



# Poetry in Aldeburgh 2020

Extract from Festival blog by poet and musician Christian Wethered

## Friday 13 Nov 9pm: 'Ultra-Sound' by All Saints Sessions



left to right  
Isabelle Baafi  
Alastair Gavin  
Malcolm Ball  
Ian Burdge  
Cheryl Moskowitz

On Friday at 9pm we had All Saints Sessions performing 'Ultra-Sound'. This was a fusion of poetry and sound by Cheryl Moskowitz and Alastair Gavin, assisted by Isabelle Baafi and musicians Malcom Ball and Ian Burdge. 'This and the Light' by Alastair Gavin (piano, electronics), Malcolm Ball, (Ondes Martenot), and Ian Burdge (cello), was a hypnotic fusion of electronic and acoustic. 'Sui Generis', 'Sister Wives' and the hilariously titled 'Finding my dad in a can of baked beans', were poems by Isabelle Baafi (from her pamphlet *Ripe*, published by ignitionpress, Nov 2020), accompanied by music. Then the electronic 'Finding my Dad...' stretched the tone dramatically, turning seamlessly from classical to jazz, where each performer appeared to blend impressively and the words and music reached new dimensions. We then had 'Di Molte Voce' by Cheryl Moskowitz, with music, and 'Vocalise – Étude' by Olivier Messiaen (1935), was in the same vein, though darker: Moskowitz's wordless sounds mapped by a gorgeous cello descent, all sounding quite John Cage.

We then watched a short film: 'Fixed in Place (8 min)' by Alastair, Cheryl, and George Gavin, which had been made in a 'virtual residency' at Bethany Arts Community, Ossining, New York, October 2020. Sound, Image and poem worked to a playful, surreal fusion, supported by a Richter-esque soundscape. Finally, the poem 'Gravida' by Isabelle Baaft, was accompanied by careful, ambient electronics, and 'Oh my darling, Already, Impossible Beauty' by Cheryl Moskowitz was matched with music by Alastair, Ian & Malcolm, also including 'Parolibre' by Ryuichi Sakamoto (1986).

By the end I was completely dumbstruck. I recently learned that Ian Burdge has recorded with Radiohead, which makes perfect sense. In this recording I was almost expecting Paul Thomas Anderson to show up with a tambourine reading some sonnets. This was undoubtedly my favourite performance of the year. I was reminded of all the great collaborations between poetry and music: from John Cage to Laurie Anderson / Lou Reed, Kate Tempest, even Billie Eilish. This was easily as good because (as is perhaps lacking in most cases) the production matched the poems for merit, with each performer on top of his or her game.