

Netsuke for Eight players (2004)

The word *netsuke* (pronounced *net-skay*) refers to a small carved toggle used in traditional Japanese male dress to fasten the cords of pouches or *inro* (medicine boxes) to a Kimono sash. They eventually became finely detailed, diminutive works of sculpture, generally carved from ivory, horn, or wood. A technique known as *Makie* (literally *sprinkled pictures*) was used in applying designs of sprinkled gold and other materials to the surface lacquer.

The musical work is a collection of short, colourful tableaux taking their initial impetus from various extra-musical sources, all miniatures in their own ways; **Le Petit Prince** by the writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the children's cautionary tales, **Der Struwwelpeter** by Heinrich Hoffmann and a short poem by Walter de la Mare. I freely connected images and incidents as my eye came across them and tried to set their resonances musically. I wished to reflect the miniature scale of Netsuke sculptures, their intricate construction and ornate surfaces, ultimately to create an 'aural' picture book.

The five sections are grouped in to three larger movements:

1. **Statue** (SH) (*no break*) **Die Geschichte vom Daumen-lutscher** (CR)
2. **La Rose** (AES)
3. **Statue ii** (MM) (*no break*) **The Owl** (OK)

Netsuke was commissioned by Hans Werner Henze for the Endymion Ensemble on his 75th birthday and is dedicated to him as well as those named therein.

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