

# **The librettist's adaptation of source in collaboration with the composer**

## **GREEN ANGEL: SCRIPT AND ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS**

Adam John Strickson

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds,  
School of Performance and Cultural Industries and School of Music

July 2014

## Table of Contents

|   |   |           |
|---|---|-----------|
| 1 |   |           |
|   | <b>Green Angel script</b>   | <b>3</b>  |
| 2 |   |           |
|   | <b>Green Angel: <i>Jo-ha-kyu</i> structure</b>                        | <b>38</b> |
| 3 |   |           |
|   | <b>Notes on sources and texts used in <i>Green Angel</i> libretto</b> | <b>52</b> |
| 4 |   |           |
|   | <b>Librettist's diary</b>   | <b>63</b> |

# **GREEN ANGEL**

**An opera libretto**

**by Adam Strickson**

**Adapted from the novella by Alice Hoffman**

**2010**

## **Cast and ensemble**

### **Cast**

**Waki:** Old woman/neighbour – actor. Soprano.

**Shite:** Ash/Green – actor/dancer. Soprano/Mezzo-soprano

**Tsure (Shite's companion):** Diamond; also actor/dancer in the Prologue and Interlude. A non-singing part.

### **Ensemble**

**Singer:** Green/Ash. Mezzo-soprano.

**Accordion**

**Clarinet/bass clarinet**

**Cello**

**Percussion, including Javanese gamelan gongs**

***2 Stage hands (Costumed and choreographed)***

**Prologue**

**Distorted but recognisable music of a Morris tune.**

**The actor, who wears a black coat of tatters and a black top hat, is in a frozen pose from the Morris dance with his back to the audience. He holds a burnt branch above his head. The lighting casts a large shadow of his pose.**

**Ensemble singer**

Grinding    roaring    falling    *(repeated quietly throughout the actor's words)*

**The actor turns to face the audience.**

**Actor (All the actor's words in the prologue are spoken)**

**He rests the burnt branch on the palms of his hands, in front of him.**

What's left after fire is black    black that marks your fingers

But what remained was white    white ash    white dust

**He rubs ashes into his face as he speaks –**

A dancer    stood in the white ash

in a coat of black rags    like a ragged city crow

Ensemble singer

Like grief

**The Morris tune is played vigorously and rhythmically for the dance.**

**The actor begins dancing.**

Actor – spoken loudly

The dancer leapt and stepped    stepped and leapt

And as he leapt and stepped    stepped and leapt

he kicked the ash    danced all the ash away

until he stamped down on bare earth

and as he stamped and stepped    stepped and stamped

green shoots grew at his feet    a small square of green shoots

**He stops dancing and looks down, spreading his hands.**

Green shoots in bare earth

Ensemble singer

Grief waters roots

**The Morris tune begins again, loudly**

**He dances briefly and vigorously finishing with a loud 'Hey' which is immediately interrupted by a sound like a Japanese gong.**

**The actor runs off and the main action of the opera begins. As he runs off, the Old Woman appears in the doorway at the start of the hashi-gakiri.**

**JO section (Autumn)****JO (of JO)****1b (Jo)**Old woman

I am an old woman    a neighbour    a survivor

Autumn is nearing its close    these woods should be lovely now

a twisted altar of golds and reds    these woods should be lovely now

I am an old woman    a neighbour    a survivor

On this path    where the market garden grew

I forage for food    among fire-cracked stones

**She gestures towards the burnt house.**

This half burnt house was full of life    these broken walls held

a strong whistling father    who grew hot chillies in his greenhouse



a mother who collected magpie feathers and planted when the moon waned

two girls a moody, dark weed and her moonlit sister

I am an old woman a neighbour a survivor

I knew a girl a moody, dark weed

My feet stick in the ashy clods my heart is an empty seed head

## 2a (Ha)

*There are two voices for Ash/Green – the performer/dancer and the singer within the ensemble. The singer within the ensemble never uses the first person. Their voices can overlap, harmonise or be separate. In this section, the performer sings the three 'stone' pieces as she stops by each pile and the ensemble singer sings when she is moving, with a slight overlap with the performer.*

Ash (ensemble) Stories unfold like white flowers petal by petal

Ash (performer)

**The performer stops at each pile of stones, introducing each colour/person.**

Black for her mother

Stones cannot feel

Silver for her father

Stones cannot feel

Stones cannot cry

White for her sister

Stones cannot feel

Stones cannot cry

Stones cannot see

**She stops a fourth time.**

And for her?

No stones    no stones

**2b (Ha)**

Ash (ensemble)

The roar of the fire    so far away    across the river    so far away

The bridge    all but melted

Ash:

*Overlap and/or repeat the two voices as seems appropriate)*

I smell    like smoke

I smell    like smoke

Ash (ensemble)

Half-blinded by cinders

Ash

I chopped off my burnt hair

Ash (ensemble)

Half-blinded by cinders

Ash (performer)

I want

Ash (ensemble)

not to speak

Ash (performer)

I want

Ash (ensemble)

not to share

Ash:

I want

Ash (ensemble)

to disappear

Ash (performer)

Do I imagine myself?

Do I imagine my mother's footsteps

my father's whistle? my sister's laughter?

Ash (ensemble)

Half-blinded by cinders

Stones cannot feel

Stones cannot feel

Stones cannot feel

### **3a (Kyu)**

Old woman

Who are you? What is your name?

### **3b (Kyu)**

Ash

My name is Ash I knew the girl who lived here

she was my friend    special friend    best friend

She whispered to the sweet peas    her voice    like leaves

she was my friend    best friend

a moody dark weed    a weed who grew too tall

Green    they called her Green    Green, blacked out by the fire

She was my friend    her voice    like leaves

Now I live here in this half burnt house

close to her    close to her    close to her

**HA (OF JO)**

**4 (Jo)**

Old woman

I heard the whoosh of the fire    I heard the whoosh of the fire

across the river

I heard people jumped from buildings    I heard people jumped from

buildings like silver birds

### 5a (Ha)

Ash (performer)

She'd just turned sixteen all her life stretched before her

everything was green as far as the eye could see

Every week the whole family packed their wooden crates

crossed the bridge and sold their vegetables in the city

I knew she was not coming back I knew I knew

Ash (ensemble)

*This overlaps with 'I knew I knew'*

So far away so far away

### 5b (Kyu)

Ash (performer)

I sleep in her house where sparks crossed the river

and blacked out memories

Her sweet voiced mother    knew gardeners' secrets

like vinegar on roses    to chase away beetles

/blacked out memories

Ash (ensemble)

*Overlaps with 'blacked out memories'*

So far away    so far away

Ash

Her strong father    carried heavy crates

but brushed away her tears    with gentle fingers

/blacked out memories

Ash (ensemble)

*Overlaps with 'blacked out memories'*

So far away    so far away

Her sister could never sit still    she laughed so hard

her pale hair    like moonlight

/blacked out memories

Old woman

I have a gift for you

**She goes to the back of the performing area and brings out a bag.**

Look!

Ash (performer)

It's birdseed.

What shall –

Old woman

You'll see    you'll see

**The old woman leaves.**

Ash (performer)

Birdseed    birdseed    birdseed

I can't eat birdseed

**She throws a handful on the ground in anger.**

**KYU (OF JO)**

**6 (Jo)**

Ash (performer)

I watch time moving    like a lame hare across snow

and I remember her long black hair



I dig this needle into leather    sew thorns until my thumb bleeds

I dip this pin in black ink    mark my arms with bats and ravens

Blood and ink    Blood and ink

I remember her long black hair

Blood and ink    Blood and ink

### **‘Clog dance’: 7 (Ha)**

**Ash begins tentatively, as if testing her feet. As she does this she sings.**

Ash (performer)

Nails in my boots    Nails in my boots

Ash (ensemble)

Blood and ink    Blood and ink

*The composer may use any combination or repetition of these two lines in the ‘clog dance’.*

**Ash cannot continue the dance; she breaks down in grief and throws the birdseed.**

### **8 (Kyu)**

Ash (performer)

Why am I the one who is still alive?    Why did I survive?

I would rather sleep    than eat or see the sky

Days silent as stone    No-one comes home

Sorrow in the wind    Grief    in the trees

Anger    makes claws    of my hands

Darkness    where once there was patience

Black    where once there was green

**She throws the birdseed into the air.**

## **HA section (Winter)**

### **JO (of HA)**

#### **Dance with fragments of chorus: 9a (Jo)**

Ash (performer) sits in the house, head bowed, chanting softly and nasally.

