



A NEW DIVAN

Press Release

21 June 2018

London, June 2018

Towards a New Divan: A Celebration of East and West through Music and Poetry

Last night saw a special occasion at the historic Wilton's Music Hall in London, featuring the premiere of a new musical composition celebrating the launch of Gingko's momentous New Divan project, the culmination of which will be a festival of music and poetry hosted in the UK by the Hay and Shubbak festivals in summer 2019 and in Germany by the Berlin-based Barenboim-Said Akademie in the autumn.

A New Divan marks the celebration of the 200th anniversary of Goethe's *West-Eastern Divan* (1819). Bringing together twenty-four leading poets – twelve from the 'East' and twelve from the 'West' – in a lyrical conversation inspired by the culture of the Other. These poets seek to continue the dialogue which Johann Wolfgang von Goethe started with Hafiz, the fourteenth-century Persian poet he thought of as his 'twin', the results of which he published in the *West-Eastern Divan*.

The concert featured a new musical composition by the London-based Tafahum music ensemble inspired by the Syrian poet Adonis' especially commissioned contribution to *A New Divan*, entitled 'Letter to Goethe'. *A New Divan's* editor, Bill Swainson, announced the names of the English-language poets contributing to *A New Divan*.

The poets and translators are as follows:

Eastern Poets

Abbas Baydoun (Lebanon)
Adonis (Syria)
Fadhil Al-Azzawi (Iraq)
Amjad Nasser (Jordan)
Fatemeh Shams (Iran)
Gonca Özmen (Turkey)
Hafez Mousavi (Iran)
Iman Mersal (Egypt)
Mohammed Bennis (Morocco)
Mourid Barghouti (Palestine)
Nujoom Al-Ghanem (UAE)
Reza Mohammadi (Afghanistan)

Western Poets

Antonella Anedda (Italy)
Homero Aridjis (Mexico)
Angélica Freitas (Brazil)
Durs Grünbein (Germany)
Clara Janés (Spain)
Jaan Kaplinski (Estonia)
Khaled Mattawa (USA)
Gilles Ortlieb (France)

English Language Poets

Bill Manhire
Khaled Mattawa
Jorie Graham
Fady Joudah
Dick Davis
Jo Shapcott
Daisy Fried
Elaine Feinstein
Sinead Morrissey
George Szirtes
Doireann Ní Ghríofa
Nick Laird

English-Language Poets

Jamie McKendrick
Kathleen Jamie
Tara Bergin
Matthew Sweeney
Lavinia Greenlaw
Sasha Dugdale
-
Sean O'Brien

Don Paterson (UK)
Raoul Schrott (Austria)
Aleš Šteger (Slovenia)
Jan Wagner (Germany)

-
Paul Farley
Brian Henry
Robin Robertson

'The twenty-two English-language poets who will render the work of the twenty-four original poets writing in twelve different languages demonstrate the scope and quality of this hugely ambitious project,' says Bill Swainson, editor of A New Divan. 'Last year, I was overwhelmed by the quality of each original poem as it arrived. This year, as the English-language versions have begun to arrive, I am thrilled by the immediacy of the translations and how the 22 poets are fashioning new poems from the work of poets they are often engaging with for the first time. When A New Divan is published in 2019, I hope readers will be equally thrilled by the confidence and freshness of these voices and the worlds they evoke.'

The 20 June concert, along with Tafahum's new composition, were made possible with support from Amal - A Said Foundation Project.

Notes for Editors

About A New Divan

A New Divan is a Gingko project that aims to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Goethe's *West-Eastern Divan* (1819). This ambitious anthology will bring together twenty-four leading poets – twelve from the 'East' and twelve from the 'West' – in a truly international poetic dialogue inspired by the culture of the other. *A New Divan's* contributing poets hail from across the East (from Morocco to Turkey, Syria to Afghanistan) and from across the West (from Germany to Mexico, Estonia to Brazil). The new poems will respond to the titles of the twelve books of Goethe's original *Divan*, including 'The Poet', 'Love', 'Ill-humour', 'The Cup-Bearer', 'The Tyrant' and 'Paradise', and will draw on the distinctive poetic forms of the cultures of the poets taking part. Twenty-two English-language poets have been commissioned to create English versions of the poems not originally written in English, either by direct translation or by working with a literal translation. Each poem will appear in English facing the original language of composition in a unique multi-lingual anthology. Three pairs of essays will enhance and complement the poems, mirroring Goethe's original notes and commentary, which he called 'For Better Understanding...'. The whole book will be a life-enhancing dialogue in the spirit of Goethe's original. Many of the contributing poets will tour the UK in the summer of 2019, and all the poets, translators and musicians will come together in a festival of music and poetry in the summer of 2019 in Berlin, hosted by the Barenboim-Said Akademie.

www.ginkgo.org.uk/new-divan

About Gingko

Gingko is committed to creating better understanding between the West and the Middle East and North Africa. By promoting a more informed public, wider interest in and better understanding of the Middle East and North Africa region, Gingko fosters dialogue and debate, and gives a voice to a new generation of thinkers and opinion formers.

www.ginkgo.org.uk

For more information and images contact: Clare Roberts

E: clare@ginkgolibrary.com T: 0203 6379730

A New Divan is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**