



Deconstructing Pierrot

Red Note Ensemble with Laura Bowler (voice)

Friday 25 October 2024, 6pm

The Lemon Tree, Aberdeen

Co-commissioned by Red Note Ensemble, Music on Main and Ensemble Offspring.

Ruth Morley (flute), Jackie Shave (violin), Tim Lines (clarinet), Robert Irvine (cello), Siwan Rhys (piano), Tom Hunter (percussion), Matthew Swan (electronics) & Matthew Fairclough (Max MSP Engineer).

Programme notes

Deconstructing Pierrot came out of a conversation, a shared loathing of the celebrated *Pierrot Lunaire* by Schoenberg. It can be difficult to brazenly grab pitches, rhythms, harmonies from work that you love, but with work that makes you angry or frustrated it can be much easier. Grab this, take that, turn it inside out and spit it out the other side. I adore the instrumental writing in the Schoenberg, it's exquisite and so rich in its variety of colours. I have less love for the vocal writing, and as a vocalist who also has a strong interest in commedia dell'arte, it could be seen as peculiar that I have never had any desire to perform the work. I admire it (sort of), but I just don't like listening to it. Through this journey of delving into Schoenberg, I don't feel any different. I still adore the instrumental writing, and I remain still feel frustrated and angered by the vocal writing, particularly its continuous hysteria and lack of nuance (for me). Of course, I'm almost certainly in the minority here.

I went back to the original text in French and attempted to draw out the tragic vulnerability of the creative artist in their need to please, to be heard, or to be seen. The self-destruction aided by a drug infused evening of anxious voices, unfulfilled desires and depression. The work features 3 interludes which draw the work out of its more poetic language into one that is more real, more direct. I imagine there might be more movements before what currently exists as the final movement, but for now, this is the journey the piece explores.

Moon and Absinthe

The wine I drink with my eyes
Flows from the moon
In shades of green
In shades of green
In shades of green
A sickly swell submerging the infinite silence
Sweet pernicious voices of desire swim through waves in multitudes
Seduction
Seduction
Seduction
Seduction
Seduction
The wine I drink with my eyes
Flows from the from the from the moon moon moon moon
In shades of green
In shades of green
green
and green and turquoise and turquoise
turquoise
Flowing from the moon moon moon moon moon moon Moon!
Driven by insatiable appetite.
Intoxication
ecstasy sucking and sipping
ecstasy Intoxication sucking and sipping
Intox ecstasy ecsta ication sucking and sipping ecstasy, ecstasy, ecstasy, ecstasy
The wine I drink with my eyes eyes eyes

Pale blossoms

White Roses Bloom
If only I could pick one to soothe my anxious sorrow all my longing would be stilled
If only If only If only I could pick one to soothe my anxious sorrow
All my longing would be stilled
If only I could pick one to soothe my anxious anxious anxious anxious anxious
anxious anxious sorrow
All my longing would be stilled
Pale Blossoms
White roses
Bloom

[Makeup Tutorial Interlude]

Glow Up!

Pierrot! with their pale face
Stands pondering and wonders:

How will they paint themselves today?
How will they paint themselves today?
How will they paint themselves today?
How will they paint themselves today?
How will they paint themselves to day?
How will they paint themselves today?
How will they paint themselves today?
How will they paint themselves today?
How will they paint themselves? today today today today today today
They push aside the red and green
How will they paint themselves today?
How will they paint themselves today?
How will they paint themselves today?
How will they paint themselves today?
How will they paint themselves to day?
How will they paint paint paint paint paint paint paint paint paint themselves
today?
How will they paint themselves today?
How will they paint themselves today?
How will they paint themselves today?
They push aside the red and green the violet and grey the blue and yellow the rose
and azure the lilac and black and aquamarine and beige the brown and navy the
gold and grey the rust and lime and chartreuse and the mint forest moss olive sea
pine apple leaf fern turquoise acid cyan emerald electric avocado tea
ocean lawn spring jade bitter pistachio green (green)
I push aside the diazepam
I push aside the diazepam
I push aside the diazepam
And paints their face with an irridescent moon beam

A pale figure

A pale figure naked, anaemic silver white arms
A pale figure arms stretch arms stretch arms stretch into the void.

