

The Priest of Shiga Temple

The Priest of Shiga Temple is the fourth of five Parts of the music theatre work, *Jodo*, for soprano, solo percussion and electronics. Commissioned by Graeme Hall, it was written for and is dedicated to Kuniko Kato, and was completed in August 1999.

Jodo is based on a story by Yukio Mishima entitled *The Priest of Shiga Temple and His Love*, which tells of an old Buddhist priest whose life-long and unflinching contemplation of Jodo ('The Pure Land') is suddenly shattered by a passing glimpse of the beautiful 'Great Imperial Concubine'.

In Part 4 we see the Priest wrestling with the conflicting emotions within him, as he tries to dispel the image of the beautiful Concubine from his mind and resume his pure contemplation of Jodo.

James Wood

Translation of the text

The Great Priest of Shiga Temple was fighting.

In the fight that he had waged against in his youth he had always been buoyed up by the hope of inheriting the future world.

But this desperate fight of his old age was linked with a sense of irreparable loss.

The various forms of religious meditation were all in vain.

Water Contemplation, too, was useless, for invariably her lovely face would float up shimmering from beneath the ripples of the lake.

Concentration, the priest soon realized, did more harm than good, and next he tried to dull his spirit by dispersal.

It astonished him that spiritual concentration should have the paradoxical effect of leading him still deeper into his delusions.

The Great Priest found a new pleasure in adorning his vision of the lady in various ways, just as though he were adorning a Buddhist statue with diadems and baldachins.