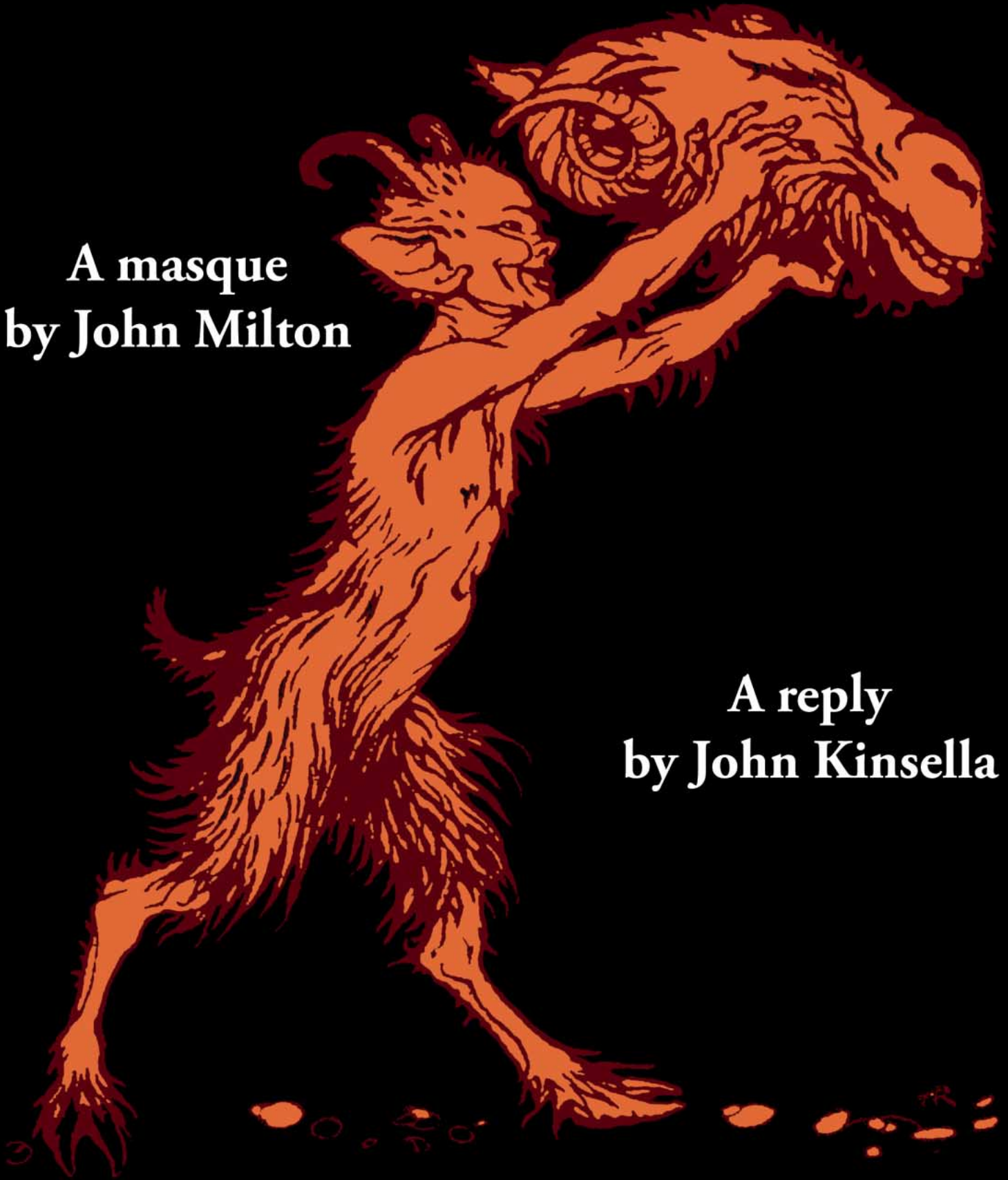


# COMUS

A masque  
by John Milton

A reply  
by John Kinsella



The *Manlowes*

Christ's College Amateur Dramatic Society

presents

# Comus

A masque

by John Milton

Comus	David F. Walton
The Lady	Mary-Ellen Lynall
The attendant Spirit	Jenni Mackenzie
Elder Brother	Ed Rowett
Younger Brother	Ned Stuart-Smith
Sabrina the Nymph	Olivia Marshall
Dancers	Rachel Thomas
	Charlotte Verrill
	Maria Pritchard
	Shu-Pin Oei
	Emma Rhule
	Helen Ivory
Director	Annilese Miskimmon
Assistant Director	Sarah Blisset
Production Designer	Lachlan Goudie
Producer	Natalie Fast
Assistant Producer	Mary Hughes
Musical Director	Ned Allen
Assistant Musical Director	Richard Bates
Costume Designer	Beth Sims
Choreographer	Kyra Cornwall
Externals Liaison	Hannah Crawforth

The Marlowe Society

presents

# Comus

A reply

by John Kinsella

Comus	David Brown
The Lady	Amanda Palin
The attendant Spirit	Helen Duff
Elder Brother	Sam Pallis
Younger Brother	Lowri Amies
Sabrina the Nymph	Alashiya Gordes
Entourage	Abigail Rokison
	Iona Blair
	Arthur Asseraf
Director	Simon Godwin
Assistant Director	Oscar Toeman
Designer	Lucy Minyo
Associate Designer	Georgia de Grey
Composer	Simon Gethin Thomas
Music Advisor	Jeremy Thurlow
Choreographer	Vikki Le May
Lighting Designer	Benjamin Sehovic
Technical Director	Adam Wood
Stage Manager	Alexandra Hepburn
Producer	Pascal Porcheron
Assistant Producer	Eve Rosato

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### Special thanks to:

Dr. Richard Axton for overseeing the CADS production.

Hannah Crawforth for liaising between and co-ordinating the two productions.

Helen Mort and the Christ's College Alumni Office.

Tim Cooper (Wolfson Theatre, Churchill)

Tony Weaver, David King, John Linford and Christ's College Maintenance Department.

Programme edited by David Parry.



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AND CADS IN THEIR  
PRODUCTION OF COMUS

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The college had barely started planning celebrations for the 400th anniversary of John Milton's birth when it got wind of a bold initiative by the Marlowe Society. Tim Cribb suggested to the Australian poet, John Kinsella, that he write a modern *Comus*. It was to be a masque, with the same *dramatis personae* as Milton's, matching his original line for line, exploring modern greed and abstinence, debating the corruption of nature and science in our global world. As a pastoral poet and a life-long admirer of Milton, John calls his *Comus* 'a dialogical masque'. Tim wrote to the Master of Christ's suggesting that the college might join in commissioning the new work for 2008. The college's legendary collaboration with the Marlowe Society in mounting Rupert Brooke's tercentenary production in 1908 made this historically fitting. (By happy circumstance, the third sponsor, Mr Robin Callan, owns the Brooke Museum at the Orchard in Grantchester.) Malcolm Bowie responded with characteristic enthusiasm, in spite of terminal illness. By the time of his tragic death, early in 2007, planning for the ambitious *Comus* project was securely under way: it was to be a double entertainment, with Milton's masque played by CADS, followed by Kinsella's 'Reply' performed by the Marlowe's actors.

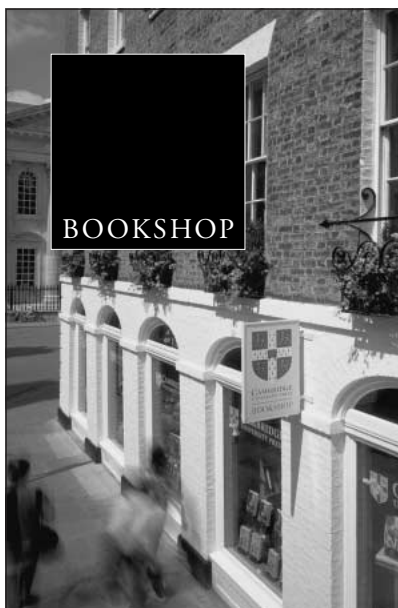
A suitable venue and date for the event were debated. Once Michaelmas Day had been ruled out as impractical (*Comus* was first performed at Ludlow Castle on 29 September 1634), May Week offered a midsummer festival with its nocturnal revels and sensual excesses. The darkly wooded alleys of the Fellows' Garden seem an ideal place for a young virgin to lose her way and fall captive to a plausible enchanter, while the garden itself contains the medicinal plant 'Moly', sovereign protection against necromancy, in the form of Milton's Mulberry. Unfortunately, health and safety regulations prevent use of the garden pool to immerse water nymphs. Of course, like other Caroline masques, *Comus* was written for performance in a great hall with a presiding household presence. The college hall has been made available for two of the five performances so that something of this aspect of the original can be glimpsed.



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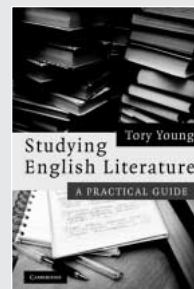
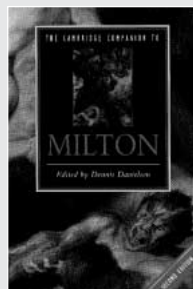
The actors, musicians, dancers, production crews and organisers have had plenty on their hands with two casts, two masques and two venues. We should like to express our warmest thanks to all who have made the event possible, in particular to Christ's College: to the Milton Quatercentenary Committee, Levy-Plumb Fund, for financial support, the Alumni Office, and staff of the Gardens, Catering and Maintenance Departments for practical assistance; to the Master and Fellows of St Catharine's College for help with accommodation; to the University of Western Australia for travel funding.

*Richard Axton and Tim Cribb*



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## Why performing *Comus* is not a sin

Milton is not well known as a dramatist and his two dramatic pieces, *Comus* and *Samson Agonistes*, are theatrical oddities. The latter was written as a closet drama (to be read, not performed) and, as a masque with an anti-hero at its centre, leading the anti-masque, *Comus* is an eccentric sort of drama. First performed at Ludlow Castle, it was not intended for the mixed, commercial audiences of the playhouse but was an occasional piece of drama to captivate a domestic, educated and aristocratic audience. The Attendant Spirit in the prologue in fact makes a virtue of narrative innovation:

I will tell you now / what never yet was heard in tale or song

Yet *Comus* (and this is its main difference from *Samson Agonistes*) is a play not merely to be read but told: that is, to be performed. Both words and actions are essential in order to be able to follow the plot of *Comus*. *Comus* would fail dramatically as a mime or dumbshow because the story would not be easy to make sense of. *Comus* maintains a focus on words, with the protagonist able to beguile only with 'well-plac't words'. Sometimes these words reaffirm what we are seeing played and at other times they ask for suspension of disbelief. For example, we make an imaginative investment in the transforming power of Comus' magic dust: 'when once her eye / hath met the vertue of this magick dust / I shall appeare some harmelesse villager'. We allow for what the Lady sees (the villager) to differ from what we see (Comus dressed up); the words taking temporary authority over the action.

