

Originally commissioned by the BBC for the 1975 Prom series, *Hagoromo* proved most elusive; all my music of 1974 and 1975 grew out of ideas related to it but not till I settled again at Pittwater on the eastern edge of Ku-ringgai Chase in 1976 did the music finally take shape.

It takes its name from the Noh play by Seami Motokiyo (1363 - 1444) which I first enjoyed in Arthur Waley's translation. An angel dances for two fishermen who have found her lost robe among the pines by the sea-shore one spring morning.

It is the sign of Spring.
Not Heaven is here but beauty of the wind and sky.

....
Waves lapping, wind in the pine-trees whispering
Along the quiet shore.

....
I am robed in sky, in the empty blue of heaven
...Now in a garment of spring mist.

(Translation by Arthur Waley)

The starting point of the music is not the action of the play (which is minimal) nor the style of the Noh (which is inimitable) but the dance of the feathered robe, its softness, its *now*. For me HAGOROMO is -

a robe of feathers: precise, shifting, detailed, blending, dense, transparent, a rainbow -
trees by the sea: the floury meal of new bark, the smell of fallen leaves in the sun, sunlight on the water, dappled
leaves, a cloud dissolving -
a wilderness in the spring: wildflowers, birdsong, the flight of butterflies, the scramble of lizards -
the folds of time: the harmony of a single flute, the melody of a bell.

The first and third movements were composed at Pittwater, the second in England the following year. Perhaps because of this break, the second movement never found its definitive shape. The score of this movement exists in two versions (see below), neither of which has precedence in the view of the composer.

Each movement opens with a slow, reflective gesture (for me, it was the sun rising out of the sea) which is at once a beginning, an end, and a still point of transformation. At the beginning of the first movement it's played by low drums, brass and strings and leads to a melody for solo flute which expands and accelerates into a counterpoint of textures for the full orchestra. It is interrupted twice during its development - first by a gently re-iterated chord played by the full orchestra and then by a slow-moving chord which grows out of octave Es (looking ahead to the third movement).

The second movement continues the long melody (this time on the strings) developing through interruptions (pitched percussion). It opens with little bells, brass and wind (the little bells, acting as a marker, introduce each section of the movement and, like the low drums in the first movement, they play an important role in shaping the third). At the centre of the movement the twelve woodwind players enter one by one and weave a dense polyphony of birdsong-like solos. It concludes with the entry of the strings under this counterpoint, bringing the movement to a close on D and its harmonics.

The third movement opens like the first. A dance for drums, piano, harp and pitched percussion alternates with a massive chorale for the rest of the orchestra. About two thirds of the way through, they fuse and lead through a wild dance to the last transformation of the opening of the piece.

Hagoromo is dedicated to Lorna and Brian Mellor who generously lent me their house at Pittwater in 1973 and again in 1976, thereby giving this work its home.

DL

Instrumentation

3 flutes doubling 3 piccolos & 1 doubling alto flute
3 oboes, 1 doubling cor anglais
3 clarinets in Bb, 1 doubling Eb clarinet, 1 doubling bass clarinet
3 bassoons, 1 doubling contrabassoon
4 horns
4 trumpets (high trumpets may be used at the players' discretion)
2 tenor trombones
1 bass trombone
1 tuba in C
6 percussion player, generally working in pairs, who play:
2 vibes (usually hard sticks, never motors)
2 marimbas
2 glocks (used alone & as extensions to the vibes)
1 set of crotales played with hammers, C6 - F#7
2 bowed crotales on D6
1 set tubular bells
2 sets of little Indian rope bells, one rope tuned to C, one to E
2 sets of 3 suspended cymbals
2 tam tams (high & low)
bell plates
2 matching sets of 6 drums, the lowest of each set being gong drums; the rest may be tom-toms or conga type as long as they are of medium resonance and create a consistent range of timbre.
bows for playing cymbals, vibes and crotales
amplified harp
piano with 3rd pedal
The latter 2 instruments are consistently associated with the pitched percussion, and it is essentially their percussive effects which are exploited. The piano uses the sustaining pedal but rarely, most resonances being created by playing staccato over low cluster resonances, held on the 3rd pedal.
24 violins (division of 1 - 12 correspond to the usual 1sts, 13 - 24 to 2nd violins)
12 violas
10 cellos
8 double basses (at least 4 with low C extension)

Score in C. Accidentals apply only to the notes they precede except in the case of repeated notes.

Hagoromo was commissioned by the BBC and it was first performed at the IRCAM series of concerts in Paris on 1st December 1977 by the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Pierre Boulez. The first Australian performance was given in Melbourne by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra conducted by Hiroyuki Iwaki as part of the World Music Days in October 1979. The first performance of the revised version was given on 29th July 1980 at the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts by the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Elgar Howarth.