Heu, heu, me    heu, heu, me    heu, heu me

Ash (ensemble)

But in the morning

a few scrawny birds flew to my garden

and sang their stunted songs

They came from the deepest woods

They came from the charred canyons of the city

**Many different coloured feathers fall slowly to the ground.**

**Ash (performer) raises her head, slowly uncurls and catches them, eventually holding two feathers in her hand, which she animates.**

Ash (performer)

Two sparrows    two spuggies

their wings too singed to fly

Ash (ensemble)

Brabble-brabble tittle-tattle

they fly from the chattering fire

Brabble-brabble tittle-tattle

they rise from the chattering fire

*The words could also be given to the musicians in the ensemble as whispers/chatter.*

Ash (ensemble)

I dance the winter months

when my stomach growls

and memories cut like broken glass

Two spuggies nestle in the lining of my jacket

I stroke them warm feed them crumbs

**10a (Ha)**Ash (performer)

Each night I dream my moonlit sister

her hair like ice like elderflowers washed by rain

**Short lyrical dance where Ash is 'being' her sister****10b (Kyu)**

My sister does not know me

She does not recognise my name

Ash (ensemble) – simultaneous, subsidiary

Black thorns black roses black leaves

Ash (performer) cries out

My sister!

**HA (of HA)**

**11 (Jo)**

**Ash (performer) sits in the house with her back to the audience, head bowed, chanting softly and nasally – intermittently, she is eating a piece of bread.**

Heu, heu, me heu, heu, me heu, heu me

**The noise of a music box, which is playing a lullaby. Diamond enters slowly, along the hashi-gakiri, dressed completely in black, with a scruffy rucksack and with a hood covering his face. He holds the music box close to his ear.**

Ash (performer)

Quiet steps quiet music

the steps of someone who travels alone

Quiet steps quiet music

**12 (Ha)**

**Ash turns to face Diamond**

Who are you?

**She hands him a small piece of bread.**

Take eat

I make it with chestnut flour

Take eat

**He eats**

Ash (ensemble)

In silence there is truth

**Diamond holds out his hands and gives his last crumbs to Ash's sparrows.**

Ash (performer)

My spuggies eat the crumbs from your hands

Ash (ensemble)

A dark night hides a shining star

Ash (performer)

I shall call you Diamond Diamond

**Diamond points to where the fire was.**

Ash (ensemble)

A boy who ran from the fire

**Diamond takes a large charred photograph of his mother in her wedding dress from his rucksack and hangs it on a tree.**

**He makes a gesture to show he was separated from his mother when the fire began.**

A boy in search of his mother

Ash (performer)

My name is Ash

Ash (ensemble) – simultaneous, subsidiary

Black thorns black roses black leaves

**He looks at the photograph of his mother and makes a gesture towards the piles of stones. Ash hesitates but gives him permission.**

**13 (Kyu)**

**Diamond picks a stone from each pile and places them one by one at the base of the tree below his mother's photo.**

Ash (performer)

Black for your mother

She was the one who with fought with you answered you back

White for your mother

She was the one who talked with you late into the night

Silver for your mother

She is the one who walks with you holds you for ever

**Diamond settles down to sleep under the tree. Ash covers him with her jacket.**

**KYU (of HA)**

**14 (Jo)**

**Ash strokes Diamond**

Ash (ensemble)

Die mit Strahlen besserer Welt ihr die Erendämmerung hellt

Ash (performer) – overlapping with the above

You are here like the wind

*She looks at the black rose tattoo on her hand*

And and my hand looks different

Ash (ensemble) – overlapping with the words above

Wir Saben so traulich beisammen Im kühlen Erlendach

Ash (performer)

My hand looks different

**She slowly adds a stone to each of her piles. Diamond sits up and watches her. He starts the lullaby music box again.**

**15 (Ha)**

**Ash dances. As she dances, Diamond takes a small notebook from his rucksack and writes in it.**

Ash (performer)

Singing and ringing

Ash (ensemble)

Singen und klingen

**She stops suddenly and Diamond shuts the music box**

Ash (performer) – spoken

I am not someone who dances and sings.



Ash (ensemble) – quietly

I am Ash the girl who sews thorns into her clothes

Ash (performer)

Ash (ensemble)

- very quietly

**She grabs the page from Diamond and reads it and, although she does not realise it, tentatively dances as she is reading. We hear an echo of the music box lullaby in the score.**

'I stir from my dark dreams

to wonder at a pretty girl

My name is Ash

who hop-skips in her father's boots.

I see how her soul gleams

in the steps of that ashy swirl

My name is Ash

as she stamps life into wounded roots.'

## **16 (Kyu)**

**Diamond takes a magnifying glass from his rucksack and motions Ash to look at her hands.**

Ash (performer)

Ash (ensemble)

The black rose is...

**As she looks, he scribbles something quickly, tears out the page from his notebook and hands it to her. She reads it.**

'I know that your garden will grow.'

With pretty bells

and cockle shells –

Nothing will ever grow here.

Nothing will ever grow here.

**Diamond strokes her cheek. Then he takes her hand and strokes it.**

Ash (ensemble) – as he strokes, very quietly

Wir Saben so traulich beisammen Im kühlen Erlendach

**Ash takes the hood from his face revealing two sides, one charred and scarred. She kisses both. They look at each other and then he gestures towards his mother's picture.**

Ash (performer)

Like my spuggies are meant to fly

you are meant to search for your mother

**She tries to give him back the magnifying glass but he refuses.  
She takes a string of pearls from her pocket.**

My mother's pearls

**He tries to refuse but she insists.**

They will buy you food

**He takes his mother's picture from the tree and puts it in his rucksack.  
He winds up the lullaby music box and leaves slowly. As he disappears into the woods,  
the old woman enters along the hashi-gakari, carrying a pot of tea and some cups.**

Old woman

Nettle tea

Take drink

Ash (performer)

Bitter on my tongue

Old woman

Tell me your name

Speak up say it out loud

Ash (performer)

Ash only Ash

**The old woman gestures to the magnifying glass. Ash picks it up and looks at her hand.**

Ash (ensemble)

The black rose is white

The black rose is white

The black leaves are...

**Interlude**

Actor (half-spoken/half-sung, improvised, not scored)

**He is in the black mummers' costume, but with no ashes on his face.**

**He wears Morris bells and carries a straw broom, which has some green and white tassels tied around the handle.**

**Rhythmic music**

One two three four five six seven eight

Sweep sweep sweep

One two three four five six seven eight

Sweep sweep sweep

I have brought my yellow broom

to sweep away the winter gloom

sweep the grief and sweep the bones

sweep the ash and sweep the stones

One two three four five six seven eight

Sweep sweep sweep

**He dances a broom dance, based on the Cotswold dances, with some suitable athleticism; approximately two and a half to three minutes. As he does this the stage is dressed for the KYU section of the opera.**

**He sweeps the stage more methodically, and slowly. He finds a way to sweep slowly by balancing the tip of the broomstick on part of his body. Then he takes the broom and balances the end on the floor, dancing with it gently as if it is a woman. He sings, improvising –**

She was beautiful as moonlight

though she burned in the firelight

that down among the dead men girl

down among the dead men dancing with the firemen

down among the dead men lying head to head men

down among the dead men moonlit girl

**He leans into the head of the broom, listening.**

*Spoken*

What is it? What do you want to say?

Ensemble singer – very quietly, almost a whisper; a distortion of the voice, as if Green's sister is speaking through her.

Green Green Green

Actor - spoken

Green? What does Green mean?

Ensemble singer

Green as Spring

Green my sister's name

Actor - spoken

Your sister's name is –?

Ensemble singer

Green! Green!

Tell her that her little sister

her moonlit sister is with her forever

like our strong armed father

like our gentle handed mother

Tell her that her little sister

her moonlit sister is with her forever

Tell her to dream of bright vines

of silver rain and white night-flowers

Actor

**He lays the broom carefully on the ground.**

She will She will (*whispered*)

**He leaves quickly and quietly.**

## KYU section (SPRING)

### JO (of KYU)

#### 18a (Jo)

Ash, now Green, makes a slow entrance along the hashi-gakiri. She is almost unrecognisable now she is wearing her Spring clothes. The trees are in leaf and flowers are growing. She looks out, towards the city.