However, the power of the language is a limited magic. Its success depends both on listening to an oral commentary: 'heare the tread / of hateful steps I must be veiwlesse now', and on watching the accompanying actions. The Attendant Spirit tells his audience he is going out of sight and out of the action. So the audience's focus is not on Comus any more but yet they cannot put him out of mind; he still lurks in the background. *Comus* would make a poor radio play because it takes an actor to lurk, uninvited, in our field of vision without being distracting. The 'wisard' Comus must have the versatility to command our attention even in the midst of 'his rout all headed like some wild bests thire garments some like mens & some like womens'. But he goes 'visor'd' – with a strikingly altered appearance – whilst remaining recognisable, and continuing to be present more quietly in our line of sight, in a performance space where there is no off- or on-stage, only standing back.

Milton is celebrated primarily as poet, and his words narrate a dramatic happening at court: 'La. I had not thought to have unlockt my lips / in this unhallowed aire', breathing rhyme, reason and sense into a day of revelry which, without his written masque, would lack articulation; without the accompanying action, would lack presence and occasion. *Comus* is supposed to be momentous.

*Beth Sims*



Illustration by Arthur Rackham

**Lachlan Goudie and Annilese Miskimmon**

*in conversation with Helen Mort*

***Comus* was last staged at Christ's in 1908. Why does Milton's masque continue to be relevant to a modern audience, and how well do you think the themes suit a modern setting?**

**AM:** Themes in drama are always relevant in some way, because people remain very much the same! *Comus* is about a young woman who is in danger of being corrupted, and who uses her wit, intelligence and chutzpah to defeat the reason behind the vice-led argument, and I think she's a very modern heroine even though the constant repetition of the idea of prized virginity is something that is very different for us today. At its core, *Comus* is about the tension between being a rational, intelligent human being and knowing how to have a good time; it's about how intellect can persuade you either way. I think that's an idea that remains relevant today.

**LG:** For me, the whole idea of masque and disguise and flamboyant costumes is a kind of escapism – the masque genre invites that escapism. Masks can be a literal form of disguise and escape; in Milton's writing the characters are transformed into other beasts, and they indulge in a Dionysian world of excess, and I think the idea of being able to escape through drama and enjoy yourself is as relevant as ever.

**AM:** The night before the show, the May Balls are on in Cambridge, and I find that very apt considering the themes of *Comus*; these students have been cooped up doing exams, and suddenly it all lets rip. It's a really funny, witty piece and it was written to entertain as well as to deliver its message.

**What have been the biggest challenges in terms of staging and design for you both in trying to produce a version of *Comus* that can be put on both outdoors and in a hall?**

**LG:** We're trying to do something that's quite two-dimensional and simple in terms of set, almost very naïve.

**AM:** Having two settings makes things difficult in one way, but it also releases you from the kind of constraints you'd have putting something like this on in a traditional theatre. I think it will be magical in the garden, and then when it goes to Hall, it will be in exactly the kind of space it was originally written for. Both are exciting.



**Lachlan, what is it that makes *Comus* a visually engaging and inviting piece of drama?**

**LG:** We've tried to keep things quite simple, but at the same time *Comus* is rich with metaphors – suns and moons and harvests – which would allow an alternative, ornate production if you had a limitless budget! The language gives you a whole orgy of material to work from.

**What was the experience of working with current undergraduates like?**

**AM:** It's fabulous. I do quite a lot of work with students at the beginning of their professional careers, and this is slightly different because you've got engineers in the cast, and English grads, all kinds of different people.

**LG:** I find it amazing that the students have fitted so much in around their studies; I know how hard that was when we were here. When you leave, your life simplifies, almost, because you find one track that you're going down and you don't have to squeeze it in between appointments and tutorials and library visits.

**What do you think the audience should take away from *Comus* at Christ's?**

**LG:** I'd like them to be able to escape for the period of time that they're here. It's about fairytale, about sitting in the gardens on a summer's evening with torches alight and allowing yourself to be transported.

**AM:** We're doing the original music that Henry Lawes wrote for it at the time, so I'd like them to see it as a peek into an entire world of seventeenth century culture. I'd also like them to come away thinking that Milton had a really good sense of humour!





## Milton at Christ's

The bust of Milton stares out, solemn and impassive, the blank eyes suggesting Milton's self-presentation in his later years as the blind oracle. To some it may seem shocking that this bust often features as a prop in photographs of undergraduate birthday celebrations. Yet this interchange between austerity and frivolity fits what is known about Milton's time here.

He studied at Christ's from 1625 to 1632, obtaining his BA and MA. Milton's entry in the Christ's College Admissions Book, dated 12<sup>th</sup> February 1624/5, is on exhibition in the college's Old Library. His 1628 supplicat (formal request to be granted the BA) is currently exhibited in the University Library.

After about a year at Christ's, it seems Milton was rusticated for a short period, having received, his brother Christopher later claimed, "some unkindness" from his tutor William Chappell. A handwritten gloss in John Aubrey's *Life of Milton* says that Chappell "whipt him". On his return to Cambridge, Milton was assigned a new tutor, Nathaniel Tovey, and this relationship was much warmer.



Engraving of Christ's College by David Loggan in *Cantabrigia Illustrata* (1690)

Milton's parents probably chose Christ's as his college because of its reputation as a bastion of 'the godly' (Puritans), who made up a sizable proportion of the fellows. Whilst the stereotype of Puritans as miserable killjoys is unfair, they did exhibit a certain earnestness, as did Milton. Milton was in the habit of staying up until midnight to study, and a surviving letter from his friend Charles Diodati tells him to lighten up and have some fun. Milton's nickname, 'the Lady of Christ's', may have had something to do with his effeminate appearance and perhaps also a moral fastidiousness and devotion to chastity.

Milton had a low opinion of the official university curriculum, largely unchanged since the Middle Ages. In sentiments familiar to students 400 years on, Milton spoke of how

when my mind has been dulled and my sight blurred by continued reading – many a time, I say, I have paused to take breath, and have sought some slight relief from my boredom in looking to see how much yet remained of my task [...] When, as always happened, I found that more remained to be done than I had as yet got through, how often have I wished that instead of having these fooleries thrust upon me I had been set to clean out the stable of Augeas again[.]

On receiving his MA, Milton retired to his parents' house at Hammersmith (and later Horton) to spend the next five years remedying the gaps in his reading. During this period *Comus* was written.

Tradition has assigned Milton a room in First Court, the room in which the young Wordsworth, as he records in *The Prelude*, became inebriated in honour of the 'temperate bard', but there is no record of Milton living here; like many of his contemporaries he is more likely to have lived in Rat's Hall, the alarmingly named wooden residence swept away to make space for the Fellows' Building in 1640. Likewise, Milton is imagined as composing verses under the Mulberry Tree. College accounts show that mulberries were planted in 1616, in accordance with King James's national campaign, but it is uncertain whether 'Milton's mulberry' dates from this era.

Milton has sometimes been pictured as a lonely soul locked away in his books and his thoughts, but his talents were recognised by his peers. Milton was asked to be the master of ceremonies (the 'father') for the Vacation Exercise of 1628, a raucous end-of-term celebration where parodic speeches mocked the university, its personnel and its curriculum. Milton's speech (the Sixth Prologue) contains some risqué jokes, and some biographers have suggested that this reveals a wild side to the young Milton. In his prologue Milton concedes, – and most of his readers will agree, – that stand-up comedy was not among his many gifts.

Milton's poetic tributes to two deceased Cambridge men have endured beyond their immediate occasion. Milton's two poems 'On the University Carrier' commemorate Thomas Hobson, who transported goods and letters between London and Cambridge on university business. He also hired out horses, and our phrase 'Hobson's choice' comes from his practice of insisting that his customers 'choose' the horse nearest the stable door. Milton's tribute has a similarly wry sense of humour, noting that Hobson sickened and died only when kept from travelling due to the plague: 'Ease was his chief disease, and to judge right, / He died for heaviness that his cart went light'.

The other tribute was to Edward King, a young fellow of Christ's who drowned in 1637 crossing the Irish Sea. Milton's elegy *Lycidas* enters a classical pastoral landscape of lament, contrasting in tone with the light verse of his Hobson poems. Yet Cambridge enters into this otherworldly classical landscape when the mythical deities who pay tribute to Lycidas/King are joined by Camus, the spirit of the River Cam. Likewise, the ostensibly private nature of the elegiac form gives way to a platform for Milton to address wider public concerns. In a foreshadowing of Milton's later career as a prose controversialist, he contrasts Lycidas 'the faithful herdman' with the perceived corruption of the national church.

Despite his comments on the Cambridge curriculum, Milton had fond memories of his time at Christ's, acknowledging 'with all gratefull minde, that more than ordinary favour and respect which I found above any of my equals at the hands of those curteous and learned men, the Fellowes of that Colledge wherein I spent some yeares' (*An Apology for Smectymnuus*).

For more information on the Christ's College of Milton's time, including an interactive virtual tour, a visit to the Darkness Visible website is highly recommended (<http://www.christs.cam.ac.uk/darknessvisible/>).

*David Parry*

## John Kinsella

*in conversation with Helen Mort*

**Your masque deals with the relationship between mankind and nature in the modern world, and all its attendant contradictions and hypocrisy – a theme that you often explore in your poetry too. How did you become an eco-activist?**

From a pretty young age I grew up in a culture of guns and hunting, extensive environmental degradation and rural clearing. My father was connected with mining for some years, so I saw the land being constantly damaged. At one point, I became a vegan because I was so disgusted with my participation in the slaughter of pretty much everything I saw; it was quite an epiphanic moment. I've been a vegan now for 24 years.

When I was young, I was constantly getting into trouble for being physical and vocal at protests. Now, I still attend protests, but I tend to be more of a spokesperson. I write about these issues; as a poet I have a voice that people – some people – listen to and that has an effect. So writing has become, for me, over a lifetime, a more effective way of bringing change.

This is what *Comus* is about through the figure of Comus himself – you've got this outlandish, extreme figure, who is a genetic scientist in my version, but he's no more wrong or right than the rest of us. What I don't like is the holier-than-thou environmentalist who says 'I live this pure life and you're all wrong' because the moment that environmentalist switches on a light, or wears a piece of clothing made in a factory, or is involved with any of the other millions of contradictions that make up modern life, he or she is complicit.

