



Chamber Operas,  
Music Theatre and  
Operas in reduced  
versions

an annotated catalogue

Universal Edition

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© Marion Kalter

## **Vykintas Baltakas** (1972)

### ***Cantio*** (2001–2004)

music theatre on a text by Sharon Lynn Joyce

libretto: Sharon Lynn Joyce

sung language: Ancient Greek; spoken language: vernacular (e.g. English or German)

world première: Munich 2004

60'

cast:

soprano

tenor

bass-baritone

narrator

picc, cl(Eb)(+bass cl), alto sax(+sop sax), hn, tpt, tbn, tuba, 2 perc, acc, pno, vln, vla, vc, cb, electronics

The idea of the work is that the linguistic rhetoric should determine all the piece's expressive aspects – its dramaturgy, music and staging. Music arises from the language and the scenic sound while, for its part, the action on stage reacts to the music.

A certain form of ***Cantio*** was performed in Greece; the gods were to be convinced to remain in the city if they were thought to be ready to abandon it. It survives only in fragments.

But our perceptual options of reconstructing such a distant epoch, identifying with it, are also merely fragmentary at most. The attempt is to complete those fragments and, using imagination – and without becoming historical – to revivify them, allow them to speak – to make them heard, perhaps, if only for a short moment. (Vyckintas Baltakas)

“Here is a composer at work who knows how to listen subtly and who excitingly reshapes the familiar into something strange.” (Reinhard Schulz, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*)



© Ben Ealovega

**Luke Bedford** (1978)

***Seven Angels*** (2009–2011)

chamber opera in 2 acts

for 7 singers and 12 instruments

libretto: Glyn Maxwell

language: English

world première: Birmingham 2011

95'

cast:

Angel 1 / Waitress, soprano

Angel 2 / Queen, mezzo-soprano

Angel 3 / Chef / Priestess, mezzo-soprano

Angel 4 / Prince, tenor

Angel 5 / Porter / Industrialist, tenor

Angel 6 / Gardener / General, baritone

Angel 7 / King, bass-baritone

flute (+picc; alto fl); clarinet in Bb (+bass cl(Bb), ratchet); bassoon (+cbsn, analogue radio); trumpet in C (+flhn, maracas); trombone(+rainstick); - perc, pno, vla(4), cb

***Seven Angels*** have fallen through space and time for so long, they have forgotten why. Coming to rest on a desert landscape, they imagine the creation of a legendary garden that once flourished there and its destruction from greed and neglect. (Luke Bedford)

John Milton's *Paradise Lost* provided a starting point for a meditation on the relationship between humanity and the resources of the earth. Where the great poem is a symphonic retelling of scripture, *Seven Angels* was grown from fragments, shards of the poem, as if that huge incandescent structure had toppled from its seat in heaven and shattered into glimpses, dreams, strange tales, lost threads, all strewn across a broken landscape. In the world of *Paradise Lost*, we know the story, we know the outcome, we know what Milton intends: the glorious pentameters sound the inevitability of the Devil's fall from Heaven, Man's fall from Eden, the Redemption through Christ. *Seven*

*Angels* grows in a world without inevitability, without known story or outcome, with forms and rhythms that slide and mutate, with causes unclear and effects unknown. This world. (Glyn Maxwell)

### ***Through His Teeth*** (2013)

chamber opera

for 3 singers and 8 players

libretto: David Harrower

language: English

world première: London 2014

60'

cast:

Interviewer and Sister, mezzo-soprano

A (woman), soprano

R, baritone

clarinet in Bb (+bass cl(Bb)); trumpet in C; percussion; harp; accordion; violin;

violoncello; double bass

***Through His Teeth*** is the second opera from Luke Bedford, widely acknowledged as one of the finest composers of his generation. Bedford collaborates with Scottish playwright David Harrower, acclaimed for his translations of Gogol's *The Government Inspector* (Young Vic) and Chekhov's *Ivanov* (National Theatre), in a chilling exploration of the frailty of trust.

First and foremost *Through His Teeth* is a gripping psychological drama. Bedford was commissioned by the Royal Opera House to write a piece on the subject of Faust, to run alongside the star-studded performances of Gounod's opera on the main stage. I, for one, was intrigued to see how a contemporary composer like Bedford would deal with a story which has been told repeatedly for centuries, and one that is highly familiar to opera-goers.

Rather than simply retell the story with his own music, Bedford focused on the true story of a man who seduced several women over the course of a decade, lying and scheming his way into stealing their money, and as Bedford writes on his blog, "kidnapping them without using any force". The similarity between this tale and that of Faust is the idea of the identity being like the soul – a thing one can steal by deception. The story begins in a television studio, with the protagonist of the work (known as 'A') being interviewed by a Fiona Bruce-style reporter about her experiences. After this scene, the rest of the opera takes place through a series of flashbacks, or reconstructions, detailing the events of her story. The man (R, in Bedford's opera) meets A in a car salesroom, and they quickly begin a relationship. R tells her that he is secretly an MI5 agent, which she believes. From here, R manipulates, deceives, and effectively takes over A's entire life, beginning with threatening her with withdrawing the sex life that she craves, and moving into more sinister territory following a spat over dinner, by claiming that there is a man watching, who will kill them in their beds. (Levi White; <http://bachtrack.com/>)





© Eric Marinitsch

**Luciano Berio** (1925-2003)

***Laborintus II*** (1965)

for voices, instruments and tape

libretto: Edoardo Sanguineti

language: Italian, English

world première: Paris 1965

35'

3 female voices

1 speaker

8 actors: satb

1 0 3 0 - 0 3 3 0 - perc(2), hp(2), vc(2), cb(1)

The text, by Edoardo Sanguineti, develops certain themes from the *Vita Nova*, *Convivio* and *Divina Commedia*, combining them, mainly through formal and semantic analogies, with Biblical texts, Eliot and Sanguineti himself. The principal formal reference is the catalogue, which relates the two central Dantesque themes of memory and usury, or the reduction of all things to market value. Individual words and sentences are sometimes to be comprehended as such, sometimes to be heard as an extension of the sound structure as a whole.

***Laborintus II*** is a theatre work which can be performed on television, in a conventional theatre, in the open air or any place else permitting the gathering of an audience. The particular space and medium selected condition the length and some of the structural aspects of the work, possible durations ranging between 30 and 50 minutes.

The principle of the "catalogue" is not limited to the text, but underlies the musical structure as well: *Laborintus II* is a catalogue of references (to Monteverdi, Stravinsky and myself), of actions and attitudes: 1) conventional instrumental or vocal characters or behaviours, 2) sound actions or behaviours external to or modifying the first category or imitating external models, 3) gestures and body movements associated with the first two categories, 4) gestures and body movements not associated with the first two categories.

Thus, *Laborintus II* is not an opera but a music theatre work – that is, a work which, to paraphrase the words of the philosopher Ernst Bloch, accepts theatre as a laboratory

“reduced” to the dimensions of performance, where we test theories and practices which can be used as experimental models of real life. (Luciano Berio)

**a - ronne** (1975)

for 8 singers

text author: Eduardo Sanguineti

language: various

world première: Liège 1975

32'

2s, 2a, 2t, 2b

*a - ronne* for 8 singers can be performed in concert or as a staged performance

The subject of **a - ronne** is the elementary vocalization of a text and its transformation into something perhaps equally elementary, but difficult to describe. The work, in fact, is not a musical composition in the traditional sense, even though the organizational procedures used are often musical (for example, the use of inflections and intonations, development of alliterations and of transitions between sound and noise, and occasional use of elementary melodies, polyphonies and heterophonies). The musical sense of *a - ronne* is basic, which is to say that it is common to any experience, ranging from everyday speech to theatre, where changes in expression imply and document changes in meaning. This is why I prefer to define the work as *documentary* on a poem by Edoardo Sanguineti, as one would speak of a documentary on a painting or on an exotic country. Sanguineti's poem, which undergoes different readings in this work, is not treated as a text to be set to music, but rather as a text to be analyzed and as a generator of different vocal situations and expressions. Finally, *a - ronne* is also a kind of *madrigale rappresentativo*, i. e. “theatre for the ear” from the late sixteenth century in Italy, as well as a kind of vocal *naïve painting*. The range of given situations, no matter how extensive, can always be related to elementary situations, and to recognizable, familiar and obvious feelings; a social gathering, a speech in a square, a speech therapy session, the confessional, the barracks, the bedroom and such like.

Sanguineti's poem is repeated about twenty times and almost always from beginning to end. It presents three themes: in the first part the theme of the beginning, in the second part the theme of the Middle and in the third part that of the end. The poem is built strictly on quotations in various languages that extend from the beginning of the New Testament of John (in Latin and Greek), Luther's German translation and its modifications in Goethe's *Faust*, to a verse by Eliot; from a verse by Dante to the first words of the Communist *Manifesto*; from a few words of an essay by Barthes on Bataille to the first letter of the alphabet (*a, alpha, eleph*) and to the last word which concluded the Italian alphabet in ancient times after 'z' (*ronne*). From this came the saying “from a to Ronne”, which has long since been replaced by “from A to Z”. The poem thus is also a highly articulated and discontinuous sequence of figures of speech, which explains the frequent uses of musical figures of speech in this work. The occasional sung sections do not have an autonomous musical significance: they are moments among many others - and perhaps the simplest - in the liturgy of vocal

gestures. Only the brief final section, based on a series of elementary harmonic 'alliterations', has its own musical autonomy.

Thus, the musical sense of *a - ronne* is not to be found in the sung sections, but rather in the relationship that is established between a written text and a 'grammar' of vocal behaviours; between a poem that is constantly faithful to its own words and a vocal articulation that continuously modifies its meaning and its referential aspects. The two levels (the written texts and the vocal behaviour) always interact in different ways, and always produce new meanings. This is directly analogous to what generally happens in vocal music and in everyday speech, where the relationship between the two levels (the grammatical one and the acoustical one) is substantially responsible for the infinite possibilities of human speech and singing. (Luciano Berio)



© Eric Marinitsch

## **Harrison Birtwistle** (1934-2022)

### ***Bow Down*** (1977)

improvising music theatre

libretto: Tony Harrison

world première: London 1977

50'

for 5 actors and 4 musicians

bamboo flutes and -pipes, oboes, penny-whistles and percussion

***Bow Down*** is based on a ballad (*The Two Sisters*) which appears and re-appears in folklore all over northern Europe and in North America (where it turns up, in at least one manifestation, as a bluegrass number). Each version has its own idiosyncratic details, depending on the local culture and geography. However, the basic outline of the story remains the same.

[...]

*Bow Down* is a story of enormously powerful images – horrific in its details of sibling rivalry, mutilation, torture and murder and yet also transcendent in the way that music is perceived as being capable of overcoming death in order to reveal the truth.

Clearly, as with all good legends or fairy stories, the myth is capable of any number of interpretations – Marxist, Freudian and Feminist among them. But *Bow Down* does not set out to make that sort of intervention. Rather it presents us with a collage of different versions, sometimes overlapping, sometimes contradictory. The focus keeps changing as does the diction (the show includes Scottish, Northumbrian and Danish versions, amongst others) and the detail. By constantly shifting the angle of vision, Harrison and Birtwistle have created a piece that is, in a way, cubist. And yet, it's also a rattling good story.

In fact, *Bow Down* sits squarely in the story telling tradition. It is not a play where the music has the role of providing atmosphere or "numbers". Nor is it an opera, in which dramatic personae appear on stage while the music comes from a separate "pit" band. It can only really be classified as music-theatre, a term appropriated by a very diverse range of material but which can perhaps best be defined as "work whose dramatic content is purposeless without the music and whose music is meaningless without the dramatic content."

It is therefore a highly collaborative piece, originally created through a workshop process at the National Theatre in 1977. Composer, poet, director, actors and musicians worked together to devise a piece based on the original ballad texts. The final "script" or

“score” was not put together until after the event. The resulting record of the devised piece is thus a starting point for any new production.

It does not, however, follow that this starting point has also to be the finishing line. *Bow Down* belongs historically to the oral tradition – a form handed down from artist to artist and changed in the process. It is a piece which can constantly mutate – indeed Birtwistle has written some new material for the present version. In this production, therefore, we have attempted to be truthful to the spirit of the original, yet to adapt it where appropriate. In this way, we aim to continue a tradition that stretches back to the dawn of culture when words, music and movement first combined to tell a story.  
(Graham Devlin)

***Down by the Greenwood Side*** (1968–69)

a dramatic pastoral

libretto: Michael Nyman

language: English

world première: Brighton 1969

30'

cast:

Mrs. Green, soprano

Father Christmas, St. George, Bold Slasher, Dr. Blood, narrator

Jack Finney, mime

1 0 1 1 - 0 0 1 0 - perc(1), cornet, euph, vln(1), vc(1)

***Down by the Greenwood Side*** was commissioned for the 1969 Brighton Festival. The text comes from two sources: a popular ballad called *The Cruel Mother*, and passages from various mummer plays, the folk plays of the English countryside. The soprano, Mrs. Green, sings the ballad while the actors and mime perform the play. The two ingredients never meet; both are completely self-contained, involved only in themselves. But near the end, in the final tableau, there is a slight acknowledgement of each other's worlds when the presenter of the mummers' play, Father Christmas, completes the story Mrs. Green has been telling, and Mrs. Green momentarily enters the mummers' acting area. (Programme Notes by Michael Hall / BBC Proms 1972)

***Punch and Judy*** (1966-1967)

a tragicomedy or comic tragedy in 1 act

libretto: Stephen Pruslin

language: English, German

world première: 1968 Aldeburgh

110'

Puppenpolly (witch), high soprano

Judy (fortune-teller), mezzo-soprano

Punch, high baritone

Lawyer, high tenor  
Choregos (Jack Ketch), low baritone  
Doctor, bass

5 Dancers (mimes): 2 women, 3 men

1 1 1 1 - 1 1 1 0 - perc(2), hp, str.quin

Harrison Birtwistle based his full-length one-act piece on traditional county fair entertainment, working together with American pianist Stephen Pruslin, a long-time London resident. Composer and librettist created a stylised and ritualistic theatre piece in which the aggression and violence of the traditional material and Punch's love for Pretty Polly are juxtaposed. Birtwistle's music is a tour de force from the outset; Punch's smile is simultaneously a terrifying grin, a father's tenderness towards his baby is a murderous gesture as he throws the infant into the fire.



© Erna Stoll

**Boris Blacher** (1903–1975)

***Romeo and Juliet*** (1943)

chamber opera in 3 parts “free” after William Shakespeare

libretto: Boris Blacher

language: German

world première: Salzburg 1950

65'

cast:

Romeo, tenor

Juliet, soprano

Lady Capulet, alto

Die Amme, alto

Capulet, bass

Tybalt, tenor

Benvolio, bass

Peter, soprano or tenor

3 male speakers

choir: satb (double or triple forces)

fl., bs. - tpt. - pno. - string quintet

In 1943, at UE's request, Boris Blacher composed ***Romeo and Juliet***, a chamber opera in 3 parts, freely adapted from Shakespeare. Blacher took excerpts of the play, which are essential to the storyline – producing a concentrated version of *Romeo and Juliet*, which, through the music, aims more at allegory than pity. Blacher's music is characterised by an economy of material, transparency and a draughtsmen's clarity.



© Barry Conyngham

**Barry Conyngham** (1944)

***The Apology of Bony Anderson*** (1978)

music theatre

text: Murray Copland

language: English

world première: Melbourne 1978

30'

Bony, baritone

Convict, tenor

Judge, tenor

Lady, mezzo soprano

choir: satb

alto-fl., bass cl. - tpt. - perc. (2) - accordion - vla., cb.





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**Hanns Eisler** (1898–1962)

***Die Massnahme*** (1930)

didactic play by Bertolt Brecht in 8 numbers

libretto: Bertolt Brecht

language: German

world première: Berlin 1930

58'

cast:

for tenor

3 speakers

mixed choir: ssaattbb

1st horn in F; 2nd horn in F; 1st trumpet in Bb; 2nd trumpet in Bb; 3rd trumpet in Bb;  
1st trombone; 2nd trombone; 1st, 2nd timpani; percussion; piano

Brecht used the words “[It] is an attempt to use a didactic play to cultivate a certain intervening attitude” to preface his play *Die Massnahme* [*The Decision* a.k.a. *The Measure Taken*], which recounts the story of a task, an action taken involving various means and decisions.

