## HAREFLIGHT

## A FASHION-OPERA

FLUTE DANCER TENOR JENNI HOGAN SHAKEEL KIMOTHO NIKI ZOHDI

## FASHION BY ISSEY MIYAKE FROM THE UU STUDIOS ARCHIVE CURATED BY GEMMA A. WILLIAMS

## CHOREOGRAPHY BY SHAKEEL KIMOTHO WORDS AND MUSIC BY ALASTAIR WHITE DIRECTION AND SET DESIGN BY ALASTAIR WHITE AND GEMMA A. WILLIAMS

SUPPORTED BY UKNA AND THE GOLDSMITHS MUSIC RESEARCH COMMITTEE PRODUCED BY UU STUDIOS The quick beat of the leg over heather, gorsesoil sands vanish its body in the grass. A flash of purple. What is the mark of this purple on the evening, what trace left like chest or clue?

Hedgerow on the edge of winter earth, the marking trees cane-whittled by wind on frost. The open earth is brown, blown-open, sounding desperate under footfall. As though it urged quiet for nurseries of dreaming seeds. What are these dreams, watched always by two black eyes? What are the eyes that blink in time along hoarfrost of the hide's edge?

After the season of rain and impending winter, the dark evening darkened further, the leaves' canopy shorn bare to days as black as the watching eye:

there is a time when the land flattens, the sun tilts like a light and hares walk madly on the newly discovered green. Hidden by nothing, whacking any colleague, suitor running for the hell of it from berrybush to den, paw wettened by some slip in bogland, unbothered, crazed before this marking sound seals passage from boxing to the jug.

This is a song of the hare's mathematics, the curve that carries speed beyond knowledge. What is the book of what the hare knows as it struts before the waiting gun, or coories to the grassland? This is a song of the knowledge of the hare. And this is the methodology of haresong: to follow that which has vanished, only just vanished to chase light upon water, brushstrokes, media vanishing Insta of some beautiful boy, your first amphetamine, hair lit by clublight and peroxide. The turn upon the alleyway and no-one there: life grins like a wheeling child thrown to the air to trail — through field bush, club and browser the spoor of the hare.

The first thing the hare knows is the glory of god learned in the lean swiftness, the just-beyond of the wolf's jaw, and sound of the close tongue licking, its hot air warmed by kinetic chase, belly upon the lung. One knowledge, here, from dogs of the earth and sea, moondog dogs of all worlds in a Universe of dogs, Universe of the shark, the wolf, the hawk's plunder is the hare: its knowledge won here. The hare teaches first *The Lesson of the Unbound Bound:* pointing, gesturing, look: a spinning cherub; a cherub urinating and red-black wood against Calvary's day. Also a unique, photobombing horse. The painter declares: the glory of god is terrestrial laughter. The glory of god is the lightness of the dance. The glory of god is in the blue, flaked paint as much as:

cider in the bushes saved, the gorgeous lightness of its two-litre weight.

The second thing the hare knows is the militancy of death and, in fact, there is a story of hare swarms set amok upon laboratories and Aubrey de Grey. See the blizzard of tufts, ears, the black eyes' shining diorama shows test tubes, stasis chambers tossed asunder. Smashed monkshead root. Shards of petri dish plastic become crumbs beneath the paws. Death's sentinel, the hare is, living always in the space between death and living, earth and sky as though the tips of grasstalks held it high planing the meadow, a territory marked between mouth and heartbeat: the hareflight. Death's militant, the hare is, unbeing's bannerman. Death's minister, the hare, teaches secondly The Lesson of Revolutionary Terror and, in fact, it is a story of the end of the world.

Once upon a time there was a fountain brought youth and life, and all dived in to splash medicine

on grey-haired shoulders, sweating breasts. They drank deeply, greedily and lines smoothed to youth, fat necks thinned as eyes blinked open and clear. In youth's uniform they bowed, winked. They bought the world. And no child could be but working for them as waiters and in factories. O, toil with coloured fish, with magazines! In bellytops, mohawks, they counted their money. They danced. But was it dancing? What is that grim shape that man makes upon the floor, as he pays ten pounds an hour to the girl behind the bar?

Had it not been for the swiftness of the hare, that cut down those monsters with age and care sealed them like relics beneath the earth of the ground, shuts up their mouths with illness and time... Death exists that the young may be for death's militancy is defender of the knowledge of the young that is the goodness of the world and the knowledge of the young is the lightness of the world and that knowledge of the young is the great morality of the world that is the logic of the world that is the glory of god that is the knowledge of the hare.