What I've tried to do in the masque, and what I've tried to do in my writing life and my life as an activist is not to say '*x is right and y is wrong*', but to say '*here are the issues, let's discuss them and each of us broaden our horizons*'.

**What was the biggest challenge for you in writing a new version of *Comus*?**

Milton himself was the biggest challenge! Milton has obsessed me since I was five years old. My mother used to read me *Paradise Lost* when I was a child. My mum was a mature student in the early '70s, which was a very unusual, distinctly feminist thing to be doing in the era she did it in and her great love, apart from the English Romantics, was Milton, so he loomed large in my life. I've written in various capacities, but all I've spent my life trying to do is re-write *Paradise Lost*. Nothing else matters, just that single great poem. I remember reading *Samson Agonistes* when I was down and out in Bangladesh aged 21, and that was the text I gripped onto.

I realised that at the time he was writing *Comus*, Milton was young and hadn't yet settled into his Republican politics, and he wrote it out of the aristocratic patronage system, so it's a very dubious part of his political evolution...that made it easier to approach, because I realised there was a certain amount of ambiguity in what he was doing. Once I saw that you could open the door into an ambiguous aspect of this extremely ambitious and brilliant poet's life, that was my mode of access.



Photo taken by Christopher Williams

**In terms of the text itself, was it difficult to maintain the structure of the original?**

I've kept to the structure exactly, and bits of the text inter-weave with the original, so it works dialogical-ly. That's a familiar post-modern technique that I've used extensively. Nearly everything I've written inter-texts with something. My present book of poetry, *Shades of the Sublime and Beautiful* is based on Edmund Burke's treatise on the sublime and beautiful, and the book before that, *The New Arcadia*, was based on Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, so there is a conscious effort to tackle what we see as canonical literature and play with it and pull it to bits, de-canonize it in any way!

**During the process of writing your masque, did you discover anything new about the original?**

Each of the characters is more interesting than I'd perceived; they came alive for me. Take the two brothers in the piece. Their sister is very interesting from a gender perspective; she's politically challenging and interesting. Comus, meanwhile, is a dynamo, a polymorphously perverse character: sexually perverse, philosophically perverse and in many ways very modern, so he was easy to write. With the brothers, they were far more straightjacketed and trying to test the limits of what they could and couldn't be was really quite fascinating.

**Milton, of course, was a great political activist and anti-monarchist. Like him, your politics informs your work. How do you see the role of the writer today in relation to politics?**

The writer and politics are inseparable. I am anarchist-vegan-pacifist – my politics since I was 14 have been decidedly anarchist. I am also a pacifist, I'm against violent overthrow of the state, and I actually coined the phrase 'umbrella anarchism', which basically means a mode of ethical living that doesn't approve of the state as it is, but coexists with it, because if you're against violent overthrow of the state, you have to find modes of living within its structures that fit your principles.

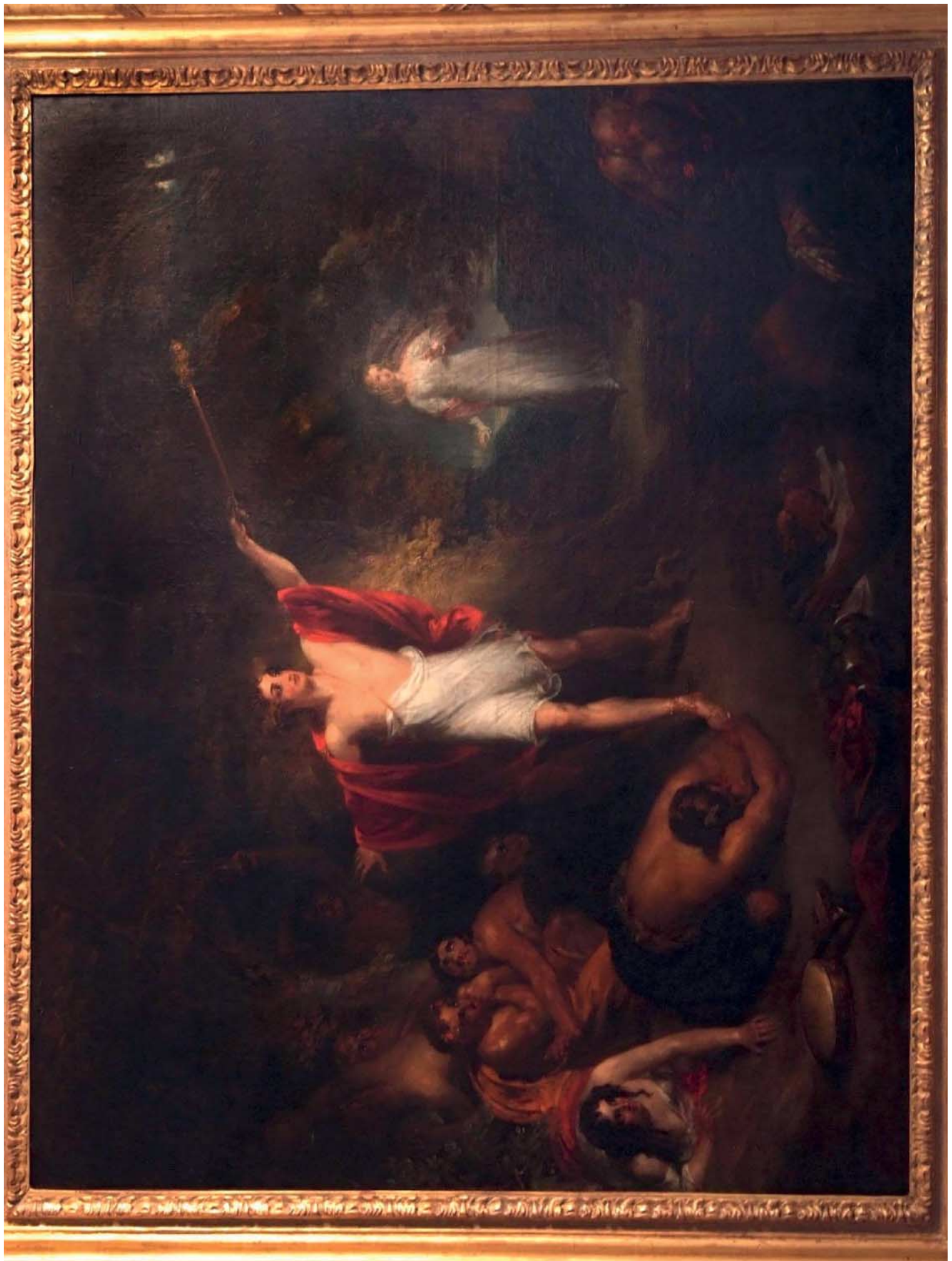
I own very little, I own books, basically, and clothes, and I share them in any case. So my politics inform my everyday way of living – it's not who I vote for, it's how I live. And how I write is connected to how I live. Milton was the same; when Cromwell went, his life was destroyed. His life as a political activist was finished. Does that mean he ceased to be political? Absolutely not. It just channelled itself in a different way.

**What do you think Milton would have made of Cambridge today, the city playing host to his *Comus*?**

That's a really pertinent question. Milton was an absolute ego-maniac, he was convinced of his genius and I think he'd love the attention he's getting today. As for the politics of the place, as an educationalist I'm not sure what he'd think about the way things have gone. In as far as you can make silly summations about that kind of thing, I think he'd be kind of entertained. I don't know if he'd be pleased by what I've done with his *Comus* but he'd be pleased that his original was being put on I'm sure.

Picture on facing page:

'Comus and the Lady benighted' by John Wood (1829). By permission of the Trustees of Milton's Cottage at Chalfont St Giles. Photograph by courtesy of Ann Priest.



## The Early Staging of Milton's *Comus*

The masque now known as *Comus* was first performed on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1634, St Michaelmas Day. Originally titled *A Masque presented at Ludlow Castle*, the piece was written to be performed there before the Earl of Bridgewater, to mark his inauguration as Lord Lieutenant of Wales. With its views out across the Severn valley, Ludlow Castle was described by one seventeenth-century visitor as a 'prettie little neate castle, standing high, kept in good repaire', and was in Milton's time a bustling political and administrative centre. The Council of Wales met regularly in its Great Hall, measuring thirty by sixty feet, and it was here (and not in the woodland grove of popular imagination – see the picture by John Wood on the preceding page) that *Comus* was first staged.

Ushered into the darkened playing hall, the masque's first audience would have been seated strictly by rank, the Earl and Countess occupying the position taken by the King and Queen in court performances, enthroned on a central dais. From there they would be best able to appreciate the perspective employed in painting the scenery – a recent continental import by celebrated designer and Ben Jonson's long-time collaborator Inigo Jones.

A curtain was raised to reveal a raised stage framed by a painted proscenium arch. In Ludlow's restricted space Henry Lawes' musicians – viol, violin, trumpet and percussion – probably sat off-stage, beside the carpeted area on which the masque's concluding dances took place. Lawes himself, playing the Attendant Spirit, may have descended from the roof in a cloud machine, suspended by pulleys attached to the stone walls.

Lawes served as music tutor to the Bridgewaters and his three charges were the leading actors in this first performance. Lady Alice Egerton, aged fifteen, played the Lady, and the difficult intervals and chromatic register of the melody for her echo song in the surviving score suggests she had a fine voice. John, Lord Brackley, aged eleven, and Lord Thomas, aged nine, played the two brothers. All three children were experienced masque players, having between them participated in *Tempe Restored* and *Coelum Britannicum*.

The Ludlow production was far from being 'amateur'. Costumes, possibly borrowed from the Revels Office, would bring a touch of royal munificence. The visual splendour of *Comus* is essential to its action, particularly in the temptation scene. Lavishly painted flats and curtains could be quickly removed to change the scene, while machinery concealed beneath the stage would have allowed Sabrina to enter in a mechanized chariot and rise swiftly onto the platform.

The whole spectacle glimmered under the light of candles and oil lamps that could, at suggestive moments in the action, be dimmed by lowering cylindrical canisters suspended on cords over the flame, to be removed perhaps at the Elder Brother's cue: 'unmuffle ye faint stars, and thou fair moon' (l.330). Jewel lights, lamps placed behind bottles filled with coloured water, highlighted Sabrina's chariot 'Thick set with Agate, and the azurn sheen | Of Turquoise blue and Em'rald green...' (ll.892-3).

The dazzling show culminated in a 'choreographic compliment' to the Earl and Countess, as the masqued players joined with their audience in social dancing.