Four agitators are debating their decision. Five of them had been assigned the task of supporting the Communist movement in China. The youngest of them had acted according to “his heart,” flouting laws and thereby endangering all of them and the assignment. With his consent, the other four killed the youngest one and threw his body into a lime-pit – thus also mutually agreeing to expunge any traces of suspicion.\*

The piece ends with an argument about principles – how grossly one may breach fundamental moral tenets when combatting oppression and exploitation.

This is another didactic work which Brecht modelled on Japanese Noh theatre. It was hotly controversial after its first performance in 1930; Brecht made a second version in 1932.

Due to possible misunderstandings of the play’s political orientation, Brecht forbade its performance; the prohibition was lifted for his 100th birthday in 1998.

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\* Dresden / Staatsschauspiel, 2000/2001 season



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**David Fennessy** (\*1976)

***Sweat of the Sun*** (2015, 2016)

after „Eroberung des Nutzlosen“ by Werner Herzog  
for 2 actors, ensemble of singers and orchestra

0 0 1 0 - 0 0 3 0 - perc(2), cel, e.guit, comp perf, str(4 4 3 3 2)

world première: Munich 2016

75'

cast:

2 actors (male and female)

(the male actor also plays the „large stringed instrument“); vocal ensemble

During the filming of his iconic masterpiece *Fitzcarraldo* in the South American jungle, German movie director Werner Herzog kept a diary which was later published under the title *Eroberung des Nutzlosen (Conquest of the Useless)*. Herzog's book has been an inspiration to David Fennessy who has since discovering it written many compositions which deal with ideas and themes deriving from *Conquest of the Useless*. One of these is his latest music theatre *Sweat of the Sun* which was premiered at the Münchener Biennale – Festival for New Music Theatre.

"It's fair to say that all the thoughts, images and ideas explored in *Sweat of the Sun* have as their starting point the collection of diaries", David Fennessy wrote on his composition and on Herzog's book. "In the end however, that text has become only a part of a constellation of influences that includes the movie *Fitzcarraldo*, Les Blank's documentary *Burden of Dreams*, Verdi's *Rigoletto*, audio recordings of Peruvian conch-shell players, Greek myths, the Christian Passion, theories of monochords, Bavarian folk songs... It seems like the further one sinks inside the text, the further one becomes removed from the particulars of the story and instead gets involved with something deeper and more ambiguous to do with the inner experiences of a protagonist who is searching for... something."

*Sweat of the Sun* is written in three parts which the composer describes as follows: "Musically, the first part consists of two distinct elements – first, everything which is outside of the protagonist; the environment, if you will, and second, that which is inside him; his motivations. The outside is characterised by a surround tapestry of voices; real and imagined while the inside is personified by the body of strings; very physical and raw. A kind of 'motif', which dominates the whole piece, is a slow and inexorable upward glissando.

The second part is characterised by everything which the first part is not. It is quiet, still and remote. I imagined a kind of 'Garden of Gethsemane'. It was really also a chance to delve musically into the images conjured up by Herzog's prose. A mezzo-soprano acts as a guide through this fever dream-scape. The sense of what is real and not real is completely abandoned and instead, we're in the realm of the sensual.

The third part is a 'snap' back to reality, or at least, the reality of the task at hand – to get the ship over the mountain. The presence of an extremely large and somewhat daunting instrument (or is it a machine?) onstage begs the question – what to do with it?! Rather than attempting to replicate the sheer force and physical effort involved in moving the ship, I wanted to explore something more fundamental to the whole concept of the work – the futility and absurdity of the venture. Our protagonist has realised his vision but has also perhaps come to terms with its uselessness.

In the Epilogue of *Conquest of the Useless* Herzog expresses his desire to ultimately escape from the 'vortex of words'. Similarly, in *Sweat of the Sun*, the spoken (or sung) language has become redundant and all that is left is action. The protagonist is left on his own, playing his instrument."



© Eric Marinitsch

**Beat Furrer** (1954)

***Die Blinden*** (1989)

chamber opera in 1 act

text source: Maeterlinck *Les Aveugles*

text editor/translator: Beat Furrer/Stefan Gross

language: German

world première: Vienna 1989

60'

cast:

3 mezzo sopranos

2 female and 6 male voices

choir: 4s, 4a, 4t, 4b

fl., 2 cl. - tpt., 2 tbn., tuba - perc.(3) - vln., vla., 2 vc., cb.

“Not yet awakened and not yet more secure” - Notes on the opera *Die Blinden* by Beat Furrer

The blind ones, who do not know precisely where they are, are awaiting the return of their priestly leader. They find him dead in their midst just before the end of the drama. That is the entire plot of Furrer's opera ***Die Blinden***, from Maurice Maeterlinck's eponymous *Les Aveugles* [*The Blind Ones*], a shortened version of his drama statique joined with fragments of Plato's Cave Allegory and passages from Hölderlin and Rimbaud in a kind of montage. The peril of the darkness arouses longing for the power and energy of the light which Plato and Hölderlin conjure and which Rimbaud emphasises; the four stories are facets of a joint passion. Furrer explains his motivation for making the textual levels into a montage as deriving from “a musical necessity to find various relations of words to music. The Maeterlinck level is homogeneous, calling for homogeneous musical expression; that language is not fractured per se. I could have placed a person in the foreground, but that makes no sense in view of the anonymous society of Maeterlinck's figures – which is why it seemed reasonable to use texts which

were very different from one another. The Cave Allegory is even more stylised, even further from the drama. "The dramatics emerge from the montage. The gradation of the Plato chorus and the Maeterlinck soloists brings Maeterlinck's anonymous society somewhat more into the foreground – Maeterlinck as the central level, the middle, with Plato in the background – and something breaks open in the Rimbaud as if someone were actually torn out. The two Hölderlin passages are caesuras, where a different, slower time takes hold." The montage of texts entails a gradual, dramatic effect of developing from the shadowy silhouettes of Plato's Cave Allegory to the phantasms of Hell in Rimbaud's words. Furrer says that the blind ones are in an endless, bottomless plunge, referring to a poem by Georges Batailles which he also recalled while working on the opera:

Starless night  
 A void extinguished a thousand times  
 Such a scream  
 Bored through you  
 Such a long, long drop  
 [...]

(Christian Scheib - from the CD booklet, *Die Blinden* by Beat Furrer. Klangforum Wien, 1991. WDR/panClassics)

***Narcissus*** (1992, 1994)

opera in 6 scenes

text: Ovidius

libretto: Beat Furrer

language: German

world première: Graz 1994

80'

cast:

soprano

2 speaking roles

8 voices: 2 sopranos, 2 altos, 2 tenors, 2 bass

2 0 2 sax.1 – 2 2 2 1 - perc.(3) - hp., pno, 2 vln, 2 vla., 2 vc., 2 cb.

***Narcissus*** is a full-scale opera – but with very few words. Beat Furrer chose a couple of lines from Ovid's story in the *Metamorphoses* of *Narcissus and Echo*, organising them in six consecutive scenes into a tentative play on the question of "What is real?" – or better, "Who is who?" The prophecy of blind soothsayer Tiresias resounds like a tacit mantra: *Narcissus* will only be granted a long life if he remains a stranger to himself – and the story of his life has a cruel end.

Two groups of musicians are gathered in the orchestra pit: instrumentalists and a small vocal ensemble. The score calls for one female singer and two actors onstage, while audiotape feeds reflect, question and anticipate the live musical events.

*Narcissus* is also the result of a novel kind of cooperation. Furrer dispenses entirely with intimations and parameters for what occurs onstage. His score initiates or discloses dramatic situations without specifying how they are to resolve. Gerald Thomas wrote his piece to the finished, independent libretto – a promptbook with large and small, comical and tragical stories.

Thus can theatre be made, so to speak from back to front – beginning with an idea, an image of an appropriate form, a composer writes his music. The actual libretto came after the score, responding to its sounds. Like a scenario written in advance, the text serves as a basis for the promptbook, which then united onstage with the composer's primal idea. (Holm Keller)



© Priska Ketterer

## **Georg Friedrich Haas** (1953)

### ***Adolf Wölfli*** (1981)

short opera

text after Adolf Wölfli

language: German

world première: 1981 Graz

25'

cast:

baritone

ob, cor.angl., bass cl, bsn, prep.pno, str.quint, tape

“I had just finished my composition studies with Ivan Eröd and Gösta Neuwirth in 1980, I was seeking ways to bring to the surface the things I was feeling inside, when Peter Vujica (general manager of the Styrian Autumn Festival at the time) commissioned me to write a fragmentary chamber opera using material by Adolf Wölfli. At first, I felt somewhat disconcerted; I knew that, for me, setting that text would mean temporarily assuming the identity of the person who had written it, infiltrating his world, understanding it and attempting to make it my own.

I had not heard much about Wölfli – only that he had sexually assaulted a child and been placed in an institution, where he had begun to paint. That aroused some revulsion – was I supposed to identify enough with a person who had done something like that to set a text based on his work? It was with mixed feelings that I went to Bern, where I was confronted for the first time in my life with his works, in the basement at the Adolf Wölfli Foundation building – and I experienced how intensively the power and intensity of his pictures spoke to me. There was the density of the painted leaves, Wölfli’s tangible fear of emptiness, the almost manic overuse of the material he used to infuse the depictions. Image, language and music melted into a virtual unity: pictures into which literary texts and a music lost forever were written – in musical notation which no one other than Wölfli himself could decode.

In Wölfli I saw an infinitely lonely man – alone with his past, with his feelings of guilt, helplessly at the mercy of an insane asylum. As a drowning man grasps at a straw, he

reached for what the institution could offer him: “edifying literature.” Travelogues, songbooks, atlases and lexicons – but whatever he reached for broke away in his hands, failed in the light of his guilt (doubtless impressed on him repeatedly). Yes, guilt – and knowing that guilt – but there was also the desperate, hopeless attempt to eradicate that guilt by painting it away, writing it away, composing it away. [...]” (G.F.Haas)

### **Melancholia** (2007)

opera in 3 parts

libretto: Jon Fosse, after the first part of his novel “Melancholy”

language: German

world première: Paris 2008

90’

cast:

Helene, soprano

Lars, bass-baritone

5 smaller parts (out of the chamber choir)

Frau Winckelmann, soprano

Kellnerin, dramatic soprano

Alfred, countertenor

Bodom, tenor

Herr Winckelmann, bass

10 roles, 24-strong choir (6-part chamber choir (s, ms, a, t, bar, b))

1 1 1 1 - 2 1 1 0 - perc(2), acc, pno, sax, vln(4), vla(2), vc(3), cb(2)

Melancholia as the topic of an opera? A gloomy protagonist who puts himself to bed or stares at the floor when he is affronted? This opera, the fourth by Austrian composer Georg Friedrich Haas (libretto by Norwegian author Jon Fosse) is entirely contradictory to the logic of contemporary advertising which the world apparently heeds. Yet Melancholia steers much closer to life than the colourful, swirling world of advertising, where women are always smiling, men are never losers and where nothing ever gets broken.

Everything breaks down for the main character in Melancholia, Lars Hertervig, on a day in late autumn 1853. He is a Norwegian student attending the Düsseldorf Academy of Art; he is 23, a talented painter – and he has fallen undyingly in love with his landlord’s 15-year-old niece, Helene Winckelmann. Her uncle throws him out of the house at once, whereupon he lands in the local pub, where his beery fellow students literally drive Lars, the quiet outsider, to madness with their taunts. And when he finally returns to Helene again, full of hope, Herr Winckelmann calls the police to take him away without further ado. Thus from one day to the next, Lars loses his flat, his place at the academy, his great love, his self-confidence as an artist and, in a way, his mind.



Jon Fosse reworked his own, sensational novel *Melancholia* (1995-1996) into a subtle opera libretto especially for Haas. It is based on the biography of painter Lars Hertervig, who was born 1830 on the Norwegian island of Borgøy and moved to Düsseldorf in 1852. The story's moving profundity is due both to Fosse's extraordinary language and to what he sets in motion on that one day he recounts; Hertervig returns to Sweden, paints unreal-yet-naturalistic landscapes, and spends some time in the Gaustad insane asylum in Christiania. Destitute, he uses newspaper, tobacco packets and bits of wallpaper for his canvas during the last decades of his life before his death in Stavanger in 1902. From today's perspective, his pictures number among the most visionary masterpieces of 19th-century landscape painting. [...] (Bernhard Günther)

***Nacht*** (1996)

chamber opera in 24 scenes  
 text after Friedrich Hölderlin  
 libretto: Georg Friedrich Haas  
 language: German  
 world première: Bregenz Festival 1996  
 75'

cast:  
 soprano  
 mezzo-soprano  
 tenor  
 baritone  
 bass  
 narrator

1 0 2 1 - 0 0 3 2 - perc(4), acc, vln, vln, vla, vc(4), cb(3)

Composer Georg Friedrich Haas began dealing with the concept of *Night* at an early stage. Although it still fascinates him, the "feeling of emotionally tinted wellbeing" he initially associated with the word "night" in his early works is fundamentally different from what it means to him in his opera *Nacht* ["Night"], where it is suggestive of hopelessness, mental derangement and loss of reality and utopias, as opposed to his earlier romantic notions.

The opera is a collage of letters and works by Friedrich Hölderlin; apart from letters the poet wrote to his beloved Suzette Gontard, it includes excerpts from *Hyperion* (his *Entwicklungsroman*), his play *Der Tod des Empedokles* [*The Death of Empedocles*] and his translation of Sophocles' *Oedipus the Tyrant*. Haas has applied skilful montage of the quotations to raise their explosive political topicality to prominence, just as Hölderlin's works and personal biography manifest his sense of loss of utopias. For Haas, Hölderlin's disappointment at the outcome of the French Revolution distinctly parallels a loss of political utopias today.

But unlike Hyperion, Haas is not interested in the closed form, the straight-line development from one point to another; for him, such concepts are remote from any reality. What he wishes to make clear – in his music and in the dramaturgy of *Nacht* – is what is expressed in French as *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* – that “the same things keep recurring, but always in different circumstances” – that the only possible development lies in revealing contextual ties.



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## **Roman Haubenstock-Ramati** (1919-1994)

### ***Comédie/Play/Spiel*** (1967)

anti-opera in 1 act

for tape and live-electronics

text author: Samuel Beckett

language: French

world première: St. Paul 1969

35'

Spotlights shine alternately on two women and one man (soprano, mezzo-soprano, baritone), who are thrust into urns, each illumination tantamount to a conductor's entry. All three recite their parts individually – in isolation, as it were – without knowledge of what the other two are saying. "Spiel" almost suggests the record of a court trial in which the three parties involved are interrogated as persons being "indicted." And the examining magistrate of the Inquisition (which, within the prescribed schema, can be arbitrarily extended) is light; the punishment is endlessness.

### ***Divertimento***

for 2 actors, 1 dancer, 2 percussionists

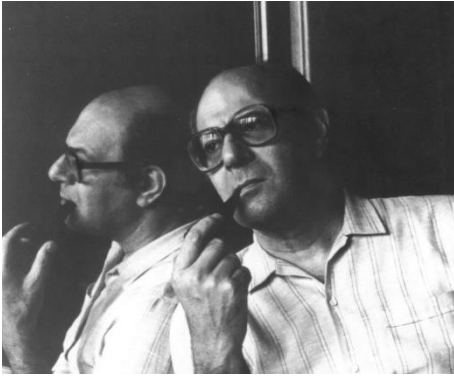
text author: Plato

libretto: Roman Haubenstock-Ramati

world première: Stockholm 1969

17'

2 actors, 1 dancers (actors), 2 perc



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**Mauricio Kagel** (1931-2008)

***Atem*** (1969, 1970)

for 1 player

world première: Darmstadt 1970

15'–25'

one player and at least 3 wind instruments (free choice)  
to be played either consecutively or simultaneously

***Camera Oscura*** (1965)

chromatic play

for light sources and actors

world première: Cologne 1976

14'

3 actors

***Ensemble*** (1967-1969)

No. 3 from *Staatstheater* (original work: *Staatstheater* – scenic composition)

for 16 voices (smaller cast possible)

world première: Hamburg 1971

min. 15'

the work requires typical opera voices, such as:

4 sopranos: Queen of the night, soubrette, Aïda; lyric sopranos

4 alto voices: Carmen, young dramatic: Elsa, high dramatic wagner-singer, Erda

4 tenors: tenor buffo, Ottavio-Tamino, Siegfried, Rigoletto

2 baritones: french baritone, lyric baritone

2 basses: bassbuffo, basso profondo

***Freifahrt*** (1967, 1970)

No. 8 from *Staatstheater*

sliding chamber music for 18 to 36 players

world première: Hamburg 1971

minimum 10'

freely chosen ensemble setup of windinstruments, percussion- and strings (min. 6 instr. of each group).

