

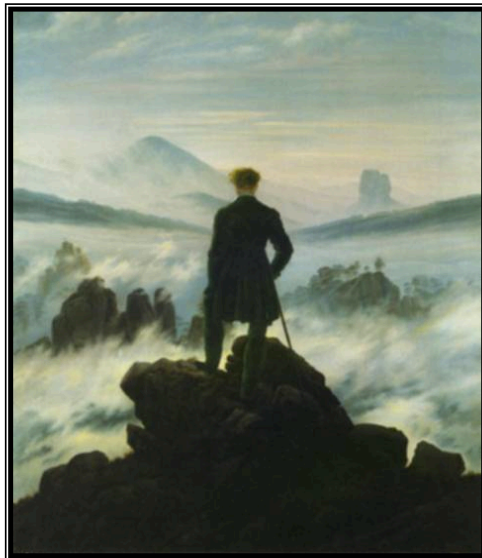
# *Manfred*

the dramatic poem by Lord Byron

abridged in ten scenes

and semi-staged with the incidental music of Robert Schumann

'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'



A co-production by Patrick Boyde and Adrian Poole

**The Master's Lodge**

**Trinity College**

**6. 15 pm**

**23 November 2017**

Special thanks are due to the following, without whose support the production could never have taken place:

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The Master allowed us to perform in the Lodge.

Graham Walker recruited the singers.

Hannah Robinson and Tom Mullock did wonders with the underlay of the English text.

Paul Nicholson discovered our pianist and Paul Johnson lovingly cares for the Dining Room.

Mark Harrison gave his usual indispensable help with the design and creation of the Powerpoint Presentation.

Mike Gormer oversaw the installation of the screen and the computer for synchronisation.

Constantin Sahms and Paul Nicholson oversaw publicity and the sophisticated ticketing for Home and Away Supporters.

Anne Barton provided some funding, from a legacy she bequeathed to Trinity; Byron was second only to Shakespeare in her affections.

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The incidental music is taken from the Klavierauszug of Schumann's *Manfred, Dramatisches Gedicht von Lord Byron*, op. 115.

The most striking of the projected images are by Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), J.M.W Turner (1775-1851) and John Martin (1789-54).

## THE READERS

|                    |                |
|--------------------|----------------|
|                    | Micha Lazarus  |
| Manfred            | Adrian Poole   |
|                    | Patrick Boyde  |
| Chamois Hunter     | Anthony Bowen  |
| Abbot of St Moritz | David Frost    |
| Manuel             | Anthony Bowen  |
| Hedwig             | Subha Mukherji |

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|                             |                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Spirits subject to Arimanes | The Singers      |
| The Spirit of Astarte       | Francesca Barber |
| Witch of the Alps           | Subha Mukherji   |
| Destiny                     | Anthony Bowen    |

## THE MUSICIANS

|             |                                           |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Piano       | Nina del Ser                              |
| Cor Anglais | David Midgley                             |
| Singers     | James Beddoe, Carys Brown,<br>Tom Mullock |

## SYNCHRONISATION

Elena Violaris

## Byron (and his Bear) at Trinity



Byron came up to Trinity in 1805 and perhaps the first thing to note about his time here is that it was short. Noblemen such as Byron enjoyed various privileges as students, including permission to wear hats instead of academic caps, eating with Fellows at High Table (admittedly, not always something Byron enjoyed), no requirement to attend lectures or sit examinations, and, crucially, the reward of the degree of MA after a mere two years' residence. Byron, however, failed to fulfil even this very slight criterion. Despite some doubt over whether he would be awarded a degree – which predictably piqued Byron's indignation – he was eventually awarded an MA.

Byron had wished to follow his Harrow school-friends to Oxford, but finding that there were no rooms available at Christ Church, he was placed at Trinity. He was pleased with his '*Superexcellent*' rooms – probably on I staircase, Neville's Court – but within his first term ran through his annual allowance of £500 and accrued debts of £1000 – a gargantuan sum. He enjoyed the company of a varied social set and an intimate, passionate friendship with the choirboy John Edleston.

Trinity was at that time hardly the shining beacon of academic endeavour and attainment that it is now. Byron reported that the main pursuits of the Master and Fellows were eating and drinking (I am tempted to write '*plus ça change...*' – but shan't), with, at most, a little disputing and punning thrown in. Byron ate (though he returned much slimmer for his second term, having followed a crash diet and rigorous exercise routine in the vacation) and certainly drank. He also read, though his reading was mostly in contemporary poetry rather than in the Mathematics and Theology textbooks that formed the basis of the curriculum.