Hannah J. Crawforth



## **Haemony and Harmony: Music for Milton's Masque**

Although the magical flower, haemony, protects the brothers as they rescue the virtuous Lady from the clutches of the licentious Comus, it cannot break the spell the enchanter has cast over her. Only Sabrina can free her; 'Listen and save' the Attendant Spirit sings in the hope of invoking the river nymph. Music holds a privileged position in Milton's narrative, as the magic of haemony is eclipsed by harmony.

Milton must have been aware of the importance of music from an early age: the son of a composer (also named John), the musical proficiency of the poet is well-documented. It is not known how Milton and Henry Lawes became acquainted, though it has been suggested that Milton's father played an important role in bringing the two together, and it is more than likely that the older, more established composer first approached Milton for a libretto. Lawes' close involvement in the original production testifies to the important role of music in the entertainment. As well as writing music for the masque and publishing the poem in 1637, Lawes also performed the role of the Attendant Spirit/Thyrsis, providing Milton with a number of opportunities to compliment his friend, repeatedly comparing the musical skill of the swain Thyrsis with that of Orpheus. Even after their work on *Comus* had ended, their friendship continued to flourish: in 1638 Lawes used his influence with the Warden of the Cinque Ports to facilitate Milton's travel to Italy, and a decade later Lawes' *Choice Psalms* was published along with a sonnet by Milton, dedicated 'To my Friend Mr Henry Lawes':

Harry, whose tuneful and well-measured song  
First taught our English music how to span  
Words with just note and accent.

This claim is appropriately demonstrated by the music that survives from the original production of *Comus*. Five settings of lyrics from *Comus* survive, all exhibiting Lawes' famed sensitivity towards word-setting. These songs are beautiful examples of the declamatory style of English song-writing, dedicated to preserving as far as possible the natural rhythms of the poetry within the rhythms of a musical setting.

The Lady's song, 'Sweet Echo', is a fine example of Lawes' artistry: rhythmic flexibility is combined with a melody that provides Milton's lyric with expressive colouring. Phrases repeatedly cadence on an inconclusive dominant chord, but this poignant pause – in which the echo should reply – only deepens our sense of the Lady's isolation. The four remaining songs by Lawes were all performed by the composer: 'From the Heav'ns now I fly', which originally opened the performance (though adapted from the epilogue written by Milton), the invocation of the river nymph 'Sabrina Fair', the folk song 'Back shepherds back', and the closing song 'Now my task is smoothly done'. Like 'Sweet Echo', all display Lawes' talent for expressive setting. Unfortunately, Sabrina's song 'By the rushy-fringed bank' no longer survives: the version used in the current production has been adapted from another contemporary song.

This combination of words and music in the songs from *Comus* naturally captures our attention, but it is important to recognise that the distinguishing feature of the masque genre was not song but dance (as discussed by Barbara Ravelhofer in this programme). Dance was representative of structure and order: as the music of the entertainment reminded masquers of the celestial music of the spheres, the ordered choreography of the dance imitated the ordered motion of the stars, and reinforced ideas of social hierarchy. None of Henry Lawes' dance-music for *Comus* can be identified; but collaboration was a common feature of these productions, and in this tradition, the dance music for the current production is provided from the compositions of Henry's brother, William.

*Simon Jackson*



The Attendant Spirit



Costume designs by Lachlan Goudie





Comus and the Lady (Watercolour design from 1908)



Designs by Lachlan Goudie

## Dance and Costume in *Comus*

We do not know exactly what kinds of dances the Egerton children rehearsed for Milton's masque. A wide variety of dancing styles was current in 1630s London, both on social occasions and in the theatre, ranging from English repertoire dating back to Elizabethan times (often referred to as 'measures') and country dances to imports from France and Italy. Foreign professional dancers and musicians worked in great numbers at the court of Charles I and his French consort Henrietta Maria – herself a fine lute player, singer and ballet maniac; they both had personal French dance instructors (such as Barthélemy de Montagut, who got into serious trouble when he killed a man at the queen's residence at Oatlands in 1635). A French manner of dancing – close to what is now called French Baroque dance or 'danse noble' – became very fashionable in court masques. Grotesque or pantomimic entries usually started the evening, followed by more formal theatre choreographies executed by members of the court or even the king and queen. Masques always concluded with 'revels', in which the audience joined the masked performers for social dances before moving on to ransack the buffet.

Caroline court theatricals indulged in ever more elaborate stage pyrotechnics. In 1638, for instance, William Davenant's *Luminalia* (sponsored by the queen) featured an aerial ballet of a group of disguised children in the fly machinery — 'which apparition for the newness of the invention, greatness of the machine, and difficulty of engining was much admired, being a thing not before attempted in the air', as Davenant's account proudly put it.



Inigo Jones, torchbearer in *Coelum Britannicum* (1634).

© Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth. Reproduced by permission of the Chatsworth Settlement Trustees. Photograph: Photographic Survey, Courtauld Institute of Art.

*Comus* comes across as a deliberately low-key affair, contrasting with, and implicitly critiquing, the dramatic ostentation of the court. In a parody of courtly masquers at Whitehall, Comus's noisy company enters with torches and a 'tipsy dance' ensues, with a 'wavering morris' dedicated to the moon; 'morris' might simply mean morris dancing (considered morally dubious, as it might involve bearded ladies and the like), but it could translate the Italian *moresca*, which denoted any kind of theatrical dance. The 'light fantastic round' of Comus's revellers might allude to round dances, traditionally associated with fairies, but might also snipe at recently introduced French *branles*, often performed in rounds. This is followed by 'the Measure', a more sedate part of the programme which seems inspired by the Lady's arrival, her 'chaste footing' noted by Comus. Unsurprisingly, the Lady regards the dancers' amusement as 'ill-managed merriment'. The structural logic of movement in *Comus* imitates, and ironises, that practised in court ballet, where taxing theatrical dances often slowed as the evening progressed towards the revels. The balletic highlight of Milton's masque is not a long and complex dance with many geometric figures, so beloved by court choreographers, but something pointedly simple: easy-going rustic jigs by 'country dancers' in front of the backdrop of Ludlow town.

The Bridgewater household was frugal. Garments were ripped and repaired; Lady Bridgewater sent her worn gowns to her friends. Surviving wardrobe accounts tell us that theatrical costumes too were stored and probably re-used. The costumes which Thomas and John Egerton wore as torchbearers in Thomas Carew's masque *Coelum Britannicum* (performed at Whitehall a few months before *Comus*) were kept in a hamper at home, and most likely Thomas and John wore them again to play the brothers in Milton's entertainment. A sketch for their costumes by the architect and stage designer Inigo Jones survives at Chatsworth. According to Carew, John and Thomas were dressed 'after the old British fashion in white coats embroidered with silver'. Additional carnation-coloured satin and silver buttons added lustre to performance under artificial lighting. The expensive materials cost £20 per costume, then a lot of money (more than a craftsman would have earned in Southern England in a year, and almost twice the annual income of a simple labourer). If the boys really wore these costumes again, they would have come across as faintly old-fashioned, dressed up in a mock-Tudor style. The description of them as a 'faëry vision' suggests they have stepped out from the nostalgic world of Spenser's epic *The Faerie Queene*.

*Comus* might also be understood as a direct response to, and critique of, the values commended in Carew's supple court masque in which John and Thomas had so successfully danced. In *Coelum Britannicum*, Mercury descends as the mouthpiece of divine order and decrees: 'We not require the dull society of your necessitated temperance, ... but we advance such virtues only as admit excess; brave bounteous acts, regal magnificence.' Comus's sensuous praise of conspicuous consumption seems to pick up the cue straight from Carew's Mercury: 'Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth ... but all to please, and sate the curious taste? And set to work millions of spinning worms, that in their green shops weave the smooth-haired silk to deck her sons.' Comus no doubt refers to those silk-clad Stuart courtiers who spent so much on expensive clothing. Charles's father, James I, had famously tried to establish a domestic silk industry; trial mulberry plantations adorned royal residences and college gardens, and it is said that staff had to carry the silkworms wherever the king went.

Milton's Lady dismisses Comus's 'lewdly-pampered Luxury' heaped 'upon a few with vast excess'. Yet in performance, Milton's criticism might not have emerged so clearly. In the torchbearers' costumes from *Coelum Britannicum*, the Egerton boys would have been hard to distinguish from the 'glistening' company of Comus. In dress code at least, those who made *Comus* happen set politics aside for the sake of a fine show.

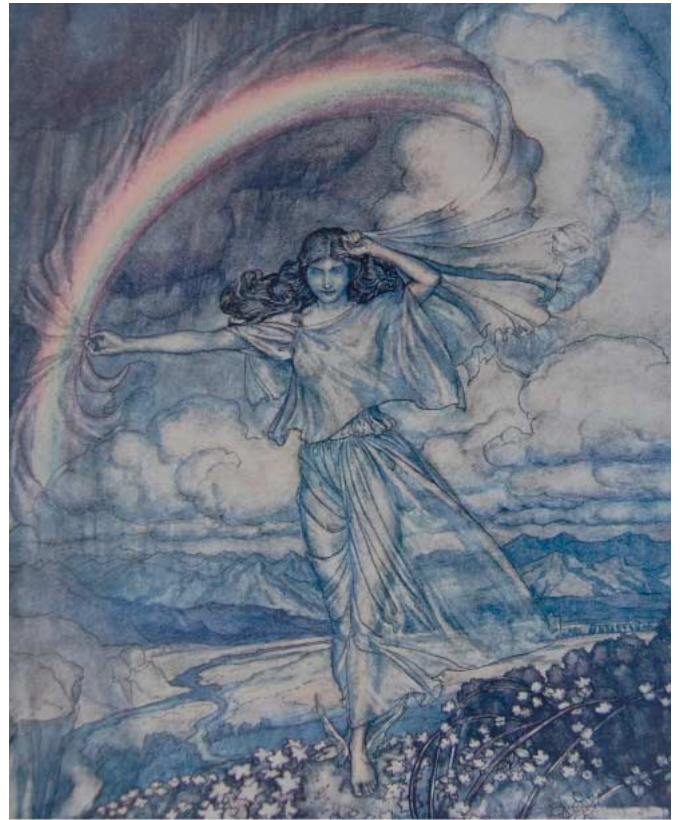
Barbara Ravelhofer



Illustrations by Arthur Rackham



Illustrations by Arthur Rackham



Design by Lachlan Goudie

**NEW THEATRE, CAMBRIDGE,**  
 LTD.  
 Managing Director - - - - - Mr W. B. REDFERN, J.P., D.L.

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**MILTON'S**  
**COMUS**

The performance (with the Original Music by Henry Lawes)  
 to be given for Christ's College in honour of the

**TERCENTENARY OF**  
**MILTON'S BIRTH**

will be repeated at a  
**PUBLIC MATINEE**  
 on  
**SATURDAY, JULY 11th,**  
 at 2.30 p.m.

