

HOTSPUR

Composed in 1980 when Gillian Whitehead and Fleur Adcock both held residencies at Northern Arts, HOTSPUR marked the beginning of a long collaborative friendship between these two leading New Zealand artists, resulting in five monodramas.

I

In 14th century Northumberland Elizabeth Mortimer is living through her husband's final days and dreading the dark tide that threatens to overwhelm them. Henry "Hotspur" Percy, second Earl of Northumberland, is a precocious warrior with a fiery temper. Despite the castles and the wealth that Elizabeth enjoys, she cannot feel safe in this "wild warring land".

II

The Earl of Douglas attacks, clashing with Hotspur at Newcastle. He threatens to carry off the Percy pennon, but Hotspur stands firm and the Scots are forced to retreat and wait for him at Otterburn.

III.

Elizabeth sits sewing with her ladies in the turret room, anxiously waiting for Hotspur's return from battle. She reflects on their marriage and the irresistible pull of danger on her husband. She wonders bitterly whether she should be sewing linen for her unborn child, or a funeral shroud for Henry.

IV.

The terrible battle at Otterburn takes place at Lammastide. Hotspur and his brother are taken, but not before they've killed the Earl of Douglas. Elizabeth, standing on the fringes of battle, cannot see the point in the endless fighting that surges on from year to year, each side seeking to balance out the score.

V.

It is 1403. Hotspur did not fall at Otterburn, but on the field at Shrewsbury. Having conspired to put Henry IV on the throne, he meets a gruesome end in a rebellion against the king. His body is quartered and sent to four cities to prove his defeat, and Elizabeth becomes a "most dangerous widow".

PIERROT LUNAIRE

Expressionistic and darkly comic with hints of cabaret, Schoenberg's 1912 melodrama for voice and five instrumentalists is one of the most influential musical works of the twentieth century. Twenty one songs, divided into three groups of seven, take us through every facet of Pierrot's personality as he wanders in the moonlight, yearning for the beautiful Colombine. There is light and shade, comedy and horror, unrequited love and longing for home.

Schoenberg sets an extraordinary challenge for the singer, forbidding her from actually singing all but a handful of notes. Instead, she is told to employ Sprechstimme, touching on specific pitches but then allowing the voice to fall away as when speaking. The result is an extraordinary freedom to use as wide a colour palette imaginable, while following Schoenberg's incredibly precise notation.

Part I

1. Mondestrunken (Moondrunk)
2. Colombine
3. Der Dandy (The Dandy)
4. Eine blasse Wäscherin (A Pallid Laundrymaid)
5. Valse de Chopin
6. Madonna
7. Der kranke Mond (The Sick Moon)

Part II

8. Nacht (Night)
9. Gebet an Pierrot (Prayer to Pierrot)
10. Raub (Theft)
11. Rote Messe (Red Mass)
12. Galgenlied (Gallows Song)
13. Enthauptung (Beheading)
14. Die Kreuze (Crosses)

Part III

15. Heimweh (Nostalgia)
16. Gemeinheit (Mean Trick)
17. Parodie (Parody)
18. Der Mondfleck (The Moonfleck)
19. Serenade
20. Heimfahrt (Journey Homeward)
21. O alter Duft (O Ancient Scent)