

THE LAND

SATURDAY 2ND MAY 7.30PM



'...we were invited to a village in Dorset, and went down through teeming rain to the tiny hall where seats were set out in a shallow semi-circle facing a low platform with two chairs, a guitar, several kinds of accordion, a drum and a small lyre.

There were readings with music from Vita Sackville-West's poem, *The Land*. The audience was held enthralled for an hour and a half by this compelling recreation of country life a generation ago. The programme noted the poem's "unsentimental absorption with the unending conflict and collaboration between man and earth - a relationship whose imbalance has become of great concern to 21st-century mankind".

There were smiles of recognition from listening farmers at the poem's sharp observation of scenes they themselves knew so well.' **John Vallins, The Guardian**

The Land, by Vita Sackville-West

Adapted and performed by **Sonia Ritter and Tim Laycock**

' the country habit has me by the heart...' Vita Sackville-West

Sonia Ritter and Tim Laycock have created a rare opportunity to hear one of the most remarkable epic poems written in the 20th century in an evening which combines the passion of Vita Sackville-West's poetry with new and traditional music and natural sound.

Hailed by both critics and public alike as a masterpiece, *The Land* was awarded the prestigious Hawthornden Prize in 1926. The power of *The Land* lies in its singular and vital celebration of rural England and particularly the beloved Weald of Kent where Vita Sackville-West lived. Vita considered the poem to be her true claim to the status of great writer.

In *The Land*, the poet is the narrator and protagonist: an intimate lover of the soil who shares the tough and testing cycle of the farmer's year without sentimentality. She follows the seasons with those who work the soil, revelling and wrestling with the seasonal forces of the natural world and their astonishing beauty.

The poem has not lost its poignancy. The unending conflict and collaboration between humankind and the Earth that lies at the heart of the narrative is all too relevant today.

Leaping away from the page with all the power of live performance, this adaptation of *The Land* unlocks the drama of this epic poem and creates an evening that celebrates the joy of the spoken word fused with wonderful music and sound.



Sonia Ritter & Tim Laycock in "The Land"