#### 18b (Ha)

### Green (performer)

At last my eyes are cleared of embers

### Green (ensemble)

The black rose is white

The black leaves are green

### Green (performer)

I see lights on the other side of the river

### Green (ensemble)

People are moving back

The city is being rebuilt

### Green (performer)

I see seedlings in my garden

**She dances slowly**

MusiciansGreen (ensemble)

Lenten is come with love to tounē

With blosmen ant with briddes rounē,

that all this blisse bringeth.

Spring has arrived with love

with flowers with birdsong

**19 (Kyu)**Green (performer)

A last stone for my father

who sang like the spuggies in the trees

A last stone for my mother

who had such gentle hands

A last stone for my sister

who shone like silver

**HA (of KYU)****20 (Jo)**Green (performer)

These seedlings have grown from birdseed

sunflowers pumpkins thistles and corn



Green (ensemble)

The world waits aching and ruined

but beautiful all the same

Green (performer)

I weed between the rows

When summer comes I shall grind corn and make flatbreads

**21a (Ha)**

**The old woman enters, along the hashi-gakari.**

Old woman

I see a young woman a neighbour a survivor

On this path where the market garden grew

I find green shoots among fire-cracked stones

**Green waves to her.**

Green (performer) – spoken

Look look I shall have vegetables and flowers to take to the city

Old woman

I heard the bang of hammers I heard the bang of hammers

they are rebuilding the bridge

Green (performer)

I shall whistle like my father

plant when the moon wanes like my mother

and carry my sister close to me inside my heart

**21b (Kyu)**

Old woman

What is your name?

What do you call yourself now?

Green (performer)

Green I am Green

Green (ensemble)

Green as the world I once knew

**Silence, as Green looks at herself and the old woman leaves.**

**The ringing of small bells**

**KYU (of KYU)**

**22a (Jo)**

**Green (performer) picks up the broom and dances, reflecting moments of the actor's interlude dance.**

Musicians

Green (ensemble)

Lenten is come with love to touné

Spring has arrived with love

With blossoms and with brides round, with flowers with birdsong  
 that all this bliss bringeth.

Green (performer)

My sister has come back to me

in my dreams

She calls out my name

and I am Green through and  
 through

Green

covered with bright vines

Green

who has torn off her scarf of thorns

Green

a wild hare

**22b (Ha)**

**She lays the broom down carefully and the dance continues.**

Green (ensemble)

Without my heavy boots I leap the brambles

I stride with purpose so like my oak tree father

Without my leather jacket I dance like teasels

I bend with grace so like my willow mother

Without my scarf of thorns I drift through thickets

I move like mist so like my birch tree sister

Green (performer)

I watch the green in all its shades I watch the green in all its shades

**22c (Kyu)**

**The dance continues, rising to a climax.**

Green (ensemble)/musicians

Wowes this wilde drakes

Wormes woweth under cloude  
(Repeated as appropriate)

Green (performer) - overlapping

Let dog roses bloom in blasted corners

Let ragged robin flag ruins red

Let ivy crawl over tangled steel

Let wide-eyed daisies shine on wreckage

Green (ensemble)/musicians

Away is heure winter wo (repeated)

Green (performer) - overlapping

Oh let rain fall on bare earth

and let white night-flowers grow

**She finishes the dance with a shout.**

My name is Green!

Green (ensemble) – softly

**Green (performer) slowly leaves along the hashi-gakari.**

I once believed that life was a gift    that birds always sang

The future was a book    I could write to suit myself

before my eyes burned    and I smelt    like smoke

but stories unfold    like white flowers    petal by petal

petal by petal    petal by petal    petal by petal

**Green Angel, adapted from the novella by Alice Hoffman:**

**Jo-ha-kyu structure.**

The one prevailing emotion is GRIEF, caused by LOSS. This is defeated by JOY in the final kyu of KYU section i.e. grief is resolved in joy.

The kyu sections need to contain the most moving poetry, and the final large KYU section the most moving poetry of all. 'As the musical tempo and the complexity of the plot increase, the poetry also heightens' (Keene, p 13).

In the large JO section, the poetry is not deeply emotional – perhaps this reflects the alienation of Ash from the world in this section; the language here needs to be more prose-like.

**Music**

**A**

'Overture'. This accompanies a slow motion film (or puppetry) of a flower growing and blossoming, fading and dying and growing once more to reveal a bloom which is slightly different in nature. It should follow the jo-ha-kyu (x3) structure of the whole piece in miniature.

Duration: 3 minutes repeated.

The final repetition is when the audience are assembled and quiet. Before the final repetition, the stage hand places a burnt out house towards the front of the stage with a suggestion of a broken fence and charred garden.

## **JO section (AUTUMN)**

Jo: Stones. The old woman visits her house and asks her name. She replies 'Ash'. The old woman says there used to be a girl who lived in the house, with her family, called 'Green'. Ash says yes – she went to school with her – she was a good friend who died in the city fire (her name is on the board) – she came to the house to be close to her.

### **Music**

#### **1a (Jo)**

Slow entrance of old woman (linked thematically to song) – a more bustling entrance than Ash, but still slow. NO WORDS.

Duration: 30 seconds.

#### **1b (Jo)**

Old woman's introductory song.

Duration: 2.5 minutes.

#### **2a (Ha)**

Slow entrance of Ash, stopping at each pile of stones (x3). Mostly music, a few words at each stop. (Both voices)

Duration: 1.5 minutes.

## **2b (Ha)**

Ash introduces her mood (both voices) And **DANCE**.

Duration: 1 minute

## **3a (Kyu)**

Old woman asks who she is

Duration: 15 seconds.

## **3b (Kyu)**

Ash replies that she is a friend of the girl who lived in this house and introduces herself.

Duration: 2.25 minutes.

APPROXIMATE DURATION OF SECTION: 7.5 MINUTES.

Ha: Prompted by the old woman, 'Ash' talks about the girl who lived in her house (Green) before her. The old woman gives a bag of birdseed to Ash and leaves.

## **Music**

## **4 (Jo)**

The old woman remembers the fire.



Duration: 30 seconds.

### **5a (Ha)**

Ash tells her about the girl – she was about to turn sixteen, and must have perished in the city with her family

Duration: 1.5 minutes

### **5b (Kyu) – links seamlessly with 4b**

Ash celebrates Green's family (linking to the final Kyu section of the whole piece) and her friendship with Green. The Old Woman gives her a gift of birdseed.

Duration: 3 minutes.

APPROXIMATE DURATION OF SECTION: 4.5 MINUTES.

Kyu: Ash sews more thorns into her jacket, hammers another nail into her boots and tattoos herself: she is engulfed by grief. She throws birdseed.

### **Music**

### **6 (Jo)**

Ash describes her appearance. Ash sews thorns and decorates herself with pin and ink

Duration: 2.5 minutes.

**7 (Ha)**

'CLOG' DANCE. NO WORDS.

Duration: 2 minutes.

**8 (Kyu)**

Ash cannot continue the dance. She breaks down in grief. She throws  
birdseed. With chorus.

Duration: 1.5 minutes.

APPROXIMATE DURATION OF SECTION: 6.5 MINUTES.

**APPROXIMATE DURATION OF JO SECTION: 19 MINUTES.**

## **HA section (WINTER)**

Jo: Birds feed. Ash takes two sparrows into her care, bakes bread from chestnuts and fishes with a net made from hair by the birds. She dreams of Green's sister (her sister).

### **Music**

#### **9a (Jo)**

**DANCE** with fragments of chorus.

Duration: 1.5 minutes.

#### **10a (Ha)**

She dreams of Green's sister

Duration: 30 seconds.

#### **10b (Kyu)**

**DANCE** (Ash dances Green's sister) with fragments of chorus.

Duration: 3 minutes.

APPROXIMATE DURATION OF SECTION: 5 minutes.

Ha: Diamond arrives, carrying a large photograph of his mother in her wedding dress. He clears the garden and takes the stones to the wood.

## Music

### 11 (Jo)

Diamond's slow arrival. NO WORDS.

Duration: 1.5 minutes.

### 12 (Ha)

Diamond and Ash meet; Ash asks him his name and when there is no reply gives him the name Diamond. Her feelings are sung by the chorus.

Duration: 2 minutes.

### 13 (Kyu)

Diamond clears the garden, humming his LULLABY. Ash watches, and describes his feelings for his mother. No chorus.