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**DOORS OPEN 2 o'clock.**

Special Prices of Admission: - Reserved Stalls and Dress Circle 3/,-  
 Unreserved Stalls 2/,-, Back of Circle 2/,-, Pit 1/,-.

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Seats may be booked at Box Office (only) on and after THURSDAY, JULY 9th,  
 between the hours of 3 & 5 p.m.

N.B. The Box Office will be open on Saturday morning, July 11th at 11 o'clock.

JOHN HULL, PRINTER, CAMBRIDGE.

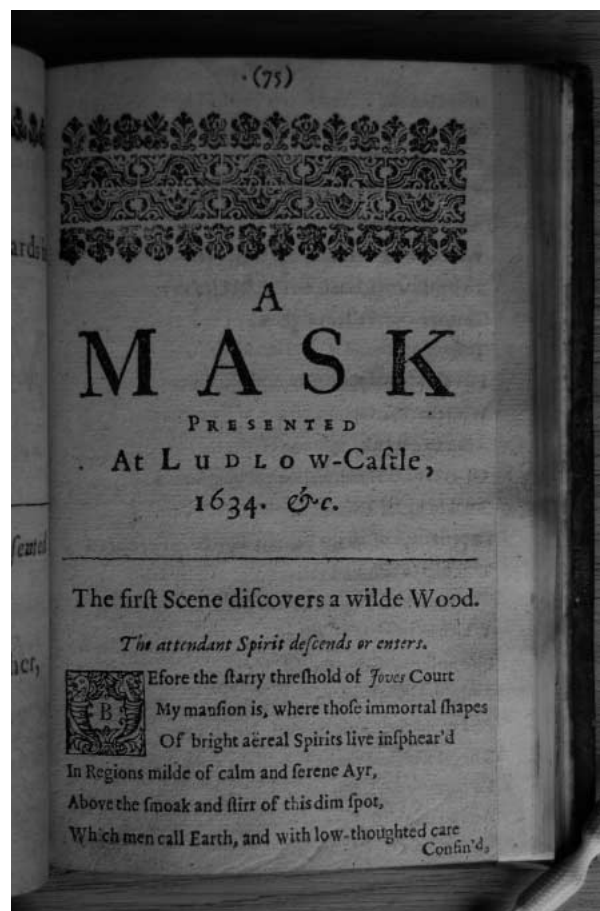
Poster for 1908 production

## The stage fortunes of 'A Masque presented at Ludlow Castle'

Milton has suffered in the theatre. The work he intended as reformation of an excessive form, the court masque, is now known by the name of its villain, Comus, the embodiment of excess. It's as if *Paradise Lost* were always referred to as Satan. The stage must share at least some of the blame, for, unlike Milton's Lady, it did not prove immune to the temptation of brilliant illusions. The form in which his masque held the stage for over a century was not Milton's own but an adaptation devised by an Oxford man, the Rev. Dr. John Dalton. He was a jolly doctor, for he multiplied the songs from four to twenty (music by Arne, of 'Rule Britannia' fame) and created more opportunities for scenery; the poetry was correspondingly reduced. This set the pattern. Later adapters, George Colman and Thomas Dibdin (specialist in patriotic sailor songs), elaborated on Dalton's additions. While the poetry shrank, Comus danced more scenic revels, a goddess of mirth was written in to sing competitive duets with the Lady, Milton's own 'L'Allegro' was raided for libretti, and scenes set in the Arctic were borrowed from Purcell's *King Arthur*. Hence it was *Comus: the Musical, by Various Hands*, which was performed over two hundred times at Covent Garden, Drury Lane and all around the country. The climax came when the comic actor, Charles Mathews, and his wife, Madame Vestris (singing the goddess of mirth) staged it at Covent Garden in 1842 with waterfalls, a cast of over fifty, and a Submarine Palace for Sabrina: Comus had won.

William Macready led virtue's fight-back next year at Drury Lane. He restored some of Lawes's music and half the text – no more, for he feared neither his actors could deliver nor his audience appreciate the whole thing. Most critics were appreciative, but the aristocratic *Morning Post* was sneering, which goaded Charles Dickens to respond in a counter-review. He turned the sneer back on the upper classes, accusing them of ignorance – and perhaps even worse – for he applied to them the following lines about Comus: 'He and his monstrous rout.../Doing abhorred rites to Hecate / In their obscuréd haunts of inmost bowers'. Did Dickens know about the abhorred rites of the Earl of Castlehaven and the sexual scandal that lay behind Milton's masque and its defence of chastity? The review was commissioned by his intimate friend, Forster, whose research was into just that period.

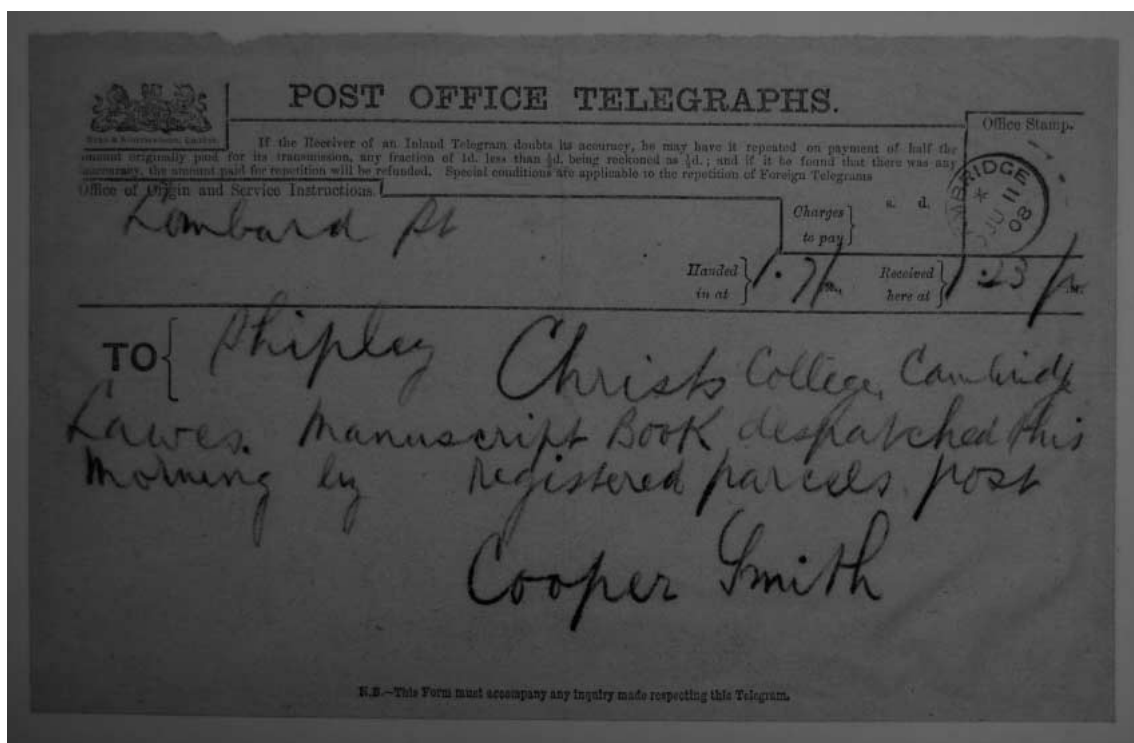
Later, Oxford began to make amends. A former secretary of the Oxford University Dramatic Society (OUDS), Philip Comyns Carr (his mother a prominent aesthete) founded the Mermaid Society in 1903. His first production was a double bill of Milton's masque with one of Jonson's for performance in Regent's Park. Sabrina was the principle of reform here. Carr took advantage of the lake to have her emerge out of the evening darkness on a poetical barge, all Tennyson and Burnes-Jones; delighted reviewers said how superior to any indoor stage effect was Nature herself.



The title-page of Milton's masque as it appeared in his 1645 *Poems*.

The Mermaid was one of a shoal of such societies in the 1890s and 1900s. In the forthcoming Cambridge Ben Jonson (online), Roger Savage shows that revival of masques was part of a general movement for reform of the theatre along aesthetic and poetic lines. William Poel's Elizabethan Stage Society was chief among them and the main source for the founding ideas of the Marlowe Society in 1907. The production of Milton's masque for Christ's College in 1908 was thus part of an emerging theatrical revolution. It fell to the Marlowe to produce the play because at that date there were no college dramatic societies, only the ADC and the Footlights. Appropriately, a member of the Footlights, the handsome Brierley of Christ's, was cast as Comus, only to be demoted to the rout during rehearsals, his place taken by Francis Cornford.

New principles led to new research. The director, Rupert Brooke (according to the young musicologist, Edward Dent, 'very much a puritan in artistic matters'), made a close study of Milton's metrics, consulting the manuscript at Trinity as well as his Supervisor in Classics at King's. Dent himself took charge of the music. He discarded the arrangements Carr had used and researched his own, as his correspondence records: 'I went to Christ's library where I worked all the afternoon at the newly discovered Ms of Henry Lawes' songs which has been lent to the exhibition'.



Telegram from British Museum noting dispatch of the Lawes MS

The fruits of these enquiries lasted beyond their immediate consumption in the production. The curates and vicars of Brooke's 'Grantchester' come and go on Milton's lissomly metric toe, and Dent's researches produced the first modern staging of Purcell's *Fairy Queen* as well as numerous influential articles on music in Shakespearean theatre. Dent was also responsible for the novelty of the Morris dances, then an activity of the musical avant-garde: 'I went to a ballet rehearsal which was quite amusing. Cornford-Comus was there with the rout – some 18 of them....The[y] look very odd scrambling around Mrs Fletcher's drawing-room on all fours in their ordinary clothes but Rupert and Justin are gradually getting them into order. I foresee frightful trouble with the Morris dances. At present they are folk tunes harmonised for the pianoforte by Cecil Sharp. I shall have to reharmonize them and score them for strings'. (Mrs Fletcher was wife to the Senior Tutor of Trinity, good friend of Arthur Shipley, active in arrangements at Christ's. One of those scrambling around was the mountaineer, George Mallory, seen in the accompanying photograph. Justin Brooke was the founder of the Marlowe.)



The figure in the middle of the back row is believed to be George Mallory

This was the production that elicited an influential review by the young Lytton Strachey, and he singled out for praise the speaking of the verse. That review was doubtless in the air much later, when Lytton's friend, Dadie Rylands, arranged the masque for Maynard Keynes, with Michael Redgrave, another fine verse speaker, as the Attendant Spirit and Lydia Lopokova as the Lady. Comus had at last been defeated.

