

# DIALOGUES

## THE FESTIVAL

### OF THE

#### MOZARTEUM

##### FOUNDATION

###### SALZBURG

#### “DIALOGUES: A REPORT”

Salzburg – an evening like any other, it seems, in the Grosser Saal of the Mozarteum Foundation, the scene of countless concerts over the years, and the hall still seems to resonate with all those events. This particular event, however, differs from the classical orchestral or chamber music concerts and recitals; it is the starting-point of an unusual journey through four days of intent listening. The journey starts softly, with the delicate strains of the shô, a Japanese woodwind instrument, a kind of mouth organ. The performer is relaxed but highly concentrated, her eyes closed; beside her, listening intently, another musician holds in her lap a large water-filled conch-shell trumpet. The shô plays on and on, alone, chords emerging from nothing, hardly moving, fading away. At last, the second musician quietly raises her trumpet and tilts it, turning it slowly. The water inside starts to move, and we hear the fragile bur clearly

perceptible sound of five or six bubbles rising. The piece is over: John Cage’s *Two*<sup>3</sup>, for shô and conch shells, composed in 1991, the year of his death. – A first impression. Later, in similar tranquil vein, come filigree works for small ensemble by Anton Webern, master of musical density, monumental in its reduction, combined with crystalline pieces by Toshio Hosokawa. The following day brings contrasts. Tempests of sound: noise musician Masami Akita *alias* Merzbow appears, and for a full hour he places the audience in the middle of his architecture of sounds, at a deafening volume. Many listeners lie on the floor, to experience the music with their whole bodies. Merzbow stands at the laptops, at the mixing-desk, at his home-made instruments, calm, collected, quiet, concentrated, hardly moving as he carefully heaps up the tremendous masses of sound. The morning after: music for flute and koto, the Japanese zither – original instruments for traditional Japanese music, played by masters of the art; again, a different kind of listening ex-

perience. And finally, early instruments in the hands of contemporary musicians: Ko Ishikawa plays the shō. He belongs to the group of musicians invited by the Japanese guitarist, composer and electronic musician Otomo Yoshihide to perform in a joint concert. They stand in a wide circle around the sides of the hall, with the audience in the centre. Shō, electric guitars, a turntable player, a performer at a sinus-wave generator, an electronic musician: improvisation – there is no score; only milestones are provided. The piece, entitled *Prisoner 2009*, consists of one sheet of music for all, with only a few sequences of notes and suggestions for performance. An hour's duration is agreed, and what follows is a highly sensitive, profound yet easily accessible performance, like a breath of freedom.

These are some impressions from “Dialogues” concerts, with music from completely different historical, cultural and musical contexts. The astonishing thing about each day is that while listening, one discovers connections, both in the music and between the performers – and in contrast, experiences oneself as a listener. During this time, the music is brought alive by the clarity of its supporting structure, which also allows an extreme reduction of the musical material, rendering perceptible the quietness of the pieces (however loud they may be, superficially). Something comparable is apparent in the musicians; despite their widely varying artistic provenance, they are all remarkable as being calm, collected, focused and concentrated. They always speak quietly, concentrating on the music – whether Anton Webern, Helmut Lachenmann, John Cage, bamboo flute music or electronic noise music.

Something special had been achieved here: encounters between different musical worlds, genuine dialogues revealing unexpected connections behind completely different aspects of music. But – why did the “Dialogues” aim at this kind of encounter? Why juxtapose such different musical extremes in one evening, in one festival? A brief look at current trends in music may shed light on these questions and on the background to the “Dialogues” Festival.

#### “DIALOGUES”: FINDINGS AND AIMS

The classical music world tends to cultivate traditional European art music in the variation of its interpretation, repeating what is familiar in the form of a relatively limited canon of classic works. Alongside this is the world of contemporary music, which tries to keep abreast with the constant production and the vast variety of means of expression in contemporary music, by maximising and

highlighting what is new, at the expense of a closer study of new works through frequent repetition. All too often in the classical field, little scope is allowed for interest in new works in different, not established styles; this is linked with all the risks of being misunderstood and of losing audiences. In contrast, a similar phenomenon can be observed in the field of contemporary music, with commitment to what is new sometimes restricted to the point of becoming a dictate. The two fields – although closely interwoven through common traditions, artistic concerns, the occasional personal partnership and shared organisational structures – nevertheless remain separate, each in its own idioms, which determine within the scene both discussion and individual subjective experience of recently-heard performances. Each has its own overall scheme for internal and external shaping – in programming, on stage, in the auditorium – and not least, its own economic structure which reveals the close interaction of its main themes with social and market considerations.

