

Quête

*OPEN YOUR DOORS AND LET ME IN
I HOPE YOUR FAVOURS I SHALL WIN
WHETHER I RISE OR WHETHER I FALL
I'LL DO MY BEST TO PLEASURE YOU ALL*

AS HURDEN HUMMER'S PLAY 1881

QUÊTE WAS COMMISSIONED BY PETER NEVILLE WITH FUNDS PROVIDED BY THE MUSIC BOARD OF THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL. THE WORK IS DEDICATED TO MY CHILDREN - BENEDICT, EMILY, TOBY, JESSICA MAY AND HOLLY.

COSTUME:

THE BASIC COSTUME OF THE QUÊTEUR CONSISTS OF A LARGE PAIR OF WHITE (PREFERABLY ILL-FITTING) DUNGAREES AND KATCHING TOP HAT WITH FALSE FLAP-TOP, IN WHICH IS CONCEALED A TOY BIRD CALL. A LARGE COMMERCIAL CHEESE GRATER IS STRAPPED ONTO THE CHEST; A POLICE WHISTLE IS ATTACHED TO A NECK STRAP AND THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE CONCEALED IN VARIOUS POCKETS: - ONE PAIR OF SPOONS; RATCHET; SMALL METAL HAMMER; WOODEN KNITTING NEEDLE [SMALL] TOGETHER WITH ALL THE STICKS REQUIRED FOR THE PERFORMANCE AND SEVERAL LARGE BRIGHTLY-COLOURED BALLOONS [WITH PIN FOR BURSTING.] [NB. THE TANTAN BEATER MUST BE PLACED IN THE PERFORMING SPACE PRIOR TO THE QUÊTEUR'S ENTRANCE.] THE QUÊTEUR WEARS STEEL-TIPPED SHOES OR CLOGS AND HAS INDIAN BELL STRAPS - THE TYPE USED BY MORRIS DANCERS - ATTACHED TO BOTH ANKLES. IN ADDITION, A SMALL BASS DRUM EQUIPPED WITH THREE GUT OR STRING SNARES IS ATTACHED TO HIS BACK. THIS IS PLAYED IN TRADITIONAL ONE-MAN BAND STYLE: A WIRE IS STRUNG FROM THE ELBOW OF THE RIGHT ARM, CROSSING THE DRUM HEAD, FASTENED TO WHICH IS A SMALL SOFT BEATER. THE DRUM HEADS SHOULD, IF ANYTHING, BE SLIGHTLY SLACK TO PRODUCE A SONOROUS, YET Ponderous SOUND WHEN STRUCK. A SMALL CYMBAL IS ATTACHED TO EACH LEG AT THE KNEE IN ORDER THAT THEY CAN BE CLASHED TOGETHER. A THIN LIGHT SONORITY SHOULD RESULT WITH MANY HARMONICS PRESENT. A LARGE KLAXON IS FITTED TO THE TOP OF THE BASS DRUM IN SUCH A MANNER THAT WILL FACILITATE ITS BEING PLAYED BY THE LEFT HAND. RIBBON STREAMERS MADE FROM NEWSPAPER MAY BE ATTACHED TO THIS BASIC COSTUME IN SUCH A WAY AS TO DISGUISE THE QUÊTEUR. IN ADDITION THE FACE SHOULD BE BLACKENED, OR A MASK WORN, TO CONCEAL FACIAL FEATURES.

SCENARIO:

THE ACTION IS IN THREE PARTS AND IS DERIVED FROM AN ABSTRACTION OF THE FORMAL RITUAL OF THE HUMMER'S PLAY IN FOLK TRADITION - A CENTRAL MASQUE IS FRAMED BY AN OPENING PROCESSION AND A CONCLUDING QUÊTE.