The Marlowe has thus acquitted itself well in the service of Cambridge's greatest poet and can now hand the baton to Christ's College's own dramatic society. Today 'to fresh Woods and Pastures new'. Milton timed his masque for the Feast of St Michael, a day for the inauguration of all magistrates and traditionally accompanied by licensed disorder. When he himself was inaugurated as a Fresher he would have participated in a Salting, another inversion of order sanctioned by custom. May Week is a zone for similar rites of transition, from Suicide Sunday through lavish May Balls to graduation. Who more appropriate to continue the tradition of puritan reform of excess than the leading poet of inverted pastoral in our time, the antipodean poet John Kinsella? What society more appropriate to produce his text than the Marlowe? Or might it be the Footlights?

*Tim Cribb*



Sabrina and the Lady (1908 production)



NAY, LADY, SIT! IF I BUT WAVE THIS WAND,  
YOUR NERVES ARE ALL CHAINED UP IN ALABASTER

Illustration by Garth Jones



The Lady Margaret Lectures 2008

**Wednesday 30 January 2008**

Quentin Skinner – *John Milton as a Theorist of Liberty*

**Wednesday 27 February 2008**

Colin Burrow – *Milton's Singularity*

**Wednesday 7 May 2008**

Sharon Achinstein – *Milton: Poetry vs. Prose*

**Wednesday 29 October 2008**

Geoffrey Hill – *Milton as Muse*

**Wednesday 26 November 2008**

Christopher Ricks – *Milton and 'the best criticism of any work'*

All lectures are at **5.15 pm** in Room 3, Mill Lane Lecture Rooms, 8 Mill Lane, Cambridge. Admission free.

Living at This Hour:

John Milton 1608–2008

**15 January to 12 July 2008**

Cambridge University Library Exhibition exploring Milton's influence in his own lifetime and beyond. Includes documents from the University Archives; rare early editions of Milton's works; and the extraordinary autograph Milton manuscript from Trinity College. Further details:

[www.lib.cam.ac.uk/exhibitions/Milton](http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/exhibitions/Milton)

Admission free.

Milton in the Old Library

**17 January to 18 December 2008**

The Old Library, Christ's College

Exhibition of the College's extensive Milton collection.

Open to the public every **Thursday, 2–4.45 pm**, and for group visits at other times by appointment. Admission free.

*Comus*

Christ's College, in the Fellows' Garden on **19, 20, 21 June**, and in Hall on **22, 24 June 2008**. Milton's masque performed together with an anti-masque newly written by John Kinsella. Performed by Christ's College Amateur Dramatic Society and the Marlowe Society.

*Paradise Lost*

**Thursday 23 October 2008**

The Drama Studio, Faculty of English, 9 West Road, Cambridge

A reading of Milton's poem *Paradise Lost*, starting at **9am**, with live relay online. Admission free. Drop in and out at any point. Performance ends at around **8pm**, with drinks.

Milton at Christ's

**Saturday 6 December 2008, 8 pm**

The Hall, Christ's College

Readings of Milton's poetry and prose by Sam West\*. Music of Milton's time performed by Fretwork, David Rowland, and the Choir of Christ's College.

\*Subject to availability.

Handel – *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, ed Il Moderato*

**Sunday 7 December 2008, 6 pm**

Trinity College Chapel

Handel's oratorio (words by Milton) performed by The Essex Baroque Orchestra conducted by Peter Holman.

Tickets and further information:

<http://cambridgeearlymusic.org>

Darkness Visible

A web resource for school and university students studying Milton's *Paradise Lost*: [www.christs.cam.ac.uk/darknessvisible](http://www.christs.cam.ac.uk/darknessvisible)

Further Information and Ticket Enquiries

w: [www.christs.cam.ac.uk/milton400](http://www.christs.cam.ac.uk/milton400)

e: [milton400@christs.cam.ac.uk](mailto:milton400@christs.cam.ac.uk)

t: 01223 334937



## CADS biographies

### **Mary-Ellen Lynall – The Lady**

Student at Clare College.

**Trained:** Nicky-Jane Kemp, choral scholarship to Clare College.

**Theatre:** Mary-Ellen has taken solo roles in operettas (Mabel in *The Pirates of Penzance*), operas (Janáček's *Cunning Little Vixen*, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*) and musicals (*Bugsy Malone*, *Annie*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Watermark*, *The Wizard of Oz*). She was most recently seen as Kate in *Kiss me, Kate* and in the comedy madrigal opera *L'Amfiparnaso*. She spent her gap year in France, performing in Strasbourg as principal in the company Comédiens du Rhin and as part of the cabaret-inspired duo Noctuelles. She has toured the USA as vocal soloist with the Belfast Youth Orchestra and performed in London with the Ulster Youth Jazz Orchestra and was recently a soloist for the 'Go in Peace' CD launch concert. She looks forward to touring with Clare Choir this summer and appearing in the new musical *Hero* at the Fringe.

### **Jenni Mackenzie – The Attendant Spirit**

Student at Girton College.

**Training:** South Oxfordshire Youth Music and Drama, National Youth Theatre, workshops with Teatr Piesn Kozla.

**Theatre:** *The Tempest*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Oliver*.

**Directing:** *The Permanent Way*, *Peer Gynt*.

### **Olivia Marshall – Sabrina the Nymph**

Olivia is a second-year music student at Christ's College, where she holds a choral scholarship. In addition to her commitments with Christ's College chapel choir, she sings regularly with the choir of the Chapel Royal at Hampton Court Palace. This year she has sung in the Cambridge University Opera Society's productions of both Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and she sang the role of Belinda in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. She has also performed as soloist with the Thames Chamber Orchestra at St Martin-in-the-Fields. Olivia studies singing with Ghislaine Morgan, and she plays the violin in CUMS I and is principal second of CUSO.

### **Edward Rowett – Elder Brother**

**Theatre:** *The Crucible* (Round Church), *The Resistible Rise Of Arturo Ui* (ADC Theatre), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (ADC), *Yerma* (Fitzpatrick Hall), *Measure for Measure* (Peterhouse Deer Park), *Shakespeare Shorts* (ADC), *The Lion, The Witch, And The Wardrobe* (Edinburgh Fringe & ADC), *Cymbeline* (Cambridge Arts Theatre), *An Inspector Calls* (Fitzpatrick Hall), *I Scream Scoop!* (ADC), *Anthropology* (ADC), *American Eagle* (Corpus Playroom), *The Glass Menagerie* (Corpus Playroom), *Journey's End* (Corpus Playroom), *Henry IV Part I* (Peterhouse Deer Park), *Talking Heads* (Abingdon Touring Theatre Company).

### **Ned Stuart-Smith – Younger Brother**

Engineering student at Corpus Christi College.

**Acting in Cambridge:** *The Wasps*, *Pirates of Penzance* (Arts Theatre), *Into the Woods* (ADC).

**Previous acting experience:** includes *West Side Story*, *Oliver*, *Cabaret*.

### **David F. Walton – Comus**

**Theatre this year:** *Journey's End* (Corpus Playroom), *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (ADC), *The Glass Menagerie* (Corpus Playroom), *Oleanna* (Corpus Playroom), *The Pirates of Penzance* (Arts Theatre), *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* (ADC), *All The Ordinary Angels* (ADC) and *Attempts On Her Life* (ADC).

**Previous credits include:** *The Tempest* (Jesus Chapel), *Much Ado About Nothing* (ADC), *Art* (ADC), *The Mikado* (Arts Theatre), *Travesties* (ADC), *Translations* (Robinson Auditorium), *Ghosts* (Pembroke New Cellars), *An Ideal Husband* (Pembroke New Cellars) and *The Collection* (Edinburgh Fringe, also David's directorial debut).

### **Ned Allen – Music**

English student at Christ's College.

**Acting:** *The Invention of Love* (CADS/JCDS), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (CADS).

**Directing/other work:** Trombonist in *The Pirates of Penzance*, *South Pacific*, *Princess Ida*, *The Alchemist*, *Iolanthe*, *The Mikado*, *H.M.S. Pinafore*.

### **Natalie Fast – Producer**

Student at Christ's College.

**Producing:** includes *Nineteen Eighty Four* (ADC) and *Dinner* (ADC).

**Acting:** *Old Times* (Homerton).

### **Lachlan Goudie – Designer**

Lachlan Goudie was born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1976. After studying English Literature at Cambridge University he received the Levy-Plumb scholarship, a yearlong painting residency at Christ's College.

In 1999 Lachlan was awarded the R.S.P. Prize for painting at the Royal Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts, and in 2001 the N.S. MacFarlane prize at the Royal Scottish Academy. Lachlan graduated in June 2004 from Camberwell College of Arts with a degree in Fine Art and Painting. He exhibits with the Royal Portrait Society and regularly shows in London, New York and Edinburgh.

### **Mary Hughes – Assistant Producer**

Student at Christ's College.

**Producing experience includes:** *Don Giovanni* (West Road Concert Hall 08).

**Other:** Clarinetist/Saxophonist in *Faust*, *The Mikado*, *Oklahoma*, *The Boyfriend*, *HMS Pinafore*, *Fame*, *Once Upon a Time*, *Follies*, *The Pirates of Penzance*.

### **Annilese Miskimmon – Director**

Annilese is the Artistic Director of Opera Theatre Company Ireland. She is from Belfast and read English at Christ's College, Cambridge and Arts Management at London City University. She was Glyndebourne's Consultant Associate Director 2001-2003. A staff producer at Welsh National Opera from 1996 until 2001, she has also worked with English National Opera and extensively with the BBC Orchestras and Proms, and at Glyndebourne. She has directed productions in San Francisco, Bologna, Toronto, Brussels, Beijing, Paris, Oslo, Glyndebourne and Frankfurt. She has worked with many of the world's leading conductors including Rattle, Gardiner, Elder, Jurovski, McGegan, and Mackerras.

**Recent work includes:** *Il Re Pastore* (Garsington), Offenbach's *Barbe-Bleu* (Buxton Festival), the National Opera Studio Showcase at Hackney Empire, *Shadowtracks* for WII Opera, and *Fidelio* for OTC in Kilmainham Gaol and Weir's *The Vanishing Bridegroom* for BBC Symphony Orchestra. Other work includes *Orlando and Poppea* (OTC, Buxton and Aldeburgh), *Apollo and Hyacinthus* (OTC/ Les Azuriales Festival, France, Britten Theatre, Tolentino Italy) *Ca Ira* for Roger Waters of Pink Floyd in Rome, *Così fan tutte* and *L'elisir d'amore* (Holland Park), *Rinaldo* (Royal Scottish Academy), *La Bohème* (OTC/English Touring Opera), *Semele* (British Youth Opera), *Vera of Las Vegas* (OTC), *Carmen* in New Zealand and *The Queen who didn't come to Tea* by Alexander McCall Smith (Scottish Chamber Orchestra).

