

## **BLOOD WEDDING**

Music: Nicola LeFanu

Libretto: Deborah Levy, after Lorca.

Commissioned by the Women's' Playhouse Trust.

First performance London, October 1992

Conductor: Anne Manson

Director: Jules Wright.

Blood Wedding is a full-length opera in two acts. It is written for a big cast – fifteen singers, some of whom form a chorus – and a large chamber ensemble. The musical language is lyrical, with expansive lines for the singers, but there is a constant undertow, a sense of foreboding. The ensemble are used sometimes as an orchestra, sometimes as individual soloists; there is a huge range of colours from the percussion, and even a surreal memory of twenties' dance music at the wedding party itself.

Many listeners will recall the essential narrative of Lorca's play. In a remote Spanish village some seventy years ago, two young people are to marry. The bridegroom is eligible, comparatively well-to-do; the bride, who lives alone with her widowed father, accepts the marriage proposal as her way forward, as the way to 'land, children, health'. But her passions are secretly taken up with Leonardo Felix, her former sweetheart, now her cousin's husband. Leonardo comes from a family which has feuded for years with that of the Groom. Every generation has seen senseless killings: the groom's mother lost her husband and eldest son, and at the opening of the opera she inveighs against further bloodshed.

Deborah Levy's libretto condenses and intensifies Lorca's poetic language so that his main protagonists — the mother, the bride and groom, and Leonardo the lover – are thrown into even greater relief. The opera ends with a lament sung by the women alone. Whatever the bloodshed, life goes on.

