



Radio 3 dramas with music by David Byers

BBC Radio 3

Tuesday 4 August 1987, 9.25pm.

Woyzeck by Georg Büchner, translated by John MacKendrick.

The nightmare journey of Private Woyzeck, forced through poverty to be the Captain's batman and the Doctor's guinea pig, tormented by voices and torn apart by jealousy. Written in 1836, this is considered to be the first 'modern' play – told in splintered dialogue and jagged episodes, with music.

Directed by Clive Brill.

Music composed and directed by David Byers.

Elizabeth Bennett (flute) Paul Schumann (clarinet)

Philip Hammond (keyboard) John Leeming (cello)

Janet Harbinson (Irish harp)

BBC Northern Ireland

See *Hear This!* – *Radio Times*, page 17

Woyzeck: Tim McInnerny

Doctor: Timothy Bateson

Captain: Ian McElhinney

Marie: Aingeal Grehan

Andres: Eoin O'Callaghan

Showman / Second Journeyman: Mark Lambert

Drum major / Jew: Derek Halligan

First journeyman / Sergeant: Aidan McCann

Grandmother: Barbara Adair

Margaret: Margaret McCann

Children: Brian Bell, Rachel Hewitt, Catherine Harper

In her review of the production for the *Daily Telegraph*, Tuesday 11 August 1987, p.10, Gillian Reynolds wrote:

... Radio 3 drama as a whole is blooming these days. Tuesday's first rate *Woyzeck* in a version by John MacKendrick produced by Clive Brill, used the edgy magic of Ulster voices to extraordinary effect. Tim McInnerny as the soldier driven to the limit was quite superb. The music, by David Byers, did that rare thing of extending the action, the words and the characters to dimensions beyond, cutting a vast silhouette of the whole on to the mind.

The production was repeated as *The Friday Play*, BBC Radio 3, Friday 2 December 1988, 9.50pm.

‘... The nightmare journey of Private Woyzeck; forced through poverty to be the Captain’s batman and the Doctor’s guinea pig: tormented by voices and torn apart by jealousy.’
See *Hear This!* – *Radio Times*, page 28

For *The Times* preview, *Radio Choice*, Friday 2 December 1988, p.23, Peter Davalle wrote:

‘If *Woyzeck* (Radio 3, 9.50pm) strikes you as fragmentary and incomplete, there is every reason why it should. Georg Buchner left it like this when he died (in 1837). But even in its unfinished state, this tale of the uncomprehending soldier driven to murder, makes total sense dramatically, and one of the additional strengths of Clive Brill’s production in the BBC’s Belfast studios is that it carries a musical score (by David Byers) that rounds off some of the play’s jagged corners while adding some sharp cutting edges of its own.

It is excellent planning to broadcast this production again — it first went out about a year ago — just a couple of days after Radio 3 transmitted the opera that Berg based on the play. *Woyzeck* is arguably the first ‘modern’ play ever written. It certainly sowed the seeds of naturalism, and in the English version by John MacKendrick that we hear tonight, the vivid and realistic images come at us thick and fast. What better pointer to Woyzeck’s deep despair (superbly caught by Tim McInnerny) than his contemplating the grey, stone, sky and saying that it is the kind he could hammer a peg into, and hang himself from.’

BBC Radio 3

Sunday 2 October 1988, 7.45pm.

Sweeney Agonistes by T. S. Eliot. An Aristophanic melodrama.

Dusty and Doris wait to entertain friends; but Sweeney’s arrival sours the atmosphere.

Directed by Clive Brill.

Music composed and directed by David Byers

Jeff Box (double-bass)

Simon Butterworth (clarinet/ saxophone)

Richard Davis (flute)

David Fletcher (cello)

Paul Patrick (percussion)

Bernard Robertson (piano)

BBC Manchester

Weeney: Malcolm Storry

Dusty: Denise Black

Doris: Patsy Rowlands

Krumpacker: John Branwell

Klipstein: Michael Maloney
Wauchope: Nigel Carrington

Includes settings of the poems: *Sweeney Erect* and *Sweeney Among the Nightingales*.

BBC Radio 3

31 March 1990, 9.30pm, *Studio 3*

Seize the Fire by Tom Paulin with Gerard Murphy

Director Eoin O'Callaghan

Music by David Byers

Niall Keatley (treble)

BBC Northern Ireland

Prometheus: Gerard Murphy

Oceanos: Liam O'Callaghan

Hermes: Des Cave

Hephaestus: Louis Rolston

Violence: Lalor Roddy

Power: Mark Mulholland

Chorus: Eileen Pollock

Chorus: Brigid Erin Bates

Io: Zara Turner

Writing in *The Scotsman*, Saturday 7 April 1990, p.34, Joy Hendry thought that

‘Tom Paulin’s version of *Prometheus Bound*, *Seize the Fire* was certainly no disappointment. The play was very imaginatively produced by BBC Northern Ireland, using local accents to give modernity and focus, and provide a source of energy. Paulin’s version is terse and to the point, with a vivid brilliance which made Aeschylus positively sparkle with contemporaneity. The language bristles with a violence which brought the issues of the play, briefly tradition versus progress, very much to life. In particular, the pain of inevitability, mankind doomed by his nature to seek after progress, but doomed also to suffer as a result, made a sharp impact. The impetus of the play conveyed a strong feeling of history, knowledge, being pushed hard. Perhaps I was imagining it, but allusions to current revolutionary situations, from Northern Ireland to Czechoslovakia, created powerful reverberations, all the more strengthened by the closing words of the play “Let Prometheus go out and become one with the democratic light”.

Seize the Fire was an extremely finely written piece, produced with flair and commitment.

BBC Radio 3

Sunday 11 November 1990 at 7.30pm, *Sunday Play*

Sweeney Astray

Seamus Heaney adapted and now narrates his own story of the Warrior King, who, in his flight from the new Christian morality, transmogrifies into a bird and goes astray in the wilderness.

Director Eoin O’Callaghan. Music by David Byers.
BBC Northern Ireland

Sweeney: Stephen Rea
Ronan Finn: Gerard McSorley
Eorann: Stella McCusker
Moling/Alan: Denys Hawthorne

BBC Radio 3

Sunday 8 September 1991, 10.05pm, *Sunday Play*

Medea – A new version by Brendan Kennelly.

When magical Medea is betrayed by Jason for whom she has won the Golden Fleece, the result is vengeful and bloody.

Director Eoin O’Callaghan. Music David Byers
BBC Northern Ireland

Medea: Harriet Walter
Chorus: Annette Crosbie
Creon: Nigel Anthony
Jason: Nickolas Grace
Nurse: Maxine Audley
Aegeus: Maurice Denham
Teacher: Garard Green
Messenger: Alan Barker

In *The Scotsman*, Saturday, 14 September 1991, Joy Hendry writes:

‘... In the dramatic line, there was an excellently violent *Medea* in a powerful new version by Brendan Kennelly. Harriet Walter as Medea hurled herself into the role with a fury hard to match. Kennelly’s rendering is stark but eloquent.’
