A woman with short grey hair, wearing a black jacket and dark trousers, stands on the wooden deck of a ship. She is holding a small tablet or book and speaking into a microphone on a stand. The deck is cluttered with various pieces of equipment, including a large blue crane with 'PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY' and 'SMT MARINE' branding, and a large rusted metal cylinder. In the background, a blue ship is docked at a pier, and a cityscape is visible across the water. A lifebuoy with 'ROCK' and 'ROCHFESTER' written on it is mounted on the side of the ship.

**CAROLINE BERGVALL**

Ragadawn

Outdoor Sunrise Performance

2016: Geneva (46°12' N) and Tilbury (51°27' N)

2017: Projected Tour

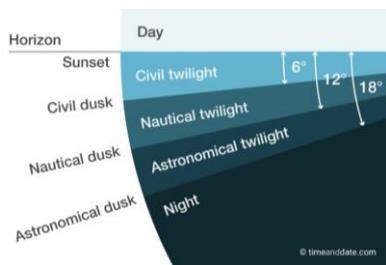
“The threshold spaces where Ragadawn is performed are not only points of conflict but of fluidity: where cultures blend, languages overlap, people trade and fall in love. Places where understanding and solidarity become possible” Emily Bick. The Wire



Estuary Festival, Tilbury. Photo credit: Thierry Bal

## SUMMARY

Ragadawn by **Caroline Bergvall** is a sunrise vocal performance to be performed outdoors from the last hours of night until the very early morning. A multisensory composition for two voices (spoken and sung), multiple languages and electronic frequencies accompany and celebrate the rising of day. The work is contextualised by the slow rising of day and draws on ancient and contemporary musical and literary sunrise traditions, such as medieval love poetry and alba songs, vedic hymns and yogic sunrise mantras as well as electronic treatments and field recordings. It celebrates and seeks out the amorous and erotic embrace between song and nature, between listeners and their locality and time.



The work creates an environment which, both sonically and verbally, emphasises an open, vibratory line of connection between sung texts, vocal sounds, breath patterns, instrumental drones, the surrounding environment (be it urban, post-urban or a natural scenery), and the listening audience. It explores both the celebratory and wondrous rise of day as well as the hidden anxieties it can provoke and the collective attention this demands.

Ragadawn is a powerful and moving performance combining music, text and voices in ritualised outdoor locations to reconnect audiences to time, place and to each other.



Estuary Festival, Tilbury. Photo credit: Thierry Bal

Directly following the performance is a **communal breakfast**. The breakfast is integral to the performance, is made using specific local foods and is offered to the audience. It creates an opportunity to participate in collective discussion, to involve and reconnect oneself to time, place and each other. It is designed to deepen the audience's experience of the work and strengthen the shared experience of the sunrise. Judging from the leisurely time audiences and the project's team spent together enjoying breakfast after the 2016 performances, this is a very welcome and important slow closure to the work.

Another key element of the work includes making contact with one **linguistic community** in the locality, to explore connections between languages from the past and those to come in the future. This might be an old language struggling to survive, hardly spoken now or a language emerging from the migration of a new community. These are timely issues which will create spaces and opportunities to engage with new audiences.

## ARTISTIC TEAM

*Ragadawn* is a sonic artwork created by **Caroline Bergvall** for time-specific and site-specific performance. It features two live voices – one spoken (Caroline Bergvall) and one sung (**Peyee Chen**) – as well as choral sections of pre-recorded voices speaking/singing in various languages (interviewed for the project). Sound design is by live programmer **Ben Corrigan** and live sound engineer **Sam Grant**.

British composer **Gavin Bryars** was commissioned to create the vocal score and the composition at the centre of the work is an extended piece for solo voice and drone *Canso*. Bryars' own interest in ancient European languages and vocal forms make him an ideal partner on the project.

The project was initiated by Caroline Bergvall and developed in collaboration with Swiss dramaturg **Michèle Pralong**.

Co-commissioned by **Festival de La Batie** (Geneva) and **Metal** (UK) for the inaugural Estuary Festival in Tilbury. *Ragadawn* premiered in 2016 at the Museum of the Red Cross in Geneva (46° 12' N) and Estuary Festival, at the Tilbury Docks in east London (51° 27' N).



Estuary Festival, Tilbury. Photo credit: Benedict Johnson



Festival la Batie, Geneva. Photo credit: Emma Wilcox

## DETAILS OF THE WORK

### **Night and day – Love, change and connection**

In its detail and narrative, the dawn project is a piece attuned to the depth and ambiguity present with the rising of day. The change from dark to dusk to light, the transformation of shadows into outlines into shapes, all this brings about a complex range of experience which can release a spirit of connectedness and collective openness as it recalls the large rhythmic patterns that connect all beings to nature and society, and the awakening of mind and body. It can also bring about anxiety and a sense of loneliness, a dreaded return to the realities of one's life. As such it can be a difficult time. This aspect of sunrise experienced as isolating is present in the narratives of the work and released through a performance structure that emphasises collective openness and sound healing.