And then there is the bear. It is often claimed that Byron kept his bear in the turret at the south-east corner of Great Court (perhaps in Professor Poole's rooms?) or he bathed it in the Fountain. He did neither, although, in a thinly veiled attack on the low academic standards and corruption that prevailed at the time, he did joke that he would enter his ursine companion for the Fellowship. Hewson Clarke, an impecunious scholar at Emmanuel, who thus didn't enjoy Byron's privileges as a nobleman, wrote some scurrilously suggestive verses on Byron's relations with Bruin.

Byron left Trinity in 1807; Bruin died at Newstead, Byron's ancestral seat, in 1810.

## Ross Wilson

## Switzerland



Byron began *Manfred* in Switzerland in the summer of 1816 and finished it the following spring in Venice. He spent the months in Switzerland round Lake Geneva with Shelley (who was inspired to write his poem 'Mont Blanc') and Mary Shelley (who dreamed up what would become *Frankenstein*). This was, for such liberal or indeed radical thinkers, a region hallowed by the figures of Rousseau, Voltaire and Edward Gibbon. In a Europe recovering from the trauma of protracted war and facing the restoration of 'shattered thrones', Switzerland was a bastion of political freedom. In 1804 Friedrich Schiller had provided in *William Tell* one of the nineteenth-century's symbolic figures of resistance to tyranny. But for Byron, as for Shelley and their successors, it was the landscape above all that answered to the needs of the imagination.

The Romantic poets and painters discovered mountains — or re-discovered the power they had held for the ancient Greeks and other 'primitive' peoples. Sacred places, to view from a humble distance and stand triumphantly a-top, terrain on which to risk life and limb and encounter who knew what of the divine and the demonic. Primitive, unconquerable, incorruptible by human artifice, a world away from a squalid, scandal-driven modern metropolis like London. For Wordsworth and Coleridge the Alps had seemed to offer symbols for the connexion between the human and the divine; for Shelley Mont Blanc presented an image of inaccessibility, something to which meaning could only be attributed by the human imagination. For Byron the Bernese Alps provided a theatre for the encounter of the self with ... what? Its own deepest fears?

The first two acts of his play owe much to the tour Byron made in late September after the Shelleys had left. He described the landscape as 'solitary, savage, and patriarchal'. In his journal he wrote that 'I have lately repeople my mind with Nature', while to *Manfred* he gave the lines: 'My joy was in the wilderness,—to breathe / The difficult air of the iced mountain's top'. And yet despite this escape from the all-too-human world, he confided to his half-sister Augusta that nothing had 'enabled me to lose my own wretched identity in the majesty & the power and the Glory—around—above—& beneath me'. This may help to explain the significance of the very different landscape featured in *Manfred*'s last great monologue, in which he recalls a moon-lit night in Rome's Colosseum (in this abridgement, scene nine): a return from the icy air of the Alpine peaks to the bloody ground of human history — a foretaste of Byron's own experience as he travelled on from Switzerland to Italy, and Greece.

**Adrian Poole**

## **Personal sources of the play in Byron's private life**

Byron fled to Switzerland in 1816 after his highly publicised and bitter separation from his wife, pursued by rumours of an incestuous affair with his older half-sister Augusta Leigh.



The four extracts from Byron's letters to her (on the facing page of this programme), give a very good sense of the nature of his attachment.

## Paragraphs from Byron's letters to Augusta

**At the age of 16, to his half-sister, aged 21**

**22<sup>nd</sup> March 1804**

I hope you will consider me not only *as a Brother* but as your warmest and most affectionate *Friend*, and if ever Circumstances should require it as your *protector*. Recollect, My Dearest Sister, that you are *the nearest relation* I have in *the world both by the ties of Blood and Affection*... Write to me Soon my Dear Augusta, And do not forget to love me, In the mean time I remain more than words [can] express, your ever sincere, affectionate Brother and Friend.