Duration: 3 minutes.

APPROXIMATE DURATION OF SECTION: 6.5 minutes.

Kyu: Diamond and Ash grow close and draw the two halves of their hearts. He reveals his half-burnt face and leaves. The old woman asks once more what her name is and she replies, 'Ash'.

## Music

### 14 (Jo)

Ash's feelings about her life begin to change. Is it because Diamond is there?

With chorus – to reflect her inner confusion. She begins to sing in a different way (like Green) and to DANCE.

Duration: 2.5 minutes.

### 15 (Ha)

Diamond has written about how he sees Ash – sung by Ash and chorus Reflecting the old woman's words, 'Did you say your name was Ash?', with

Diamond humming.

He gives her a magnifying glass to look at the changes in her hands.

Duration: 2.5 minutes plus 1 minute = 3.5 minutes.

### 16 (Kyu)

Ash makes half a heart with the pins. Diamond returns and she makes half on him. With chorus and sounds from Diamond – and spaces of silence (jo)

Diamond reveals his burnt face. DANCE and chorus (ha)

Diamond leaves to search for his mother – Ash describes the feelings which she will have of missing him (grief once more). No chorus (kyu)

The old woman returns and asks Ash who she is, handing her the magnifying glass  
(jo) – a deliberate break with the jo-ha-kyu pattern leaving this question hanging in the air during the interlude.

Duration: 4 minutes.

APPROXIMATE DURATION OF SECTION: 10 minutes.

**APPROXIMATE DURATION OF HA SECTION: 23 MINUTES.**

Note that the kyu of HA is stronger and longer than the kyu of JO – and the kyu of KYU will be similarly stronger and longer than the kyu of HA.

**Interlude:**

Ash dreams that Aurora comes back as a little girl who is calling 'Green'.

*Offstage, Ash changes her appearance to that of 'Green'.*

**Music****17 (Jo-ha-kyu)**

'My sister came back to me in her dreams' (Pages 109 – 110). Chorus and instrumentalists playing and vocalising.

This piece must contain its own jo-ha-kyu, looks back and looks forward: Aurora calls Green's name (Jo); Aurora tells her she will live with her forever, like her mother and sister (Ha – this ha section has intimations of the final kyu section of KYU); Green wakes up crying and then sees seedlings in the garden (Kyu – this music refers back to the Overture and the kyu of the kyu of the JO section (GRIEF).

**APPROXIMATE DURATION OF SECTION: 4 minutes**

## **KYU section (SPRING)**

Jo: Green appears. She goes to the hillside and looks at the city which is being rebuilt.

### **Music**

#### **18a (Jo)**

A slow entrance. NO WORDS

Duration: 1.5 minutes.

#### **18b (Ha)**

Green stands on the hillside and looks at the city, now partially rebuilt.

With chorus.

Duration: 2 minutes.

#### **19 (Kyu)**

She places the last three stones she will ever place on the three mounds.

Mostly music, a few words at each stop.

Duration: 1.5 minutes.

APPROXIMATE DURATION OF SECTION: 4.5 minutes.



Ha: She gathers all her vegetables and makes a stew for her neighbour, to celebrate her sixteenth birthday. For the third time, the old woman visits and asks her who she is. She says 'Green' out loud for the first time.

## 20 (Jo)

As she is gathering vegetables for the stew, Green describes everything that is green around her. DANCE and chorus.

Duration: 2 minutes.

## 21a (Ha)

The old woman arrives and is served the stew. Green feels it is a gift from Diamond (Chorus words)>

Duration: 1.5 minutes.

## 21b (Kyu)

Once more the old woman asks Green who she is and this time she replies 'Green'. Silence, as Green looks at herself and the old woman leaves.

Duration: 1.5 minutes.

APPROXIMATE DURATION OF SECTION: 5 minutes.

Kyu: A vigorous celebration of the lives of her sister and parents (who live on in her) and renewed life. *A dance.*

## Music

### **22a (Jo)**

A celebration of herself.

**DANCE** with chorus.

Duration: 1.5 minutes.

### **22b (Ha)**

A celebration of her family.

**DANCE** with chorus.

Duration: 2.5 minutes.

### **22c (Kyu)**

A celebration of the renewal of nature and the world, tinged with grief.

**DANCE** with chorus.

Duration: 3 minutes.

APPROXIMATE DURATION OF SECTION: 7 minutes.

**APPROXIMATE DURATION OF KYU SECTION: 17 MINUTES.**

\*APPROXIMATE TOTAL DURATION OF PIECE =  $3 + 19 + 23 + 4 + 17 = 66$  minutes.

I am looking at a maximum duration of 75 minutes, so that the opera is both complete in itself and, potentially, half a performance programme.

AJS. 3/1/10

## Notes on sources and texts used in *Green Angel* libretto

Like the Japanese Nō playwrights, I have ‘sampled’ texts, and some images, from other sources. Some of them are taken from older forms of the English language, to enhance, ‘authenticate’ and expand the emotional and sound range of the piece. This was an essential part of Nō practice when members of the audience would enjoy recognising quotations from literature used within the play, and savour their enhancement of the emotional feel of a scene. Using excerpts from older texts is intended to add to the sense of timelessness of the story. This way of writing is also part of the Nō practice of ‘expanding the moment’, so that the emotional action progresses slowly and is played upon with variations. It is a kind of layering, which is intended to give the text increased weight by citing sources beyond it to verify the content. This is a very different attitude to the contemporary horror of plagiarism and concern with originality. Many Nō plays are, like Shakespeare’s, re-workings of existing dramatic or narrative material. There is no emphasis on originality of story; what matters is how beautifully the story is told. So when I use the soft feminine end rhymes of medieval poetry which have ‘a dying fall’ to overlap contemporary English, the intention is to add to the sung beauty. The Nō practice leads to the connoisseur audience member who enjoys a courtly aesthetic of recognition. It does not mean that the play is not accessible to all but that it is possible and desirable to reach higher levels of appreciation.

The Nō playwright and theorist Ze-ami wrote that the kind of words used in Nō and ‘the interaction between the writer’s own words and those he chooses to quote are what gives Nō its especially powerful yet refined quality.’<sup>1</sup>

One must choose words for poems which sound elegant to the ear yet are easy to understand. If one acts while speaking elegant words, one’s words and movements must naturally look *yūgen* – *Fūshi-Kaden, Ze-Ami & Zenchikku (1974), p.47*<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> From Chapter V, ‘Writing a Play’, *Ze-ami and his theories of Noh drama*, Masaru Sekine, Dufour Editions, Chester Springs, USA, 1985, p.100

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, quoted on p.100

There are, of course, a number of direct quotations from Alice Hoffman's *Green Angel* where I have sought to keep the poetic integrity of her 'through images' and 'through phrases'. Examples are the description of Green as 'a moody dark weed' and of her sister, Aurora, as 'my moonlit sister'. I would hope that readers, listeners and audience members who know the original novella would savour and enjoy these quotations, connecting them directly with their reading experience. I have often kept these direct quotations as two or three words rather than a complete line. The whole piece is a spare condensation of the novella, almost a concentrated short poem made from a much longer work – or a beautiful quotation

## **PROLOGUE**

'Grinding roaring falling', and the different colours of perception for the fire damaged site of 9/11, are borrowed from the sculptor David Nash's notes to his sculpture, 'An Awful Falling', a series of pieces made from charred wood, accompanied by charcoal drawings. This work was exhibited as a separate installation within Nash's major retrospective exhibition at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (2010–11).

The idea of the Morris dancer is to take a derided and, until very recently, almost ignored, English tradition which connects with the patterns of nature, and therefore – to some extent – with stylised and sometimes slow, often circular, movements mirroring the natural world. The Leeds graphic artist David Owen has made a series of striking prints portraying Morrissey, The Clash and others as contemporary Morris figures. The black rags are typical of Border Morris, a slightly wilder form of Morris which comes from the Anglo-Welsh borders. New York is famous for its city vultures which nest on the top of skyscrapers, and our urban crows are a kind of parallel.

## **JO section**

This section has largely been kept clear of quotations, apart from those from Hoffman's *Green Angel*. Each section and the prologue and interlude has a different feel, which derives from the sources used. The Ha section uses lieder, the Kyu

section medieval poetry and the prologue and interlude English folk. All are lyrical forms, and have the capacity to be both celebratory and melancholic.

