



JAZZ PREMIERE SERIES

BLAIR LATHAM AND THE NOVELTONES

WED 18 NOV 2020
ST PETER'S ON WILLIS

KARLA AND THE DIVIDE

Having witnessed a significant social divide whilst living in Mexico, Blair was struck by the similarities starting to appear here on his return to Aotearoa. As part of the creative process and as a jumping off point for the new music you will hear this evening, Blair wrote the following short story, Karla and the Divide, exploring how this expanding social separation echoes across time and place.

A kaka screeched across the valley as Karla strolled up Aro Street. It was a bright and fresh day, but the winter sun held no real warmth. Karla was idly thinking about the great life plunge she'd decided to take, her move out of her parents' 'home' (always renting! Always moving!), and on to freedom, but also away from the money she could easily borrow to hang at Midnight Espresso or the Laundry Bar. That was something she knew that she'd miss, what with paying her own rent for once. As she rounded the first curve in that long street something caught her eye over to her left, up in the hodgepodge of trees and carport stilt legs. She turned and looked more closely. She stared. To her it was like a Magic Eye book that you finally get the hang of for the first time, something was there that she'd never noticed before but which had obviously been there a very long time. Thick wooden posts, at least a person across, covered in bits of steel and concrete, were wedged into the earth. They didn't travel very high, but they looked like they were supporting a lot of weight. Like they were pushing two worlds apart. In the middle of it all

was dark, the kind of dark you get at dusk. If she squinted she thought she could see men in trim suits in there, working on the posts, but she wasn't sure. Then she remembered.

She'd seen this sort of thing before, back in Mexico where she'd grown up. Over there it was known, without saying out loud, as 'the Crack', or 'the Divide', and to divide was its purpose. It kept the mainly light-skinned, ridiculously wealthy few who were in charge of Mexico's Fortune Up Above and apart from everyone else. There it was built of stone as well as wood, and overlaid with American Steel, and was much older and very very permanent. Here it looked like a beginning. "I guess this Crack is newer" she thought. Part of her insides churned at the knowledge that the Crack/Divide was here too. But part of her knew it was inevitable. "Stuff it, this time I'm gonna go in and look". So she did.

It wasn't what she'd expected. She thought that she'd come out in that Up Above, a place that her and her parents had been invited to back in Mexico, mainly because of their foreign-ness and whiteness, but it wasn't. It was Aro Valley, just without so many houses, and those that were there reminded her of the Jane Austen films that she'd seen.

She stood there for a while, bemused, thoughtful, a little frightened. A young lady was walking towards her. When she was close enough, they both stopped, stood and stared.

"Did you come through the Divide?"
"Yes. Where is this?"
"Wellington."
"Ah okay, um....when?"

"What? March."

"March? It looks different."

"Different from what? Did you come out with Vogel's paid passage from England too?"

"What? No. Ah, now I know, I studied that in history. What year is it?"

"'73 of course."

"1873?"

"Well yes, what'd ya think? 1773?"

"I didn't think there'd be a Divide here."

"Oh yes. They told us back home there wouldn't be, those Divides are what we came here to get away from back in the old country, but the men in charge of land selling and buying had built it by the time our boat got in."

"I see."

"Still, we can ignore it if we want, and not help it get bigger and stronger. That's what my Ma and Pa have decided anyway."

Karla just stood and thought.

"Yes!" she thought,

"We can!"

We can.

We can, can we. Can we. We can...

We can seek to change go from here and to there be gone then back over here and change seek again to change go from here and to there be gone then back, and then change.

We can.

THE NOVELTONES ARE:

Jasmine Lovell-Smith – Soprano Sax

Blair Latham – Bass Clarinet

Tristan Carter – Violin

Tom Callwood – Bass

with special guests

Dan Beban – Sound Manipulation

Andrew Wright - Visuals

WELLINGTON
JAZZ
FESTIVAL

18 — 22 NOV

COMMISSIONED BY WELLINGTON JAZZ FESTIVAL

CORE PARTNER

Absolutely
Positively
Wellington
Me Heke Kiri Poneke

HEADLINE PARTNER

BOULCOTT SUITES
Your place in Wellington

PARTNERED BY

TODD
CORPORATION

THANKS TO

creative jazz
ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND EDUCATION

SEE THE FULL LINE-UP AT
JAZZFESTIVAL.NZ