

# Blood on the Stones

(First performed 2001)

Edinburgh, 1827-8

Rumours that the resurrectionists (body snatchers) have taken to murder have made the already fearful citizens of Edinburgh's Old Town truly terrified. An innkeeper, Mr Cairns, strives to maintain a cheery atmosphere despite the fact that "Death Walks the Streets". His wife advises Jean, a serving girl, that even in such hard times love can come along. Perhaps Callum, a medical student to whom she is attracted, will be the one if she can just "Hold on to the Dream". In the street outside William Burke, a resurrectionist, argues with Dr Knox; he wants out of the arrangement they have to supply bodies for the anatomy school but Knox has powerful friends and enough influence to frighten Burke into continuing.

In the inn next evening, the townspeople lament the "Blood on the Stones". Daft Jamie, a simpleton, amuses the customers with stories of what he has seen in the New Town, telling them of the grand occasion he saw through one of the windows, and the fine lady he saw singing: "Jock o Hazeldean". The local minister enters and berates the customers for drinking spirits; their angry response "Where is God?" shows feelings are running high - these are poor, hard-working and very frightened people.

Mr Cairns, after asking the minister to leave, persuades one of his customers to lead them in a song to help them forget the outside world: "When I'm Walking Along". After the customers have left, Callum and Jean spend time together: both have been hurt previously and are reluctant to rush in: "Tell Me Please". Burke, who appears worse for drink, asks Daft Jamie to help him home. On the way Jamie tells him that he overheard Burke's exchange with Dr Knox last night although he understood little. He asks Burke about the bodies and about the payment they argued over. Afraid that his secret is about to be discovered, Burke kills Jamie: "All Your Troubles".

Despite being a homeless simpleton, Daft Jamie's popularity means that many locals attend his meagre funeral; all sing the Gaelic lament "Caidil Thu". Burke, guilt-ridden, sings "Yesterday", realising that he has made a bad situation worse. He can hear the voice of Jamie joining him. Later, he argues

again with Knox. Knox once more has the upper hand, and this time sets one of his other henchmen, William Hare, to watch Burke.

The medical students appear in the inn next day and begin drinking hard: “Heather Ale”. The body supplied for anatomy instruction that day was Daft Jamie’s. Jean turns on Burke, claiming that since Jamie left with him before his death, Burke is responsible. Burke denies that he is to blame and leaves. The townspeople leave the inn in groups, afraid to be alone on the streets. Jean and Callum, in the first days of love, decide to enjoy what they have while they can: “If I Die Tomorrow”. They part in the street near Jean’s lodging where Burke and Hare are lying in wait for her.

Turmoil breaks out at the Lecture Theatre next day when the body revealed is Jean’s. Knox’s consternation is further confounded when he learns that the authorities are investigating several other suspicious deaths. Will his influence be enough to keep him from the gallows?

As the townspeople of Edinburgh learn of the latest events (Knox’s disappearance and Hare turning King’s Evidence) they are enraged, asking, “Where is the Justice?” At his hanging, although not denying his own guilt, Burke lays the true blame on “Dr Robert Knox”. The townspeople, however, would rather watch the death of Burke - the criminal in their midst - than waste effort to pursue such a powerful man against whom it would be difficult to prove anything. Gleefully, they sing “Hang Him High”.

#### Cast

Mr Cairns - Innkeeper	-
Mrs Cairns - Inkeeper’s Wife	-
Jean - a serving girl	-
Callum - a medical student	-
Burke - a resurrectionist	-
Minister	-
Mother	-
Young Girl	-
Man	-
Daft Jamie	-
Jenny - a prostitute	-
Angry Woman	-
Angus - a student	-
Fergus - a student	-

Citizens of Edinburgh

## Musical Numbers

1	Overture		
2	Death Walks the Streets / Ave Maria	Company	Solo lines for: Burke, Old Woman, Old Man, Young Woman
3	Hold on to the Dream	Duet	Mrs Cairns, Jean
4	Blood on the Stone	Company	
5	Where is God?	Company	Solo lines for: minister, cripple
6	Jock o Hazeldean	Solo	Daft Jamie
7	When I'm Walking Along	Company	Solo lines for: Jenny, Student, Man
8	Tell Me Please	Duet	Callum, Jean
9	All Your Troubles are Over	Solo	Burke
10	Caidil Thu	Company	Solo lines for: Man
11	Yesterday	Duet	Burke, Daft Jamie
12	Heather Ale	Company	Solo lines for: A Student
13	If I Die Tomorrow	Duet	Jean, Callum
14	Where is the justice?	Trio	A Student, Old Woman, Man
15	Dr Robert Knox	Solo	Burke
16	Hang him High - Finale	Company	Solo lines for: Old Woman, Old Man, Young Woman

# Carpe Diem