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World premiere:

Helmut Oehring
UNSICHTBAR LAND

Opera in 7 days (2005)
 based on William Shakespeare: Der Sturm
 with music by Henry Purcell

FP: 7 May 2006 Theater Basel

Helmut Oehring's new music theatre piece *UNSICHTBAR LAND* ('Invisible Land') at its Basle premiere was greatly acclaimed not only by the audience, but also by the press – please find a selection of reviews on the back of this page; a dossier with all detail on the performance is available on request at composers.germany@boosey.com

On 27 May 2006 at 11.15 pm arte TV will present in its METROPOLIS series an extensive documentary on the world premiere; repeated on 28 May 2006 at 6.05 pm.

The production may be seen at Theater Basel at the following dates:

- Saturday, 27 May, 8.00 pm
 - Monday, 29 May, 8.00 pm
 - Friday, 2 June, 8.00 pm
 - Sunday, 11 June, 7.00 pm
 - Tuesday, 13 June, 8.30 pm
 - Monday, 19 June, 8.00 pm
 - Wednesday, 21 June, 8.00 pm
- www.theater-basel.ch**

Scores, demo recordings and further information are available at composers.germany@boosey.com

Stage photo: Sebastian Hoppe



Selected press clippings on the premiere

„Voices seem to emerge from nowhere. Quiet, plaintive chords are heard from the choir, slowly swelling... And suddenly it is there: a chillingly glistening atmosphere, grasping your soul and keeping you in suspense for two hours... It is not like drifting through a novel or a drama but rather through states of mind.“
Wibke Gerking, Die Welt, 10 May 2006

„Using musical means of expression, the work feels its way towards regions beyond the usual language and explanatory patterns offered by the media... The sound aims to create an aural drama and defines the position of contemporary music theatre... Complex ‘expedition music’ with highly theatrical qualities.“
Frieder Reininghaus, DeutschlandRadio Kultur, 8 May 2006

„In Oehring's score, a second layer is developed from Purcell's stage works: while the symphony orchestra is in the pit, the Baroque ensemble is playing on stage, however in Baroque tuning, therefore a half a tone lower. Alternating at the beginning, the two layers increasingly overlap and merge into each other, thus creating musical picture puzzles... One of the moving moments of confusion in this suspense-filled evening is when the sign-language soloists, often used in Oehring's works, blend into tender lamento song – towards the end, even the choir falls silent and, instead of singing, uses a kind of sign-language song-speech, accompanied by silent mouth movements... The stage performance and music, the singing and acting all together make for an absorbing evening.“

Gerhard R Koch, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 10 May 2006

„Helmut Oehring has chosen a momentous subject, combining Shakespeare's last drama, *The Tempest*, with reports from the diary of the English polar explorer Shackleton, written during his disastrously failed Antarctic expedition... A number of layers, musical, narrative and visual, are superimposed... The overall structure is organised in seven successive days, seamlessly passing over into each other, just as the days are listed in Shackleton's diary. Perhaps it is necessary to abandon the hope of finding something in this work, and to simply, with your eyes wide open, enjoy Guth's intense, rich imagery and Oehring's superimposition and juxtaposition of events, as an inspiring multimedia adventure.“

Alfred Zimmerlin, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 9 May 2006

„At first, Oehring's original score and Shakespeare's contemporary Purcell are treated as two separate elements. Then, however, they touch, overlap, fuse. A fascinating process of gradual convergence... Eventually they are together, with the ‘historical’ ensemble playing Oehring and the modern playing Purcell. Even when the curtains are closed, Oehring's expressive language, with the wordless, distant choirs, evokes an affinity with the sea: almost wave-like, the voices move up and down, rise and fall... A dominant element on stage is Christian Schmidt's library, as tall as the backdrop itself: the element of life, in concave structure, of the bibliomaniac Prospero – a building of collected knowledge which has become interior design. On the reverse side of the revolving stage, rotating more and more often, there is a panorama of the Antarctic Ocean, which, reminiscent of Caspar David Friedrich, seems endless. It shows the expedition vessel suffering shipwreck and human figures who are dwarfed by the perspective. Embedded in that setting, Claus Guth's stage direction is a successful, precisely thought-out mixture of simultaneous Brechtian disengagement from *and* empathy with the actors – like a drama you read with a reflective distance but which allows for partial identification.“

Heinz W Koch, Stuttgarter Zeitung, 12 May 2006

„In ten years under Schindhelm this is only the second opera commissioned for the big stage. With *UNSICHTBAR LAND*, Theater Basel has delivered a coup... A terrific mixture of Baroque sound, contemporary music, turn-of-the-century aesthetics and polar imagery – a revue with sharp picture and sound cuts and sophisticated transitions, which, of all artistic genres, is probably only possibly in opera.“
Sigfried Schibli, Basler Zeitung, 9 May 2006