All these factors (together with additional ones which would become clear in a more detailed analysis) give both fields an image which is at the very least unattractive, conveying as it does an aura of exclusion and seclusion. Openness, mutual exchange and encounters between the scenes are rare in the music world – a fundamental circumstance that applies to everyone involved: audiences, performers and organisers. Only a minority amongst these groups base their work and experience on crossing musical boundaries, on taking a wider view, on peaceable openness. Of course there are prominent examples and places – also backed by long tradition – that show precisely this crossing of boundaries, and of course there are also ample audio-biographies and artists' profiles that owe their status to constant experience with boundary-crossing. In general, however, one would certainly be justified in maintaining that efforts to change the established landscape constitute the smaller part of the whole.

This is where the “Dialogues” Festival takes up the story. The aim is to take the encounter between different musical and artistic worlds as a basis, rather than treating it as an exception. Boundaries are ignored; works, performers and audiences from classical and contemporary music, dance, film, visual arts and all age groups are brought together – not simply juxtaposed, but interacting within one event, one concert. The “Dialogues” Festival is not a pioneer in its aim to cross boundaries; the distinctive and innovative element is the consistent effort to make this the permanent guiding motif for the development and format of the programmes in collaboration with the artists.

This declared aim would be inadequate, however, were it merely the result of the above-mentioned findings. It has to be based on inherent connections; so the “Dialogues” add the hypothesis that an open encounter with other forms of music and art can set in motion an independent experience – the overall concern being to initiate mental, emotional and intellectual movements to counteract the rigid territorialisation of the musical field. Of course, this intention can be realised only in the perception of the individual. This underlines the complexity and the fragility of the purpose of the “Dialogues”, since its realisation is determined by the multiplicity of variables and influences – from the works included, the performers, the conditions in the venue and the individual auditory experiences of the listeners, right through to the guiding principles and the imaginative scope of the programme-planners.

Against this background, then, the “Dialogues” meet the current situation with a working hypothesis which seeks to animate the music world in its consciously narrow contextualisation of various artistic formats. A few examples from previous years – and this book in particular – may demonstrate where this has succeeded, where and how the hypothesis has become reality.

#### “DIALOGUES”: PROGRAMMES, DISCUSSIONS, FORMATS

The “Dialogues” Festival has included concerts where the long-deliberated groupings of works and distinguished performers from quite different music scenes provided new spheres of perception hardly conceivable under normal concert conditions. For example, works by Beethoven and Georges Aperghis revealed – in their inexorable impetus, their existential gravity, in the strength of their compositional structure and their pioneering exploration of frontier areas – profound relationships far beyond the surface, brought out by leading performers in their fields, who with powerful interpretations placed the works and themselves at the disposal of the Dialogues: the Hagen Quartet, the Arditti Quartet and Salome Kammer as soloist in a work by Georges Aperghis (see page 250). Further examples could be mentioned, such as the encounter between two pianists from widely differing contexts: Lars Vogt and Marino Formenti who, at two pianos, explored the auditory realms of Schubert, Fernyough, Brahms, Feldman and Kurtág. Here, too, the associations within apparently alien fields were manifest, and – as in many other concerts – the power and the dialogue between the performers, in their playing, in the realisation of the work, each listening to the other’s performance and “his” works, and in the ac-

ceptance of stimuli for creating new experiences in the performance of their “own” works. Yet another concert, under the unifying analytical eye of the composer Helmut Lachenmann, juxtaposed Luigi Nono’s string quartet *Fragmente – Stille, an Diotima*, performed by the Arditti Quartet, with Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*, performed by András Schiff. And as described above, the cultural context of Japan brought together traditional and experimental Japanese music.

With programmes like these, conversations and discussions, often over several days, were an essential element of the “Dialogues” – not in the sense of holding introductory lectures or imparting knowledge and content, but with the aim of being aware at one and the same time of the speaker and of what he is saying, and to be ready to adapt to his approach to music in one’s own way of listening. Thus encounters between audience and composers were a central component of the “Dialogues” – with Helmut Lachenmann, Georges Aperghis, Toshio Hosokawa, Alvin Lucier, Georg Friedrich Haas and others. The Festival also enabled encounters between performers who would hardly have met in their own cultural contexts; Toshio Hosokawa and Otomo Yoshihide were mentioned earlier, and Alvin Lucier was brought together with Ivor Bolton (who conducted Mozart’s *Requiem*) and the vocal soloists. Helmut Lachenmann and András Schiff met for the first time here; Helmut Lachenmann also came into contact with the choreographer Xavier Le Roy, and the soprano Annette Dasch met performers including Donatienne Michel-Dansac und the fado singer Mísia.