- (i) BARE STAGE IN TOTAL DARKNESS. THERE SHOULD BE NO SET WHATSOEVER OTHER THAN THE INSTRUMENTAL FLOOR LAYOUT. IF POSSIBLE THE ENTIRE COLLECTION OF INSTRUMENTS SHOULD BE "ENCLOSED" BY A SURROUNDING "CAGE" CONSTRUCTED OF METAL SCAFFOLDING, THUS DISPENSING WITH THE NEED FOR AN ADDITIONAL LENGTH OF SCAFFOLDING TO BE STRUCK. [SEE DIAGRAM OVERLEAF] IF DESIRED CERTAIN OF THE DESIGNATED FLOOR INSTRUMENTS MAY BE FASTENED TO THIS SCAFFOLDING, ESPECIALLY IF THIS AIMS ACCESSABILITY AND EASE OF PERFORMANCE. THE QUÊTEUR ENTERS, LIT BY A SOLITARY FOLLOW-SPOT. HE CARRIES A BROOM WHICH HE USES TO SLOWLY AND HESITANTLY SWEEP A PATH BEFORE HIM UNTIL HE REACHES THE PERFORMING CIRCLE. [NB. ENTRANCES AND EXITS MUST BE MADE VIA THE REAR OF THE CIRCLE, AS INDICATED OVERLEAF.] ONCE HE HAS REACHED THE MASQUE CIRCLE HE SHOULD RITUALY SWEEP THE SPACE CIRCUMSCRIBING THE AREA A TOTAL OF THREE TIMES IN A CLOCKWISE DIRECTION. DURING THIS DÉLIMITATION OF THE PERFORMING CIRCLE LIGHTS SLOWLY UP. THE QUÊTEUR DISCARDS HIS BROOM AT THE REAR OF THE SPACE AND COMMENCES THE MASQUE.

- (ii) THE MASQUE IS THE CENTRAL, FLAMBOYANT SECTION OF THE WORK AND IS PERFORMED WITH LIGHTS ON THE PERFORMING CIRCLE FULLY UP. THE CONCLUSION OF THIS SECTION IS SIGNALED BY AN UNSEEN ASSISTANT SWITCHING ON THE TWO FLOOR-MOUNTED ELECTRIC FANS SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE EXTINGUISHING OF ALL LIGHTS [WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE FOLLOW SPOT, WHICH NOW PRECISELY ISOLATES THE QUÊTEUR WHO EXITS THROUGH THE REAR OF THE PERFORMING CIRCLE]
- (iii) THE QUÊTEUR EXITS, BY A DIFFERENT ROUTE FROM THAT USED IN THE PROCESSION AND, IF POSSIBLE, BY WAY OF THE AUDIENCE. EVERY NOW AND AGAIN HE PASSES TO BLOW UP A BALLOON TO DISPENSE TO AN ONLOOKER, OR OFFERS HIS HAT FOR ALMS. AS THE SOUND OF THE BASS DRUM FADES INTO THE DISTANCE THE FOLLOWSPOT IS SLOWLY EXTINGUISHED.

THE ACTION:

THE ACTION/MIME IS ENTIRELY DEFINED BY THE PHYSICAL GESTURES REQUIRED IN ORDER TO EXECUTE THE SCORE IN THE MOST ELEGANT MANNER POSSIBLE. NO ATTEMPT MUST BE MADE TO CHARACTERIZE THE ACTION; - ALTHOUGH THE QUÊTEUR FIGURE IS PART BUSHER AND PART GREEN MAN, [ST. GEORGE OF ANCIENT LEGEND] THE MOVEMENT IS ESSENTIALLY ARCHETYPAL IN NATURE. NO ACTING IS REQUIRED ALTHOUGH THE QUÊTEUR MAY CHOOSE TO EXAGGERATE APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL GESTURES IN BOTH PROCESSION AND QUÊTE SECTIONS. THE MASQUE IS TO BE AS FLAMBOYANT AND AS INDULGENT AS POSSIBLE; - AN OBVIOUS SHOW-PIECE OF HIGH-ENERGY VIRTUOSITY IN CONTRAST TO THE RESTRAINED AND HESITANT FRAMING SECTIONS. IN ORDER THAT THE MUSIC DOES NOT INHIBIT EXECUTION AND SPONTANETLY THE QUÊTEUR IS REQUIRED TO MEMORISE BOTH PROCESSION AND QUÊTE SECTIONS. IF POSSIBLE, THE ENTIRE SCORE SHOULD BE MEMORISED. BUT SHOULD THIS PROVE AN IMPOSSIBILITY THE SCORE SHOULD BE ARRANGED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO BE BLOWN OFF THE MUSIC STANDS ONCE THE ELECTRIC FANS HAVE BEEN SWITCHED ON AT THE BEGINNING OF THE QUÊTE SECTION.

Richard David Hewitt

TOMMY DEVEN 30-VII-84