***Hallelujah*** (1967-1968)

for voices

world première: Stuttgart 1969

15'–40'

3 cast versions:

a) choir (4s, 4a, 4t, 4b)

b) speaking choir (8s, 8a, 8t, 8b)

c) singing and speaking choir together

***Die Himmelsmechanik*** (1965)

composition in 5 stage sets

world première: Venice 1969

minimum 15'

The realization of the scenic actions on stage depends on the available equipment. Sounds which interact with these actions are produced by standard equipment: storm machines, drums and so on.

***Kantrimusik*** (1973, 1975)

Pastorale

for voices and instrument

world première: Köln 1976

48'

cl(Bb), tpt(C), bass tuba in F/C, vln, pno (ad lib.: also "western piano"), 2 guitar players (instruments are: octave guitar, spanish guit, ukulele, mand, tenorbjo and freely chosen others). All players also play different percussion instruments. (ad lib.). 3 singers: high soprano, mezzo-soprano and tenor (this ensemble can be adapted ad lib.), they can even be part of the piece as a pre-recorded tape.

Obligatory: Playback of 4 tape parts with recordings of sounds from the countryside on hire from the publisher.

***Kommentar + Extempore*** (1966, 1967)

soliloquy with gestures

world première: 1967 Frankfurt am Main

30'

2 female actors, 1 male actor (or vice versa)

1–3 tapes (7 free to choose brass instruments)

**Ludwig van** (1969)

homage to Beethoven  
for various instruments  
world première: 1970 Madrid  
15'

**Match** (1964)

for 3 players  
world première: 1965 Berlin  
18'

2 violoncellos, perc (2 cymbal (hand), 1 hanging cymbal, 1 sizzle-cymbal, 1 marimba, 1 snare drum, 1 bass drum, 2 castanets, 2 ratchet, 1 sistrum, 2 hand bells, 1 bell, 2 brackets, 1 flexatone, 1 large Waldteufel, 2 whistles, 1 chinese monkey drum, 2 dice cups, 5 cubes)

**Parkett** (1967, 1970)

No. 9 from *Staatstheater*. Operatic concert mass scene  
for 10–76 players and 10–76 singers  
world première: 1971 Hamburg  
20'

**Pas de cinq** (1965)

A moving scene  
for 5 actors  
world première: 1966 Munich  
15'

**Phonophonie** (1963)

4 melodramas  
for 2 voices and gramophone records  
world première: 1965 München  
25'

1 baritone, 1 voice off stage, 2 tapes. For the recording of the tape 3–6 percussion players and 3 speakers or singers (2 male and 1 female voice, or the other way round), large perc. set. 2 tape recorders and 4 loudspeakers for playback.

**Recitativarie** (1971-1972)

No. 8 from *Programm. Gespräche mit Kammermusik*  
for singing harpsichord player  
1 female singing cembalist  
world première: Cologne 1972  
6'

**Repertoire** (1967, 1970)

No. 8 from *Staatstheater*, scenic concert  
for 5 or more actors or instrumentalists  
world première: 1971 Hamburg  
20'–60'

min. 5 performers (musicians or actors) are necessary for the 100 actions. The instruments consist mostly of props which are used for sound production. There are also plucked and wind instruments. The performers act in front of a screen (ca. 7m x 2.30m). A selection of actions is possible (order ad libitum).

**Saison** (1970)

No. 5 from *Staatstheater*  
song play in 65 scenes  
for mixed choir a cappella  
world première: Hamburg 1971  
minimum 20'

16–76 voices  
large numbers of different objects

**Staatstheater** (1967, 1970)

combines all numbers of *Staatstheater* mentioned  
world première: Hamburg 1971  
maximum 100'

**Tremens** (1963-1965)

scenic montage of a test  
for 2 actors, electric instruments, percussion, tapes and projections  
world première: 1966 Bremen  
45'

instruments 1: electric guitar, electric bass guitar, electric double bass, hammond organ; perc (tambourine, waldteufel, small chinese drum, snare drum, 2 bongos, hi-hat (from chinese cymbal), 2 singing saws, siren, small motor with speed pedal, 2 sinus and rectangle generators, 3 contact microphones): 1 player;  
instruments 2 (for pre-recording): spanish guitar, five string contrabass; perc (timpani or free to chooses membranophone instrument, 2 waldteufel, 2 singing saws): 1 player; 1 stereo- and 2 mono-tape recorders, 4 loudspeaker, 1 microphone, 3 diasopes. Tapes available from the publisher (on demand)

**Variationen über Tremens** (1963-1965)

scenic montage of a test  
for 2 actors, tapes and projections  
world première: Knokke 1967  
25'

1 stereo and 2 mono tape recorders, 3 diasopes (ad lib. 1 film projector add.), 2 walkie-talkies, 1 singing saw, bike horns, 2 steel ribbon, magnets

***Zwei-Mann-Orchester*** (1971-1973)

for 2 "One-man-Bands"

world première: Donaueschingen 1973

45'–60'

2 "orchestermaschinen" [ad lib. synthesizer with a third musician] Musicians are sitting on separated podiums in a distance of 8 meters from each other. Around them there are the instruments in a close but transparent setup– together with pedals, wheels, machine parts and so on: an "orchestermaschine". Place for the audience is to the right and left of the orchestermaschine.

[The 3rd player (with synthesizer) is to be seated in the first row of the audience.]





© Jan Bebel

## **Zygmunt Krauze** (1938)

### ***The Star*** (1981)

chamber opera

text: Helmut Kajzar

language: French, German (translation by Peter Lachenmann)

world première: Mannheim 1982

50'

cast:

2 sopranos

2 mezzo-sopranos

2 altos

t.sax, tpt, perc(1), acc, e.guit, vln, cb

***The Star*** (former title *Die Kleider*) is a kind of inner monologue, the drama of a great actress or a singer, who wants to define her identity and is frantically recalling her previous roles, as well as gestures, words and fragments of roles she barely remembers. *The Star* is a play about love, isolation, falling down and rising, pain, rebellion, invincibility, longing, memory, harmony and conflict. It is about dresses, about actors, and about us being aware of our limits and our flaws. It may sound solemn, but *The Star* is not afraid of striving for the highest note, pathos, which has its opposite side in ridicule. (Zygmunt Krauze)

Sensing the actor's fate, contemporary Polish author Helmut Kajzar reveals the entanglement of an individual with himself and in his societal situation. He has selected the figure of an actress, to clarify a general manifestation; we all play roles offered to us by an imaginary casting agency outside of us, thus thwarting our own identity. This image is further reinforced by the title *Kleider*; clothing represents characteristics which the actress pictures to herself, turning her into a queen, a noble maiden – yet at the same time preventing her from finding herself – and that inability to find herself leads to deterioration of her personality and ultimately to the death of her soul. Yet physically she lives on, apparently enabling her at first to continue to exist – but even becoming a mother, bearing an actual child, can no longer be assumed as a way of renewing herself against that existential background. This voided life is presented through a variety of roles which lead their own unconnected lives. (Leo Habinger; Excerpts from the program notes of the world première at Nationaltheater Mannheim 1982)



© Pfeifer

**Ernst Krenek** (1900–1991)

***Tarquin*** (1940)

chamber opera in 2 acts (8 scenes)

text author: Emmet Lavery

language: English

world première: Cologne 1950

120'

cast:

Marius, baritone

Corinna, soprano

Cleon, tenor

Der Erzbischof, bass

Der Kanzler, tenor

4 speaking roles (Bruno, Reporter, Tonio, Officer)

clarinet in Bb; trumpet in C; violin; percussion(1); 1st piano; 2nd piano

With ***Tarquin***, Ernst Krenek and his librettist Emmet Lavery have attempted to understand the emergence of dictatorship and terror using the stories of exemplary characters.

Initially, the plot follows a simple pattern:

Two youths compete for the love of a girl and for first place in school. Marius, the youth who loses, goes out into the world and becomes a dictator, suppressing his former identity and calling himself Tarquin thenceforth, unleashing a war and establishing a regime of terror.

Cleon, the other youth, becomes a scientist; he is physically disabled due to a failed experiment. Corinna, the girl, becomes a doctor.

The country is in a state of civil war. Cleon operates a secret radio transmitter, while Corinna takes care of the wounded on both sides of the conflict. The people revere her as a saint.

When the three former friends meet again, the suppressed human side of the dictator reawakens - Tarquin increasingly loses control, while his regime has long since taken on a life of its own.

The characters in the work are allegorical: the dictator, the fool, the good woman, church, art, politics, radio, warmonger. (Mascha Pörzgen)



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**Darius Milhaud** (1892-1974)

***Délivrance de Thésée*** (1927)

opéra-minute in 6 scenes

libretto: Henri Hoppenot

language: French, German

world première: Wiesbaden 1928

10'

Aricia, mezzo soprano;

Phædra, soprano;

Hippolytos, baritone;

Theramenes, baritone;

Theseus, tenor;

vocal quartett: satb

1 1 1 1 - 1 1 0 0 - timp., perc. - str.

***L'Enlèvement d'Europe*** (1927)

opéra-minute in 8 scenes

libretto: Henri Hoppenot

language: French; German; English

world première: Baden-Baden 1927

10'

cast:

Agenor, bass

Pergamon, baritone

Zeus as bull, tenor

Europa, soprano

vocal sextet: satb

**L'Abandon d'Ariane** (1927)

opéra-minute in 5 scenes

libretto: Henri Hoppenot

language: French, German, English

world première: Wiesbaden 1928

10'

cast:

Ariadne, soprano

Phædra, soprano

Theseus, tenor

Dionysos, baritone

vocal sextet: satb

2 1 2 1 - 1 2 0 0 - timp, perc, str

Four years after the composition of the Sixth Symphony, Milhaud received a commission from Paul Hindemith, director of a festival of new music at Baden-Baden. Every year Hindemith chose a theme. That for the 1927 festival was to be operas as short as possible. Whereas Toch's *Prinzessin auf der Erbse* lasts some 50 minutes, Weill's *Mahagonny* about 30, and Hindemith's own *Hin und Zurück* zwölf, Milhaud's contribution, *L'Enlèvement d'Europe*, only lasts about ten minutes.

Milhaud asked his friend Henri Hoppenot, a diplomat by career but writer in his spare time, to write as short a libretto as possible. Hoppenot wrote a "minute-opera" as they called it, which for all its brevity includes most of the typical operatic elements: choruses, arias, duets, ensembles. In fact the opera has the distinction of appearing in the "Guinness Book of Records".

*L'Enlèvement d'Europe* was composed partly in Budapest and partly in Grinzing, a suburb of Vienna, where Milhaud was staying at the home of his friend Emil Hertzka, director of the publishing company Universal Edition. The latter attended the first performance and at once said to Milhaud: "What an idea, an opera that only lasts nine minutes! Now... if you would only write me a trilogy..." (Notes without Music, p.173). The idea appealed to Milhaud and he again had recourse to Hoppenot for two librettos in the same vein. Yet Hoppenot was "lazy, or rather, too involved on official duties, and took an endless amount of time to send me the other librettos" (My music written for the theatre, unpublished lecture). This accounts for the four-month gap between the composition of *Europe* and that of the two other operas-minute, a gap which included the première of the first, at Baden-Baden on the 17th July 1927. **L'Abandon d'Ariane** was written in only two days (5-6 August 1927) and lasts some nine minutes. *La Délivrance de Thésée*, lasting eight minutes, was finished on the 18th of the same month, having no doubt been started just a few days before. These two operas were composed at l'Enclos, Milhaud's country house near Aix-en-Provence.



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**Alexander Mossolov** (1900–1973)

***Der Held / The Hero*** (1926)

chamber opera in 1 act (3 images)

libretto: Alexander Wassiljewitsch Mossolow

original language: English, German

world première: Berlin 2001

30'

cast:

Sie, soprano

Er, tenor

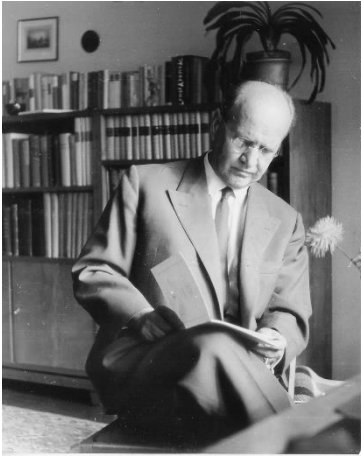
Der Freund, tenor

Der Fremde, tenor

Der Professor, baritone

three minor roles

1(also picc.) 1 1 1 - 1 1 1 0 - timp., perc.(3) - str.: 4 4 2 2 2



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**Edmund Nick** (1891-1974)

***Leben in dieser Zeit*** (1929)

lyric suite in three movements

text: Erich Kästner

language: German

world première: 1930 Leipzig

58'

cast:

Chansonette, soprano or mezzo-soprano

Schmidt, tenor or baritone

speaker

1 1 2 0 - 0 2 1 1 - Bandoneon, timp, perc(4), hp, cel, harm, pno(2), alto sax(Eb),  
t.sax(Bb), mand, mand, bjo, guit, str

speaking choir: satb

The music of the big city by Kurt Weill from *The Threepenny Opera* numbers among the influential models for the chanson series by Edmund Nick and Erich Kästner premièred during the same year: ***Leben in dieser Zeit***. A title already anticipating programmatically what is involved here: a picture of society at the end of the Golden Twenties and – what nobody could imagine might come – on the eve of the Great Depression. The massive economic collapse in all the industrial nations, which led, among other things, to the insolvency of business enterprises and massive unemployment, admittedly had its quite visible omens of doom in the collapse of the stock market on the New York Stock Exchange on 24/25 October 1929, which would go into history as Black Thursday/Black Friday. [...]

*Leben in dieser Zeit* does not have a plot in the classical sense. The authors were also not sure about its generic classification; this experiment was too new for that. What was performed and printed as a Lyric Suite in Three Movements they also termed a radio play, a secular oratorio, and a cantata. Characterizing the content rather than describing

it, Kästner stated in the program of the Altona City Theater in 1931, "One will hardly call our cantata pious. It is a secular cantata. It addresses itself to the inhabitants of the big city, it presents to their eyes and ears people of their own kind, it demonstrates their concerns, their futile wishes, and their methods for mastering "Life in these Times" as difficult as it is to bear. The contemporary piece in fact cannot be described with a clear sketch or a plot; it involves themes from its times but not dramaturgical courses of action. [...]" (Uwe Schneider and Ernst Theis)





© Robert Golden

**Nigel Osborne** (1948)

***Hell's Angels*** (1985)

chamber opera in 2 acts

libretto: David Freeman / text editor: David Nigel

language: English

world première: London 1986

120'

cast:

high sopranos: 1st Angel, Salome, Lucrezia

sopranos: 2nd and 3rd Angel, Jungfrau Maria, Helena (from Troja), Heloise/Eloise, Agrippina

mezzosoprano: Magdalena

tenors: Jesus, Pope, Chevalier

bassbaritones: Cherub, God, The Boy, Foreign Minister, 2. and 3. Man, Burcardi

basses: Satan, Puppenspieler

Further roles: Cardinal, Priest, Bishop, Cesare Borgia, Casper/Cafper Pietro, Don Gianni, Pulcinella, Gemmata, Mädchen, 1., 2. und 3. actor, 1., 2. and 3. Mann, Die Frau, Farnese, Laura, Vanozza

1 0 1 0 – 1 1 0 0 - perc. - hp. - vln., vla., vc.