**Previous shows include:** *La pietra del paragone* and *Don Pasquale* (Stanley Hall), *Cinderella* (OTC), Goehr's *Arianna*, Bach's *Endimione* (Cambridge Classical Opera), Weill's *Protagonist/Royal Palace* (BBC SO/Andrew Davis): *La vida breve* for the BBC Proms, Barber's *Vanessa* and John Cage's *Songbooks* (Slatkin/BBC SO), Bernstein's *On the Town* (BBC Concert/Paul Daniel), *Figaro* (Beijing Music Conservatory/WNO/British Council). Her WNO *Traviata* was the subject of an HTV documentary series.

She was awarded the Margot Simon Award by Glyndebourne in 2001. Education work includes that at the NOS, Irish Vocal Masterclasses and Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. Audience development projects include work at the Royal Opera House, WNO, Glyndebourne and Le Chatelet, Paris.

Her work has been nominated for Canadian Dora, Guardian Fringe Theatre, Irish Times and Manchester Evening News Theatre awards. Future plans include Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* for Opera Holland Park, *Comus* (Milton/Lawes) for the University of Cambridge, and *Alcina* and *Wozzeck* for OTC.

### **Bethany Daisy Sims – Costume Design**

Beth is a second-year English student at Christ's College. She has worked with the Wardrobe Dept at the National Youth Theatre and at Angels and Berman Theatrical Costumiers. She has taken short design courses at the V&A and has run puppet and fashion design workshops for young people in Tunbridge Wells. In Cambridge Beth has designed, made costumes, dressed and managed wardrobe for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (ADC), the Ballet Society's *Alice and Wonderland*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (ADC@the Edinburgh Festival), The Pembroke Players' *Romeo and Juliet* Japan Tour, The Marlowe Society and Trevor Nunn's *Cymbeline* at the Cambridge Arts Theatre, *Attempts On Her Life* (ADC), *The White Devil* (ADC) and *Everyday Fairytales* for the Mutabilite Theatre Company.

## **Marlowe Society biographies**

### **Lowri Amies – The Younger Brother**

English student at Queens' College.

**Acting in Cambridge:** *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (ADC Edinburgh Show), *Faust* (ADC/Footlights panto), *Hang on Mr Bugson* (ADC), *Return to the Forbidden Planet* (ADC Lent term musical), *1984* (ADC), *Memory of Water* (ADC), *Peer Gynt* (ADC), *Skates* (ADC), *Into the Woods* (ADC Lent term musical), *Dad* (Footlights Harry Porter Prizewinner), *Anthropology* (Geologic Players), *The Government Inspector* (BATS), *The Secret Garden* (DDS), *Punch and Judy* (RATS), *The American Dream* (Shadwell), *The Mad Hatter's Trinitea Party* (Dryden), *Liberdad*, *Making Spaces* (Fletcher Players), *The Union Flag* (HATS).

**Acting pre-Cambridge:** *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, *Confusions*, *Household Gods*, *Shakers*, *My Mother Said I Never Should* (Roses Youth Theatre Company). Also put together and performed in *Will's Women* (a selection of speeches from Shakespeare's most famous female characters) and co-wrote and filmed a short documentary which was selected to represent Europe in an international film competition for American television (also with the Roses Youth Theatre).

**Other theatre involvement in Cambridge:** ADC Actors' Rep, BATS Actors' Rep, the odd Footlights smoker...

### **Arthur Asseraf – Chorus**

History student at King's.

**Acting in Cambridge:** *Pizarro*, *Chekhov Double Bill* (Shirley Players).

**Acting pre-Cambridge:** *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (SIS); *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, *Rhinocéros*, *Phèdre* (Théâtre de Porcelaine).

**Other theatre involvement in Cambridge:** Co-chair of revived King's Drama Society.

### **Iona Blair – Chorus**

Social Anthropology student at Sidney Sussex College.

**Acting at Cambridge:** *Tiny Dynamite* (ADC), *Rex Futurus* (Emmett Brown Productions), *Far Away* (Newnham Anonymous Players), *Twelfth Night* (New Arcadians).

**Acting Pre-Cambridge** (with The Compass Theatre): *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (India and England), *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Crucible*, *Tartuffe*, *The Sea*, *Ash*.

Achieved a Gold Shakespeare Award from RADA.

### **David Brown – Comus**

Studying English and Drama with Education at Trinity Hall.

**Directing in Cambridge:** first stage adaptation of Ian McEwan's *The Cement Garden* (FallOut Theatre, Judith E. Wilson Drama Studio), *After the End* (FallOut Theatre, Corpus Playroom), *No Exit* (Trinity Hall), *4.48 Psychosis* (Homerton Auditorium).

**Acting in Cambridge:** *4.48 Psychosis* (Homerton Auditorium), *Debris* (Homerton Auditorium), *The Fall of the House of Usher* (ADC Theatre), *Cymbeline* (directed by Trevor Nunn at Cambridge Arts Theatre), *Copenhagen* (ADC Theatre), *Antigone* (Robinson Auditorium). He is the joint Artistic Director of FallOut Theatre. David will be taking *After the End* and *The Cement Garden* to the Edinburgh Fringe this summer and next Christmas will direct the European Tour Group's production of *Hamlet*.

### **Helen Duff – The Attendant Spirit**

English Finalist, St Catharine's College.

**Trained:** National Youth Theatre.

**Theatre:** *Macbeth* (Bristol Old Vic), *Antigone* (Knee High Theatre Company, Soho theatre)

**Acting in Cambridge:** *Macbeth* (ETG), *The Cabaret of Menace* (ADC/Edinburgh), *Greek* (ADC), *20 Cigarettes* (NYT, Soho theatre), *James and The Giant Peach* (CUADC).

### **Alashiya Gordes – Sabrina the Nymph**

English student at Newnham College.

**Acting in Cambridge:** *Peer Gynt* (ADC at Corpus), *Far Away* (Newnham Anonymous Players).

**Acting pre-Cambridge:** *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Stage One Theatre, Cyprus), *An Inspector Calls* (Stage One), *Pack of Lies* (Stage One), *Snow...Sort Of...White* (Rosebowl Theatre Festival).

**Other theatre involvement in Cambridge:** Co-directing, producing and lighting *Ted and Sylvia in Cambridge* (Newnham Anonymous Players); lighting and sound for *Fate of a Cockroach* (Corpus).

### **Amanda Palin – The Lady**

English student at King's.

**Acting in Cambridge:** *Hippolytus* (Miscellaneous Theatre Festival), *The After Dinner Joke* (Freshers' Play).

**Acting Pre-Cambridge:** *Whale Music* (Stage Presents), *The Boyfriend* (CLC), *The King of the Golden River* (CLC).

### **Sam Pallis – The Elder Brother**

Studying English, Drama and Education at Homerton College.

**Theatre experience outside Cambridge:** Shakespeare in the Square (National Youth Theatre), *Missing* (NYT) and I.D. 1000. Sam currently sits on NYT's youth committee.

**Acting in Cambridge:** *The After-dinner Joke* (ADC), Chekhov Double Bill (Corpus) and *American Eagle* (Corpus).

**Directing in Cambridge:** *The Maids* (Homerton Auditorium).

### **Abigail Rokison – Chorus**

Fellow at Homerton College.

**Trained:** LAMDA.

**Professional Theatre:** *Shakuntala* (Gate), *High Risk Zone* (Almeida), *Duchess of Malfi* (Bath), *Ajax* (Tour), *Samuel Pepys* (Tour), *Taming of the Shrew* (Exeter), *What you Will* (Globe, Read not Dead).

**Television:** *The Darling Buds of May*, *The Bill*.

**Film:** *The Pride of Africa*.

**Acting in Cambridge:** *Romeo and Juliet* (ETG), *The Women of Trachis* (Edinburgh), *The Threepenny Opera* (Edinburgh), *Tales from Ovid* (Marlowe), *Losing It* (Corpus Playroom), *After the End* (FallOut Theatre), *The Cement Garden* (FallOut Theatre).

**Directing in Cambridge:** *The Wasps* and *The Golden Ass* (Marlowe), *As you Like It* (CAST), *Oh What a Lovely War!* (ADC at Corpus) and *The Age of Consent* (ADC).

Abigail is one of the Artistic Directors of FallOut Theatre.

### **Simon Godwin – Director**

**Trained:** The Anna Scher Theatre, Cambridge University and LISPA.

Simon is the former Associate Director of the Royal and Derngate Theatres where he directed many productions on tour and on the main stage, including *The Seagull*, *Everyman*, *Habeas Corpus*, *The Witches* and *Quartermaine's Terms*. Other work includes *Mister Heracles* (West Yorkshire Playhouse), *The Increased Difficulty of Concentration* (Gate) and *Eurydice* (BAC/West End). He is one of two directors leading the 2008 International Residency at the Royal Court.

### **Alexandra Hepburn – Stage Manager**

Philosophy student at Christ's College.

**Stage Managing in Cambridge:** *Ruddigore* (CUG&S), *Alcock Allstars* (Alcock Players), *The Gnadiges Fraulein* (CUADC), *This Live: Live at the ADC* (CUJO).

**Other theatre involvement in Cambridge this academic year:** Technical Director for *Dad* (Footlights); Production LX for *Fame* (CUMTS), *Snippets* (Footlights), and *Into the Woods* (CUADC); Props Manager for *Les Mamelles de Tiresias* (CUOS) and *The Pirates of Penzance* (CUG&S); Assistant Stage Manager for *All the Ordinary Angels* (DDS, Alcock Players & GODS) and *Romeo and Juliet* (The Swan Theatre Company); Production Designer for *Dinner* (Alcock Players); Costume Designer for *HMS Pinafore* (CUG&S), *Peer Gynt* (CUADC) and *Follies* (CUMTS); Hair & Makeup for *Don Giovanni* (CUOS).

### **Lucy Minyo – Set and Costume Designer**

**Trained:** BA Architecture, Cambridge University.

**Professional Theatre:** *Zoop Zoop Hackney* (Arcola Theatre), *Sons of Bond* (Theatre Royal Haymarket), *The Hairy Ape* (BAC - JMK Prize finalist), *Onwards Outwards* (Camden People's Theatre).

**Assistant Design:** *The Sea* (Theatre Royal Haymarket), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Globe Theatre).