**At the age of 28, from Switzerland**

**29<sup>th</sup> September 1816**

I am a lover of Nature—and an Admirer of Beauty—I can bear fatigue—& welcome privation—and—have seen some of the noblest views in the world.—But in all this—the recollections of bitterness—& more especially of recent & more home desolation—which must accompany me through life—have preyed upon me here—and neither the music of the Shepherd—the crashing of the Avalanche—nor the torrent—the mountain—the Glacier—the Forest—nor the Cloud—have for one moment—lightened the weight upon my heart—nor enabled me to lose my own wretched identity in the majesty & the power and the Glory—around—above—& beneath me. —I am past reproaches—and there is a time for all things—I am past the wish of vengeance—and I know of none like for what I have suffered—but the hour will come—when what I feel must be felt—& the—but enough. —To you—dearest Augusta—I send—and *for* you—I have kept this record [*his Alpine Journal*] of what I have seen & felt.—Love me as you are beloved by me.

**A month later**

**28<sup>th</sup> October 1816**

All I know is—that no human power short of destruction—shall prevent me from seeing you when—where—& how—I may please—according to time & circumstance; that you are the only comfort (except the remote possibility of my daughter's being so) left me in prospect in existence, and that I can bear the rest—so that you remain.

**Two and a half years later, from Venice,**

**17<sup>th</sup> May 1819**

My dearest Love, I have been negligent in not writing, but what can I say. Three years absence—& the total change of scene and habit makes such a difference—that we have now nothing in common but our affections & our relationship.—

But I have never ceased nor can cease to feel for a moment that perfect & boundless attachment which bounds & binds me to you—which renders me utterly incapable of *real* love for any other human being—what could they be to me after *you*? My own XXXX [*short word crossed out*] we may have been very wrong—but I repent of nothing except that cursed marriage—& your refusing to continue to love me as you had loved me—

Chosen by **Stacey McDowell**

## Detached and teasing accounts of the plot and supernatural machinery

We must not think that some of the absurdities of *Manfred* passed without comment at the time. Byron himself summarised the plot with typical wit and detachment in a letter to his publisher:

It is of a very wild, metaphysical and inexplicable kind. Almost all of the persons — but two or three — are spirits of the earth and air, or the waters; the scene is in the Alps; the hero is a kind of magician, who is dominated by a species of remorse, the cause of which is left half-explained. He wanders about, invoking these spirits, which appear to him and are of no use; at last he goes to the very abode of the Evil Principle to evoke a ghost, which appears and gives him an ambiguous and disagreeable answer; and in the third act he is found by an attendant, dying in a tower, where he has studied his art.

In 1818, a year after the publication of *Manfred*, Thomas Love Peacock gently satirised Byron as Mr Cypress (alongside Shelley as Scythrop, Coleridge as Flosky, and Mary Wollstonecraft as Celinda) in his witty and penetrating roman à clef, *Nightmare Abbey*. (Incidentally, the novel appeared the year after Jane Austen's no less delightful satire, *Northanger Abbey*, written in 1803).

Here are two after-dinner speeches from the novel attributed to Mr Cypress:

Sir, I have quarrelled with my wife; and a man who has quarrelled with his wife is absolved from all duty to his country. I have written an ode to tell the people as much, and they may take it as they list.

I have no hope for myself or for others. Our life is a false nature; it is not in the harmony of things; it is an all-blasting upas, whose root is earth, and whose leaves are the skies which rain their poison-dews upon mankind. We wither from our youth; we gasp with unslaked thirst for unattainable good; lured from the first to the last by phantoms — love, fame, ambition, avarice — all idle, and all ill — one meteor of many names, that vanishes in the smoke of death.

And here is Peacock's note about Arimanes:

Ahrimanes, in the Persian mythology, is the evil power, the prince of the kingdom of darkness. These two powers have divided and equal dominion. Sometimes one of the two has a temporary supremacy. According to Mr Toobad [a character in the novel], the present period would be the reign of Ahrimanes.

Lord Byron seems to be of the same opinion, by the use he has made of Ahrimanes in *Manfred*; where the great Alastor of Persia, is hailed king of the world by the Nemesis of Greece, in concert with three of the Scandinavian Valkyrae, under the name of the Destinies; the astrological spirits of the alchemists of the middle ages; an elemental witch, transplanted from Denmark to the Alps; and a chorus of Dr Faustus's devils, who come in the last act for a soul. It is difficult to conceive where this heterogeneous mythological company could have originally met, except at a *table d'hôte*, like the six kings in *Candide*.