CLINGING

Like a drop of blood staining the lips of a sick mother You never leave my thoughts
You cling to my mind like a drop of blood Your eternally fresh wounds are like eyes,
red and open red and open Your wasted hands mirror mine. Yet the gaze of death
awaits you

Like a drop of blood staining the lips of a sick mother You never leave my thoughts
You cling to my mind like a drop of blood Your eternally fresh wounds are like eyes,
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O Moon

O moon O moon Nightly, deathly, sickly moon
O moon O moon on the black pillows of the skies
You gaze feverishly enchanting me enchanting me enchanting me enchanting me
Rotting from a chimerical love love longing suffocating
O moon O moon Nightly, deathly, sickly moon moon
O moon On the black pilows of the of the of the skies
your pale blood dripping in rays

[The Sad Interlude with Moths]

Black Moths

Dark, black, giant moths, Dark, black, giant moths, Dark, black, giant moths, Dark,
black, giant moths, Dark, black, giant moths, Dark, black, giant moths
Kill the suns brilliance A closed book the horizon rests silent From the smoke rises
a scent disrupting the memory
Dark black giant moths, Dark black giant moths, Dark black giant moths
Kill the suns brilliance brilliance From the sky a black dust looking for blood,
descends on our despair
Dark black giant moths, Dark black giant moths, Dark black giant moths, Dark black
giant moths, Dark black giant moths, Dark black giant moths, Dark black giant
moths, Dark black giant moths, Dark black giant moths

Laughing

eurgh my laughter between my teeth I broke it!
Black flies the flag from the mast for me now

eurgh my laughter between my teeth I broke it!
Black flies the flag! my laughter
O MOON O give O MOON O give O MOON O give O give
Give me back Give me back Give me back Give me back Give me back Give me
back Give me back Give me back Give me back Give me back Give me back Give
me back Give me back Give me back Give me back Give me back Give me back
Give me back Give me back Give me back Give me back Give me back Give me
back Give me back Give me back Give me back Give me back Give me back Give
me back Give me back my laughter Mine! Give me back Give me back Give me
back Give me back Give me back Give me back my laughter Mine! Give me back
Give me back Give me back Give me back Give me back Give me back Give me
back Give me back Give me back Give me back Give me back my laughter Mine!
Give me back Give me back Give me back my laughter Mine! Give me back Give
me back Give me back Give me back Give me back laughter Mine! Give me back
Give me back Give me back my Give me back my Give me back my laughter Give
me back my laughter Give me back my laughter Give me back my laughter Give
me back my laughter

The Mass

A shared space The flickering light of candles
Pierrot approaches tearing scraping scratching, tearing scraping scratching,
tearing scraping scratching
A blessing
Her bloody heart in dripping fingers
A blessing A blessing A blessing

Hanging Song

The skinny bitch
With the long neck
Will be my last
Beloved
In my mind sticks like a nail
The skinny bitch
With the long neck
Slender as a pine
With a braid on her neck
And a strangling caress
Ecstasy My slender necked lover
The skinny bitch
With the long neck
Will be my last
Beloved
In my mind sticks like a nail
The skinny bitch
With the long neck

[Excuses Excuses Excuses Interlude]

Sunset

The sun has slit her veins On a bed of red clouds Her blood pours in red fountains
The sun has slit her veins On a bed of red clouds Her blood pours in red
fountains The sun has slit her veins On a bed of red clouds Her blood pours in red
fountains The sun has slit her veins On a bed of red clouds Her blood pours in
red fountains fountains The sun has slit her veins On a bed of red clouds Her
blood pours in red fountains The sun has slit her veins On a bed of red clouds
Her blood pours in red fountains The sun has slit her veins On a bed of red clouds
Her blood pours in red fountains The sun has slit her veins On a bed of red clouds
Her blood pours in red fountains red fountains The sun has slit her veins On a bed
of red clouds Her blood pours in red fountains A soul filled with shame Letting her
sick arteries bleed into dirty seas The convulsive branches of the oak bleed the
crazed horizons