## HA section

This begins with the Medieval Latin 'Heu me'. 'He-u' is two syllables and is found in Psalm 119, amongst other texts. It means, roughly, 'Alas me', but has a stronger feel to it and its use here is to do with my belief, originally coming from witnessing La Mama Theatre Company's use of Aztec and Greek in 'The Trojan Women', that extremes of grief need the lengthened vowel sounds we find in ancient languages, which are closer to the sounds of intense weeping. This sense could be brought out with overtone chanting and/or bending the sound – what matters is the physicality of grief and the way it makes the body fold in on itself.

A version of 'Heu me quia incolatus meus', Psalm 119, can be found at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOGOAxBLsvY> Accessed 6 August 2010

Son los pasariellos del mal pelo exidos

The spuggies are fledged

The epigraph for *Briggflatts*, which is where the word 'spuggies' is taken from on page 17 of *Green Angel*, comes from a thirteenth century Catalan poem (See below), which probably came to Basil Bunting via his mentor Pound, who translated Medieval Catalan poetry. 'Spuggies' is Northumbrian/Geordie for 'sparrows' and has an affectionate, warm and slightly earthy sound. My wife, Kim Strickson, is from Felling, Gateshead, and it is the word she uses for sparrows.

La primera página del poema contiene tan sólo ese subtítulo y un misterioso verso precisamente en Castellano: "Son los pasariellos del mal pelo exidos", que es una cita literal del Libro de Alexandre, anónimo medieval en Castellano antiguo (1202–1207) que trata de las hazañas de Alejandro Magno, al que quizá pudo acceder en el manuscrito que se encuentra en París, cuando colaboraba con Ford Maddox Ford

en "The Trassatlantic Review", o acaso en alguna copia del de Madrid cuando estuvo en Canarias.

<http://www.emboscados.com/foro/viewtopic.php?TopicID=1912>

Bunting, via Pound's influence, was responsible for an innovative free verse form with stanzas, strong rhythms and its own form of rhyming (See below) and words used which derive from dialect and the Anglo- Saxon and Norse roots of English. This approach and style has been influential on my own poetry, and is a sort of complementary way of looking at prosody to the spacing and approach I borrow from Royall Tyler's Noh translations in *Green Angel*.

## **BRIGGFLATTS**

### **An Autobiography**

**By Basil Bunting**

For Peggy

*Son los pasariellos del mal pelo exidos*

**The spuggies are fledged**

**I**

Brag, sweet tenor bull,  
 descant on Rawthey's madrigal,  
 each pebble its part  
 for the fells' late spring.  
 Dance tiptoe, bull,  
 black against may.  
 Ridiculous and lovely  
 chase hurdling shadows  
 morning into noon.  
 May on the bull's hide  
 and through the dale  
 furrows fill with may,  
 paving the slowworm's way.  
 A mason times his mallet  
 to a lark's twitter,  
 listening while the marble rests,  
 lays his rule  
 at a letter's edge,  
 fingertips checking,  
 till the stone spells a name  
 naming none,  
 a man abolished.  
 Painful lark, labouring to rise!

The solemn mallet says:  
 In the grave's slot  
 he lies. We rot.  
 Decay thrusts the blade,  
 wheat stands in excrement  
 trembling. Rawthey trembles.  
 Tongue stumbles, ears err  
 for fear of spring.  
 Rub the stone with sand,  
 wet sandstone rending  
 roughness away. Fingers  
 ache on the rubbing stone.

You could say that Bunting's whole attitude to sound and meaning is that of 'the solemn mallet'. He allows himself to use this tool to set the patterns of words.

'Brabble-babble tittle-tattle' for the sound of sparrows comes from John Skelton's work (1460–1529). Skelton, like Bunting, often used very short lines and he is famous for 'Philip Sparrow', an extended humorous and melancholic meditation on little girl. He wrote often of birds and their calls and is responsible for his own poetic form known as 'the Skeltonic'.

### **(KYU section of HA)**

Perhaps slightly as a tribute to Pears and Britten, but more as a way of enhancing the melancholic lyrical feel of this section I have been aware of Schumann and Schubert as lieder composers and have borrowed some texts in German, to create a different kind of soundscape for this section, where the sounds of the words are about atmosphere as well as literal meaning.

The first quotation used is from *An die Sterne*, Friedrich Rückert (1788 – 1860) or 'To the stars' set by Schumann in *Vier doppelchörige Gesänge* (1849), 'Four songs for double chorus'. This song is poetic, atmospheric and has a meditative feel. This was written in Dresden, the site of much political upheaval and violence at that time, and he moved to Dusseldorf the following year.

The quotation used is highlighted below. I have changed the wording of the translation to make it sound more contemporary and immediate.

<http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/get.text.html?TextId=27089>



Accessed 6 August 2010

The set of quotations which begins 'Wir Saben so traulich beisammen...' is taken from Schubert's *Tränenregen*, 'Rain of tears', a setting of a text by Wilhelm Müller (1794 – 1827) from *Die Schöne Müllerin* D.795). This lieder, part of a set of five, was orchestrated by Webern in the years 1902 – 1906; the orchestrations were discovered some years after his tragic death; they had been stored in an attic.

[http://members.maconnect.com/users/j/jimbo/classical.Schubert\\_D795.html](http://members.maconnect.com/users/j/jimbo/classical.Schubert_D795.html)

Accessed 6 August 2010

## 10. Tränenregen

*Ziemlich langsam*

Wir saßen so traulich beisammen  
 Im kühlen Erlendach,  
 Wir schauten so traulich  
 zusammen  
 Hinab in den rieselnden Bach.

Der Mond war auch gekommen,  
 Die Sternlein hinterdrein,  
 Und schauten so traulich  
 zusammen  
 In den silbernen Spiegel hinein.

Ich sah nach keinem Monde,  
 Nach keinem Sternenschein,  
 Ich schaute nach ihrem Bilde,  
 Nach ihren Augen allein.

Und sahe sie nicken und blicken  
 Herauf aus dem seligen Bach,  
 Die Blümlein am Ufer, die  
 blauen,  
 Sie nickten und blickten ihr  
 nach.

Und in den Bach versunken  
 Der ganze Himmel schien  
 Und wollte mich mit hinunter  
 In seine Tiefe ziehn.

Und über den Wolken und Sternen,  
 Da rieselte munter der Bach  
 Und rief mit Singen und Klingen:  
 Geselle, Geselle, mir nach!

Da gingen die Augen mir über,  
 Da ward es im Spiegel so kraus;  
 Sie sprach: Es kommt ein Regen,  
 Ade, ich geh' nach Haus.

## 10. Rain of Tears

*Quite slow*

We sat so comfortably together  
 Under the cool roof of alders,  
 We gazed so quietly together  
 Down into the murmuring brook.

The moon was already out,  
 The stars after her,  
 And we gazed so quietly together  
 In the silver mirror there.

I sought to see no moon,  
 Nor the star's shine;  
 I looked only at her image,  
 At her eyes alone.

And I saw her reflection nod and gaze  
 Up from the blissful brook,  
 The flowerlets on the bank, the blue  
 ones,  
 They nodded and gazed right back.

And into the brook seemed sunken  
 The entire heavens;  
 And seemed to want to pull me under  
 Into its depths as well.

And over the clouds and stars,  
 There murmured the brook  
 And called with singing and ringing:  
 Fellow, follow me!

Then my eyes filled with tears,  
 And made the mirror ripple:  
 She spoke: "The rain comes,  
 Farewell, I am going home."

---

The child's game utterance of 'Singing and ringing', 'Singen und klingen' (p.17) is a slight allusion to *The Singing Ringing Tree*, a strange – and sometimes disturbing – children's series of the 1960s, suggesting that the tone here is not purely celebratory.

## Interlude

Broom dancing exists in many cultures, especially the USA and UK.

The counting in is perhaps more American than English, suggesting a slightly less sedate dance than some of the English ones. There are many tunes used for the Morris broom dances, with *The Keel Row* being the most frequent but, musically, it may be more appropriate to draw on the Cotswold Morris – for example the broom dance used by the Bempton Morris. The village where I was brought up – Ilmington, in the North Cotswolds – is famous for the Morris fiddler and dancer Sam Bennett. In recent years, the Ilmington Morris side has been revived by a group of men whom I was at Junior school with. Air traffic controller Paul Bryan has revived the broom dance. Ritual sweeping of the polished wooden stage is very much part of Nō and is also referred to here, as it was in Terayama's theatrical production, *Masters and Servants*, 1978–79, when an actor swept the stage by leaning the brush against his forehead to sweep the stage very slowly. Function, ritual formality, parody and the ridiculous are all part of the sweeping.

