

Frank Michael Beyer



Frank Michael Beyer © Stefan Moses

MUSICAL ARCHITECTURE, PLACED INTO TIME

The composer Frank Michael Beyer

By Habakuk Traber

History becomes meaningful because of the horizon of the future, and substantial because of the past on which it rests. In Frank Michael Beyer's compositions, both dimensions are present. It is partly this aspect which gives them their specific sense of time. Within the broad spectrum of music-history, two composers have served as benchmarks for Beyer, the son of a writer: Johann Sebastian Bach and Anton Webern.

Bach has remained an object of unsated curiosity and repeated discoveries for Beyer, and while studying in the early fifties, he made himself also familiar with Webern's music. In the works of both composers he not only found a strictness of thought, but also the liberation of musical imagination and representation, made possible by a total command of compositional techniques. The fine polyphony, the arrangement in layers and groups of his choral piece *Et resurrexit*, was also inspired by his contemplation of the old polyphonic works of Josquin or Thomas Tallis; it was this which gave him the experience of how, during the course of time, parts can become more and more densely woven together to form a breathing and intensively moved sound.

Thus an arch of time – sometimes more evident, sometimes less; sometimes more determining, sometimes less – runs throughout Beyer's entire output. His *Fuga fiammata* for orchestra, premiered by the Bayerischer Rundfunk symphony orchestra in June 2001 and performed for the 24th time in the composer's hometown by the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin under Kent Nagano, is the culmination of his works. This piece has a transparency and clarity that is heard also in those passages where the musical processes are extremely condensed; it is a changing sound tableau which evolves into a complex musical architecture, placed into time. This architecture was generated from the sequence of notes which Johann Sebastian Bach used as a basis for the theme of the final movement of his *Partita in E minor*. As a series from Webern, it was developed from a core of three notes and mysteriously leads the musical events out of the background, itself surfacing only at prominent moments. Here the notion of concentrated musical thought in variations and proportions is extended to a spatial-musical imagination.

The mythology and art of antiquity, in which music leads to the core of humanity, are present in works such as the ballet, *Geburt des Tanzes*, *Griechenland* for full orchestra, and the violin concerto, *Musik der Frühe*. They act as imaginative gates to an aesthetic experience which directs us from the fragments of the presence

into the openness, and coherence, of that temporal space called history.

Talking to Frank Michael Beyer about his works means devoting a large part of the conversation to the works of other composers and the context of their creation. It is in this way that we can find out essential things about Beyer's own compositional work, since for him musical composition is an expression of a spiritual world which has numerous sources and forms of representation.

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