

# Anthony Ogus

Author / Speaker / Academic

## 2014-03-18: Jewish ritual mourning as musical theatre

**Shiva for Anne**, given in Berlin as part of the March Festival for Contemporary Music, is a striking piece of musical theatre. The composer **Mela Meierhans** wanted to pay tribute to her long-standing collaborator, the English poet Anne Blonstein who died of cancer in 2012. She did so by drawing on the Jewish ritual for mourning Shiva, family and relatives coming together for seven days after the death to reflect on, and talk about, the deceased person. Here on a bare stage, surrounded by four percussionists, the singers in stylized postures and movements, sang or spoke, or used other vocal means to express, the poetry of Blonstein. The language, even for a native listener like myself, is dense and difficult, but once I had relinquished the attempt to derive a precise meaning from it and could instead relish the sounds of the words and the images they generated, it resonated for me. Helpfully, understanding the context in which the poetry was written was facilitated by a speaker who, in a way representing us, outsiders to the ritual, connected the poetry to the life of Blonstein, but at the same time threw up questions about both which would remain unresolved. Under the musical direction of **Raphael Immoos**, all the performers excelled in carrying out with precision their far-from-easy tasks.

Anthony Ogus has held academic posts at the Universities of Leicester, Oxford, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Manchester (where he was Dean of the Faculty of Law from 1990-92); and visiting positions in Antwerp, Berkeley (California), Hamburg, Maastricht, Paris, Rotterdam and Toronto. He is now Emeritus Professor at the Universities of Manchester and Rotterdam. A founding co-editor of the *International Review of Law and Economics*, he has published books and articles on many aspects of the law, but particularly on the economic analysis of law and regulation. He was a Member (subsequently Vice-Chairman) of the Social Security Advisory Committee, for services to which he was awarded the CBE in 2002; and was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 2007.

Anthony gives illustrated talks on various aspects of opera, including individual works, opera houses, productions styles and opera-going worldwide.