"[...] This was Nigel Osborne's first opera [...]]. The starting point for ***Hell's Angels***, however, was a play, *The Council of Love*, by the late 19th-century dramatist Oskar Panizza, which tells the story of a divine retribution on the court of the Borgia Pope Alexander VI in 1494. God looks down upon his representative on earth and does not like what he sees; he calls a *Council of Love in Heaven* to decide how he should punish his subjects for their debauchery and corruption. Satan is asked to help, and he suggests a plan: he invents syphilis and introduces it into the papal court carried by a beautiful woman.

For *Hell's Angels*, however, Osborne and Freeman give the scenario a contemporary parallel, interweaving the 15th-century saga with Heaven and Earth in the present,

when the Papacy is again under threat, this time for being too honest – the new Pope is in favour of birth control and wants to rid the Vatican of the taint of financial jiggery-pokery; he ends up poisoned by his aides. God is stirred into action again, a second Council of Love is summoned, and Satan's solution this time is even more specific – he invents AIDS. The opera ends with the infected youth sent into the world to exact revenge. [...]” (OPERA magazine / 3 / 1986 / Andrew Clements)

***Terrible Mouth*** (1992)

musical theatre

libretto: Howard Barker

language: English

world première: London 1992

120'

cast:

high soprano

2 mezzo sopranos

tenor

baritone

bass baritone

bass

actor

choir: s, ms, b and 3 actors

flute (also piccolo and alto-flute), oboe (also cor anglais) - horn - perc - harp - 6 vc.



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**Henri Pousseur** (1929-2009)

***Votre Faust*** (1961, 1968)

variable work in the operatic genre

libretto: Henri Pousseur, Michel Butor

language: French, German

world première: Gelsenkirchen 1982

duration: variable 150'–180'

cast:

Der Bassist

Die Altistin

Die Sopranistin

Der Tenor

actors: Der Theaterdirektor; Henri; Maggy; Die Sängerin; Die Schauspielerin

1 0 1 1 - 1 1 0 0 - perc, hp, pno, alto sax, vln, vc, cb



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**Wolfgang Rihm** (1952)

***Faust und Yorick*** (1976)

chamber opera for soli and orchestra

original author: Jean Tardieu

libretto: Frithjof Haas; German translation of Tardieu's text: Manfred Fusten

language: German

world première: Mannheim 1977

50'

cast:

Der Gelehrte, baritone

Die Mutter, alto

Die Frau, mezzo-soprano

Die Tochter, mezzo-soprano

Der Reporter, tenor

4 Studenten: soprano, alto, tenor, bass

1 1 1 1 - 0 2 1 0 – perc, hp, cel, cemb, pno, e.org, vln, vla, vc, cb

Wolfgang Rihm wrote *Thinking of Busoni* as the dedication of his Chamber Opera No. 3, which premiered in its new stage version (1976/77) at the Lower Saxony State Opera.

The work's name and title are merely highly associative allusions having little to do with either Goethe or Shakespeare. The ingenious idea behind it is a quite timeless notion –to juxtapose the irresolute Hamlet character with another actor, masked as a Faustian savant and possessed by his obsessive researches – the veritable tragedy of a scholar.

Struggling with time as it constantly trickles away, the hero's persona splits, fragmenting its own individuality, its originality, ignoring elementary aspects of human emotions; mother, wife, daughter, children and grandchildren become insignificant sacrifices in the endeavour serving merely to research the human brain, its expansion, its development.

But then the researcher's monomania and his infallibility switch places; scholarship, the institutions which had formerly ignored him, suddenly acknowledge him – and as he is being awarded honours, praise and medals, the hero dies. His students, to whom he was a foil, open the dead man's skull, only to discover that he himself had the largest brain of all (something he had sought in vain in others) – a grotesque, macabre joke.

The premiere of this new version – achieved with the composer's genial accord – deciphers as it were the "permanent gravity of the scholar's situation as he confronts his un-lived life and is forced to perceive the latent ludicrousness of his actions." That results in an overlapping of scenes and unveiling of stage settings, like in a film, achieving the cognitive periphery the composer endeavoured to attain: "the multifaceted richness of playful, associative, semi-absurd music – fleeing into the drastic and immediately finding shelter in dissociative compassion." (Lower Saxony State Theatre Hanover, 1997 – Günther Roth)

### **Jakob Lenz** (1977–78)

chamber opera for soli and chamber ensemble

source text: Lenz by Georg Büchner

libretto: Michael Fröhlig

original language: German

world première: Hamburg 1979

75'

cast:

Lenz, baritone

Oberlin, bass

Kaufmann, tenor

6 voices: 2 sopranos, 2 altos, 2 basses; 2 or 4 children

0 2 1 1 - 0 1 1 0 - perc(1), hpsd, vc(3); décor:1

With **Jakob Lenz** the then 25-year old Wolfgang Rihm produced perhaps the most successful music theatre work of recent decades; speaking of its Hamburg première in 1979, he said: The stage representation of someone like *Jakob Lenz* is complicated simply by the fact that he hides several 'stages' within himself. These everpresent stages must be re-presented in the music. Hundreds of performances in the subsequent years testify to the fact that Rihm succeeded brilliantly in this aim.

"[...] Büchner's Lenz describes the state of a process of decay, incidents of destruction already complete but not yet accepted. This becomes evident at the moments where [the play] touches on the environment – and, in turn, those moments are the ones which Michael Fröhling attempted to reconstruct onstage. Lenz is constant in his derangement; it is only the proximity of the environment to that derangement which grows and wanes.

The musical consequence

Büchner's description became an hour of radical chamber music; always animated by the main character – without commentary, actually – taking the main character himself as the basis for its multilayered action. Although Lenz acts – or tries to act, or thinks he is acting – on many levels, he has no space in which to move. That is why he is tightly enmeshed in the sound enveloping him. The voices – which only he hears – are as much himself as the two men he encounters (the liberal pragmatist Oberlin and the alert merchant who always “does the right thing” in every situation), who bring forth responses which he most deeply desires. Ubiquitous Friederike is just as much his inner world as nature, which he can no longer perceive or personalise – livened or dead. Thus the music is always confronted with the bipartite task of motivating “situation” (with mood, atmosphere) and being a psychological constant during a performance (employing a network of references enmeshed per se).

#### The compositional process

December 1977 to June 1978 – was identical with the gradual development of a subsistence like that of *Jakob Lenz*. Yet the more precisely the facts and atmosphere of his life became clear to my intellect, the more the historical figure himself retreated, made way for a cipher of destruction which I then understood Lenz to be. That explains why the attempts to approach him – including my effort to interpret him in music – miscarried, because Lenz himself was essentially the miscarriage. Only the bare-bones stages of his failure could be portrayed – thus including the failure of those who want to “help” him, for instance – whereas Lenz himself is already frozen inextricably in a state of utter destruction. I tried to feel my way into such a situation as much as possible while composing; rhythmic and harmonic constellations persistently intrude – they are the palpable expression of the main character's chronic rigidity. [...]” (Wolfgang Rihm, January 1979)

#### ***Séraphin*** (1993–1996)

*Versuch eines Theaters – Instrumente/Stimmen/...nach Antonin Artaud ohne Text* (2nd state)

for soli and ensemble (without text)

world première: Stuttgart 1996

70'

cast:

3 mezzo-sopranos

3 altos

2 baritones

1 0 1 0 - 0 1 1 0 - 1. part, 2. part, perc(2), hp, vla, vc, cb

A piece of music? A piece of music theatre? A species of theatre, “born out of the spirit of the music?” A music theatre piece where “the event is protagonist?”

The idea to create something new for music theatre matured in the composer on reading “Le théâtre de Séraphin” – texts by Artaud and Baudelaire bearing the same title, both poetical in nature and at the same time to do with the theory of the theatre. These texts constitute the spiritual background; words in the piece are substituted by phonemes - a special challenge, perhaps, for a new type of singer/actor.

Rihm has conceived two “characters” for **Séraphin** – one created by two male voices (two baritones), the other “born out of the body of six female voices (three mezzo-sopranos and three altos), stretched out in space”, enveloping the audience. The female voices either sing live or from a multi-track tape. Independently from these (“acoustic”) characters, non-singing actors may also play out events on stage. The characters portrayed are not necessarily “male” or “female” – this particular aspect of action on stage has not (yet) been definitively decided on and may well remain open. Rihm calls the two characters “the one and the other double”.

### **Séraphin III** (2006–2007)

Jan Fabre: I am a Mistake  
world première: 2007 Athens  
70’

cast:  
female narrator;  
2 baritones

1 1 1 0 - 0 1 1 0 – perc(2), hp, pno(2), vln, vla, vc, cb

This work, premiered in Athens, is the first cooperation project of Belgian artist Jan Fabre and German composer Wolfgang Rihm, based on Fabre’s text (which also gave the piece its title) and dedicated to subversive filmmaker Louis Bunuel and Atonin Artaud, two artistically related personalities.

Written in 1988, the words are a manifesto, also readable as an artist’s declaration of faith. The virtually unadorned confession “I am a mistake” acts as a mantra, constantly repeated and also dictating the rhythm; while speaking the text, the voice weaves a kind of matrix of confessions and meanings, sometimes metaphorically reflecting the artist himself and occasionally turning accusatory in tone – a protest against reality and its rules, against factuality and its conformism.

“I am extremely loyal to the pleasure which is trying to kill me” (from *I am a mistake*); “I am a mistake because I shape my life and my work to harmonise very organically, making them dependent only on my own judgement, and ignoring whether it is politically correct.”

This quotation may be taken directly as a candid summation of Jan Fabre’s world-view – and as the reciter’s voice clearly says, there is a price to be paid for such candour, namely progressive self-destruction. Fabre makes self-affirmation and disdain for all artifice and laws of Nature crystal-clear, through the reciter’s constant repetitions and

the inveterate smoking onstage; flagrant praise of cigarettes, co-existent with awareness of their hazardousness, only serve to reinforce "the pleasure which is trying to kill me," to which Fabre is "extremely loyal." The End hovers closely nearby after a monologue at once lyrical and delirious, "because I am immortal."

Rihm set this textual excess to make a composition performed by "an actor infected with music" who can capture "the context of my music in Sprechgesang." Rihm's and Fabre's interdisciplinary collaboration fuses in a multimedia spectacle combining film, music (played live by Freiburg's Ensemble recherche), language, songs and dance. Chantal Akerman was responsible for the film sequences. (Wien Modern Catalogue 2007 – from a German translation by Thomas Schäfer)





© Minna Ronnefeld

**Peter Ronnefeld** (1935–1965)

***Nachtausgabe*** (1955–1956)

opera piccola in 5 scenes

new version by Ernst Märzendorfer (1987)

libretto: Peter Ronnefeld

language: German

world première: Salzburg 1956

cast:

Frau Becker, bass

Frau Pachulke, soprano

Renée, soprano

Ping, tenor

Lothar Witzlaw, baritone

Mario, tenor

Stilblüte, tenor

Kommissar, baritone

Wachtmeister, Sprechrolle

Mädchen — female dancer

X, Y, Z: 3 male dancers

1 1 1 1 – 1 2 1 0 - timp., perc.(2) - pno. - str.

Peter Ronnefeld was only 20 when he composed his chamber opera ***Nachtausgabe*** – opera piccola in 5 scenes (1955-56). It was not his first work for the stage, but earlier ones only survive as fragments. Ronnefeld was already teaching at the time at the Mozarteum in Salzburg; he wrote *Nachtausgabe* mainly for his students' study purposes at the International Summer Academy. Although it is a modern opera buffa, its subject is timeless – it is about sensational stories, gossip and tittle-tattle in the tabloid press, the persons involved and scandal-sheet readers. Ronnefeld brought his great musical and linguistic talents to bear in a manner reminiscent of his own personality - shrewd, impudent, ironically jocular. In conversation, his contemporaries all mention Ronnefeld's sparkling sense of humour, obviously not forgotten; even Thomas Bernhard (who had a speaking role at the premiere performance) said afterwards that he had never laughed so much as he did during the time he spent with Peter Ronnefeld, one of his best friends.\*

Boris Blacher, Ronnefeld's teacher, was the musical influence; Ronnefeld esteemed him highly, and his stimulus is plainly evident. The freely tonal composition bristles with brilliant ideas, for example the moment when the reporter, a singer on the telephone, receives the replies to his words from the orchestra in a sonic jumble of voices – punch lines are often triggered by the instruments in the ensemble instead of human voices. Ernst Märzendorfer reworked the piece in 1987, leaving the opera's essentials untouched but carefully "smoothing it over." For instance, a secretary now has a mezzo part, Bernhard's speaking role at the premiere is now sung and the music regrouped in some places. The press was uniformly enthralled at the premiere when the new version was given in 1987 (on the studio stage of the Vienna State Opera in the Künstlerhaus); many of the Austrian and German media raised their voices to praise the work and the performers to the skies.

\* Thomas Bernhard, letter to the editor of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper on 20 February 1987. It was published with the title „...allerdings nur als Bass-Stimmführer“.



© Ben Wright

**David Sawer** (1961)

***The Panic*** (1991)

chamber opera

libretto: Godfrey Paul

language: English

world première: London 1991

40'

roles: soprano, tenor, baritone and bass

fl, tbn, hp, pno, vla, cb

"The stories of three young people in a contemporary love triangle collide with the appearance of the mythical figure of Pan." (David Sawer)

***The Lighthouse Keepers*** (2012–2013)

for 2 actors and ensemble

text: *Gardiens de phare* by Paul Autier and Paul Cloquemin

English adaption by David Harrower

language: English

world première: July 2013

25'

"***The Lighthouse Keepers*** is a setting of a short 1905 Grand Guignol play, scored for two speakers and nine musicians. The piece is performed like a radio play, on a bare stage with no visuals, and lasts about 25 mins.

A father and son are lighthouse keepers, trapped in a violent storm. The father is forced to choose whether to kill his son, or to save a boat from shipwreck. The original French play has been adapted by Scottish playwright David Harrower.

The text is spoken, the actors' voices will be miked and the rhythms and dynamics of their speech precisely notated in the score. The ensemble includes percussion and sound effects. I am excited by the possibilities of writing for spoken voice and instruments, and of portraying the volatile relationship between father and son." (David Sawer)



© Jonathan Irons

## **Johannes Maria Staud** (\*1974)

### ***Berenice*** (2003-2004, 2006)

opera after Edgar Allan Poe

text author: Edgar Allan Poe

libretto: Durs Grünbein

language: German

world première: Munich 2004

85'

cast:

Egaeus 1, actor

Egaeus 2, bassbaritone

Berenice, soprano

Der Vamp, mezzo-soprano

Edgar Allen Poe, actor

Das Hausmädchen, high soprano in the choir

Die tote Mutter, alto in the choir

Der Hausarzt, bass in the choir

Ein Diener, tenor in the choir

Chor der Familiengeister, mixed 8-part vocal ensemble

1 0 1 0 - 1 2 1 1 - perc(2), harm, pno, sax, vln(2), vla(2), vc(2), cb(1), tape, live-electronics

Two young cousins grow up together - she is lively and full of energy, and he escapes into the virtual reality of the world of books - an almost "archetypical pair of opposites" (Staud). They discover love. But both of them become ill - she contracts tuberculosis, he falls victim to psychic obsession. This arabesque by Edgar Allan Poe provides the foundation for Johannes Maria Staud's opera. It gradually but incessantly moves toward "pure horror" (Staud). The inner tension is intensified by the allusions in the narrative structure, by what is left unsaid. Durs Grünbein's libretto adheres closely to Poe's short story, including the language. He added two persons to the cast of characters: the author Poe and a vamp, which also brings another interweaving of reality and fiction to the story. This draws the audience more into the story than Poe's text does. Johannes Maria Staud's composition "recalls the strengths of music: to suggest, to allude, to illustrate, to deceive, to seduce, to manipulate." The main characters are represented by

a specific musical aura, which is determined by rhythm, harmony and elementary motif nuclei. Pre-recorded sounds on tape are mixed like installations into the live music. Nothing is foreseeable, although everything is forced to develop the way it does - just like in Poe's short story. (Extract from the programme book of the Munich Festival 2004)



© Werner Scholz

**Karlheinz Stockhausen** (1928-2007)

***Oben und unten*** (1968)

play from No. 26 *Aus den 7 Tagen*

world première: Holland Festival 1969

minimum 40'

cast:

Ein Mann

Eine Frau

Ein Kind

ad lib. instrumentation

The instructions by the composer are minuscule. So this quite experimental opera looks different every time being performed.



