

## Lost Princes

baritone and digital sound

Pete Stollery

*Lost Princes* is a setting of words by the poet Peter Davidson, which celebrate two major figures in seventh and eighth century Welsh history – Cadfan (d. 625), ruler of Gwynedd and Eliseg (fl. mid 8<sup>th</sup> cent.), ruler of Powys.

One of the main themes is that of remoteness, both in time and in location. I wanted to emphasise these two aspects alongside imagery provided by references in the poem to water and stone. The digital sound part is made up, for the most part, from recordings made at the locations of two monuments dedicated to each figure – the Pillar of Eliseg near Llangollen and the Catamanus (Latin for Cadfan) Stone in Llangadwaladr on the Isle of Anglesey.

*Catamanus, the wisest, most famous of Kings* is the clearly discernible text on the Catamanus Stone. The text on the Pillar of Eliseg, however, has now completely worn away. The historian Edward Llwyd made an inscription of the text in 1696, which was even then partly indecipherable and which was translated in Nash-Williams' *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales* in 1950. These different aspects of remoteness from the original inscription provided a powerful stimulus for the piece and is reflected in the ambiguities provided by partly-recognisable sounds interweaving with recognizable ones which undergo gradual transformations.

Another challenge was to be mindful of the fact that performance would be within the context of an art song recital, alongside pieces for voice and piano, rather than alongside other pieces of electroacoustic music. The first sound is that of a piano middle C, which gradually transforms into a non-real world soundscape made up of sounds recorded on location; similarly, the piece ends with the decay from a single piano note. Sound files are triggered via computer by the pianist, from the piano stool.

*Lost Princes* was commissioned by Jeremy Huw Williams, with funds from Creative Scotland, and was premiered by him as part of the **sound** festival in October 2013.