The third thing the hare knows is the black, wrapping robe that is the unacted thought of death that curls from the ear in a spiral, before the neck garrotte-like wrapping over the shoulder and round solar-plexus to a pressure point of the spine, wrist, then, then fingers woven shut, tight, stitchpatterned. The legs and groin are spared, but just below the gut the weight tightens, tightens.

It turns you to look from the window to see nothing, then turning, to see nothing within, though the oven on, the wine open, the phone ringing. It's summer. From this the hare teaches Coldness of Grass, its third lesson. The lesson regards the remainder of the subtraction of the hare of the woodcut from the hare of the field the riddle from the grid, the mink from cuff or clue from burglar, the dwelling-place and its marriage vows. The lesson is formal. Though a metaphor might be the hare's form: that dip in the grass for rest or litter. No hide in depths of badger-set or warren, its deepness only this fold in the meadow this shallow-earth rut, fur-lined below rock or tussock, cramped hole barely anything but a hole and place for childbirth, the hare-form, this sole mark of its passing upon the world.

As it huddles in the shallow, watching the earwig slide across the rock, listening to the beating wings above, its heart stills in sadness, a melancholy that is not often spoken of. It is not the fast-beating pulse of endangered cubs, or the mother's taught breath watching, it is not the agony of fledgling, paw-battered, or waiting with open mouth, no sense of time beyond hunger. No, and though not like any band or memoirist the hare is depressed watching through the grassleaves its lack of motion, the sudden death that stalks it, it thinks, briefly, *rubbish!*, then forgets, which was never forgotten by coat or woodcut, this excess of all beyond the sign of the hare is but a stinking hole filled with skin, fur, babies and self-pity and the hare.

The fourth thing the hare knows is its enemy. That mortal enemy of the hare, ancient hated foe, O, tortoise! Proud bester of Achilles and (yes) the hare, armoured lizard in motion unceasing. He who carries the heaviness of long-life, the dogged, piston-like push of its hooves to drag shell and beak upon a meal of leaves. Maddening as a bad broadband connection, a movie skipping, its terrible shape tracing both the crocodile and crow. The tortoise teaches its own famous lessons and these the hare hates above all things. How it despises this enemy! How it hates, hates, hates this beast! It hates its mean self-sufficiency. It hates its cowardly eyes. It hates its smug self-regard. It hates its grim meal. It hates its green, awful colouring. It hates the knowledge of its age.

The fifth thing the hare knows is where the treasure is buried. For it is treasure itself and has been hidden in the earth as gold and precious stone. This lesson it calls *The Tale of the Golden Hare*.

I was once given a brass keepsake, hare-shaped like an ornament, if too small. But it fitted perfectly in your palm. Kept in the breastpocket and you'd hardly know. I was a child then, also. Its legs were tucked in, the ears shot out straight and high: unnaturally geometric. Across its back — etched lines in burnished metal showed the unevenness of the sculptor's hands. It rattled like a mechanical chest: something hidden inside. If you squeezed its belly like a tube of toothpaste, the body split at a hare line

opened.

Inside: a tiny, ritualistic phallus, a fertility symbol, fully erect and carved also with the sculptors shaking hands: symbols, ancient languages that prayed for children.

crack.

I was once given a book called *Masquerade* and ever since, whenever I was lucky enough to be drunk on a bridge, with a new friend perhaps, the whole of the world shining the bridge's burnished red metal in the sun, shining the eyes of the people walking home, their heads turning slightly to the sun, or the light upon the water,

> (when, often, long after, when never would I stand on bridge or make new friends to drink with and laugh, I would sit alone, remembering fondly the bridge and the sun)

I'd turn to them, and remember, sometimes — if I was drunk enough! — I'd even tell it. The story of the little man. Who defied Isaac Newton in swiftness to outrun law, the givenness of possibility, all the way to heaven and the light of the sun.

The rest of the story is very sad.

But...

the thing about *Masquerade*, the Golden Hare and *Hareraiser*, then its auctioning, removal from the world

(is that the story of the hare is not over yet)

is that the story of the hare gave its own tragic myth. From the race across the ocean to plot, lawn and earth, riddled virtuality and a pathetic, hidden purse. Gold stowed from the world in dull vault and greed. Unshining, the collector counts its beads.

But...

