



Lena Herzog

# Last Whispers

*Oratorio for Vanishing Voices, Collapsing Universes and a Falling Tree*

Concept / Directed / Produced by Lena Herzog

With compositions and sound design by

Marco Capalbo and Mark Mangini

## *Last Whispers*

### *Oratorio for Vanishing Voices, Collapsing Universes and a Falling Tree*

is an immersive installation by artist Lena Herzog, built on her frequent themes of ritual and gesture, as well as her exploration of loss and dislocation.

It is a project about the mass extinction of languages—the unprecedented disappearance of our linguistic diversity. By definition, this occurs in silence, since silence is the very form of this extinction.

In collaboration with the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme at SOAS University of London and other world archives, Herzog and her team gathered an extensive source library of hundreds of voice recordings from around the globe. The original sound composition is made up of spoken and sung vocal recordings of endangered and extinct languages collected from these world language archives. The work is scored as an immersive piece of music, which is why it is called an *immersive oratorio*.

An accompanying video projection with original animation, stills, and drone footage poetically links image and sound.

*Last Whispers* is an invocation of languages that have gone extinct and an incantation of those that are endangered.

*Last Whispers* premiered at the British Museum in October 2016 at the Living and Dying gallery, next to the hall exhibiting the Rosetta Stone. Its curator, David Sheldon, called the show “informative, beautiful, and heartbreaking.”