## Byron and Goethe



Goethe and Byron reach out to each other across the lands and generations. Byron sends his *Sardanapalus* and *Werner* to ‘the illustrious Goethe’. Goethe is polite, no more, but he finds a kindred spirit in the godless *Cain*, the wicked *Don Juan* and the titanic *Manfred* – the *Faustian* Manfred: Goethe cannot fail to recognise his own offspring in Byron’s opening monologue. Goethe shudders at Byron’s ‘tormented talent’, but he pays him the ultimate compliment of translating the soliloquy ‘We are the fools of time and terror’ (II, 2), matching exactly Byron’s 41 lines of blank verse, with a fine courtesy added from poet to poet: for ‘giving happiness’ he puts the neologism *glückverspendend*, thus allowing Byron, at a remove, to enrich the German language.

Goethe’s novel *Werther*, his dead child of 1774, was also on his mind. He does not say outright that Byron was Werther reborn. But ‘hypochondriac’ and ‘tired of life’ – part of Werther’s lexis and of Goethe’s in coming to terms with his own creation – are key terms in Goethe’s review of *Manfred*. Werther’s unhappy offspring, René, Obermann, even Byron’s own Childe Harold (cf. *Manfred* III, 4) hand down their legacy to Manfred, their solitude, their *mal du siècle*, their ‘Shall forbid thee to rejoice’.

But a Faustian (or Wertherian) reading gives us limited access to Byron’s text. Werther’s Ossianic wanderings or Faust’s ascent of the Brocken do recur in Byron’s ‘Eigher’, but these sublime peaks he had also seen for himself. Byron knew Goethe’s play imperfectly. At a high Gothic moment in the history of literature, on 14 August, 1816, Matthew Gregory (‘Monk’) Lewis, a guest at Villa Diodati, read his version of *Faust* to Byron. A biographer of Byron asserts that his ‘retentive memory’ gave him the ‘unconscious framework’ for *Manfred*. But where are Goethe’s God the Father, Mephistopheles and his pact, Margarete, the framework of heaven and hell? Byron summons up ‘aspirations’ ‘beyond the dwellers of the earth’, sin and guilt beyond even Mephistopheles’ register, a heterodox cosmogony transcending the Christian categories underlying *Faust*.

Perhaps —a big perhaps— Goethe, writing the second part of *Faust*, not yet completed, did light on things from *Manfred*: the great invocation of the sun that opens his Part Two for instance, or at the end the return to elemental nature, Byron’s hero sinking into oblivion, and Faust, for all the panoply of heaven, reunited with the ever-renewing energies of life.

**Roger Paulin**

## Robert Schumann's incidental music



*The following helpful paragraphs are taken from Concert Notes to Schumann's Manfred Overture.*

Schumann's thoughts were very much on the musical stage when he took *Manfred* in hand as the subject for a composition in August 1848. He had just completed his only opera, *Genoveva*, and began immediately sketching an Overture inspired by Byron's poem which he completed in early November. During the Overture's composition, he tinkered with German translations of *Manfred* by Posgarn and Böttger with the hope of bringing the poem into stageworthy shape, and conceived a set of incidental music that would accompany its presentation. 'I never devoted myself to a composition with more love and exertion of strength than to the work on *Manfred*,' Schumann told Wasielewski. By November 23rd, he had finished fifteen additional pieces, including entr'actes, choruses, solos and 'melodramas,' poetic lines recited above a musical accompaniment.

*Manfred* demonstrates Schumann's growing desire to explore the outer limits of musical drama. *Manfred*, he insisted, 'should not be advertised as an opera, Singspiel, or melodrama, but as a 'dramatic poem with music.' Rather than conforming to any one of these well-established genres, Schumann combined all three, fashioning his vocal ensembles in accordance with conventional operatic practice, employing spoken dialogue as in a Singspiel, and, in his treatment of the title character's words, turning to melodrama: unadorned speech coupled with a delicate tissue of orchestral background music.

### **‘Old men should be explorers’**

This performance of *Manfred* is the latest in a series of semi-staged productions which have kept me busy since my retirement. I have had to learn so much in the past fifteen years – how to understand and pronounce Ancient Greek; how to use, creatively, the essential high-tech resources; how to coach and inspire teams of amateurs; how to persuade audiences to come along to a reading aloud of dense and complex texts in four different languages (none of them Italian). But I have of course been re-deploying my previous knowledge and skills (acquired through the teaching of Dante and Italian Narrative Art); and there are some ‘red strands’ running the whole length of the ‘cable’.

