

Madam He

Mary Finsterer

Madam He, for soprano, oboe, cello and piano, was composed in 1988 as a result of Mary Finsterer's receipt of the Dorian le Gallienne Award that year. The work has been selected for performance in Switzerland at the 1991 Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music. The two selections below give an impression of the composer's style in one of her recent major works, and of the way in which she fulfills the intentions expressed in her statement of aesthetic.

Description and analysis of *Madam He*

Madam He is based on the radio play *Radio 1* by Samuel Beckett.

The play involves two characters - He and She. Both are combined in my piece to form the soprano line.

The frivolous character of She or Madam is portrayed in a lyrical and melismatic style, exploiting the upper register of the voice and often paralleled in the accompanying oboe line (see bars 68-73).

The character of He uses the lower register of the voice and is portrayed in an extremely monosyllabic and monotone style. It is often coupled with the cello (see bars 74-9).

The piano finds its role as mediator, serving to punctuate the erratic phrases of the cello and oboe (see bars 14-19).

Throughout the piece, the character of He transforms, as he changes from an expressionless and bored disposition to frantic nervousness. In doing this he assumes the characteristic gestures of Madam, who toward the end of the piece has made her exit. At this point He moves more freely through the entire soprano range.

Statement of aesthetic

My music is concerned with the way instruments collide and synchronise with each other just as people do in life. I give my instruments characters or stereotypes and set up musical situations, at times letting the instruments take their natural course, or imposing obstacles by way of another instrument or idea that will either disrupt or sympathise with the expected order of events.

Musical score for *Madam He*, showing staves for Voice, Oboe, Cello, and Piano. The score is in 4/4 time, indicated by the '4' over the '4' and the tempo marking '♩ = 84'. The Voice staff is empty. The Oboe staff has a melodic line starting with a fermata. The Cello staff has a melodic line starting with a fermata and a dynamic marking of *ffz pp*. The Piano staff is empty.

Voice ²
 Oboe
 Cello
 Piano

Voice ³
 Oboe
 Cello
 Piano

Voice
 Oboe
 Cello
 Piano

intensely *p*

Min

Voice
 Oboe
 Cello
 Piano

a Ma Ma Ma a Ma Ma Ma

14

Voice *mp* *mf* *f whimsically*
 a Mn Ma — Ma — Ma — dan. Are you al —

Oboe *normale*

Cello *sfz pp sempre* *sul pont.* *sfz* *f* *mp*

Piano *mf* *p*

17

Voice *M* *with caution* *sternly mp*
 right — (t) You asked me to come. I

Oboe *mf* *ppp (pass)* *mf* *M norm. — (su. ppf)*

Cello *sul pont.* *pp* *p* *ff*

Piano *p* *ppp*

20

Voice *mf* *with confusion p* *mp* *detached (brist) mf*
 ask no one to come here, here. You suf-fered nic to come. I

Oboe *pp* *p*

Cello *sul pont.* *mp* *col legn ballato* *l.b.* *l.b.* *mf*

Piano *p* *p*

23

Voice *f confused* *boldly* *detached*
 meet my debts. Oh! I have to lis-ten. When you please

Oboe

Cello *sfz f* *ff* *sfz* *sfz ff*

Piano *ff*

68

Voice: *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *agitated* *p* *f*
 Mm a Ma Ma Ma — (dè) dam ! How — cold

Oboe

'Cello: *sfz* *pp* *sf* *sfz*

Piano: *ff* *p* *f*

71

Voice: *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *pp* *ff*
 (o) (ld) col (l)-d you are (r) (rè)!

Oboe: *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *sfz* *pp*

'Cello: *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *pp* *ppp*

Piano: *p* *mf* *f* *ppp*

74

Voice: *confidently* *mf*
 Are these the two — (oo) (oo)

Oboe: *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

'Cello

Piano

77

Voice: *p* *mf* *mp* *p* *f detached*
 (oo) two — two two Yes Mm

Oboe: *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf*

'Cello: *pp* *sfz* *ff* *mp* *sfz*

Piano: *mp*

innocently *mp* *brashly* *mf* *f* *mp* *f*

Voice *80*
 (Mm) Yes. Just push? Is i-t live? (vè) I ask you Is i-t live

Oboe *fz* *pp* *mp* *fz*

'Cello *p* *tr* *mp* *sfs* *pp* *f*

Piano *pp* *f*

bored *mf* *mp* *f* *p* *mf* *pp* *f*

Voice *83*
 (vè) No You (oo) You must twist it il

Oboe *tr* *mf* *mp* *f* *p* *mf* *pp*

'Cello *mf* *mp* *f* *p* *mf* *pp* *tr*

Piano *mp* *mf* *f*

Voice *85*
 To the righ- righ- right (tè).

Oboe

'Cello *f* *p* *mf* *pp* *mp* *f* *p* *f* *pp* *sfs*

Piano *p* *f*

Voice *88*

Oboe

'Cello *sfs* *spiccato* *normale* *p* *f* *p* *f* *pp* *sfs* *sal. cont.*

Piano