



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

WOZZECK



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Listening and Watching

THE HOME OF CLASSICAL MUSIC

**SOUTHBANK
CENTRE**

THE EXPERTS



Gillian Moore

Gillian Moore is Director of Music at Southbank Centre. She was appointed Head of Classical Music in December 2011, having joined the organisation as Head of Contemporary Culture in 2006. Before 2006, she had a long association with both Southbank Centre and the London Sinfonietta. She was the Artistic Director of the London Sinfonietta from 1998 to 2006, combining that post with running the audience development programme *Inside Music* at the Royal Festival Hall and being a Visiting Professor at the Royal College of Music.

In 1998 she was also Artistic Director of the *ISCM World Music Days* in Manchester. She was Head of Education at Southbank Centre from 1993 to 1998, developing an approach that integrated educational and artistic activity. From 1983 to 1993, she was the Education Officer at London Sinfonietta, the first such post of its kind in the UK. During her career, Gillian has collaborated with many of the great musical and artistic figures of our age, from Luciano Berio to Radiohead, from Harrison Birtwistle to Squarepusher, from Steve Reich to Akram Khan and has commissioned many significant new works. In 1991 Gillian was awarded the Sir Charles Groves Award for services to British music, in 1992 she was created an Honorary Member of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and in 1994 she was awarded an MBE for services to music and education. She received the Association of British Orchestras Award in 1998 for contribution to British orchestral life, and was made a Fellow of the Royal College of Music in 2000. She was made an Honorary Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in 2003 and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Brunel University in 2006.

Gillian regularly writes and broadcasts about music. In particular, she is a regular contributor to BBC Television's coverage of The Proms and to BBC Radio 3. Gillian is a council member of the Royal College of Music and of the Royal Philharmonic Society.



Julian Johnson

Julian Johnson is Regius Professor of Music at Royal Holloway, University of London. Originally a composer, his research explores issues in music from the 18th century to the present day. He is the author of five books, including *Webern and the Transformation of Nature* (1999), *Mahler's Voices* (2009) and *Out of Time. Music and the Making of Modernity* (2015). He has been closely involved with the educational work of several orchestras and opera companies over the past 20 years, including the Royal Opera, English National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera and the Philharmonia Orchestra, and is a regular broadcaster on BBC Radio 3. In 2005 he was awarded the Dent Medal of the Royal Musical Association for 'outstanding contributions to musicology.'



Diane Silverthorne

Diane is an art historian with research interests in turn-of-the-century Vienna, and on how ideas about music and art have been of mutual influence in the birth of modern art forms in both fields, from the nineteenth century onwards. Her doctoral thesis focused on the Vienna Secession, and the artist Alfred Roller who was best known as stage-designer at the Vienna Court Opera during the Mahler years.

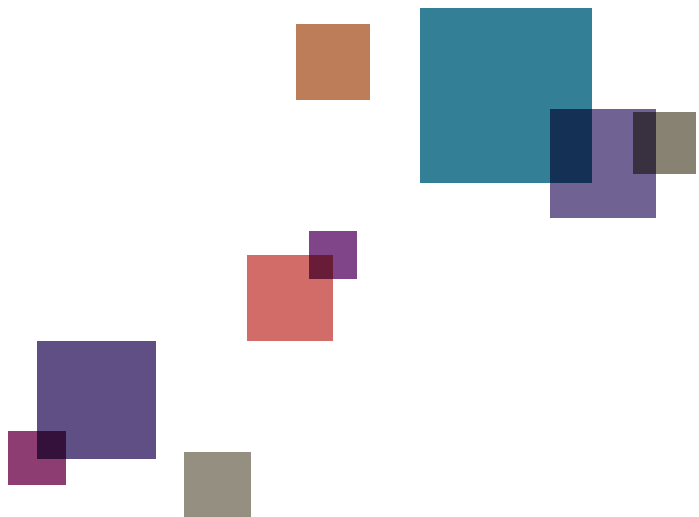
She has published for several anthologies, including most recently on 'Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk' for the Routledge Companion to Music and Visual Culture, and is currently editing an anthology on music and art for Ashgate. She is a regular public speaker on these subjects and the wider field of art history in the twentieth century, for organisations such as The National Gallery and the London Art History Society, and was a frequent contributor to the South Bank Centre's The Rest is Noise Festival. She holds a post at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts, and also lectures at Birkbeck, University of London.