The sun has slit her veins A soul filled with shame

Biographies

Since its formation in 2008, **Red Note Ensemble** has taken up a leadership position as Scotland's contemporary music ensemble, performing and developing an extensive, highly-varied and critically-acclaimed programme of new music to the highest standards, and taking new music out to audiences across Scotland and internationally. Red Note performs the established classics of contemporary music, commissions new music, develops the work of new and emerging composers and performers from Scotland and around the world, and finds new spaces and new ways of performing contemporary music to attract new audiences.

Within Scotland the ensemble has performed from the Outer Hebrides to the Borders in concert halls, bothies, pubs, clubs and aircraft hangars, amongst other unusual settings. Outwith the UK it has a growing international reputation, performing to great acclaim at festivals in France, Germany, Belgium, Holland and Australia in recent years.

The ensemble also undertakes an extensive programme of Working with Communities, focusing particularly upon working with younger and older people, people with multiple disabilities, people living in areas of multiple deprivation, and also working to address inequalities of access and representation due to race/ethnicity and gender imbalances. We also undertake an extensive performer and composer development programme within schools, universities and conservatoires nationally and internationally.

Laura Bowler (born 1986) is a composer and vocalist specialising in music-theatre, multi-disciplinary work and opera. She has been commissioned and featured across the globe by ensembles and festivals, including the Royal Opera House, Music on




Main (Canada), Ensemble Phace (Austria), Festiva Musica (France), MaerzMuzik (Berlin), Donaueschinger Musiktage and Omega Ensemble (Australia). As a vocal soloist she has performed and premiered works internationally, including the premiere of Louis Aguirre's *The Way The Dead Love* as part of the European Capital of Culture Aarhus programme. She is also the vocalist in contemporary music ensemble, *Ensemble Lydenskab*, based in Denmark.

Bowler's recent compositions include *The Blue Woman*, a chamber opera commissioned by the Royal Opera House and Britten Pears Arts; *Wicked Problems* for flute and soprano (herself), commissioned by sound Festival, which won the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Chamber-scale Composition and was nominated for an Ivor Composer Award. Her other works include, *Houses Slide*, a bike powered music theatre work for ensemble and cycling soprano (Jessica Aszodi) commissioned by London Sinfonietta, *ADVERT (herself and Decoder Ensemble)* commissioned by Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, New Music Dublin, November Music, Ultima, Musica Estrana, Music on Main and Time of Music festivals; and *Antarctica*, a 50-minute multimedia work for orchestra and vocalist (herself) co-commissioned by Manchester Camerata and BBC Radio 3. Her latest opera, *Girl with the Hurricane Brain*, commissioned by Ensemble Lydenskab premiered August 2024 in Aarhus and Copenhagen Opera Festival.

Laura completed her BMus (Hons) at the Royal Northern College of Music and Sibelius Academy (Finland), followed by her MMus and PhD at the Royal Academy of Music. She also completed an MA in Theatre Directing at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. She is currently Lecturer in Composition at Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Trinity Laban Conservatoire and the Royal Northern College of Music. In the coming months she will be performing works by Diana Soh, Nwando Ebizie and Sivan Cohen Elias at MaerzMuzik25, whilst touring her new chamber work *Deconstructing Pierrot* to Scotland, Canada and Australia. She will also begin work on a new orchestral song cycle for Barbara Hannigan, and new music theatre commission for Basel Sinfonietta, herself and GBSR Duo.

This year's **soundfestival** is dedicated to the memory of cellist Rohan de Saram, one of our patrons, who took part in many festivals. His musicianship, kindness and generosity will be much missed.

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