Estuary Airs

for sextet

by David Roche
The composition of *Estuary Airs* was inspired by two situations. The first of these relates to my time living near the Gower Estuary in Swansea, South Wales. The contrast between the natural beauty and poverty of the surrounding areas is striking and upsetting and I wanted this to be reflected in my music; smooth and lyrical lines are interrupted by and developed in to more jagged and attacking figures.

Secondly, and more recently, *Estuary Airs* was inspired my time in Berstane House in Orkney, once home to the Artic explorer John Rae. I chose to compose the rest of this composition in Orkney due to the similarity in landscape. The musical events in this piece reflect the incredible pace and intensity of the environmental change in Orkney; the blinding, bright white light of the sunrise reflecting on the ocean and through the windows of the house; the occasional total stillness of the sea inlets in contrast to their movement in the blustering, stormy weather; the broad and windswept open landscapes; and the beams of light that cut through the clouds and rest themselves on the sea.

What struck me most in Orkney, however, was the way I experienced the changes in air pressure and wind when exploring the coastal areas and estuaries. It strongly reminded me of the Gower Estuary and immediately evoked feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and melancholy. It felt incredible to be reminded of something so specifically by the landscape of a place – the idea that something so far away was still clouding my judgements of my experiences was frightening and exhilarating.

**Instrumentation**

1 flute (doubling piccolo)
1 clarinet (doubling bass clarinet)

2 violins
1 viola
1 cello

This composition was written for The Assembly Project as part of the 2017 St Magnus International Festival Composers’ Course.

This score is written in C
Duration: approximately 8 minutes long