© Eric Marinitsch

## **Jay Schwartz** (1965)

### ***Narcissus & Echo*** (2003/2009)

chamber opera for countertenor, viola, percussion and organ

libretto: Jay Schwartz

language: Latin

world première: Kaiserslautern 2003

85'

cast:

solo countertenor

viola; percussion(2); organ

“The story of ***Narcissus and Echo*** has its origins in Greek mythology and was notated perhaps for the first time around 60 B.C. from the Roman poet Ovid and appears in the Third Book of his *Metamorphosis*.

The subject matter of *Narcissus and Echo* has rarely been treated in the history of music-theater. It has an intimacy which at first appears to be missing the necessary dramatic element for a narrative opera. I have chosen an instrumentation which corresponds to a mirrored-image relationship: a counter-tenor and a viola. The ranges of both are nearly identical. I am interested in the musical possibilities of composing for an intimate and reduced instrumentation with this intimate subject matter. The violist appears as part of the staging and is equal in presence to the counter-tenor. A sensitive play on very quite and delicate sounds as well as on earthly organic timbres yields a chamber music setting of a very intimate kind. A staging of this score should make it possible to integrate both soloists as near as possible to the audience, perhaps even presenting them around and among the audience.

A baroque aria from Marc Antonio Cesti appears as a central piece in this chamber opera. This aria has been extremely reduced in its instrumentation and appears to be only a shadow of the original music. Elements of the baroque will be employed even more extensively in the complete version of the chamber opera. [...]

In addition to the soloists another musical level appears through the employment of percussion, which is to be out of sight for the audience and provides a dramatic impact and special dimension as a theatrical contrast to the intimate solo rolls. In the complete version of the chamber opera the percussion will be extended and be performed by two players.” (Jay Schwartz)

**Zwielicht** (2012, 2013)

Music for three trombones, solo voices, mixed choir and organ  
for six singers, mixed choir (SSATBB), three trombones and organ  
SSATBB

(min. 2 singers)

world première (new version): Köln 2013

60'

Two or more opposing, sliding pitches (“glissandi”) form the basis for the temporal progress of **Zwielicht**; due to their consonant nodal points (intuitively sensed by listeners) and the mighty wake of the pitches striving for unison, a natural, “magnetic” undertow develops, a compelling motivation of the temporal events. In its earliest stages, Western polyphonic music was born of this harmonic gravity. The *Zwielicht* music portrays the elapsing time between day and night with pitches sliding between consonance and dissonance. Central to the composition’s meaning are liturgical texts and songs for Ascension Day by the St. Gallen monk and lyric poet Notker Balbulus (d. 912), from which isolated text particles directly related to ascension were detached and set to music. *Zwielicht* had its first performance in June 2012 at St. Gallen Cathedral; the spatially and polyphonically expanded new version was composed for the Cologne Vocal Soloists.

The composition is tripartite. The central piece, for organ solo, is framed on either side by five sections; in the first five, the pitches strive predominantly downwards over long stretches, gliding to unisono. The pitch motion transmutes in the last seven sections to seven-note scales as the music tends strongly upwards whereas, in the central organ solo, descending chromatics (dodecaphonic) collide with rising diatonic (seven-note) scales, thus generating the nodal point of both halves of the composition.

The Greeks defined the diatonic scale more than 2500 year ago; it corresponded to the notion at the time of seven heavenly bodies circling about the earth. The seven notes of this scale were attained as the result of seven steps of the interval of the fifth. For its own part, a fifth consists of seven semitone steps; thus it is easy to see that the number 7 has left an incomparable imprint on the history of music.

The story of the number 12 is similar. It has a special relation to the number 7 in musical theory; the Greeks distributed the 12 chromatic pitches over a series of fifths extending over seven octaves. Moreover, 12 was related to the 12 signs of the zodiac and to the 12 principal Olympian deities. Christianity gives 12 to the number of apostles and symbolically allots 12 doors to Heavenly Jerusalem.

The seven-pitch diatonic aspect of the composition’s second half appears as a Mixolydian scale, as in Gregorian chant. Notker built his *Alleluja. Dominus in Sina* – the climax of his Ascension sequence – on this scale, which became the inspiration to use it as the central musical motif in the second half of *Zwielicht*.

The Mixolydian mode is fascinating in that, in the natural overtone series, almost all Mixolydian scales are found in the upper registers from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> partials. After



that, the overtone series becomes chromatic/microtonal, at which point it is no longer melodically comprehensible as a specific scale. Thus the Mixolydian mode seems to be a “melody” at the point of transition between a “tonic” and its endless spectrum of overtones.

The music of *Zwielicht* drafts this acoustical phenomenon as an analogon; light slips imperceptibly away as twilight inexorably advances. (Jay Schwartz)



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### **Mauricio Sotelo (1961)**

#### ***De amore – Una maschera di cenere* (1996–1999)**

chamber opera

text author: Wallace Stevens

libretto: Peter Mussbach

language: German

world première: Munich 1999

100'

cast:

Woman

Man

2 sisters (2 cantaoras = female flamenco singers);

the role of the mask from audio tape (cantaor = male flamenco singer).

choir: SATB from tape

flute, clarinet, saxophone - violoncello, contrabass - perc (2) - pno - tape and live electronics

The plot of our opera is based on a musical structure in which some of the elements of its make-up – electronic tape and instrumental voices – are already fully extant. This form, already successful in earlier works, resembles a palindrome with a central axis on which the elements reappear transformed, raised to another spatial level and another dimension, considered from another perspective. This is not what compositional terminology calls a “mirror;” the structure is spiral-shaped. Imagine something sonic which twists in ever smaller concentric circles hurtling toward a central focal point, whence they are again hurled outward farther and farther away as they grow, describing aimless circles. Librettist, director and set designer Peter Mussbach discovered a curious similarity between this shape and the structure of a discourse on love. Simply expressed, it could be called Encounter – Union – Separation, including all the infinite nuances which at once characterise and categorise various kinds of love-story. Beginning and end are here one and the same – empty, desperate waiting; to flee from misery, to escape a situation of the greatest pain, to be free of the burden of love and to await a coming love which will liberate us and reconcile us with the world again.

The opera begins with the epilogue and ends with the prologue; the central part consists of the Union or Attainment with, on the left, hope or expectation and, on the right, desperation, hopelessness and pain. At the outset, the audience experiences the drama through her – after passing through the central axis it is he who leads us to the tragic end. Two female figures (cantaoras - flamenco singers) accompany the action continuously; they have a key role (the elder sister particularly), since they are the reflection of the lovers' innermost feelings. They sing what the lovers would be unable to say to us, what they do not know about their own feelings and the others'. The cantaoras are the mirror of the lovers' voices, the mirror of the weak yet impressive voice of the woman's lover, which she recalls fragmentarily, far beyond hearing, a heartrending, emaciated voice she recognises because it sounds from the masks which magically functioned in Greek tragedy to lend a clonic origin to a voice and to distort it, as if it were arising from the subterranean beyond. The voices of the cantaoras conduct a dialogue – not with the lost, ecstatic, desperate lovers, but with their exhausted voices; they circle them, colour them, vitalise them – they are an interplay of tonal perspectives which, like a refracting crystal, express at once profoundest pain and playful lights, irony and fun – burleria. (Mauricio Sotelo)



© Courtesy of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music New York

**Kurt Weill** (1900–1950)

***Der Jasager / The Yes-Sayer*** (1930)

school opera in 2 acts

after the Japanese play "Taniko"

libretto: Bertolt Brecht

languages: German, English, Italian, French

world première: Berlin 1930

35'

cast:

The boy, tenor or boy soprano

The mother, mezzo-soprano

The teacher: baritone

3 students: 2 tenors, 1 baritone

1 0 1 0 - 0 0 0 0 - perc(2), harm, plucked instr., pno(2), alto sax, vln.I, vln.II, vc, cb

The school opera *Der Jasager* (The Yes-Sayer) goes back to the Japanese fable Tanikô, a play from the centuries-old Nôh theatre. A shortened English version of the Noh play was translated into German by Elisabeth Hauptmann and made its way to Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht. Weill composed *Der Jasager* in the first half of 1930, pausing only for the turbulent première of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* on 9 March 1930. The term 'school opera' gave Weill a number of possibilities for combining the concepts of 'education' and 'opera': the opera teaches the composer – or a whole new generation of composers – to approach the operatic genre in a new way. But it is also a question of re-training the process of operatic performance, with the end goal of staging the work so naturally and simply that children become the ideal performers. And finally, Weill also considered 'school operas' as meant for use in schools: "it is thus essential that a piece for schools should give children the opportunity to learn something, beyond the joy of making music." (Weill)

*Der Jasager* is a typical work of the parable-play period in Germany around 1929/30, a time when didactic purposes were tried out in the arts in all kinds of ways. Among the

school operas written at that time (such as Paul Hindemith's *Wir bauen eine Stadt*, Wolfgang Fortner's *Cress ertrinkt* or Paul Dessau's *Das Eisenbahnspiel*) the piece occupied an exceptional place. Though there could be discussions over the harshness of the plot, the concision and compelling strength of Weill's music have meanwhile made the work a classic of its kind worldwide. Even the composer conceded it a high place within his works. When in 1935 Weill, having arrived in the USA, was asked by a New York reporter which was his most important European work, he replied without hesitation *Der Jasager*.\*

### **Happy End** (1929)

a comedy with music

book by Dorothy Lane (pseudonym for Elisabeth Hauptmann and Bertolt Brecht)

song lyrics: Bertolt Brecht

language: German, English

world première: Berlin 1929

music: 40'

cast:

Bill Cracker, Sam Worlitzer, Dr. Nakamura,  
Jimmy Dexter, Bob Merker, Johnny Flint,  
Captain der Heilsarmee, Hanibal Jackson,  
Lilian Holiday, Die Dame in Grau, Mirjam, Jane,  
Mary, Zwei Fremde

flute (+picc.), alto saxophone in Eb (+cl.(Bb), soprano sax.(Bb), fl., picc.),  
tenor saxophone in Bb (+Bsax.(Bb), cl.(Bb)), 1. trumpet in B, 2. trumpet in Bb, trombone,  
perc, bjo (+hawaii guit., mand.; bass guit.), band (+acc.), pno

As an end to the truly incredible run of the *Threepenny Opera* at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm came in sight, theatre director Ernst Josef Aufricht requested Bert Brecht and Kurt Weill to provide him with a "continuation": a play for a wide audience with brazen songs. A splendid cast was ready and waiting, as well as the director, Erich Engel, the set designer, Caspar Neher, and the Lewis Ruth Band, conducted by Theo Mackeben. Brecht took the easy way out – either that, or he had had enough of commercial theatre: except, of course, for the royalties. He turned to his associate, Elisabeth Hauptmann, to write the play, and he himself added a few striking lines and a series of lyrics for songs to which Kurt Weill wrote the music. There thus developed a "comedy in three acts" of which no-one claimed to have been the author, not even Elisabeth Hauptmann, who would have been most justified in doing so. A certain "Dorothy Lane" was invented, and Elisabeth Hauptmann was named as the translator. The cast was brilliant: Carola Neher as Lilian Holiday, Theo Lingen as Jimmy, Oskar Homolka as Bill, and, as the "Fly", Helene Wiegel, who also had a large part to play in Brecht's private life: he married her at the time. This, in turn, caused Elisabeth

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\* Jürgen Schebera translated by Lionel Salter (CD booklet: Kurt Weill; *Der Jasager*, Down in the Valley; Capriccio 1990)

Hauptmann to lose interest in the play and in life in general, and Erich Engel, also withdrew during rehearsals. Brecht directed the production and completed the manuscript by arbitrarily sticking on a monologue by the "Fly" (later added to the *Threepenny Opera*): "What is breaking into a bank as compared to founding one," which then, in front of glass windows with the holy figures of St. Ford, St. Morgan and St. Rockefeller, led up to the grand finale "Hosiannah Rockefeller".

The première on September 2nd, 1929, ended predictably and probably the way it was intended to, with a scandal. It was not, however, one which added to the play's popularity. *Happy End* was taken off after only seven performances, and was not to be put on again during Brecht's or Weill's lifetime. It was ultimately only staged again (and even then not until 1958 at the Kleine Komödie in Munich, starring Hannelore Schroth) due to the magnificent songs, which were only loosely related to the plot. \*

### ***Mahagonny Songspiel*** (1927)

libretto: Bertolt Brecht

language: German; English; French

world première: Baden-Baden 1927

35'

cast:

Charlie, tenor

Billy, tenor

Bobby, bass

Jimmy, bass

Jessy, soubrette

Bessie, soubrette

2 cl. (2. also bass cl.), alto-sax. - 2 tpt., tbn. - perc. - pno. - 2 vln.

The ***Mahagonny Songspiel*** is the first of Weill's two Mahagonny works – the second being the three-act opera, *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. It was the result of a commission from the organizers of the Deutsches Kammermusikfestival (a festival of modern German chamber music) – among them, Hindemith – who asked Weill for something suitable for a programme of short operas for chamber ensemble. Weill's first idea was to set a scene from King Lear or Antigone; but as he and Brecht were already planning the Mahagonny opera, they decided on the Songspiel as a "style study". The order of the Mahagonny-Gesänge was changed in the interest of continuity, and a short epilogue was added (but no linking dialogue, as some authorities have wrongly suggested). A simple staging was then worked out in collaboration with Caspar Neher, who designed a series of projections. The number of singers was determined by the resources available for the Baden-Baden programme, and the apportioning of the texts between the singers reflected purely musical considerations. It was not until after Weill had completed the full score that the six singers acquired their fictional names. Even so,

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\* Josef Heinzelmann (CD booklet: Kurt Weill; Happy End; Capriccio 1990)

neither the texts nor the production implied any individual characterisation. Significantly, the scores produced for rehearsal purposes specified formal evening attire for all the singers. However ironic the intention, that requirement precisely conformed with the music's almost Stravinskian stylisations. (David Drew/1990)

### ***Die Dreigroschenoper / The Threepenny Opera*** (1928)

A play with music in a prelude and 8 scenes  
Based on THE BEGGAR'S OPERA by John Gay

Translation by Elisabeth Hauptmann  
Adaptation and lyrics by Bertolt Brecht  
Music by Kurt Weill  
language: German, English  
world première: Berlin 1928  
140'

Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum, head of a gang of beggars  
Mrs. Peachum  
Polly Peachum, their daughter  
Macheath, head of a gang of crooks  
Brown, Chief of London Police  
Lucy, his daughter  
Macheath's gang, street bandits: Walt Dreary, Crook Finger Jack, Matt of the Mint, Sawtooth Bob, Ed, Jimmy  
Filch, one of Peachum's beggars  
Jenny Diver, a whore  
Smith, a police constable  
Reverend Kimball  
Beggars, Whores (Dolly, Betty, Vixer, Molly, and others), Policemen

alto saxophone in Eb (+fl; picc; cl(Bb); sop.sax(Bb); bar.sax(Eb)); tenor saxophone in Bb (+cl(Bb); bsn; sop.sax(Bb)); trumpet in C; trombone (+cb); bjo (+band; vc; guit; hawaii guit; mand); timpani (+perc); harmonium (+pno; cel)

The idea for the ***Threepenny Opera*** came from Elisabeth Hauptmann, Bertolt Brecht's widely-read employee, who had heard of the enormous success of the 1920 revival of John Gay's old English Beggar's Opera (music by John Christopher Pepusch) at London's Lyric Theatre. She made a rough translation of Gay's text for Brecht, and it became one of his many current projects. Brecht was intrigued by the story, set in a milieu of beggars, whores and thieves; it seemed the perfect form in which to cast his criticism of the bourgeoisie. In adapting it, he transferred the action to the Victorian era of the 19th century and turned Gay's "disguised critique of public disgrace" into a "public critique of disguised disgraces," in Werner Hecht's phrase. "It no longer aims at the cream of society; it strikes out at 'normal bourgeois existence,' as it were." Not a note had been written yet when Brecht was introduced to the idea; he made it a condition of accepting the commission from Josef Aufricht that Kurt Weill should compose the music. Time was

scarce, so Brecht and Weill travelled with their wives in May 1928 to southern France, where they could work undisturbed.

