

Mauro Hertig The Great Mirror (2019, Austrian premiere)

The Great Mirror follows the idea of the encyclopedia by Vincent de Beauvais (1184/94-1264) bearing the same name. As its starting point, the composition follows de Beauvais's attempt to squeeze all the world's information into a single work. For this purpose, the sounding environment (be it local animals, the architecture of the concert hall, the performers, the audience, or past concerts at the concert venue) are fed in the score of the choral piece The Great Mirror as musical objets trouvés. Various techniques of feedback and simplification are used by the choir to process the local sounds. Hereby the summary of contents, as crucial for an encyclopaedia, is imitated, which, although incisive, retains the wholeness of the world described – or according to de Beauvais "everything, that is worth the attention - of its admiration and imitation". (Mauro Hertig)

Tomás Luis de Victoria Officium Defunctorum (1605)

Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611), a contemporary of Palestrina, is considered one of the most important Spanish Renaissance composers. He grew up in Ávila and received early musical training, which is also where his close spiritual and artistic ties with the Jesuit order, founded in 1552, began. His entire oeuvre is dedicated to sacral music, much of it for special liturgical occasions, including two Requiems. Victoria went to Rome at an early age, established himself as a musician and also gained the priestly ordinations. A deeply religious and at the same time emotionally expressive composer of the Roman school, he quickly became a sought-after and busy composer and musician, sometimes holding three positions simultaneously. A considerable number of works published during his lifetime document his work as a composer. In 1587 he returned to Spain to become Kapellmeister and chaplain at the Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales in Madrid, where the widow of Emperor Maximilian II, who died in 1576, had retired. Tonight's Requiem (officially titled "Officium Defunctorum") is the composer's second one and was composed for the death of this emperor's widow in 1603. It is the last work Victoria published himself before his death in 1611, and it represents a highlight in his and his generation's output. The Requiem, consisting of 6 parts, follows the rules established by the Council of Trent, however the Dies Irae sequence is missing. The contrapuntal work, set in extraordinarily long note values, is based, as usual, on a single-voice chorale as cantus firmus, which is usually led by the second soprano. The attraction of the merging lines in the Kyrie radiates throughout the entire piece. The music, the memory of it and its reverberations overhaul the otherwise strict sequence of movements in the mass. In a flow of steady, sometimes highly dramatic movements, as given in the Sanctus and Benedictus, and a gliding pause in the monophonic chants, temporality is completely dissolved. To perceive time not as a progressive movement, but as a not necessarily linear experience deriving from music, is one of the affinities in between this music and the one of Beat Furrer. (Andreas Karl)

Beat Furrer Prophezeiungen (2022-2023, Austrian premiere)

Claude Lévi-Strauss describes in "Sad Tropics" a tribal chief, who retires after the ritual and begins to sing: he sings in the voices of many different persons, animals and mythical figures, and he sings them in the pitch and register assigned to each of them.

This narration has brought forth a specific idea of a song within me: a melody, heterogeneous, an interweaving of many different melodies, different positions in the body, different timbres.

The instruments accordion and contrabass clarinet reinforce this heterogeneity embodied in a voice by discontinuously changing its resonances – big space, small space – and colouring it darker, or lighter.

The text is taken from the wonderful story by Sara Gallardo: Eisejuaz. (Beat Furrer)

Katharina Rosenberger Aufzeichnungen eines Stimmlosen (no voice other than this pen...)
(2020)

From the diary entries of Mohammed al-Hamiri.

The composition refers to Gustav Mahler's Des Knaben Wunderhorn's "Lied des Verfolgtem im Turm" (1898), that itself is based on the song "Die Gedanken sind frei" by an unknown author of the 18th century. Aufzeichnungen eines Stimmlosen was premiered on September 4th, 2020 at the Gustav Mahler Music Weeks in Toblach, South Tyrol, by the vocal ensemble Cantando Admont and Marco Sala (bass clarinet), Mirko Jevtović (accordion) and Johannes Haase (violin).

Transposed into topicality, Aufzeichnungen eines Stimmlosen addresses the inadmissible circumstances of persecution and deprivation of liberty of people without judicial review. Especially in the US, prisons and controversial detentions are a big issue and a thriving business. With the 9/11 attacks in 2001 and successive politically motivated propaganda to persecute terrorists and scare the population, the USA allowed itself the illegal internment of hundreds of people, some of whom are still imprisoned in Guantánamo, an extraordinary prison set up in 2002. Here, held under inhumane conditions, the prisoners not only lost their freedom, but also their voice.

The libretto consists of edited sentence fragments from various reports from the Frankfurter Allgemeine, Süddeutsche Zeitung, New York Times and the news channels Al Jazeera and The Intercept. The latter published excerpts from the diary entries of the young Yemeni and Guantánamo Bay inmate Mohammed al-Hamiri. In these writings, and especially in the letters to his mother, it becomes clear that the imprisoned terror suspects were deprived of any rights and many were held without official charges. Nevertheless, al-Hamiri does not let his hope be crushed. His remarks speak of an unprecedented strength and faith in a life of peace and happiness. Al-Hamiri was acquitted in 2015 after 13 years in captivity. (Katharina Rosenberger)

Francesco Filidei Dormo Molto Amore (2012)

Once more a piece about sleep, once again on a text by Stefano Busellato, the author of the libretti of my two music theatre pieces. In this case, my music has been entrusted with a poem from "Chi non muore", taken from one of the sections of "N.N.", the work I dedicated to the story of Franco Serantini, the young anarchist orphan murdered by the police in the early 1970s.

The piece explores the harmonic possibilities of some simple major, pentatonic and chromatic scales, ascending, descending, trying to find the balance necessary for the few words of the text in the contrasts between duration and long progressions: I Sleep-A Lot-Love-Hours-After-Not-Having-Done-Death. Words that are constantly recombined anew to create new meanings. (Francesco Filidei)