*Am I awake am I asleep  
am I asleep when Im awake  
when Im awake am I awake  
am I aware that Im awake when Im awake  
am I aware that Im asleep  
Am I in the dark when in the clear  
am I in the know when in the dark  
is it even clear when its dark  
Are you certain that youre sure*

(excerpt Ragadawn, C Bergvall 2016)

### **Medieval love poetry and ritual songs**

The influence of medieval morning songs and troubadour love poetry as well as ancient sunrise rituals, such as vedic hymns and yogic mantras is embedded in the structuring of the work. The two live voices develop between the various moods of the piece in long sequences of breath patterns and songlines as well as through the circulating and at times more intense drone-like sequences of the site-specific sound design. Active silent pauses throughout the piece allow for ambient and passing sounds (cars, birds, engines..) to be integrated to the

overall presentness of the piece. The central celebratory love song *Canso* features sections from Old Occitan and Medieval poetry within the contemporary text. All these elements make for both a musical and a physical approach to song and text delivery.

### **Dawn Chorus - Language Map -**

At the heart of Ragadawn's exploration is the process of revitalizing connections between languages active in Europe. Research into old European languages as well as languages spoken by recently settled communities are introduced into the project through edited recordings. These sequences allow for local minority languages to be heard as part of the work and the region and they deepen the overall contemporary and historic linguistic pool of the work.

As a whole, the project's time-specificity, sited contexts and very public nature provides a unique opportunity to create a very special songwork at the edges of spoken artforms and attuned to surrounding sounds and emerging histories. It offers a widened range of audiences a renewed experience of each other and their time and place.

**Ragadawn** seeks out the ambiguities of light, celebrates the preciousness of love, the amorous and erotic embrace between lovers and with the surrounding elements. It wishes to release a spirit of connectedness to renew one's awareness and enjoyment of time, place and each other.

*oh my darlings oh my sweethearts oh my love oh my lovers oh my buddies oh my departed  
oh my teachers oh my healers oh my illuminators oh my oh my  
in the moostest of the stilleste, varmeste, nydligste, lighteste, smalleste, gorgeouste  
for the brighteste of the deepeste in the morkeste*

(opening excerpt, Ragadawn, C Bergvall 2016)

### **PRESS & AUDIENCE REACH**

Ragadawn gained significant press and public interest both in Geneva and London. In Geneva the work was presented over two mornings at the Museum of the Red Cross as part of the city-wide festival La Batie. For Estuary Festival's opening weekend, it was performed at the historically significant Tilbury Docks. A total of approximately 400 people made the journey to attend these performances.

*"As the sun rose over the Thames Estuary, next to shipping containers stacked like multicoloured Minecraft towers. As we huddled under blankets on rows of sofas on the dock, Bergvall and the soprano Peyee Chen took their places at microphones in front, and began to sing the dawn into life"* Emily Bick, The Wire

*"We are passengers" is one of the central refrains – results in a hypnotic hour of spoken word and stereo sound and, for the audience at least, a headspace somewhere between waking and sleeping"*  
Nancy Groves, Guardian

*"I was transported! Seemed she was collaborator to breeze, birds, passing boats. Made me relaxed yet hyper aware of surroundings. "@Francheskyia Twitter*

*"Earlier that morning I had been up at 5am for a dawn performance by a vocal artist named Caroline Bergvall, who wove her mesmeric voice with that of a vocalist Peyee Chen and a backing track of collected sounds. Raga Dawn. My job was to capture it for other people, but towards the end I just lay down on the deck behind the audience, my spine falling between one of the broad gaps in the planks, the breeze surging up through the fibres of my jumper to my skin, and the sound of the heavy lapping water beneath my head." sadiehasler.com*

Press coverage included print media, national radio both in Switzerland and the UK, as well as reviews on blogs and a good social media interaction, through the #ragadawn. A significant interview/review in the Guardian and The Wire as well as two interview spreads in Swiss newspapers. Interviews and sound samples in established national radio programmes both in the UK and Switzerland.

**UK media coverage included:**

National press:

*The Guardian*, Interview & review,  
*Guardian Guide*, Preview of Ragadawn, 17 September.

Magazines:

*The Wire*, RAGA DAWN listing included in September issue and online

*Art Monthly*, Estuary preview

*Classical Music Ragadawn* in their 'Pick of the Rest' premieres section, September issue.