The opera was finished in late July and rehearsals began early the next month for the première performance on 31 August at Berlin's Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, where it was a colossal success. By contrast, the first American performance, on Broadway in 1933, was an outright failure, due to a poor translation and inadequate staging; it closed after 12 performances.

Lotte Lenya played Jenny in the 1956 revival, an adapted version by Marc Blitzstein at a Greenwich Village theatre, where it played for over 2000 performances. Today, the *Dreigroschenoper* is one of the most frequently produced musical dramas of the 20th century. (Jürgen Schebera, Kurt Weill, Deutscher Verlag für Musik, Leipzig 1990)





© Steve Rogers

**Ian Wilson** (1964)

***Hamelin*** (2001–2002)

chamber opera in 2 acts

libretto: Lavinia Greenlaw;

language: English; German

world première: Flensburg 2003

90'

cast:

Girl, soprano

Mayor, tenor

Doctor, bass

alto fl, cl(Bb), perc, hp, guit, vln(1), cb(1)

**Ian Wilson's** opera ***Hamelin*** enthusiastically received at the Provincial theatre.

Let no one believe he can always enjoy himself passively at the opera. No: during the première of Ian Wilson's *Hamelin* at the provincial theatre interaction was demanded. There was free beer, leaflets, and those in the front rows had to be "extras" or they became scenery.

Producer Christian Marten-Molnar had built, by decor and costume director Hans Jurgen Baumhofner, a podium in the middle of the Flensburg studio. Around this sat the audience as at a boxing match or in a disco; on TV monitors clips of pop stars like Britney Spears and subsequently live excerpts of the performance itself could be seen.

Antje Bitterlich brings great power to her role and shows the development from the shy outsider to the confident woman, contributing to this with many nuances of her beautiful soprano voice. Markus Wessiack (bass) and Harald Quaaden (tenor) are complete slob oppressively tormenting and amusing at the same time, but always vocally at their best. Wilson's music which the small orchestra under the leadership of Theo Saye plays effectively, contains virtually all the techniques of modern composing; it is at the same time extremely catchy and always oriented towards the action. A flute symbolically reminds us of the piper. The remaining players with violin, guitar, harp, clarinet, double bass and percussion make possible a filigree web of sound. Ian Wilson's *Hamelin* is a multilayered lesson in power manipulation and the media composed and produced in such a way as to produce a great effect. Enthusiastic applause! (Flensburg Daily, 17/03/03, Christoph Kalies)



© Julian Yu

**Julian Yu** (1957)

***The White Snake*** *op. 19* (1989)

opera for marionettes and musical instruments

world première: Munich 1990

45'

cl/bass cl - tpt, trbn - perc(1) - pf/cel - vn/vla, cb

## OPERAS IN REDUCED VERSIONS



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**Béla Bartók** (1881-1945)

***Bluebeard's Castle*** (1911)

opera in 1 act

arranged version by Eberhard Kloke (2019)

for soprano, baritone and chamber orchestra

libretto: Béla Balázs

text adaption: Helmut Wagner, Karl Heinz Füssl, Eberhard Kloke

language: Hungarian, German, English

translation: Wiljhelm Ziegler, Christopher Hassall

world première: 2020 Biel/Bienne

60'

cast:

Duke Bluebeard, baritone;

Judith, mezzo-soprano;

Former wives, silent;

2 2 3 2 - 2 1 1 0 - perc(2), hp, pno, str (min. 2 2 2 2 1, max. 6 6 4 3 2)

Offering Béla Bartók's only opera ***Bluebeard's Castle*** in a reduced version was a major concern of Eberhard Kloke, because he saw in the "fine tuning" between solos and a reduced orchestra the possibility to help the modernity of the score to its full development. It is often forgotten today that the premiere was not a success and that Bartók was plunged into a veritable crisis.

The main focus of the instrumentation is on wind instruments. The strings should at least be doubled. Since Kloke was very concerned with tonal compression, he added sparingly but effectively some instruments that were not included in the original score: alto flute, alto saxophone and double bass clarinet.



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## **Alban Berg** (1885–1935)

### ***Lulu*** (1927–1935)

opera in 3 acts, version for solo voices and chamber orchestra (2008/09)

arranged by Eberhard Kloke

text author: Frank Wedekind

libretto: Alban Berg

language: German, English

world première: Gießen 2012

150'–180'

cast:

Lulu/Fünfzehnjährige, high soprano/alto

Gräfin Geschwitz/Garderobiere/Gymnasiast/Groom, dramatic mezzo/alto

Medizinalrat/Bankier/Professor, high bass

Maler/Journalist/Neger, lyric tenor

Dr. Schön/Jack the Ripper, heroic baritone

Alwa, juvenile, heroic tenor

Schigolch, ein Greis, high character bass

Athlet/Tierbändiger, heroic bass

Prinz/Kammerdiener/Marquis, tenore-buffo

Theaterdirektor/Diener/Polizeikommissär, basso buffo

Mutter/Kunstgewerblerin, alto

Clown/Erscheinung Geschwitz, silent character

1 1 2 1 - 1 1 1 0 - perc, acc, pno, str. (min: 2 2 2 2 1; max. 5 4 3 3 2), jazz band

Before taking on the challenge of arranging Alban Berg's entire opera ***Lulu*** for 11 soloists and chamber orchestra, the unfinished third act had to be transcribed anew. The insight gained thereby – apart from regenerating *Lulu* - the *Three Fragments* for three soloists and chamber orchestra, all directly contributed their influence to this version; thus the work was accomplished in two steps:

Step one consisted of arranging Act III for 11 soloists and chamber orchestra. The adaptation is essentially oriented to the orchestral transcription of *Lulu's* Act III,

divergences naturally arising especially in terms of the scoring. The cast was also reduced in number, the alternation of roles between the acts guaranteeing additional, attractive singing roles for everyone.

Step two involved arranging Acts I and II, which Berg left complete in full score. My main concern when reworking the opera for 11 soloists and chamber orchestra was that my version should be commensurate to the work's musical-theatrical intent (in the sense of the transparency of "word – music" which Berg strove to achieve). Thus a radical compositional-sonic substance, finely attuned to soloists and chamber orchestra, offsets the notion of supposedly lost "grand opera."

There are casting advantages in the foreground, thanks to various alternatives in terms of acting, clarity of enunciation and transparency. I also endeavoured to increase sonic range and density by varying the use of the instruments (especially the woodwinds) for each performer. More theatrical compactness can be gained by suspending the classic separation of stage/audience if the small orchestra is positioned on, beside or behind the stage – at least one has the option of positioning the orchestra more freely, if one wishes to dispense with an orchestra pit.

#### Act III: A special case

With its major alterations, abbreviations and recommendations, this new version of Act III helps to "open up" the opera. This new arrangement makes the inclusion of video a more viable option with respect to stage performance. Many of my own performances of *Lulu* and the *Symphonic Pieces* preceded my new version of Act III. Thanks to my scoring and arranging several of Berg's works, I was also able to see a larger compositional context within his oeuvre (*3 Fragments from Lulu* for soloists and chamber orchestra, the concert aria *Der Wein* and *Wozzeck* – arranged for chamber orchestra). (Eberhard Kloke)

**Wozzeck** (1914–1921)

opera in 3 acts (15 scenes)

version for small orchestra by Eberhard Kloke

text author: Georg Büchner

libretto: Alban Berg

language: German; English

world première: Steinfurt 2004

90'

cast:

Wozzeck, baritone

Tambourmajor, tenor

Andres, tenor

Hauptmann, tenore buffo

Doktor, bass

1. Handwerksbursch, deep bass and voice

2. Handwerksbursch, high baritone

Der Narr, high tenor

Marie, soprano

Margret, alto

Mariens Knabe, singing voice

Soldat, tenor

2 2 3 2 - 2 2 2 1 - perc, hp, pno, str(5 4 3 3 2), stage music: 2 violins, cl, acc, guit, bombardon, chamber music: 1 2 3 2 - 2 0 0 0, str(1 1 1 1 1)

Eberhard Kloke talks to Katja Blessin (from the programme booklet for the first performance)

*What relevance in terms of performance is your arrangement intended to have?*

In terms of performance, the intention was to bring **Wozzeck** back very close to Büchner's *Woyzeck*, providing the opportunity for large-scale identification and the greatest possible sensate reflection for the audience. The idea was to take the material about this man, driven to social misery by work and various deformations, and update it in a way not "smoothed out" by the operatic art form. The proximity to the performers and the theatrical situation should make it possible for everyone to feel like *Wozzeck*.

*So the new arrangement fuels emancipation from the conservative operatic framework?*

Yes – but apart from variable spatial situations and dispensing with the orchestra pit, the arrangement likewise allows more radical scene changes which come closer to Büchner's open structure, with its fragmentary character.

*Berg's version is written for extremely large orchestra; you have reduced the forces to 38 players. How closely were you able to adhere to his original?*

Well, I actually did not stray at all. Every note is Berg's. All I did was condense the wind scoring and eliminate the filler, thus "slimming down" the orchestra, as it were. I did change some dynamics and I had to rethink the divisi parts for the strings at specific

moments because my string section is much smaller. I reconceived the onstage music to maintain stringent spatial distribution with a small orchestra consistent with that of a large one. Actually, everything I did was very exciting, all of it aimed at performance in a space other than an opera house.

*Apart from the extended spatial options, what effect does your arrangement have on the musical experience?*

Immediate proximity to the events allows the audience to experience every sonic change, since the listeners are in the midst of the sounds. Reducing the orchestral forces also removes the extreme dynamic heights, meaning that the singers need not revert to the unnatural operatic tones predominating in our opera houses.

*You have eliminated the chorus. How did you come to that decision?*

A chorus onstage always means "convention." In Berg's case, I think the chorus is more of a concession to operatic convention than a fundamental dramatic component. The chorus can be dispensed with in *Wozzeck* without detriment to the original substance; specifically, I gave the choral parts in the 1st and 2nd tavern scenes to the soloists and I transferred the chorus of snoring soldiers to the orchestra. Our view of *Wozzeck* as an experiment towards an understanding of humankind will justify the concentration on the soloists' interactions.

### **Wozzeck** (1914–1921)

opera in 3 acts (15 scenes)

version for small orchestra by Erwin Stein

text author: Georg Büchner

libretto: Alban Berg

language: German, English

90'

world première: Schwerin 2002

cast:

Wozzeck, baritone and speaking role;

Tambourmajor, heroic tenor;

Andres, lyrischer Tenor und Sprechstimme Hauptmann, buffo tenor;

Doktor, buffo bass;

1. Handwerksbursch, deep bass and speaking role;

2. Handwerksbursch, high baritone;

Der Narr, high tenor;

Marie, soprano;

Margret, alto;

Mariens Knabe, singing role;

ein Soldat, tenor

choir:

Soldaten und Burschen, tenor I and II, baritone I and II, bass I and II

Mägde und Dirnen, sopranos and altos (two-part)

Kinder (unisono)

3 3 3 3 - 4 3 3 1 - timp(2), perc(4), hp, cel, str; stage: "Heurigenmusik" - fiddle (2-4), cl, acc, guit, bass tuba; pno; chamber orch - 1 2 3 2 - 2 0 0 0 - str(1 1 1 1 1)

**Wozzeck** (1914–1921)

opera in 3 acts (15 scenes)

reduced version for 21 instruments by John Rea (1995)

text author: Georg Büchner

libretto: Alban Berg

language: German, English

world première: Banff 1995

90'

cast:

Wozzeck, baritone

Tambourmajor, tenor

Andres, tenor

Hauptmann, tenor buffo

Doktor, bass

1. Handwerksbursch, deep bass and voice

2. Handwerksbursch, high baritone

Der Narr, high tenor

Marie, soprano

Margret, alto

Mariens Knabe, singing role

Soldat, tenor

choir: soprano (I/II); alto (I/II); tenor (I/II); baritone (I/II); bass (I/II); children

1 2 3 2 - 2 1 1 0 - perc(2), hp, pno, str

[...] Following a request to me in 1992 by conductor Lorraine Vaillancourt "to imagine a version of **Wozzeck** for the Nouvel Ensemble Moderne (NEM)", and consequently, after a study of the orchestral score, I concluded that no less than 21 musicians would be required to keep the music vital and irresistible. By starting with Act II, scene 3 (the central scene of the entire opera), I found, already in miniature, the 15 instruments of Arnold Schönberg's *Chamber Symphony op 9*, to whom the scene renders homage. Then there is an overlap with the slightly different configuration of the usual NEM ensemble, adding a harp and a second percussionist which forms the 21 players. [...] I felt somewhat relieved that my work would not be seen as a betrayal. This kind of "translation" of a composition into its compact version was placed within the same tradition, indeed, the very tradition well practiced by the three Viennese composers.

But how does this reduction in the form of an "enlargement" present itself? Part of the elaboration consists of transcriptions, above all in those passages where Berg writes a



great deal of chamber music. It can be particularly well heard in Act II, scene 1 (Marie with her child). Another technique used is reduction itself, understandable enough since the wind section generally reveals each instrument multiplied by four and the score calls for 30 woodwinds and brass as well as 50 to 60 string players. Then, there is re-orchestration, a procedure that is applied in a variable manner. Almost in every measure one is obliged to complete the musical thought with a timbral mask, that is, an instrumental colour not originally chosen by Berg but one that may lend itself to the assignment. The re-orchestration also involves new unison doublings on behalf of certain melodic lines so that they may be heard clearly.

Finally, the technique of re-orchestration approaches the art of composition when one is obliged to "dismember" enormous sound aggregates which by their very nature transcend the salutary action of a transcription, a reduction, and the use of timbral masks and doublings. It is well to be heard in Act III, scene 4 (*Wozzeck* drowns; *Invention on a six-note chord*) where I was constrained to rewrite all of the voices of all the pitches on manuscript paper before assigning the instrumental colours, an assignment not only considering the spirit of the composition but also, correspondingly, the structure of the passage. This elaboration is not exactly a re-composition and it is certainly not an arrangement. In an arrangement, one presupposes the possibility of manipulating pitches in whatever registers are deemed necessary. It is rather a new disposition that, by all means, had to preserve Berg's instrumental colours to the maximum as well as the true registers of the score. For the very action of having changed those registers, it would have been unquestionably an unfortunate betrayal. [...] (John Rea)



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**Max Brand** (1896-1980)

***Maschinist Hopkins*** (1928)

opera in 1 prelude and 3 acts

reduced version by Werner Steinmetz (2015)

world première: Vienna 2016

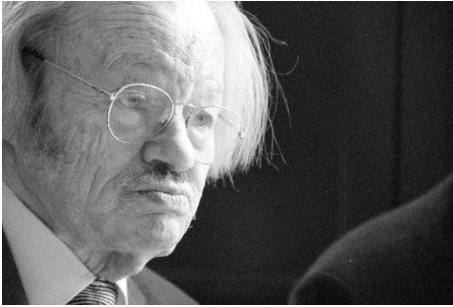
135'

2 1 1 1 - 2 1 2 1 - perc(3), pno, alto sax(Eb), str

With ***Maschinist Hopkins***, Max Brand had his finger firmly on the pulse of his time. By 1933, this Zeitoper had been performed over 200 times and Brand looked well on the way to becoming a famous composer. But following the world economic crisis and the rise to power of the National Socialists, he emigrated to New York in 1937 via Geneva and Rio de Janeiro.

