by Seamus Heaney’s translation of Sorley Maclean’s poem *Hallaig*, a haunting reflection on the clearances in the mid 1800s and it is from this poem that my title is taken. The census taken in 1841 stated that 129 people were resident in Upper and Lower Hallaig; the census taken in 1891 stated that the population was 0.

This short piece is 161 seconds in length, each second is dedicated to each individual registered as resident on Raasay (census date 2011).