Every day, the world changes and dares. One day, we will have back the hare that became pixel-grid, painting, a golden object and the story of the hare is not over yet. But the song of what the hare knows must now be. Time has run out. And if we're honest, we'd see how little we've learned from chasing its trail, how our quarry has foxed us. We've failed. Five lessons it teaches, but to write them down, sexed up with *bel canto* and pleated gowns tells less than nothing of lessons themselves their sun-burnished bridges or dew-wettened dells. To learn of what the hare knows, you must go where the hare goes: Venice, city of *lapis lazuli!* Heaven on Tuesday (when entry is free.) Or, better still, just open a book... where hareflight is (beautifully) misunderstood. Climb up a mountain with bottles of booze, where hareflight is (thankfully) unlikely to cruise. Bow your head in the classroom. Raise it up on the beach. The song that is silent and the words preached on hareflight are lessons in a right of their own. But look for a hare there? You will find none. Live as a hare in meadow and scrub. Get stinking and starving and covered in mud where hareflight's (unexpectedly) tricky to find...

But, but...

I've mentioned Venice now a number of times, Tiepolo, the water, the network of vectors that reach east and west like pidgeonpost letters. The light on lagoon as it shimmers in gloam, its inscription in paint. This is hareflight's home. Or perhaps the bridge. No, wait, in writing. Ok, definitely (this time) the dog gullet biting. No, speed. No. Absence. Skin. Ah — lipstick! In sickness. In cabbage. In ballet. In shit. In death. In love. In gold. In glove. In cartridge and on bridge —

the hareflight passes.

Jenni Hogan is a prolific solo and chamber performer and composer praised as "ravishing" (The Guardian) and for her ability to "knock off complex phrases, harmonics and extended techniques with such subtlety you'd hardly know what was involved" (BBC Music Magazine). Recent highlights include performing at St John's Smith Square, on Sounds New BBC Radio 3, Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Barbican as a soloist and in chamber groups. Jenni is currently completing her PhD at the University of Leeds supervised by Scott McLaughlin and Emily Payne, where she is researching a reversal in the traditional sound/movement hierarchy.

Shakeel Kimotho is a dancer and choreographer trained at The Urdang Academy, Associated Studios Performing Arts Academy, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance and The Northern School of Contemporary Dance. Recent credits include Joe in *Elegies for Angels, Punks and Raging Queens, Spirit of Beau Bells in Dick Whittington and His Cat* at the Norwich Theatre Royal, Hud/Dance Captain in *Hair, Ensemble in Pippin, Ensemble in Matthew Bourne's Lord of the Flies, Dancer in 80s Flashback and Ensemble/Dwarf/Puppeteer in Imagine Theatre's Snow White.* 

Alastair White is a Scottish composer and writer. Recipient of a Tait Memorial Trust Award (2021), and shortlisted twice for a Scottish Award for New Music (in 2019 and 2020) and Creative Edinburgh Award (2019), his work has been described as "a whole exciting new genre of art" (BBC Radio 3), "perfect" (Vogue Italia), "genuinely original" (TEMPO), and "the height of compositional magnificence" (Fanfare). His music is released by Métier and Navona, and his scores are published by UMP. He is currently composer-in-residence for the Ljubljana-based .abeceda [new music ensemble] and teaches at Goldsmiths, University of London. He publishes and speaks internationally on his research interests in composition, musicology and philosophy, which include the theory of contingency dialectics and its methodological implications in fashion-opera.

Gemma A. Williams is a fashion curator and previously ran the Fashion Space Gallery at London College of Fashion. She is currently the film curator for the Shaded View of Fashion Film Festival. Her area of interest is emerging Chinese designers and she is the author of *Fashion China* (Thames & Hudson). She has worked for the Business of Fashion, Conde Naste Shanghai and Shanghai Fashion Week. She writes about the China market from a B2B perspective for luxury publication Jing Daily, where she is the Director, Editorial Strategy and Content.

Niki Zohdi is a composer, tenor and conductor born in Blackburn, Lancashire. He completed his music undergraduate degree at Goldsmiths in 2019 and continued to study for his masters degree in composition at the same institution under the tutelage of Roger Redgate. Niki is currently halfway through his PhD in composition at the University of Leeds and is supervised by Mic Spencer and Martin Iddon. His PhD is a practice-led project in composition looking at musical quotation in complex music by exploring compositional approaches that examine varying levels of identifiability and unidentifiability of existing materials in complex musical contexts. He is engaged and interested in the relationship between early music and the New Complexity. As a singer, Niki continues to study with Ashley Stafford and frequently sings with various cathedral choirs in the north of England, as well as with Leeds Baroque and Borealis. He has also been a guest soloist with various other ensembles throughout the UK.