

HIPPODROME silent film festival

Where movies and music come alive!

WEDNESDAY 21 MARCH - SUNDAY 25 MARCH 2018

BOX OFFICE: 01324 506850 | HIPPFEST.CO.UK



Call of the North

Thursday 22 March 2018

Performing live: Atzi Muramatsu, Rob MacNeacail, Gerda Stevenson

Atzi Muramatsu was commissioned in 2017 by Yasmin Al-Hadithi of Highlight Arts to compose a contemporary score for three films by Isobel Wylie Hutchison, presented at HippFest tonight.

The curators explain their thinking behind the commission.

HIGHLIGHT ARTS' curatorial work aims to build cultural dialogue with parts of the world challenged by contemporary conflicts – be they political, social or environmental. Our Highlight ARCTIC project was conceived with a view to establishing such a dialogue with the circumpolar North, giving Scottish audiences the chance to explore a region seldom seen as an active participant in shaping its own image.

In classical and medieval literature, the 'Ultima Thule' was that place which exists just beyond the borders of the known world - a land where anything could be possible, anything real. Mapping of the Ultima Thule has, throughout history, been at once a romantic quest and a practical, economic endeavour. As curators we sought to investigate the notion that the Arctic may still be the southern world's Ultima Thule, held steadfastly in our minds as a realm of pristine beauty, yet equally one with potential for bounty.

Setting out on our own journey of exploration into the history of Scotland's northerly gaze, we were delighted to find a vast array of treasures left to us by West Lothian's very own Isobel Wylie Hutchison (1889-1982). A pioneering filmmaker, poet and painter, Isobel was also - perhaps first and foremost - a botanist. Called to the North, flowers were Isobel's bounty. Once there, she fell in love - with not only the wildflowers and the rolling landscapes but equally with indigenous Inuit communities she encountered there, with whom she spent a great deal of time over many years.



Hutchison's caring portrayal of life in Greenland - in all its forms - is particularly striking in these films, so they seemed a good place to start. Seeking to bring her work into conversation with the present, the ethereal cinematic soundscapes of contemporary composer Atzi Muramatsu (Winner, Best Composer at BAFTA Scotland New Talent Awards 2016) seemed an ideal fit. As Isobel invites us to discover 1930s Greenland with her, Atzi lends us the space in which to dream - of Isobel's Ultima Thule and perhaps also our own.

Atzi Muramatsu's score was first presented at CCA Glasgow in March 2017 as part of a 3-week Highlight Arctic programme of events across Scotland and then again in December, in dialogue with a performance by Greenlandic Inuit poet and performance artist Jessie Kleemann.

Screening material courtesy of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society
Dir. Isobel Wylie Hutchison | Greenland/Scotland | 1935

This event will be enhanced by BSL interpretation plus electronic note-taking

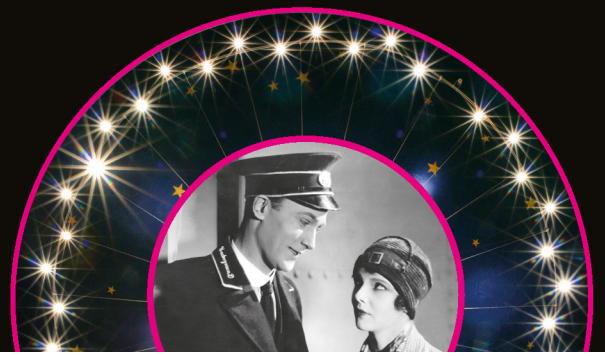


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HippFest Director, Alison Strauss, invited Gerda Stevenson to join the 'conversation' about Isobel Wylie Hutchison for tonight's event. This poem about Hutchison by Stevenson features in her most recent poetry collection: 'Quines' (published March 2018).

'Admiral of the Bering' Recalls Alaska

(Isobel Wylie Hutchison – born and died in Edinburgh 1889–1982, botanist, film-maker, writer, artist and Arctic explorer)

I sold my ball gown to a chambermaid at Nome –
after all, 'when in Rome'! What use could tulle
and jewels be to me, cadging a lift on the gallant
ten-ton Trader, hunkered on my bunk,
as she sliced through ice to Point Hope?
Gone for me the fouting fuss of women's frills:
free just to be, to roam the rim of the Arctic sheet,
at ease among men.

I'd gained Anvil's summit before we sailed,
and from her tundra slopes plucked gold -
not the diggers' kind - specimens to be pressed
between paper leaves: snow-white boykinia,
primula eximia, and golden potentil,
a farewell blaze before winter set in.

At Wainwright I looted with Inuit
the ribs of a drifting ghost - who knows
if her rusted hull still rides the floes?
I froze my finger on the shutter-release
in minus 63, painted the glittering Endicott peaks,
and got snowed up for weeks with Bolshevik Gus
in his driftwood hut on a sandspit; "I'll treat you,"
he pledged, "like a lady," and true to his word,

rigged up a screen for my modesty;
outside at night the dog team's breath
rose crystalline on the freezing air,
while, happed in parkas and eiderdown,
we'd debate without rancour the existence of God,
though proof - as if needed - was pulsing above,
in the sky's green harp.

My old bones must be rime-ringed now,
and full of snow, crumpled in this wheelchair,
hooked fingers leafing through memory's maps.
"The first white woman, no doubt," Gus said,
"to reach Demarcation Point on dog sled,"
clicking my camera on the laughing length of me,
two nations straddled by my long, lean legs!

Gerda Stevenson