Some of the words draw on the character of Little Devil Doubt, the Sweeper and one of the three collectors at the end of many English mummers' plays, including the Cotswold ones.

Little Devil Doubt carried a broom, threatening the spectators if they didn't contribute, although his broom was traditionally intended to create a space for the performance. His rhyme, shouted at the top of his voice, was:

'Here come I, little Devil Doubt,  
If you don't give me money  
I'll sweep you all out.  
Money I want and money I crave,

If you don't give me money  
I'll sweep you all to the grave.'

The above version is taken from the Rochdale Pace Egg play –

<http://www.link4life.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=c.showPage&pageID=368>

Accessed 16 August 2010.

**‘Down among the dead men’** refers to the ancient children’s rhyme of that name; it is meaningful doggerel that is as much about sound as meaning and follows on from Devil Doubt’s rhymes. It’s given a slight contemporary edge by the references to 7/11: ‘dancing with the firemen’, ‘lying head to head men.’

### KYU section

This section makes extensive use of the medieval ‘Lenten is come with loue to toune’, a song of Spring since, essentially, the whole section is an intensification of the single moment when Ash knows she is once more Green and calls on the imagery of Spring to celebrate this.

**Lenten ys come with loue to toune** (Anon., 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> centuries)

London, British Library, Harley MS 2253, f. 71va

<http://www.soton.ac.uk/~wpwt/har/harl2253/lenten/lentext.htm>

Accessed 16 July 2010

‘This poem takes up a common theme of medieval love-poetry, the contrast between the coming of spring, when all creatures choose their mates, and the lover’s own frustrations.’

The poem is used in Benjamin Britten’s *Songs Sacred and Profane* (1974–75) written for Peter Pears’ Wilbye Consort), a source which I have drawn on in both *Green Angel* and *Red Angel*. Passages used are highlighted. I have adjusted the piece of English translation used to make it sound slightly less archaic. The numbers in brackets indicate the order in which I have used the quotations.

#### **Text**

Lenten ys come with loue to toune,  
With blosmen ant with briddes rounne,  
That al this blisse bryngeth. (1)

Dayeseyes in this dales,

#### **Translation**

Spring has arrived, with love,  
With flowers, and with birdsong,  
Bringing all this joy. (2)

Daisies in the valleys,

Notes suete of nyhtegales,  
Vch foul song singeth.

The threstelcoc him threteth oo;  
**Away is huere wynter wo** (7)

When woderoue springeth.

This foules singeth ferly fele  
Ant wlyteth on huere [wynne] wele  
That al the wode ryngeth.

**The rose rayleth hire rode;**  
**The leues on the lyhte wode**  
**Waxen al with wille.** (4)

The mone mandeth hire bleo;  
The lilie is lossom to seo,  
The fenyle ant the fille.  
**Wowes this wilde drakes,** (5)

Miles murgeth huere makes  
Ase strem that striketh stille.  
Mody meneth, so doth mo;  
Ichot Ycham on of tho  
For loue that likes ille.

The mone mandeth hire lyht,  
So doth the semly sonne bryht,  
When **briddes singeth breme.** (3)

Deawes donketh the dounes;

Deores with huere derne rounes,

Domes forte deme.

**Wormes woweth vnder cloude;** (6)

Wymmen waxeth wounder proude,  
So wel hit wol hem seme.

Yef me shal wonte wille of on,

The sweet notes of nightingales,  
Every bird sings a song.  
The thrush is constantly wrangling;  
Their winter misery is gone  
When the woodruff flowers.

These birds sing in great numbers,  
And chirp about their wealth of joys,  
So that all the wood rings.

The rose begins to blush;  
The leaves in the light-green wood  
All unfurl gladly.

The moon sends out its light;  
The lily is lovely to see,  
The fennel and the wild thyme.  
The wild ducks are courting,

Animals cajole their mates  
Like a quietly-flowing stream.  
Many men of spirit complain;  
I know that I'm one of them  
Because I'm crossed in love.

The moon sends out her light,  
So does the bright, beautiful sun,  
When birds sing gloriously.

Dews drench the hills;

Animals murmur secretly,

Passing their own judgements.

Worms make love underground;

Women put on amazing airs,  
it suits them so well to do it.

If I don't have my will of one,

**'The invisible text'**

There is a kind of underlying reference in the whole of the HA and KYU sections of the libretto *Green Angel* to 'Foweles in the Frith', one of the Medieval texts used in Britten's *Songs Sacred and Profane*, sometimes known as 'I Mon Waxe Wode' ('And I must go mad') which is a lament for humankind's tendency to seek insanity despite being surrounded by the natural world.

**Foweles in the frith**

<http://www.mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=2386>

Accessed 12<sup>th</sup> July 2010

Foweles in the frith |birds/wood  
 The fisses in the flod |fishes/river  
 And I mon waxe wod |must/mad  
 Mulch sorw I walke with |sorrow  
 For beste of bon and blod.

Mid-14th century lyric from an Eton College MS.

AJS. 6 August, 2010

**GREEN ANGEL: librettist's diary****24/09/09**

Having got the provisional ok from Tom, Alice Hoffman's husband, I'm now beginning the adaptation. So much of the atmosphere is Nō: nature, ghosts, the intersection between the dead and the living, melancholy, the objectification of feelings in creatures and plants, the notion of disguise and an unrecognisable person who will be revealed. And some things aren't: the intricacy of the plotting with the different animals and birds from section 3 onwards; the linear chronology. This is the first structural problem I am dealing with. Obviously Green/Ash is the Shite. Who is the Waki? Is it Diamond perhaps, with his hooded face making him seem like the priest who meets a spirit on the road? The animals and birds can be described (and we can use film too). I think I'll remove the dogs. The chorus/singer is also the voice of the Shite, so it can carry more of her thoughts, though I'll probably have to make it one person, more like an echo. The chorus/singer is also the voice of Aurora, Green's sister, which haunts her heart and her dreams.

Green is a dancer too, and the last KYU section will be voiced through the chorus as much as the singer who is dancing.

And how to set out the text? Tyler's short phrases in his translations suggest a model, a short series of words around which the musical phrase can be built.

The city is the pine tree, the single object which is always present and which does change. Much of the atmosphere of the woods and the gardens can be suggested with light and, indeed, by Ash's/Green's words. Stage lighting must in some way substitute for the natural play of light of the original outdoor river bed stage of the Nō.

\*

Already, after a day's work, much has been cut away – characters, animals, colour, description. The paring down is the first rule of adaptation, never more so than when approaching something in the spirit of the Nō.

I have decided, at this stage, that the old woman is the *waki* – she has something of the old travelling priests of the Nō, always asking Green/Ash the pertinent question – an oracle who achieves her purpose by getting Green/Ash to reflect on her own identity. Diamond is the *tsure*, the companion of the *shite*.

\*

### **Nonlinearity:**

*the value of the whole is not equal to the sum of its parts. In this case, overarching structural expression can greatly exceed any expressive possibilities of 'material' itself.*

'Property of chaotic systems, characterised by random behaviour and unpredictability. It is the feature of natural (real world) or other systems which cannot be decomposed into parts and reassembled into the same thing, and do not change in proportion to a change in input. [...] the relationship between variables is not simply static or directly proportional to the input, but instead is dynamic and variable'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Definition of nonlinearity, <<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/nonlinearity.html>> [accessed 03-06-09]

So begins the composer's (Lauren Redhead) PhD introduction to her compositional process. You cannot divide a plant into parts and reassemble it. (Or is a cloud a better example, with a form which is constantly being rearranged – seemingly at random - even though we may read it as 'complete' in the moment?). How does this connect to the Nō's interrelationship with nature, and the evanescence of the things of nature (e.g. the flower, mist) as a model and an aspiration? For Lauren, it is do with a widening of what the material is – beyond the inward looking obsession with the variations of the serial row or conventional forms like the rondo which contemporary music may be said to veer towards. The truth is not in the music itself (sometimes seen as a kind of universal) but includes its relation to context – time, space and ideas. In arriving at a form, that form must recognise the performative – the parts of which may differ quite fundamentally in each performance depending on the performers, the space, the time and the informing ideas.