The plays are all abridgements of rarely performed verse-dramas or dramatisations of episodes in classical epics or books of the Bible. All have been enhanced by live music and illuminated by appropriate images. The meaning has always been made crystal-clear by specially composed surtitles, or (as tonight), by the projection of the English words.

In every case the focus has been on the language of a major text that is to be enjoyed on its own terms and for its own sake, just like a symphony. Every directorial choice is intended to heighten the impact of the Word, to rouse it from its hibernation on the page, to bring it from potency to act. There are two underlying obsessions; first, my conviction – shared with Dante – that the essence of poetry lies in its verbal music (*armonia, dolcezza*), which is why it does not survive translation: and, second, that a good reading depends on deep understanding and conveys a loving interpretation – which it does more effectively than any written commentary. (And, yes, there is also a thin, ‘black thread’ of muted protest against the cult of the Director in the modern theatre and against the dominance of Theory in the teaching of literature at our universities.)

**Patrick Boyde**

### **Alphabetical table of the principal works semi-staged between 2002 and 2017**

|                                            |                          |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Achilles: The End of his Wrath</i>      | Homer                    |
| <i>Aeneas I: Troiae Tutamen</i>            | Homer                    |
| <i>Aeneas II: Teucrorum Spes</i>           | Virgil                   |
| <i>Ajax</i>                                | Sophocles                |
| <i>Anticleia, Calypso, Circe, Nausicaa</i> | Homer                    |
| <i>Apocalypse</i>                          | New Testament            |
| <i>Borderers, The</i>                      | Wordsworth               |
| <i>Job: Trial by Ordeal</i>                | Book of Job (Septuagint) |
| <i>Manfred</i>                             | Byron                    |
| <i>Gospel of Mark, The</i>                 | New Testament            |
| <i>Oedipus at Colonus</i>                  | Sophocles                |
| <i>Paradise Regained</i>                   | Milton                   |
| <i>Penelope</i>                            | Homer                    |
| <i>Persephone &amp; Demeter</i>            | Homeric Hymn + Ovid      |
| <i>Prometheus Bound</i>                    | Aeschylus                |
| <i>Prometheus Unbound</i>                  | Shelley                  |
| <i>Pulchérie</i>                           | Corneille                |
| <i>Two Kinsmen from Lycia</i>              | Homer                    |
| <i>Two Kinsmen from Thebes</i>             | Shakespeare              |

# Who's Who

**FRANCESCA BARBER** (T) is studying for an MPhil in Modern Literature, but is happy to make ghost appearances in her spare time.

**JAMES BEDDOE** (JN) is now the Choir Marketing Officer, but continues to sing as a tenor. He has recently performed some major song-cycles and taken tenor roles in three operas.

**ANTHONY BOWEN** (J) is a former Orator of the University. He has been busy with plays in Greek and English since his schooldays.

**PATRICK BOYDE** (JN) is Emeritus Professor of Italian. He has been adapting and directing dramas in Greek, Latin, French and English since 2004.

**CARYS BROWN** (JN) is in the third year of her PhD in history. She sings regularly with St John's Voices and Vox Cantab, but is delighted to make occasional appearances as a spirit.

**NINA DEL SER** (T) is currently a fourth-year Physics student. She is French and Spanish, but was born in Sri Lanka and grew up in Kazakhstan, where she started playing the piano. Her other interests include reading, swimming, and French pâtisserie.

**DAVID FROST** (JN) held the Chair of English in Newcastle NSW until his retirement and was until recently the Director of the Institute of Orthodox Studies.

**MICHA LAZARUS** (T) is a Research Fellow in English who works on the kind of Renaissance and Reformation literature from which Manfred traces his lineage.

**DAVID MIDGLEY** (JN) retired as Professor of German in 2015 and is taking great pleasure in resuming his education.

**SUBHA MUKHERJI** (F) is pleased to ascend from the rank of the Wordsworthian Beggar Woman (in *The Borderers*, 2008) to that of the Byronic Witch of the Alps.

**TOM MULLOCK** (CL) is a third year undergraduate engineer who spends a lot of time playing and singing music. His interests span orchestral, choral, jazz, *a capella* – and anything else he can find.

**ADRIAN POOLE** (T) retired from his Chair of English Literature in 2015, but continues to read, write and teach the works of great authors from Sophocles to Henry James.