Leigh Melrose

In recent years, Leigh Melrose has carved out a formidable reputation for the performance of new works. His fearless vocal flexibility and engaging stage presence mark him out as one of the most sought after singers for this challenging repertoire. A graduate of St John's College, Cambridge, and the Royal Academy of Music, Leigh has sung everything from Mozart to Maxwell Davies with madness, murder and (on stage) massive drug taking an apparent specialty.

He has performed *Wozzeck* in London, Salzburg and Madrid. Other recent repertoire includes *Alberich*, *Gawain and Escamillo*, while recent concerts include *8 Songs for a Mad King*, *Zimmerman's Requiem für einen Jungen Dichter* and *Matthias Pintscher's Songs from Solomon's Garden*.



AT A GLANCE

A short introduction to Wozzeck from Gillian Moore

I first heard Wozzeck when I was a student, and a very young Simon Rattle conducted it at Scottish Opera in the early 1980s. I've been obsessed ever since. Every time I hear the music, I hear something new. Some of it is frightening, some of it is challenging and complex and some of it is so unbearably sad that it's hard to avoid tears.

Wozzeck must be one of the best case studies if you want to demonstrate why opera is an unbeatable way of telling a story. The story of Wozzeck, taken from Georg Buchner's play, is simple and tragic in itself. But Berg's music deepens the experience, underlies or contradicts what we see on stage, heightens the emotional states or gives a different angle on a situation. So, for example, Wozzeck and his wife Marie are poor people who are flawed and take disastrously wrong decisions. But their music is full of softness, nobility and heart. The more 'important' people who oppress them - the Captain, the Doctor, the Drum Major are characterised by music which is harsh, angular, insistent. Wozzeck's descent into madness and his hallucinations are echoed in the orchestra, as if it represents the turmoil and terror inside his head. In a key scene where Marie is flirting with the Drum Major who then makes a grab for her, the music in the orchestra chillingly tells us that this is not a happy erotic coupling, but a brutal act of violence. And, in the final heartbreaking scene, we see Wozzeck and Marie's young child innocently run off to view his mother's murdered corpse as the repeating, unresolved patterns in the orchestral music tells us that the cycle of misery is about to repeat itself.

The particular mix of styles that Berg uses in the music is one of the things that makes Wozzeck so powerful. The last throes of an opulent, extremely expressive, post-romantic, post Mahler sound moves seamlessly in and out of a hugely confident and daring modernism and, throughout the opera, Berg gives us flashes of the music of the common people: folk songs, a military march, pub music, a nursery rhyme, a hymn, a lullaby. Underlying the music is a tight structural web, based on classical forms, but Berg is determined that this is a matter for him as a composer, and not for the audience. What the audience experiences is a tight, gripping and moving drama in which the short scenes and abrupt cuts from one to the other must surely have been influenced by the brand new art form of film, and which build inexorably to a shattering conclusion.

Julian Johnson on Berg and the birth of musical modernism

Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*, premiered in 1925, is widely acclaimed as one of the most powerful operas of the 20th century, but nearly a century after it was completed, it still remains a difficult and disturbing work. There are several ways we might try to understand it. Largely written during the years of the 1st World War, it certainly reflects some of Berg's own experience of the dehumanizing effects of military life during the war. But the tragic story of a poor soldier, driven to madness by the inhumanity of the world around him, has a more universal relevance, and one that seems to find a particularly powerful match in the atonal music of Berg.

Understanding the roots of this music takes us to the heart of Viennese modernism, which erupted in the early 1900s in the music of Mahler, Zemlinsky, Schoenberg, Webern and Berg. To this day, it is a musical movement widely misunderstood as some kind of violent rejection of tradition. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Schoenberg and his pupils had huge respect for the musical tradition that runs from Bach to Beethoven to Brahms, but saw themselves as charged with the responsibility to find its specifically modern form, one that would be adequate to express the nature of modern life. In Berg, this results in music that is often beautifully lyrical, while at the same time utterly uncompromising in its dramatic truth.



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Diane Silverthorne on turn-of-the century Vienna

Was Vienna around 1900 the 'city of dreams', or filled with nightmarish visions, and premonitions of the fall of the four hundred year old Habsburg Empire? Perhaps neither, or both of these commonly-held views are true. It is certainly clear that Vienna, in the few decades leading to the war was riven with political and social divisions, often referred to as tensions 'below the surface', despite the security of what seemed a never-ending period of prosperity and peace.