Is this a way of saying no two performances are ever the same? Not really – because this is explicitly built into the composition, and it's a notion usually to do with interpretation rather than structure. Think of the number of places you find a daffodil and how its appearance, even its colour, is changed by context – but it's always a



daffodil, and how we see it is always informed by our notion of 'daffodil'. But perhaps Lauren is looking towards making structures that it is almost impossible for us to bring a notion to. Distortion and repetition of existing musical material seems to be key too (quotation beyond plagiarism), when the historical is transformed and made present, even if unrecognisable. A cloud is always made up of water but each arrangement is absolutely unique; water is always water and has been many clouds before. In this sort of composition, everything is up for grabs and words and image can become part of the composition as much as notes. Contextualisation is an inbuilt.

Where does this notion sit in relation to Williams' 'No ideas but in things'?

Where does it sit in relation to music as an emotional journey which the listener imposes her/his narrative on?

Where does it sit in relation to tune or melody, rather than form?

i.e. Is it of any interest to arrive at a memorable melody within this attitude to composition?

Is anything ever arranged at random? If we look hard enough, isn't there always a principle of evolution or construction, although we haven't discovered many of them yet?

My concern is that it might lead to a certain dry intellectualism in the work but the two works of Lauren's that I have heard/seen had a complex dynamism in the performance, challenging the performers (flute, percussion) to their limits.

**3/10/09**

Working on the structure of the music and action. I am at the jo of the jo section of KYU and my head is spinning, and wondering how close I am to the real spirit of jo-ha-kyu, which is the organising principle of Gagaku as well as Nō.

I have been looking at the whole idea of sampling in the music, since this seems to be part of Lauren's field, and – in a contemporary opera context – musical quotations are probably more recognisable than poetic quotations.

An opera audience has a certain shared knowledge of music, but – I suspect – a much more patchy knowledge of twentieth and twenty first century poetry.

I have also, of course, the whole copyright issue since poetry can only be quoted directly (one possibility is to quote lines from poets I know whose permission I can ask – but this will have no recognition in the audience) and not processed through disguise as in music (or can I attempt something similar with words, a reworking without plagiarism?).

**4/10/09**

I have been reading (in TLS) about how knowledge of the natural world has diminished among the population in general during our time. Anecdotally, there is now less writing about trees than at any time during the history of Literature. It may be vitally important to name the flowers, trees and plants in Ash's garden – and for her to somehow bring them back into existence through this naming. The article also points out how the truly sustainable knowledge about how to work with nature may exist primarily in those societies that know nature as a sentient being and whose world view is infused with the superstitious (and the 'primitives' can usually name 500 trees if they live in a forested area). Sometimes even university biology students can only name half a dozen! So in re-growing the garden, and in her celebration of renewal, Ash recovers knowledge, a knowledge which becomes ever more important to us as cities burn. As well as subject to the risk of bombs and chemical disasters, cities also - in a very real sense - burn up nature through depletion by their excessive consumption of fossil fuels.

TLS. Sept 18<sup>th</sup> 2009 No 5555 P/10 – 11. Scott Atran and Douglas Medin, *The Native Mind and the Cultural Construction of Nature*, MIT Press, 2009.

Reviewed by N. J. Enfield.

*One success of twentieth-century anthropology was to debunk the myth of primitive thought.*

Traditional cultures' knowledge of plant life uses classifications which turn out 'to have significant similarities with biological taxonomy in modern science'.

The mind categorises and organises in a similar way despite the 'advances' of science. What the 'primitive' has too is a rich knowledge of the ecological interrelations between plants, trees and animals.

*The average educated Westerner knows as much about nature as a Hanunoo tribesman is likely to know about computer software.*

The problem is not that we don't need this knowledge but that we don't think we need it: it is what Atran and Medin call 'the extinction of experience'. What are the cognitive consequences of this lack of knowledge?

Atran and Medin in their wish for an 'empirical anthropology' look at rural Wisconsin and Guatemala, cases of 'the tragedy of the commons' when an expanding population exploits a finite resource. 'People appear unable to resist over-exploiting the resource until it is exhausted.'

Comparing the Itza' Maya, Q'eqchi Maya immigrants and Spanish-speaking Ladino immigrants – the Itza' show the most sustainable practice. The argument is that this is not because of any ideology or taught practice but 'by means of one of the fundamental orientations of human cognition: the tendency to believe in supernatural entities'. Forest resources are treated like friends or enemies – the spirits of the forest have supernatural knowledge.

Villagers risk being punished if they do not respect this reciprocal 'human' relationship. This is therefore not about individuals and institutions but the commons as "a player with a stake in its own future". More rational approaches to averting the commons tragedy are less likely to succeed.

*It is a chilling thought that our technologically advanced way of life amounts to a cultural demolition of biological understanding. This extinction of natural experience is one among many costs of our recent yet profound self-imposed domestication.*

Suddenly the 'primitive' relationship of the characters of the Nō with nature and the supernatural seems a matter of modern urgency, a necessary way of thinking and operating that needs to be recovered. And this can be expressed even in the naming of the things of nature.

\*

After reflecting the above, I think the piece should be set – in an ecological sense – in the wooded valleys of West Yorkshire, with the skyscrapers of Leeds in the background. The setting is a 'mythic', non-specific setting but the flora and fauna are Alice Hoffman's, which I don't have a walking, touching, growing knowledge off. It's the ecology I inhabit which is under threat too, and which can disappear. With the new 'Green Valley Grocer' in Slaithwaite and a greenhouse down the hill supplying chillies and other crops, this locale seems eminently suitable as a location for the story.

\*

she was my friend    special friend    best friend  
 she'd sit for hours    watch the seedlings grow  
 the trowel in the ground    asking for her hands

her willow hands

and her sister    *her moonlit sister*    who drew the white moths to her

*who couldn't stay in one place    any longer than moonlight could*

Two pieces I've just cut (late at night) from Ash's introduction to herself. There just seemed to be too much (very much remembering the briefness of Alasdair Middleton's *Swan Hunter* for Opera North) but they may be suitable or important in a later passage. They kind of overdo the poetry at this stage – though I'm thinking that the change in tone in HA and KYU will be more to do with tone, structure and rhythm rather than imagery.

**18/4/10**

Having completed a performance of the first section I now need to refine, edit, think creatively about everything from staging to money, talk with Lauren and move things forward.

The first things that come into my head re content –

- The first section is about 5–7 minutes too long, so some judicious cuts need to be made. The 'too long' is not to do with clock time but with the audience sustaining this intensity for the whole piece. This first section is really intense so we need to look carefully at how the nature of this intensity changes in parts 2 and 3, and perhaps to think of an interlude as supplying some lightness. When we look closely at the score and recording, I think the cuts will become apparent.
- Formally, I should look at other possibilities, including short rhymed verse and other forms to vary the dynamic of each section. In sections ha and kyu the text could perhaps be less, with a bit more emphasis on movement.
- It needs a prologue to put the piece in a context for the audience; this can be spoken or sung, and is the time of transition, of easing the audience into the convention, as at the beginning of the Church Parables where the monk's chorus clearly says 'we are in the space of the sacred where music is both worship and narrative'. Musicians and/or performers could enter together in the prologue? And even in procession through the audience? (Look at the description of the pre-performances in Terayama's work, which already take the audience to a different place before they become involved in the main narrative). There could be something – small installations/shrines; small poetic performances; fragments of music - that are close to the ideas explored in my paper, 'How to write a Noh play'. Scent and texture could be part of this too.

- Where words need to be heard, they need to be heard! Sometimes words can be used as sound sources for textures and emotion (as in the use of the Acholi and Dinka in 'Red Angel') but where, and if, this happens in 'Green Angel' is something that still needs to be worked out.

The first things that come into my head re production –

- The staging needs to be sparer and to allow more of a relationship between ensemble and performers.
- Ash, performer, needs a costume much closer to the book cover illustration, which will allow her more fluidity and give her more vulnerability, but the shoes must be heavy. The old woman needs a head covering. The make-up, without being over the top, can be more 'designed', more clearly saying this is a new formality of performance you are experiencing.
- Perhaps the musicians could be on tiered rostra so that we can see all of them.
- The use of tuning forks for performers to pitch notes is distracting, and takes their own focus away from the performance flow – we must find a way within the music itself for them to find the notes.
- If we're going to use a contra-bass clarinet we need a better instrument!
- Should we use more of the possibilities of the gamelan, hit and bowed; now we know what it is? It could be used as punctuation.
- A lighting plan needs to be written in advance and there needs to be adequate time for purely technical/lighting rehearsals (at least 2) where the work is not about rehearsing music or nuances of performance since the piece needs this precision (a la 'Curlew River' performance score) which will heighten emotion and help to control the dynamic of the piece. Or we could not use lighting... but I think its possibilities for linking with the *jo-ha-kyu* and helping the audience's through-track are too great for it to be ignored.
- How many roles do I want/need? It's difficult to be both writer, director and producer. Writer and director would be fine, or even writer and producer.