However, the “Dialogues” Festival does not depend solely on the concert programme, discussions and encounters, but also largely on the development of interdisciplinary formats. From the start, a central concern of the “Dialogues” has been to include performers from various artistic fields, whose whole apparatus is given an important role in the Festival. This applies to spoken theatre (e.g. with Josef Bierbichler, or with Therese Affolter, Markus Meyer and Hermann Beil) as well as to film (with such differing film-makers as Jean-Luc Godard, Andy Warhol and Derek Jarman), the visual arts (represented by artists such as Sylvie Fleury, Lawrence Weiner, Bernhard Martin, Jack Pierson, Arnulf Rainer and Jack Pierson) and contemporary dance and performance projects (with choreographers including Boris Charmatz, Meg Stuart, Xavier Le Roy and Philipp Gehmacher). Finally, particular attention is paid to the development of new formats and the creation of spaces for artistic exploration between these art forms and music. Thus the juxtaposition of works for piano solo by Mozart with the choreographic work of Philipp Gehmacher is

one profound and successful example, others being Xavier Le Roy's performance dealing with the relationship between conductor and audience in a concert hall, or the combination of film documentary and music in the form of docu-concerts created specially for the "Dialogues" Festival by the film-maker Frank Scheffer, with music by Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schoenberg, Elliott Carter, Edgard Varèse and John Cage.

All these set-ups (including the "classical" concert format, which of course has its permanent place in the "Dialogues") have the aim of reinforcing, through dialogues with the others, the awareness of their conditions and the conditionality of how they are themselves perceived. Here, too, the "Dialogues" are concerned with the attempt to test the working hypothesis that getting to know other (musical) languages and experiencing one's own from their point of view can offer a stimulating challenge, intensifying awareness and making a huge difference in perception, as opposed to remaining enclosed in one's own field.

#### "DIALOGUES": THE BOOK

Now, in the autumn of 2009, the "Dialogues" look back over ten Festivals – reason enough to document the programmes to date. This book is divided into three sections. The first tells the story of the Festival since its inception, in a chronological sequence of photographs of concerts, projects, performances, performers and audiences. The second includes all the texts written on the projects and concerts, providing a coherent documentation of programme essays, libretti, song texts, etc. The third section, with a comprehensive index of works and participants, facilitates a systematic survey of the "Dialogues" through the performers and composers, inviting the reader to follow the career of central personalities beyond their part in the Festival.

This is a retrospective – and a record, a collection of material, a bird's-eye view. The "Dialogues" Festival was founded in 2005 by the Salzburg Mozarteum Foundation, just before the 2006 celebration of the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth. The idea was to provide a new and unusual festival as a long-term project. As the retrospective shows, this idea has been fulfilled. This book is for all those who have taken part in the Festival – performers and audiences alike. It invites the reader to look back, and to devote further thought to the content.

Our sincere thanks go to the Mozarteum Foundation, its boards and committees, which have made the Festival possible. First and foremost, to all the Foundation

colleagues who have contributed to the planning, implementation, supervision and communication, and to all the artists who have constituted the nucleus of the Festival, from the development of the programmes to their own presence and performances. Thanks to all the co-producers and collaborators, and to the supporters who have followed, encouraged and enabled the Festival. Without the generous financial support from public funds, sponsors, patronage and private donors, the Festival would never have been realised. Our grateful thanks to all; the documentation (Section 2) states who supported each project.

It is thanks to Dr. Thilo Mannhardt, to whose initial generosity the project is due, that the history of the Festival could be documented here in such wealth of detail. The idea for the book evolved in many discussions, and the project took shape in dialogue with him. Thanks to Stefan Fuhrer, who developed the layout and visual identity, for his participation in the discussions and his creative energy. Thanks also to the Foundation colleagues who lent their active support to the project, preparing the programmes and supervising the photograph and text archives of the Foundation, from which the photographs were selected and the texts in the documentation section were compiled. Our thanks also to Elisabeth Schoeberl for editing and for compiling the index, and to Gail Schamberger for the English translation.

*Salzburg, November 2009  
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