

## York Höller



York Höller Photo © Copyright Hanne Engwald

### An introduction to York Höller's music by Helmut Rohm

The composer York Höller has consistently and undogmatically followed his own path, without undue involvement in either the agitated stylistic debates or the often vehement disputes over personal reputation which have dominated recent music history. It is rather the pursuit of developmental logic that is of central importance both for his musical output and for the course of his artistic career. Among the European composers of his generation, Höller is arguably the one who has most convincingly achieved and continues to achieve the synthesis of diverse stylistic and philosophical concepts. He achieves this not in an eclectic manner but with the partly intuitive, partly rational power of vision which alone produces the new, the original, the distinctive.

In the sixties, Höller studied composition with Bernd Alois Zimmermann and Herbert Eimert and piano with Alfons Kontarsky at the Musikhochschule in Cologne. During this time, important and defining impulses also came from studies with Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen. But it was not long before Höller began to harbour growing doubts about integral serialism from a theoretical as well as a philosophical and aesthetic perspective. In the late sixties, while working as repetiteur at the opera in Bonn, Höller began to devote himself to questions of information theory and stochastic processes. Extended periods of work at the Electronic Studio of WDR (West German Radio) led to his first live-electronic compositions in 1973/74. Over the years, Höller also gradually intensified his artistic activity in France following a stay at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris in 1974/75.

In the late seventies, Höller began to develop his ever-evolving concept of "Gestaltkomposition". His openness to international discourse has acted as a catalyst, together with his distinct ability to explore without ideological barriers various aspects and conditions of artistic experience, whether from an historical, anthropological or psychological viewpoint. In his search for archetypal elements he studied facets of Gregorian plainchant, central elements of Western music history, and the sounds and rhythms of non-European cultures. He perfected his method of developing a work, or even a complete cycle of pieces, organically from the "genetic code" of an almost cellular "sound shape".

This sound shape is always more than the mere material of a tone row or interval row which forms the basis in orthodox dodecaphonic thought; it must

already contain a secret, a teleological direction, the breath of life, as in a seed. The references within this musical cell gain importance for all dimensions of the musical form: melody, harmony and temporal structure. Höller's method, which he himself calls "permanent development", is always open to spontaneous intervention and the fantasy of the creative impulse. More than any other composer, Höller is concerned with blending the dimensions of electronic sound with traditional instrumental and vocal music. Through the tension between these polarised mediums, new worlds open up to his extravagant sound sensibility, at times inspired by mythical and dreamlike ideas. He explores these and invites us, his listeners, to travel with him.

Höllers's two-act opera *Der Meister und Margarita* was premiered at the Paris Opéra with resounding and lasting success in 1989. Höller himself wrote the libretto based on the novel of the same name by Mikhail Bulgakov: it was the tragic fate of a politically persecuted artist depicted with theatrical colour and surreal complexity that fascinated him. It is Höller's power of reflection and his ability, in re-examining his own concepts, of always finding individual solutions and translating them into a 'telling' and comprehensible form that characterise his work after *Der Meister und Margarita*. Representing this period are a series of large-scale and impressive works, including *Fanal* for trumpet and orchestra, *Pensées* for piano, orchestra and live electronics, *Aura*, *Margaritas Traum* and *Widerspiel* for two pianos and orchestra. The German Bundestag commissioned Höller to write a farewell piece to commemorate the final sitting of parliament in Bonn. With *Aufbruch* he characteristically succeeded in finding a solution for this piece of representational music that did justice to his idea of the gradual development of an individual 'nucleus'.

Höller wins over listeners without suspending the essential achievements of New Music. The question of 'material' is, however, no longer as important as in his earlier creative phases. The shaping of psychological 'energy fields' (morphogenetic fields) has gained greater prominence, as he once explained using the orchestral piece *Aura* as an example: "I used the mythical image of *Aura* because within it I see the archetypal dualistic confrontation between the gentle (*Aura*) and forceful (Dionysus) emotions. The union of these creates extreme tensions bordering on madness which can be resolved only in death."

Such energetic tensions also inform Höller's most recent works, from the solo piece *Scan* for flute through the ensemble compositions *Klangzeichen*, *Fluchtpunkte* or *Feuerwerk* to the large orchestral cycle *Sphären* for which Höller received the Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition 2010.