In 1929, a critic wrote the following about the opera's première: "One of the most beautiful albeit most difficult elements in the performance is the irreality of the machine room at night. Here, Brand made the audacious attempt to bring the motionless machine to life; just as he captured the romance inherent in the language of the woods from its murmurs and whispers, he conveys here the language of wheels, pistons and iron gears awaking".

For EntArteOpera Linz, Werner Steinmetz has reduced the score to 35 players, making the work accessible to smaller stages as well.



© Eric Marinitsch

## **Friedrich Cerha** (1926)

### ***Baal*** (1974–1980)

a stage work in 2 parts

reduced version

text author: Bertolt Brecht

libretto: Friedrich Cerha

language: German

world première: Vienna 2011

195'

cast:

Johanna, soprano

Sophie, soprano

Emilie, mezzo soprano

Johannes, tenor

Baal, baritone

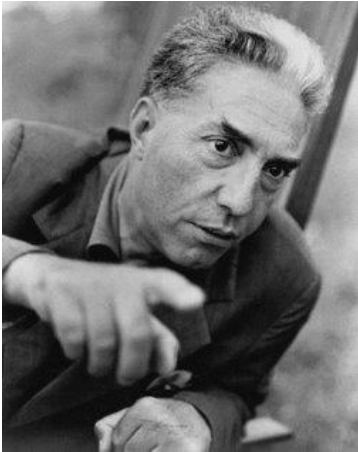
Ekart, bass

small double-roles : soprano, alto, 2 tenors, 2 baritone, bass, 2 speakers

2 3 3 3 - 4 3 4 1, timp, perc(4), hp, acc, e.org, sax(2), guit, str(10 8 6 6 4); stage music  
on tape

Baal's actual impulsion is the vital, ineradicable human longing for happiness, the search "for the land where living is better," as he sings in his final song. He is seeking it here because he is "dependent on the terrestrial," where he encounters limits of all kinds.

My choice of tools increasingly determines what I want to achieve. An alienating stylisation, detachment from the exposition of events, juxtaposition of levels ( ... ) are the wrong tools here. What I want can only be attained by hints or clues of affinity. There can be no question of making Baal likeable, endearing – he will remain "unloved," but he must also be "lovable" – accessible, in a way that makes the audience become part of what interests me – and the music, I hope, will help. (Friedrich Cerha)



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### **Luigi Dallapiccola** (1904–1975)

#### ***Volo Di Notte*** (1937–1939)

opera in 1 act

reduced version

text author: Antoine de Saint Exupéry *vol de nuit*

libretto: Luigi Dallapiccola

language: Italian, German, French

world première: Florence 1940

60'

cast:

Rivière, bass baritone

Robineau, bass

Pellerin, tenor

Der Funker, tenor

Leroux, bass

4 Beamte: 2 tenors, baritone, bass

Frau Fabien, soprano

3 3 3 3 - 4 3 3 1 - timp, perc(2-3), xyl, hp, cel, pno, str - on stage: cl(3), tpt(3), tbn(2), perc(2), xyl, hp, pno, vln(3), cb(2)

Luigi Dallapiccola wrote his own libretto for his early one-act opera ***Volo di notte***, based on the novel *Vol de nuit* ["Night Flight"] by Antoine de Saint Exupéry. Although it is a twelve-tone work, Dallapiccola used the technique somewhat loosely.

The piece is set in a South American airport in the 1930s. Rivière, the airport's manager, having only one thing in mind – profit – decides to keep the airport open for all-night operation, dispatching his pilots without hesitation for night flights, even in the worst weather conditions. Protestations from a pilot's wife and his employees only reinforce his ambitions – and his deranged greed soon claims its first victim; without ado, he sends a courier on an overnight flight to Europe; he is determined that nothing will stop him from reaping profits from his plan.



© Atelier Nadar

## **Claude Debussy** (1862-1918)

### ***Pelléas et Mélisande*** (1902 / 2022)

opera in 5 acts (1902)

arrangement for chamber orchestra by Frédéric Chaslin

165'

cast:

Mélisande, soprano

Geneviève, mother of Golaud and Pelléas, alto

Arkel, King of Allemonde, bass

Pelléas, Arkel's grandson, tenor or baritone

Golaud, brother of Pelléas, bass

Yniold, son of Golaud from his first marriage, boy soprano

A doctor, bass

Servants, beggars, mute

Voices of sailors, chorus

1 1 1 1 - 1 1 0 0 - timp, hp, pno, str

The idea of this orchestration was born from a double observation: Maeterlinck's story is very intimate, everything takes place in small places – a corner of a forest, a fountain, a room, a cave – with most often 2 or 3 characters. There is no chorus on stage, we are in the most intimate world possible. The other observation is that Debussy uses very economical musical means in the service of a very original, new writing. But the "physical" means are as limited as those of the libretto. When I was writing the orchestration, I realised, which I already knew, but when you copy it, you become physically aware of things, that I was writing a majority of "piano", "pianissimo", some "forte" and "mezzo-forte", and very rarely "fortissimo". Moreover, the original orchestra uses a lot of instruments that keep silent for most of the opera (trumpets 3 and 4, trombones, tuba, etc).

Debussy said that he imagined Pelléas for a chamber orchestra and that it was the Opéra Comique that demanded the large orchestra. This does not surprise me. Nevertheless, the evidence with which this orchestration lends itself as well to a large hall (the Budapest Opera where it was created) as to very small venues (several châteaux, small private theatres) where we have 'tried it out', reinforces the idea that this version, in addition to being close to Debussy's original desire, will allow his masterpiece to shine in the places most similar to the 'settings' it suggests. It is important to stress that no cuts nor changes have been made in the vocal parts, and that we have even corrected many errors, especially in the original orchestral score, which had never been corrected except in the orchestral material.



© Andras Farkas

**Ferenc Farkas** (1905–2000)

***Der Wunderschrank / The Magic Cupboard*** (1939–1942)

comic opera in 3 acts and 5 scenes

reduced version

text source: *Tales from the Thousand and One Nights*

libretto: Gyula Kunszery / Karlheinz Gutheim

language: German

world première: Zurich 1984

115'

cast:

Suleika, soprano

Hassan, tenor

Der Kadi, bass baritone

Der Großwesir, baritone

Der Mufti, bass

Der Tischlermeister, tenor

3 Odalisken: soprano, mezzo soprano, alto

fl, ob, cl(Bb), bs, 2 hr(F), tpt, tbn, str quint

Ferenc Farkas' opera ***The Magic Cupboard*** has had a new production after remaining unplayed for five years. It is beyond all disputes the greatest Hungarian comic opera: sparkling, spirited, stagy. Generally, opera production is very poor in Hungary – that is why we are so excited about the premieres of Ferenc Szabó's and Pál Kadosa's new operas. Jenő Kenessey gave the dance performance *Majális* – the [Budapest Opera] has scheduled a dance show by Ferenc Farkas and Szervánszky. (György Ligeti, February 1950)

Suleika's husband Hassan has been locked up for brawling with a sheik. Feeling lonely, the young woman hurries to the qadi, the grand vizier and the mufti. Each of them promises her that he will free Hassan if she receives them in the evening. Suleika agrees.

She persuades a master carpenter to make a cupboard with four doors at once, by promising him a dalliance with her, too.

The qadi is the first to visit her that evening. Before promising to yield to his advances, she obliges him to pardon Hassan. There is a knock at the door – there is only one escape for the qadi; he must hide in the cupboard.

The grand vizier and mufti arrive together – and suffer the same fate when the master carpenter shows up. Deviously, Suleika manages to despatch the master carpenter into the fourth compartment, before hurrying away to free Hussan. Meanwhile, neighbours discover the four men, locked up and wailing in the cupboard ...

From the programme booklet / world premiere 1984, Zurich Opera House

“I have lived through two world wars, several revolutions and counterrevolutions; I do not wish to shock my audiences – I have been shocked enough in my life. I want to make them happy, just as composing makes me happy – I want to pass that happiness along to listeners.” (Ferenc Farkas)





© Lotte Meitner-Graf

**Hans Gál** (1890–1987)

***Die heilige Ente / The Sacred Duck*** (1922)

a play with gods and humans

arranged for chamber orchestra by Rainer Schottstädt

text authors: Karl M. Levetzow and Leo Feld

language: German

world première: Cologne 2003

75'

cast:

Der Mandarin, baritone

Li, seine Gemahlin, soprano

Der Kuli Yang, tenor

Die Tänzerin, soprano

Der Gaukler, basso buffo

Der Bonze, bass

Der Haushofmeister, tenoro buffo

Drei Götter: bass, tenor, baritone

perc, hp, pno(2), str(6 6 4 4 2)

Yang, a simple duck-breeder, is on his way to the mandarin's palace, where he is to deliver a duck for the evening's festive banquet, when he succumbs to the enchantment of the mandarin's beautiful consort and her song. Bewitched, he does not notice when someone steals the duck. The festivities commence, and the mandarin threatens Yang with the death penalty if he does not produce a duck. The gods intervene and switch Yang's soul with the mandarin's; in the latter form, Yang abolishes the death penalty. But when he declares the gods to be superfluous, they are not amused, and reverse the exchange of souls ... (Programme booklet, Cologne Opera, March 2007)

After Hans Gál's remarkable success as a musician with his firstling opera *Der Arzt der Sobeide* [*The Doctor of Sobeide*] in Breslau ten years ago, the Düsseldorf City Theatre decided to premiere the composer's second opera four years later. Also in three acts,

this work – worthy of note for its spirited, graceful libretto alone – was received so enthusiastically under George Szell's baton that a goodly number of German opera houses immediately scheduled it for performance. In Breslau, ***The Sacred Duck*** was General Manager Tietjen's concluding success before he took up his new post at the City Opera in Berlin, where he began his tenure with Gál's opera; Marie Schreker (wife of composer Franz Schreker) sang the female lead role. *Die heilige Ente*, set in China (like Puccini's *Turandot*, but written several years earlier and without that composer's bombastic rendering of that country), has already been given in over fourteen German houses. Hans Gál belongs to no particular school or movement, having never submitted to any dogma. He thoroughly adheres to Classical and Pre-Classical instrumental and vocal forms, colouring them melodically with thematic schemes sensitively invented and personally nuanced, always with a sure touch for gentle transitional harmonies.

With all its painstaking and artistically rendered detail, Gál's music yet bears the stamp of Truth which is "objective" in a sense which is as modern as it is generally valid. Both his first two operas are in a congenial vein; *The Holy Duck* evolves in an atmosphere of humour and irony, exemplified in Act II, where the brains of the mandarin and the coolie, the impostor and the bonze are interchanged – this bizarre idea (from a poem by Karl M. Levetzov and the precocious young Viennese Leo Feld) unfolds at a lively and dashing pace in the music - back in Haydn's time, one might have said "*con spirito*." [...] (Radio Wien/1929/Elsa Bienenfeld)



© Janáček Museum Brno

**Leoš Janáček** (1854–1928)

***Jenůfa*** (1894–1903/1908)

opera in 3 acts

reduced Brno version by Tony Burke

text author/libretto: Gabriela Preissová

language: Czech, German, English

world première: London 2006

120'

cast:

Grandmother Buryja, alto

Kostelnicka Buryja, soprano

Jenufa, soprano

Laca Klemen, tenor

Steva Buryja, tenor

Foreman, baritone

The Mayor, bass

His Wife, mezzo-soprano

Karolka, mezzo-soprano

Herdswoman, mezzo-soprano

Barena, soprano

Jano, soprano

Aunt, alto

choir: sattbb – village people, recruits, musicians, servants, countryside girls

2 2 2 3 - 2 2 1 0 - perc(2), hp, str, stage music (musicians from the orchestra): hn(2), toy  
tpt, bells, vln(2), vla(1), vc(1), cb(1)

**Káta Kabanová** (1921)

opera in 3 acts

arranged version for chamber orchestra by Eberhard Kloke

libretto: Leoš Janáček, Max Brod (German)

language: Czech, German

cast:

Savyol Prokofievich Dikoj, a merchant, bass

Boris Grigorievich, his nephew, tenor

Marfa Ignatievna Kaban (Kabanicha), a rich merchant's widow, mezzo-soprano

Tikhon Ivanych Kabanov, her son, tenor

Katherina (Katya), his wife, soprano

Vanya Kudryash, teacher, chemist, mechanic, tenor

Barbara, foster daughter in Kabanov's house, alto/mezzo-soprano

Kuligin, friend of Kudryash, baritone

Glasha, Feklusha, servants, soprano

2 1 1 1 - 2 1 1 0 - timp, perc, hp, str (mind. 4 4 2 2 1, max. 8 6 5 4 3)

The central concern for a transcription of Janáček's *Káta Kabanová* for soli and chamber orchestra was to accommodate the music-theatrical structure of the piece (in the sense of the transparency Janáček's intended transparency "word - music").

By reducing the large orchestral apparatus to an ensemble of 25 players, the greatest possible transparency and audibility of sound should be achieved, which should accommodate both the filigree structure of Janáček's music as well as his speech melody, allowing for a more radical realization of speech and vocal nuance. An additional theatrical concentration and condensation could be achieved by abolishing the classical separation stage-audience-audience by placing the small orchestra on/next to/behind the stage – at least the orchestra pit could be dispensed with in favor of more variable orchestra positioning. (Eberhard Kloke)

***Příhody lišky bystroušky / The Cunning Little Vixen*** (1922–1923)

opera in 3 acts

arranged for chamber orchestra by Jonathan Dove

libretto: Leoš Janáček

language: Czech, English, German

world première: Birmingham 1998

110'

cast:

Forester, baritone

Forester's wife, alto

Schoolmaster, tenor

Parson (Badger), bass

Haraschta, (vagabond), bass

Vixen, soprano

Fox, soprano

The young vixen, children's soprano  
a couple of smaller parts (ballet)

1 1 1 1 - 2 1 1 0 - perc, hp, acc, str.quin

The tale of the free-thinking and crafty vixen Bystrouška goes back to the 1890s. In the beginning were the tiny sketches of the painter and forester Stanislav Lolek (1873–1936), a distinguished landscape artist. The story of Bystrouška was serialized in *Lidové noviny* from 7 April to 23 June 1920 and had a huge success. The merry and immediately accessible drawings with a witty and topical text found a readership throughout the entire social spectrum. It is certainly true that Janáček began considering composing an opera on this theme since he acquired cuttings of all the episodes in *Lidové noviny*. And in fact, as soon as Janáček completed the work on *Katja Kabanova* he immediately started on ***The Cunning Little Vixen***.

Meanwhile Janáček composed and started out on his study of nature to a whole series of bird notations – of thrushes, sparrows, finches and blackbirds. He wrote down notations for doves, a little toad, and a frog with the instrumental comment “like a xylophone”. He also noticed animals and took down in his notebook his impressions of walks in the game reserve, where the forester even tracked down a vixen’s den with young so that the composer could observe and study them. No wonder that several of Janáček’s newspaper reviews in *Lidové noviny* in the years 1921– 1922 had animal motifs.

The celebrated world première of the opera *Přihody lišky Bystroušky* (*Die Abenteuer des Füchslains Schlaukopf*) took place in the Brno theatre Na Hradbách on 6 November 1924. The reception was tremendous and the composer himself was happy with the staging by Ota Zíték and the set design by Eduard Milén (who also designed the cover of the piano vocal score).

The composer himself characterized the opera as a forest idyll, one that would awaken the notion of the unity of life – both human and animal.