The Habsburgs were resistant to change, yet embraced the principles of liberal enlightenment. These principles were enshrined in the monumental buildings of the 'Ringstrasse' (Ring Street), and the principles on which the new constitutional and cultural institutions were established: 'Strong Through Law and Peace'. Yet Vienna's artists, writers, composers, and men of letters, by the first decade of the twentieth century, seemed to believe otherwise. In this session, we will explore these social themes, and question what led to the birth of 'Expressionism'. This artistic impulse was reflected in all the arts: in the paintings of Oskar Kokoschka and Egon Schiele, in the fiction of Arthur Schnitzler, in the early stage compositions of Arnold Schoenberg, and ultimately, in the post-war period, in Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*.



Leigh Melrose on the role of Wozzeck

For me, the key thing about *Wozzeck* is that he is all of us. Despite whatever Brechtian or modernist or 'regietheater' ideas are imposed on a production: *Wozzeck* is potentially you or I, or the person sitting next to you. That is the power of *Wozzeck*: the identification in the audiences' minds that some missed payments of the mortgage, some missed deadlines at work, some difficulty in standing up for yourself and any one of us could begin a downward cycle to follow *Wozzeck*'s.

In the theatre it is easy to play at being mad and it is fun to fool around at representing killing. What is terribly hard is to find out how these things become inevitable and to then convey them in a human way. *Wozzeck* does not want to be thought mad as he is at pains to try and explain himself and his ideas. Nor does he want to kill Marie – there is such tenderness in most of his music with her, such as when he hands over money in II.1 and then sadly leaves. But *Wozzeck* should end up in a situation where madness and murder are the only available choices for him. How to remove all the reasonable alternatives is the difficult part of rehearsals and of living inside *Wozzeck*'s head.

Having said all of that serious dramaturgical stuff, I must say that *Wozzeck* is the most exciting character I have ever played. There are so many layers, so many things to discover and let's not forget that it is simply wonderful music. Oh the music! The flashes of colour and tone from the silvery celeste before *Wozzeck* and Marie's first scene through to their final confrontations in Act III and the crushing weight of the following Interlude. While Berg's compositional style can lead to very cerebral interpretation, this is a visceral, exciting, wonderful work.

FURTHER VIEWING, LISTENING AND WATCHING

View

To view more paintings by Egon Schiele click [here](#)

To view more paintings by Gustav Klimt click [here](#)



Listen

CD Review: Berg's Wozzeck

Gillian Moore compares recordings of Berg's opera Wozzeck and makes a personal recommendation.

Suggested Playlist

Das klagende Lied – Gustav Mahler
Tristan und Isolde – Richard Wagner
Salome – Richard Strauss
3 Pieces, op. 11 – Arnold Schoenberg
6 Little Piano Pieces, Op.19 – Arnold Schoenberg
Solo for 15 Instruments, op.9 – Arnold Schoenberg
Pierrot Lunaire – Arnold Schoenberg
The Seven Early Songs – Alban Berg
Chamber Concerto – Alban Berg
Concert for Violin and Orchestra – Alban Berg
Lulu – Alban Berg
Violin Concerto - Alban Berg (Hear it live at Royal Festival Hall on Thursday 1 October)

Read

The Hare with Amber Eyes Edmund de Wall

The Trial Frank Kafka

Wozzeck (English National Opera Guide)

includes full version of Büchner's play

The Interpretation of Dreams Sigmund Freud

Murderer, the Hope of Women Oskar Kokoschka

Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture Carl E. Schorske

Vienna Modernism 1890-1910 Isabella Ackerl
trans. by Erika Obermayer, Federal Press Service, 1999

Wittgenstein's Vienna Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin,
Touchstone, 1973

The World of Yesterday, An Autobiography
Stefan Zweig, University of Nebraska Press, 1964

Journey into the Past Stefan Zweig, Pushkin Press, 2009
(particularly the short story of the same name)

A Nervous Splendour, Vienna 1888-1889
Frederic Morton, Penguin, 1979

The Viennese Café and Fin-de-Siècle Culture
Diane Silverthorne

Alma Mahler, or, The Art of Being Loved Françoise Giroud

Watch

Gillian Moore's film introduction to Wozzeck
(Southbank Centre)

Woyzeck the 1979 film by the German director
Werner Herzog

Wozzeck the 1970 film version directed by Rolf
Liebermann on youtube

Alban Berg documentary on youtube

Royal Opera House Introduction videos:

Mark Elder introduces Wozzeck

Interview with Mark Elder and Amy Lane

How does Berg use Sprechgesang in Wozzeck?

Esa-Pekka Salonen on Alban Berg's Wozzeck (2012)

Philharmonia's introductory film to their
2009 semi-staged *Wozzeck* performance

Mary Wigman – Hexentanz first performed in 1913