

Introduction

Although I had previously read Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, a couple of years ago I read it again. Afterwards I decided to set some of Juliet's monologue lines to music for female voices. I enjoyed that project very much and it inspired the idea to write more music connected to Shakespearean women on stage. I carried out intensive research on different female characters who appear in Shakespeare's plays and chose the following for my compositions:

The fairy who wanders over hill and dale,
 The elves who protect Queen Titania's sleep and
 Love-doubting Helena in *Midsummernight's Dream*,
 Lady Macbeth with her Invocation of Darkness,
 The witches who prepare a horrible potion for Macbeth,
 Queen Gertude's report about Ophelia's drowning in *Hamlet*,
 Desdemona's Willow Song shortly before Othello stabs her, and
 Juliet raving about her lover Romeo.

The *Shakespearean Women* is composed as a concert cycle but can be introduced with explanations to the audience before each movement. The surrounding original texts can be read so that each chant is embedded its scene. Also there is the option to use additional theatrical means like costume, choreography and dancing for visual effect, giving the audience a multi sensory experience.

Supplementary material like summaries of the scenes, the texts in modern English and the video of the world premier performance can be found on my homepage www.christian-baehrens.de.

My *Shakespearean Women* will come to life at the end of this month. Many heartfelt thanks go to the Norwegian female choir *Concentus* and their conductor Per Sigmund Rettedal for committing themselves to my music, working so intensively and finally performing the world premier in Sandnes. I also thank Magne Løvdaal for his wonderful score engraving and layout, my publisher Jan Stefan Bengtsson for his great support, my friend Horst Zeitler for his unique illustration and my friend Lucy Coyne for her language assistance. And I dearly thank my wife Antonia for her endless encouragement and understanding.

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 Christian Bährens