***Příhody lišky bystroušky / The Cunning Little Vixen*** (1922–1923)

Opera in three acts (1924)

version for reduced orchestra by Heinz Stolba (2022)

libretto by Leoš Janáček after the story by Rudolf Těsnohlídek

German translation by Max Brod

English translation by Norman Tucker

languages: Czech, German, English

No performing rights in USA / Mexico until 2046

110'

Gamekeeper, baritone

Gamekeeper's Wife / Owl, alto

Schoolmaster / Mosquito, tenor

Parson / Badger, bass

Harašta, a poultry dealer, bass

Pásek, an innkeeper, chorus tenor

Mrs. Pásková, his wife, chorus soprano

Pepík, the Gamekeeper's grandson, chorus soprano

Frantík, his friend, chorus soprano

Young Vixen Bystrouška, child soprano

Vixen Bystrouška, soprano

Fox, soprano

Cricket, children's voice (soprano)

Grasshopper, children's voice (soprano)

Young Frog, children's voice (soprano)

Lapák, a dog, mezzosoprano

Cock / Jay, soprano

Chocholka, a hen, soprano

Woodpecker, alto

Hens, women's chorus (SA)

Forest Creatures, women's chorus (SA)

Voice of the Forest, mixed chorus (SAATTBB)

Fox Cubs, (children's) chorus

Blue Dragonfly, Midges, (children's) ballet

Apparition of the Vixen as a girl

Squirrels, Hedgehog, a Young Vixen, Forest Creatures

2 2 2 2 – 2 2 2 0 – perc (2), hp, str (12 10 8 6 4)

Leoš Janáček's opera *The Cunning Little Vixen* is undoubtedly one of the most important music-dramatic works of the 20th century. According to his own account, the composer wanted to create a parable about the cycle of life with his 'forest idyll'. From the very first moment, the audience is transported into an almost breathless tension: Janáček's unmistakable musical language with its sheer overflowing abundance of motifs and themes makes one forget time.

Janáček's departure from the traditions of the late 19th century is already clearly evident in the tonal language and orchestration of his seventh opera. In the original, he conceived the work for a larger late-Romantic orchestra, as was standard in the opera houses of his time. However, due to his experience with the balance between singers and orchestra, he only used the full orchestra in a few places.

In the present version for a smaller orchestra, Janáček's original instrumentation is basically retained. With a reduction to about two-thirds of the original number of musicians, it is ensured that no distortion of timbre or loss of volume or radiance is involved. This version makes it possible for a larger number of theatres to stage this masterpiece of opera literature without having to improvise or to make musical compromises.

The arrangement for a smaller orchestration is based on the new critical edition of the opera by Jiří Zahrádka from 2010.



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**Ernst Krenek** (1900–1991)

***Das geheime Königreich / The Secret Kingdom*** (1926–1927)

fairy tale opera in 1 act

reduced version for chamber orchestra by Rainer Schottstädt

libretto: Ernst Krenek

language: German

world première: Cologne 2002

55'

cast:

Der König, baritone

Die Königin, coloratura soprano

Der Narr, baritone

Der Rebell, tenor

Die drei singenden Damen: soprano, mezzo-soprano, alto

Erster Revolutionär, tenor buffo

Zweiter Revolutionär, tenor buffo

Ein Wächter, tenor buffo

1 1 1 1 - 1 0 0 0 - perc(2), pno, str(1 1 1 1 1)

Shortly after he completed his tragic opera *Der Diktator*, Ernst Krenek started work on another one-act opera whose subtitle (*Märchenoper – fairy tale opera*) already suggests that it is set in an entirely different world, with regard to both the message and the music. Today, ***The Secret Kingdom*** would probably be described as a “green” work: it proclaims the advantages of life away from power, away from towns, away from civilisation – amidst nature, the secret kingdom where the tortured ruler in Krenek’s libretto finally finds peace.





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**Arnold Schönberg** (1874–1951)

***Erwartung*** (1901)

monodrama in 1 act

reduced version for soprano and chamber orchestra by Paul Méfano and Michel Decoust

libretto: Marie Pappenheim

language: German; English

world première: Vienna 2001

30'

2 1 2 1 - 2 0 1 0 - perc, cel, hp, str(1 1 1 1 1)

***Erwartung*** (1901)

monodrama in 1 act

reduced version for soprano and chamber orchestra by Faradsch Karaew

libretto: Marie Pappenheim

language: German; English

world première: Vienna 2004

30'

1 1 2 1 - 2 1 1 1 - perc(3), hp, cel, str.quin

***Die glückliche Hand*** (1908/1913)

drama with music

arranged version for baritone and chamber orchestra by Eberhard Kloke

libretto: Arnold Schönberg

language: German

world première: Würzburg 2021

20'

1 1 2 1 - 1 1 1 0 - perc, hp, cel, pno, vln, vla, vc, cb

The idea of the transcription is to radically slim down the orchestral movement in order to structurally emphasize the tonal events and to contrast the synaesthetic music theater approach (light, color, movement, moving images, language, song) with a more condensed, pared-down sound image.

The tonal basis of the transcription is formed by the two pianos with celesta, harp and xylophone. The wind instruments, on the other hand, are mostly used in a soloistic manner. The strings, which are used rather sparsely, function as selective sound coloration (Eberhard Kloke)



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**Franz Schreker** (1878–1934)

***Die Schatzgräber*** (1915-1918)

opera in 1 prelude, 4 acts and 1 epilogue  
reduced version by Werner Steinmetz 2013

libretto: Franz Schreker

language: German

world première: Linz 2013

145'

1 1 1 1 - 1 1 1 0 - perc(2), hp, cel, harm, pno, vln, vln, vln, vln, vla(2), vc(3), cb

On 21 January 1920 *Der Schatzgräber*, Schreker's most popular work, had its first performance in Frankfurt: shortly afterwards he took over the direction of the High School for Music in Berlin. His later operas were much less successful. National Socialist intervention in 1933 prevented the planned first performance in Freiburg of *Christophorus*: already before this Schreker had had to resign as director of the Berlin Hochschule. At the end of 1933 he also lost his position as a teacher of composition at the Prussian Academy of Art. A little later he suffered a stroke, as a result of which he died on 21 March 1934.

(CD-Booklet/*Die Schatzgräber*/Capriccio 1989)

The première of Werner Steinmetz's reduced version in Linz/Austria in 2013 was highly estimated by the audience and the media.



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**Richard Strauss** (1864-1949)

***Elektra*** (1909)

Libretto: Hugo von Hofmannsthal  
reduced version by Richard Dünser

105'

cast:

Elektra (Sopran)

Klytämnestra (Mezzosopran)

Chrysothemis (Sopran)

Orest (Bariton)

Aegisth (Tenor)

5 Mägde (A, MS, MS, S, S)

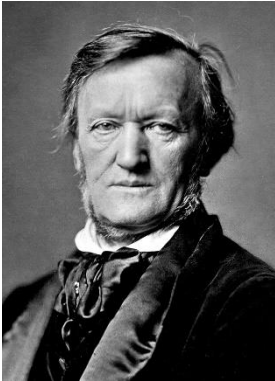
Aufseherin (Sopran)

Die Schleppträgerin (Sopran)

Die Vertraute (Sopran)

2 2 3 2 - 4 2 3 1 - timp, perc(3), hp, harm(cel), str(10 9 8 7 5)

In no other opera did Richard Strauss take tonality to its extremes as much as in *Elektra*. For this he used a large orchestra with effects on the singers' audibility. The greatest advantage of Richard Dünser's reduced version is thus an unprecedented clarity and transparency of musical texture. Even the proven connoisseur of the score will find unexpected nuances in this version. It was important to Dünser not to forget the eruptive power of the music. He therefore uses a chamber orchestra that can produce enough volume to overwhelm. It was essential that this dimension of the opera must be preserved. Dünser has also oriented himself as closely as possible to the original in his instrumentation. So nobody will miss the typical *Elektra* sound. This is ensured among other things by a sophisticated conception of the division of the strings. This version makes it possible to perform this jewel from the Strauss oeuvre even for small to medium sized houses.



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**Richard Wagner** (1813–1883)

***Das Rheingold*** (1853–1854, 2018)

arranged version for medium sized orchestra by Eberhard Kloke

libretto: Richard Wagner

language: German

world premiere: Regensburg 2021

140'

Woglinde (auch Freia), soprano

Wellgunde, soprano

Floßhilde, mezzo-soprano

Fricka, mezzo-soprano

Freia (auch Woglinde), soprano

Erda, mezzo-soprano

Loge, tenor

Froh (auch Mime), tenor

Wotan, baritone

Donner (auch Fasolt), baritone

Mime (auch Froh), tenor

Alberich, baritone

Fasolt (auch Donner), baritone

Fafner, bass

2 2 2 2 - 4 2 4 0 - perc(2), hp, str(10 8 6 5 4)

The key motivation for a new transcription of Wagner's ***Rheingold*** for 11 soloists (including doubling) and 54 instrumentalists was to provide a practical alternative version for stagings of the work – while still remaining true to the original Wagnerian score. In this transcription the soundscape within the orchestra, along with the balance between orchestra and stage, is changed as little as possible.

The loss of the “grand opera” style is mitigated by the fine aural and compository balance between the soloists and the newly reduced orchestra. Also central to the new version are practical advantages such as the provision of alternatives for flexible

instrumentation, along with the possibility for using less powerful voices, which can only be a positive feature in terms of transparency and text comprehension, in keeping with the music-theatrical style of the piece. Wagner's "last words" to the singers before the première of the Ring cycle in 1876 were "enunciation! - the big notes will take care of themselves; the small notes and the text are the main thing".

The transcription process has also expanded and "modernised" the orchestral tone by introducing new instruments, taken on by the existing instrumentalists. The goal here is an expansion and intensification of the sound. Classically "Wagnerian" instruments like the tuba, bass trumpet and bass trombone are still present in the transcribed version. The addition of new instruments like treble recorder, heckelphone, bass clarinet, contrabassoon and cimbasso (as the missing link between tuba and trumpet) brings particular dramatic and psychological depth to certain passages. The orchestral instrumentation is compressed to suit the level of a medium orchestra. (Eberhard Kloke)

## **Richard Wagner** (1813–1883)

### ***Walküre*** (1856, 2018)

Erster Tag des Bühnenfestspiels "Der Ring des Nibelungen"

arranged version for medium sized orchestra by Eberhard Kloke (2018)

libretto: Richard Wagner

language: German

world première: Marseille 2022

300'

cast:

Sieglinde: soprano

Brünnhilde: soprano

Fricka (Waltraute)\*: mezzo-soprano

Siegmund: tenor

Wotan: bass-baritone

Hunding: bass

Six Valkyries:

Helmwige, Gerhilde: soprano

Waltraute (Fricka)\*, Rossweiße: mezzo-soprano

Grimgerde, Schwertleite: alto

\* These roles can be played by one performer, if necessary.

2 2 3 2 - 4 2 4 0 - timp, perc(2), hp, cel, str

Orchestra: min. 57, max. 65 players

This transcription is geared to the forces available in a mid-size orchestra. In the course of arranging the work, the *Klangfarben* of the orchestra were expanded and "modernised" by greater differentiation within the historically given spectrum and by introducing new instruments. I strove both to expand and condense the sound,

especially since I of course kept the instruments typical of the *Ring* (Wagner tuba, bass trumpet, contrabass trombone, etc.); the newly introduced ones (alto flute, heckelphone, contrabass clarinet, contrabassoon and cimbasso, the latter as a link between tubas and trombones) become especially significant as additional dramatic-psychological sonic elements.

My central concerns when transcribing Wagner's *Walküre* for 11 soloists (including doublings) and 60 players were therefore both to create a practical alternative for performance (while fundamentally adhering to Wagner's score) and to find a new sonic directionality for the piece – and this, let it be emphasised, was not only aimed at reducing the intention and method of reducing Wagner's orchestra to make the work practical for performance in mid-sized and small theatres. This transcription consists of a not negligible transformation of the sound and thus the sonic structure within the orchestra and in the balance between the stage and the orchestra.

It cannot be emphasised enough that *Walküre* was not conceived for a covered orchestral sound (Bayreuth's "mystical abyss") but for conventional opera houses with open orchestra pits. It seems to me that indirect sound, indirect emission have become obsolete since the invention of microphone techniques (and thus sonic media, as well as unlimited options of digital analysis, processing and storage).

Today, attentive listeners are most concerned with perceiving refined *Klangfarben* in the orchestra, achieved through greater differentiation in the orchestration and more closely considered balance between the stage and the orchestra, to make the drama manifest for people's eyes and ears today.

Specifying the *Fach* of the voices was dispensed with since this arrangement of the work can also be performed by lighter voices, not only the traditional high-dramatic ones. (Eberhard Kloke)

## **Wagner Richard** (1813-1883)

### ***Siegfried*** (1872, 2018)

Zweiter Tag des Bühnenfestspiels "Der Ring des Nibelungen"  
arranged version for medium sized orchestra by Eberhard Kloke

libretto: Richard Wagner

language: German

300'

cast:

Siegfried: tenor

Mime: tenor

Wanderer: baritone, bass-baritone

Alberich: baritone, bass baritone

Fafner: bass

Brünnhilde: soprano  
 Erda: alto  
 Forest Bird: soprano  
 Orchestra: 60 players

2 3 3 3 - 4 2 4 1 - timp, perc(2), hp, pno, str(10 8 6 5 4)

Along with *Rheingold*, *Siegfried* is the most experimental of Wagner's *Ring* operas. The great interruption during the time of composing *Siegfried* included two major factors which had their effect on the sound, sonic architecture and general compositional density of the work:

1. Composition of *Tristan and Meistersinger*
2. Specification and planning of the Festival Theatre in Bayreuth ("covered orchestra sound")

It cannot be overemphasised that it was not until Act III that *Siegfried* was conceived with the special acoustics of the Bayreuth Festival Theatre (the covered orchestra pit – "mystical abyss") in mind.

This arrangement of *Siegfried* is geared to special sonic weighting for each act:

The orchestration work generally consisted of finding the right proportion between sonic density and thinning out and, at the same time, weighting the sonic balance anew between the singers onstage and the music from the orchestra.

Above all, it was a matter of minimising instrumental doubling, in order to "slim down" the sound and to take away its sonic "blasting." The orchestration also aimed at greater differentiation between woodwind and brass colours (using cor anglais, heckelphone, bass clarinet, contrabass clarinet, contrabassoon, bass trumpet, Wagner tubas and contrabass trombone). New dynamics were also given, allowing the voices more options for vocal nuances and to balance out the orchestra sound further.

Specifying the *Fach* of the voices was dispensed with since this arrangement of the work can also be performed by lighter voices, not only the traditional high-dramatic ones.



**Wagner Richard** (1813-1883)

***Götterdämmerung*** (1874)

Dritter Tag des Bühnenfestspiels „Der Ring des Nibelungen“

arranged version for medium sized orchestra by Eberhard Kloke (2018)

libretto: Richard Wagner

language: German

world première: Würzburg 2019

300'

cast:

Siegfried: tenor

Gunther: baritone

Alberich: baritone, bass-baritone

Hagen: bass

Brünnhilde: soprano

Gutrun, 3rd Norn, Woglinde: soprano

Waltraute, 2nd Norn, Wellgunde: soprano

1st Norn, Flosshilde: alto

Men, women: mixed chorus

Orchestra: 63 players

3 3 3 3 - 6 2 4 1 - timp, perc(2), hp, cel, str(10 8 6 5 4)

This transcription is based on the forces available in a mid-sized orchestra. The orchestral colours were “modernised” in the course of arranging it by differentiating among the historically given spectrum and by introducing new instruments. I strove both to expand and condense the sound, especially since I of course kept the instruments typical of the *Ring* (Wagner tuba, bass trumpet, contrabass trombone, etc.); the newly introduced ones (alto flute, heckelphone, contrabass clarinet, contrabassoon and cimbasso, the latter as a link between tubas and trombones) become especially significant as additional dramatic-psychological sonic elements.



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**Zemlinsky Alexander** (1871-1942)

***Eine florentinische Tragödie*** (1916)

opera in 1 act

reduced version for soli and ensemble or chamber orchestra by Roland Freisitzer (2015)

language: German

world première: Vienna 2015

60'

cast:

Guido Bardi, Tenor

Simone, Bariton

Bianca, Sopran

1 1 3 1 - 2 1 1 0 - timp, perc(2), cel, pno, str

Roland Freisitzer has arranged the opera for chamber ensemble, in keeping with the character of the dramatic material. His version makes do with just 16 instruments (with optional string sections). Such a radical reduction of the orchestra necessitated significant alterations to the work; but changing and re-weighting the instrumentation did not make the absence of certain instruments a shortcoming; they became a means of discovering the superb harmonic ideas in Zemlinsky's score anew – and the result is riveting chamber music theatre.