**Cambridge Design:** *The Cabaret of Menace* (Edinburgh), *Tales from Ovid* (Marlowe), *The Calvino Project* (Cambridge Union), *Oleanna* (ADC), *Suddenly Last Summer* (ADC), *Astrakan Winter* (Edinburgh), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Queens Gardens), *Marat Sade* (Pythagoras), *A Small Family Business* (ADC).

### **Pascal Porcheron – Producer**

English student at Churchill College.

**Acting in Cambridge:** *Loot* (GODS), Anouilh's *Antigone* (May Week production).

### **Eve Rosato – Assistant Producer**

Studying English and Drama with Education at Homerton College.

**Acting in Cambridge:** *A Dolls House* (BATS), *Broken Glass* (Corpus Playrooms), *Follies* (CUMTS), *Come Back to the Five and Dime Jimmy Dean Jimmy Dean* (BATS), *The Glass Menagerie* (Corpus Playrooms).

### **Benjamin Sehovic – Lighting Designer**

Engineer at Downing College.

**Lighting Design in Cambridge:** *All the Ordinary Angels* (ADC Theatre), *9.6% Love* (Corpus Playroom), *Cruel and Tender* (Corpus Playroom); *Scaramouche Jones* (Corpus Playroom)..

**Lighting Design pre-Cambridge:** *Copacabana* (Ryan Theatre, Harrow School), *42<sup>nd</sup> Street* (Ryan Theatre), *Grease* (Ryan Theatre); *Anything Goes* (Ryan Theatre); *Hamlet* (Boyd Campbell, John Lyon School), *A Flea in Her Ear* (Boyd Campbell), *Epsom Downs* (Boyd Campbell).

**Production Electrician:** *Fame*, *Fall of the House of Usher*.

### **Simon Thomas – Composer / Sound Designer**

Simon began involvement in Cambridge amateur dramatics in Lent Term 2008. He has composed and sound designed for *All the Ordinary Angels* (ADC), sound operated for *Dinner* (ADC), *Romeo and Juliet* (ADC) and *Into the Woods* (ADC). He has sound designed for *The Cement Garden* (Judith E. Wilson Drama Studio), *Cruel and Tender* (Corpus Playroom), *Scaramouche Jones and the Seven White Masks* (Corpus Playroom) and assisted the sound design for *Yellow Moon* (School of Pythagoras).

### **Jeremy Thurlow - Composer**

Fellow of Robinson College.

His music has been described as 'seductive, innovative, full of freshness' by Henri Dutilleux.

**Recent projects include:** a 'video-opera' premiered at the Spitalfields Festival in June 2007, a 'music fable' *The Pedlar of Swaffham* recorded by Lesley-Jane Rogers with the Bergamo Ensemble, and a new work which the Fitzwilliam String Quartet will premiere in New York in July. His book on composer Henri Dutilleux is published in French by Millénaire III, and he has also written and broadcast on the music of Messiaen.

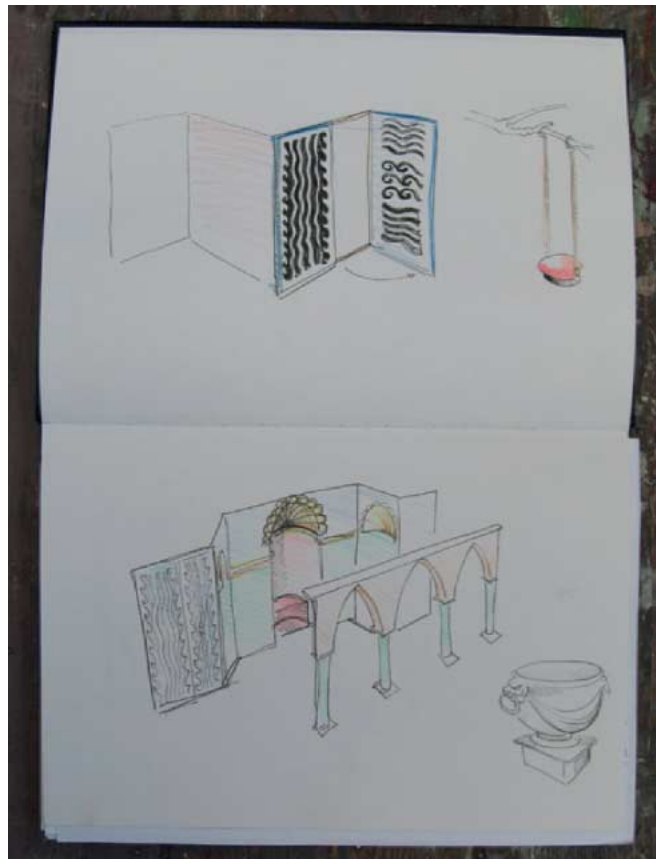
### **Oscar Toeman – Assistant Director**

Student at St. Catharine's College.

**Directing in Cambridge:** *Twelfth Night* (New Arcadians), *Relative Values* (The Shirley Players), Chekhov Double Bill, *Scaramouche Jones* (The Shirley Players at Corpus).



Rehearsals in the Fellows' Garden at Christ's College



Design by Lachlan Goudie

## Simon Godwin

*in conversation with Helen Mort*



**You've adapted the work of contemporary poet Simon Armitage for the stage in Yorkshire. How did the challenge of directing John Kinsella's work compare to that?**

Simon Armitage wrote an original piece for the stage, based on Heracles, and his challenge there was in some ways similar to John's: to take an existing text and respond to it, to find that balance between preserving the essence of the original and casting a new voice, new vocabulary, a new set of resonances for a contemporary audience. It's a delicate dance between the original and the new work, and it's important to make that relationship liberating rather than constricting. Both Armitage and Kinsella try to forge a very witty, contemporary and political voice through their writing, and both managed a very lively and a very contemporary take on their original texts.

**As a director of Kinsella's version of *Comus*, how have you tried to update the masque genre itself in a way that will engage with a modern audience?**

I think our job with the John Kinsella play is to be the riotous, parodic post-interval crew! The audience will have had the unusual experience of having watched the original in the first half, and will therefore be very sensitive to the nuances and the changes that we are going to introduce in the second half. Our job is to revel in the parodic adventure, to be adventurous, outrageous, fun, witty and provocative.

**What new challenges does staging a masque both outdoors and indoors present?**

I think we have to see the two environments quite separately, because the garden offers so many possibilities for surprise, adventure and participation, and we'll be exploiting them. The Hall, by contrast, invites careful listening, a greater focus of action – it's a space of tentative communion, a much more formal, less participatory space. So for us, it will be an interesting experiment to see where John's work, and indeed Milton's work, succeeds best.

**How closely have you been working with the cast who are staging Milton's original?**

It's important for my actors to understand the original *Comus*, which we've been reading in rehearsals, because they need to understand what the audience will have experienced in the first half. Having said that, the productions have been kept quite separate in terms of the creative teams to make sure that the individual impact isn't watered down; they are individual pieces that will also work in a complimentary way when staged together.

**Why do you think we continue to be fascinated with reinventing older stories? What is it about *Comus* that makes it relevant today?**

I think the story of a woman being lost in a forest, and being captured and seduced by a dangerous figure who symbolises knowledge and experience and sexuality is a primal myth. So long as human beings are negotiating experience and restraint, we'll be drawn to those myths. The perennial struggle is not to find new stories, but to find new ways of telling those stories that make them fresh and as if we are encountering them for the first time.

### **In particular, how do you think a modern audience will respond to the theme of chastity?**

In his version, John Kinsella explores the right-wing idea of virginity somehow still being an appropriate way to combat the AIDS epidemic, the agenda of certain political parties in the USA, for example, who foster that idea as a way of tackling AIDS in Africa. So in a way, the question of virginity and chastity remains pertinent. Our audiences in Cambridge, however, aren't going to be reflecting on the need for chastity in quite the same way, so there's a question there about how we excite an audience.

I think we do that by returning to that sense of chastity being a metaphor for experience and risk and boundaries. John's exploration of the boundaries of science, and how far they should be pushed, is a way of re-working the notion of chastity and purity for a modern audience in Cambridge. He examines the notion of virginity of the land and how we impact on the environment; pollution, the body as land, all of those things.

### **How do you hope the audience will respond to what you've done with John Kinsella's masque?**

I really hope they have a good time, first and foremost! In the medieval age, masques were referred to as being 'assaulting', and I think that's an apt word because for me the performance is a kind of spicy, sensuous, cheeky, tactile corruption. I think I want the audience to have a sense of being tickled rather than assaulted – a tickling of associations, opinions and expectations.

### **Will *Comus* be just as relevant in another 100 years?**

Hamlet talks about art reflecting the 'form and pressure' of its age, and I think in John Kinsella's *Comus* we certainly see that shaping influence, our age reflected. It would be a daring thing to try and predict what the form and pressure of another hundred years would be on that text, but I think what's striking about *Comus* is that it could sustain it. Milton's original is an effective, reflecting mirror; I think that's what's most striking about it. So, though I'll never be there to see it, I'd love to know what the next step in the life of this rather remarkable and provocative piece will be!



### **The Text of *Comus***

Despite two manuscripts and two early printed texts, there is really no single, authoritative text for *Comus*. The Bridgewater manuscript may be closest to a performance text but with quite a few passages censored as having the potential to offend if taken as uncomplimentary or indecorous. Milton's own working text (now the Trinity College MS) has many revisions, some of them down-playing the Christian element of the masque, and only some of them incorporated in the printed texts. Five songs from the masque, with the lyrics written between the musical staves, survive in the handwriting of Henry Lawes. Following the Ludlow performance, demand for copies of the text drove Lawes to oversee publication (1637, printed by Humphrey Robinson at St Paul's church-yard), to spare the aching of his own hand. This quarto volume was prefaced by Lawes's explanation that the work was 'not openly acknowledged by the Author, yet it is a legitimate off-spring, ... lovely, and ... much desired'. Then, in the 1645 *Poems* under Milton's own name, the masque has revisions found in the Trinity MS and is dedicated to John, Viscount Brackley, who had played the Elder Brother in 1634.

For their centennial production CADS have followed 1645, omitting a number of short passages which proved hard to speak or follow, in total about 15% of the text.

John Kinsella worked from the same text when writing his reply. He leaves the stage directions for the most part unchanged and closely follows the variations in metre with variations of his own. Anyone wishing to compare the two texts will find them in the edition by Arc Publications, to be published in October 2008; advanced copies are on sale to accompany the performances.

(Back cover: Portrait in the hall of Christ's College, attributed to John Lely. It is doubtful that this is an authentic likeness and not certain that it is a portrait of Milton, though tradition has received it as such.)

