

Bacchic Gala

for four amplified vocalists and pre-recorded tape

Philip Armstrong

Characters:

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| Xantriae , a Theban Bacchant; | <i>Soprano.</i> |
| Agaue , mother of Pentheus; | <i>Mezzo Soprano.</i> |
| Dionysus , god of the vine and leader of the Bacchants; | <i>Tenor.</i> |
| Tiresias , a Theban seer; | <i>Bass.</i> |

Libretto by the composer

Length: 22 minutes

Introduction:

'Bacchic Millenium' was written during 1997/8 for Gregory Rose and Singcircle. It is based on Euripedes' play, "Bacchae", written in 407 BC. The characters in the music each participate keenly in the ecstatic mountain rites celebrating the transformation of the old into the new. The tyranny of our closing millenium is represented by the frenzied destruction of youth, a major theme in "Bacchae". Just as the maenads flouted the laws of their time and ate the raw flesh of their victims in orgiastic rituals, so our millennial characters feast on the fading ethos of modernism and, in a sacrificial purging of the past, dismember the bodies of the young. Dionysus, Olympian god of the vine and champion of the Bacchants, leads the re-discovery of ancient fertility rites. The sexual repression and prejudice of recent centuries, that have divided the erotic from beauty and pornography from art, are mocked by the spirit of Ancient Greece whose sex symbols are revived as innocent and playful. The new millenium is welcomed for its potential as a golden age. The dances of the Bacchants celebrate post-modernist eclecticism and seek the emancipation of cultural values and moralities.

(P.A. March 1998)