Broadcast media:

*BBC3 The Verb*. Interview and rehearsal samples. 26 May.

*BBC Radio 3, In Tune*. Interview with Caroline Bergvall 16 September.

*BBC 6 Music*, 'Shout out' for Estuary / Ragadawn, 11 September.

*Resonance FM*, Preview of performance on Six Pillars to Persia.

*BBC Radio 3, The Verb* Interview with Caroline Bergvall, 27 May

*Resonance FM*. Interview with Caroline to be transmitted w/c 10 October

Upcoming

*The Wire* Review & interview feature, November issue

Estimated reach = 6,332,634 (Gorkana/ RAJAR figures)



Estuary Festival, Tilbury. Photo credit: Benedict Johnson

## **2017 PREPARATIONS**

We are now in discussion with a range of venues and are seeking partners for an international tour of *Ragadawn* to run from late May – September 2017. It is intended that the tour will commence in Morocco and follow a trajectory via Southern Spain, France, Switzerland, the UK and lead to the Nordic region. Conversations are ongoing with curators in Spain, Morocco and France and the UK.

In the UK we have secured initial interest from venues and partners who are interested in delivering offsite work, and work which engages new audiences for their organisations. We are keen to perform **Ragadawn** in a variety of locations' from rural and isolated landscapes, to post-industrial and urban. We want to develop relationships with organisations and venues with strong local engagement.

### **Local Engagement.**

In its detail and narrative, the *Ragadawn* project is a piece attuned to the depth and ambiguity present with the rising of day. The change from dark to dusk to light, the transformation of shadows into outlines into shapes, all this brings about a complex range of both ancient and contemporary experiences. Gathering outdoors at an unusual hour and at a chosen site to perform vocal work and to greet the day can reawaken a spirit of much needed interconnectedness. These shared moments provide a way into conversations about current living situations, contact between people and sharing very personal experiences.

### **Language**

A key element of the work includes making contact with a linguistic community in the locality. This might be an old language struggling to survive, one that is hardly spoken now or a language emerging from the migration of a new community. In each location we would work closely with our host and partners to help locate the most relevant community.

### **Breakfast**

Throughout the international tour we will seek out local food traditions and work with communities to create a breakfast that has resonance with the work and its location. This is a key part of the work and where the audiences and artists can come together in an atmosphere of collective sharing, encouraging discussion and reflection.

### **Site and date**

In each location we will undertake local research and detailed conversations with our partners to establish the best site for the work. Further discussions will be needed to select a date to ensure that we can secure a good audience. Careful selection of the site will encourage exploration by the audience of the relationship between the work and the location.

### **Technical requirements**

*Ragadawn* is presented as a multi-speaker set-up, to be performed outdoors (weather permitting). The work involves four people; two vocalists, one sound artist, and one sound engineer. The audio delivery is site specific, and as such will vary from site to site.

### **Marketing**

*Ragadawn* was supported by Four Colman Getty for the UK elements of the 2016 tour, a summary of press reach and wider impact is set out above and an Appendix provides a full account. We have an active social media campaign and micro-site for the project. We are confident of reaching a diverse and international audience.

We plan to work with Four Colman Getty again for the 2017 tour and would align our press and promotional activity with that of our partners.

## ABOUT CAROLINE BERGVALL

Caroline Bergvall is an internationally renowned, London-based Norwegian artist, writer and performer. Her work spans art forms, media and languages. The recipient of numerous awards and commissions, her work frequently develops through exploring material traces, literary documents and linguistic detail, language and literary history, sites and histories, hidden or forgotten knowledges. Her sparse textual, spatial and audio works often expose hidden or difficult historical/political events. More info can be found on her site:

[www.carolinebergvall.com](http://www.carolinebergvall.com)

### Additional info:

Web: [www.ragadawn.com](http://www.ragadawn.com)

Instagram: @ragadawn

Facebook: Ragadawn

### Contacts:

Producer. Emma Wilcox [emma@wilcox.net](mailto:emma@wilcox.net) 07932 724861

Lead Artist. Caroline Bergvall [carolinebergvall@gmail.com](mailto:carolinebergvall@gmail.com)



Museum of the Red Cross. Festival la Batie, Geneva. Photo credit: Emma Wilcox

## SUPPORTERS

Ragadawn was co-commissioned by two major festivals and premiered in September 2016; by Metal, Southend-on-Sea for the inaugural Estuary Festival, and by Festival la Batie in Geneva. The work has been supported by Ville de Genève, Etat de Genève, Fondation Wilsdorf, and Fondation Göhner, Arts Council England, Royal Embassy Norway.



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