**22/9/10**

**An extract from an email to Lauren following a discussion with Kara**

Kara thought 9/11 was overstated in the Prologue, giving too much away and not allowing the audience enough room for their own interpretations. So the major change is to the Prologue - which is of course probably the first bit you worked on... I haven't actually changed any words but there are two cuts of blocks of text. I've got rid of 'like a Morris dance like a Noh play' which Kara though was far too 'academic' a line, and she is right. Basically we stay with the image of a dancer and white ash but everything extraneous is removed so it's more like an open poem which is a kind of summing up of the whole, really very simple, narrative. I toyed with removing the prologue but I think it has to be there, and to connect with the interlude - it needs to place a resonant 'puzzle' in the audience's mind, which they know they recognise but perhaps can't quite place.

Kara has a question about the relationship and differences between quoted text and quoted music which I can't quite answer but am continuing to think about. Since she is a German speaker, she paid particular attention to the HA section and wondered if it was overloaded with quotes. When I explained a bit more about the Noh and about our dialogues, she came round quite a lot. But I have removed the two English translations of the lieder lines after thinking about it. The lieder are really there for the musical echo, though of course Schumann and Schubert's music is a response to the words. So the German, I think, kind of underlines an atmosphere and therefore it is not important for the audience to know literally what the words mean.

In the KYU section I have made one cut of a small block of text simply because there seemed to be too much there when I re-read it and it's one possible cut I could make. I've removed the stuff about the hundred different songs of birds because I wasn't happy with its register/diction. I've added an extra line for Green (Performer) on page 23 about seeing the seedlings and repeated 'Lenten is come' in a different places and removed 'Brides Breme'. The 'Lenten is come' could, in the ensemble singer's translation part, possibly echo the interlude dance - so that we have echoes of the Medieval setting of the tune and echoes of the interlude dance cut into this? But this may be too complex. I've got rid of 'The Rose Raileth' too but feel free to

make reference to the melody if you want to. I guess it's all about wearing the Medieval, musically and textually, lightly on our sleeves.

Two versions here - the one 'Lauren' is the text you have with red blocks for the cut text and lime green blocks for amended text, the other is the new and up to date version of the libretto.

**30/10/10**

### **Green Angel and Orientalism**

Sometimes teaching affects our research. Preparing a seminar on 'Orientalism' for the Intercultural Theatre 2<sup>nd</sup> Year elective did just that.

As part of my seminar, I wrote what I called 'a provocative statement':

*The basis of contemporary Orientalism in theatre is a failure to engage with the real politics of the relationship between the West and the rest, and with the contemporary Imperialism of some of the 'the rest' e.g. China's colonisation of Tibet. It is akin to Said's nineteenth century 'textual universe' of Orientalism, where the study of language, cultures and forms is taken out of a political and social context, and treated as 'pure knowledge'.*

Oh dear. Where does that then place my concern with the underlying structures and strategies of the Nō, this 14<sup>th</sup> century court dance-theatre form that evolved from river bed agricultural rites? Is there really any such thing as pure knowledge? I guess this ties in to the whole notion of practice as research, and the notion of applied science and pure science, remembering that's it's frequently from the supposedly non-useful pure variety that many of the most useful discoveries emerge. Barba's ISTA work certainly seems to come under the pure heading, and in this he was influenced by Grotowski. So perhaps there is something about my provocative statement that is actually wrong but in writing 'pure knowledge' I arrived at some sort of premise. Real intercultural dialogue is about engaging with deep structures, deep insights – it's not about decoration or effects or little technical borrowings. But there is a kind of pure knowledge in the body, the sound and the word in a space



investigating stories and emotions. But it's still important to watch out closely to see how the social and political context are affecting this 'pure space' of research.

In the seminar, I also reflected on Grotowski's 1989 'artisan' paper 'Around Theatre: The Orient – the Occident' (Pavis, P. 1996, pp.231-241), included in Pavis' 'Intercultural Performance Reader', and wrote this short summary of some 'useful' perceptions:

- Oriental culture is profoundly structured'...
- 'I maintain that East and West exist...but the frontiers are always moving'
- 'What is important is to note how Orientals and Occidentals react when confronted with the same ideas – how they react in practical ways, in the *performative* area. It is this which is truly revealing.'

I would add that the writing or structuring of a work is as much performative, in this sense, as acting or dance. So the engagement with the oriental may be to do with practical problems, or koans: we have something to investigate and need to find a structure or method or different aesthetic to test this problem against. The koan, or intellectual knot, of my PhD is how to portray the large scale extreme and, indeed, the reaction of individuals to public extreme events which affect own lives, in order that the performed extreme may become an object of intelligent contemplation for performers and audience. And behind this there is the notion of how contemporary music-theatre and opera might deal with war, disaster, famine etc – the big stories that are so much part of our media culture – and if a sung, highly 'theatrical' form may actually be more appropriate than spoken drama for this material. The problem is also that we, as an audience, are often alienated by this material and switch off our thinking and our feeling.

In looking at Orientalism and constantly re-examining the nature of my intercultural PhD on adaptation, I've been much concerned about costume and design, having made the decision in the initial staging of the JO, or 1<sup>st</sup> of the three sections, to refer to the Nō in the costumes and, to some extent, in the set. I seemed to have fallen into the obvious trap of the exotic or the 'oriental' without considering the 'external' with some of the same rigour that I have been applying to structure. I looked back at my notes, which were accompanied by beautiful illustrations of Nō masks and costumes. I wrote:

We are NOT looking for naturalism but for a stylised costume which refers to the real, like a quotation.

Which real am I referring to? The stage is surely, by definition, always artificial. Looking at the costumes, I think it's the real of Japanese Nō costume and the real of a kind of nod to the contemporary UK but somehow in this it falls between two cultures and gets bogged down in an invented false theatricality of costume. It's almost as false as the Gérôme paintings I was looking at in the seminar, it's almost a Western 'orientalist' construction. And maybe they relate to what I mistakenly talked about in my initial design brief: Western 'quotations' of the orient. This is I think a perpetual trap in intercultural engagement. It's so easy to take, borrow or steal the scarves and bamboo poles, the beautiful hand signs or the flags, some effects of make-up, a pattern of foot movement or an adapted mask. I think we are all still susceptible to the exotic and the oriental and perhaps should be more honest about this.

But actually my PhD is concerned with looking at the underlying forms and conventions which deal with the extreme, a kind of so-called 'pure knowledge'; this is, in the case of *Green Angel*, about an aesthetic of constructing a single protagonist's drama of interiority and a very particular relationship with that content between the actors and the audience. Let's look at another quotation from my initial design brief.

'The Noh (sic) theatre makes **maximum demands on the audience**' (Donald Keene) which is why each element (words, music, dance, design) is a **separate 'text'**. It is '**conspicuously non-realistic**' in its presentation. Scale is (sometimes) non-human – the burnt house may well be too small for Ash to enter; the design must build its own conventions, but they must be consistent. The plays are about **the inner tension of the main character**, not their actions. Usually, the costume does not accent the natural form of the body but creates its own shape around the human frame. Everything happens very slowly.

This seems to be more on the button, especially – in relation to this thinking about set and costume – 'the design must build its own conventions'. But sometimes things do happen very fast on stage, even if it's only for a moment – it's the general feel of the Noh that is very slow. So perhaps what I should be looking at more closely is how the design can contribute a different 'text' to the performance, and how cloth or costume can slow down the body or speed it up. This would then not be to do with style, or taste, or decoration, or technical tricks, or colour, or silky cloths but

would be a central part of discovering the 'conspicuously non-realistic aesthetic' I am investigating, rather than borrowing a 'look' or a 'feel'. The more we dig down into the 'pure knowledge' the more difficult it becomes, but perhaps the more useful as a piece of performative research.