The ideas expressed in the above quote are closely tied to a concept of form which he describes in the following way: "Non-identity is characteristic of art in our century, but it can only be non-identical in relation to some other thing. What is this other thing? In art, it is form and always form. Without form there is neither identity nor non-identity, but only interchangeability and entropy. These I attempt to avoid to the best of my ability."

Unity of thought, the synthesis of opposites, an involvement in the reality of pluralistic phenomena, the raising of diverse elements onto a higher plane: in

these things York Höller is a master.  
Helmut Rohm is editor for New Music, Bavarian Radio, Munich.

## OPERAS

## Der Meister und Margarita

1984–89, rev.2008

2 hr 30 min

Opera in two acts

Text: Libretto by the composer based on the novel by Mikhail Bulgakov (G)

Major roles: lyrdramS,M,T,dramBar,Bar,B,mime(female);

minor roles: 2M,lyrT,2T,4B;

small roles: M,T,2Bar,3B,speakers; ballet;

3(I,II,III=picc;II=afi).3(III=corA).3(II=Ebcl;III=bcl).asax.3(III=dbn)

-4.4.3.1-perc(6-7);8timp/4tgl/crot/glsp/xylorimba(or

marimba&xyl)/vib/t.bells/hi-hat/8cym/9gong/3tam-t/tamb/4bongo/6tom-t/2conga/2SD/TD

/BD/3cowbell/2bells(lg)/3wdbl/ tpl.bl/2slit dr/sleigh

bells/maracas/cast/claves/guero/ratchet/whip/flexatone/wooden hammer(lg)

-harp-Spanish gtr(=elec.gtr)-cel-pft-2synth(Yamaha DX7,EMS Synthi AKS)-4-channel

tape-strings(14.12.10.8.6); stage musicians(can be taken from orchestra); Act I:

ssax-jazztpt-pft-db-jazzperc; Act II: amplified

vin-elec.gtr-elec.bgtr-elec.pft-perc(2);2conga

*"When in 1967 the novel Master i Margarita (1928–40), opus ultimum of the Russian dramatist and narrative writer Michail Bulgakov (1891–1940), was released for publication, the event attracted worldwide attention. The author had been ostracized by official literary critics since the late twenties and his works were banned from publication and performance in the Soviet Union. The Master and Margarita, however, is a religious and philosophical novel rather than a political one; indeed, it is a modern version of the Faust legend. Three strands are intertwined: Pilate's interrogation of Jesus, the grotesque conditions of life in Moscow during the thirties and the tragic story of the life of the 'Master', a writer full of doubts about himself, and of his lover, Margarita, who believes in him..."*

*... Cologne-based composer York Höller took up the Herculean task of cutting the intricate plot of the novel down to an opera libretto in the years from 1984–89. It is a libretto which exploits every nuance of human singing and sprechgesang to allow the novel's numerous characters to express and define themselves, drawing on the technique developed by Alban Berg in Wozzeck. Höller uses a dramatic stage music to underpin, surround, emphasise or counteract the singing and declaiming parts. It is a music which is always pushing forward, full of images, and one which, in a manner as moderate as it is brilliant, employs the full range of orchestral sound to hold everything in suspense: the Master suffering over his Christ novel, the devil's interference and the lies it uncovers, the clarifying imbroglions arranged by him and the surreal incidents in the House of Artists, in the evil apartment, in the psychiatric clinic, at Satan's ball, on Golgotha and on the Sparrow Hills. Each scene is given an individual couleur locale – an impressive creative act which received its world première at the Opéra de Paris in 1989 and its first German performance at the Cologne opera in 1991.*

*(Lutz Lesle, NZfM, 2/2001)*

*"The version that has attracted most attention is that by the German York Höller, which was premièred at the Palais Garnier in Paris in 1989. It has only now appeared on disc; this recording is taken from the German première in Cologne in 1991, and reinforces the impression that the first performance made 11 years ago: that this is a powerful and hugely imaginative work, richly scored and carefully plotted..."*

*Naturally Höller preserves all the great spectacles, and they provide the points of articulation in his dramatic scheme – Voland's magical tour de force ends the first act and Margarita's aerial journey opens the second, which climaxes with the Satanic ball and ends with the lovers' flight into eternity. Those moments also generate the finest music, in which Höller's mastery of electronics comes to the fore... In Der Meister und Margarita the textures he creates are beguiling – suitably ethereal for the two journeys, and an astonishing, time-travelling collage of musics from the Renaissance to the 1960s for the ball, which climaxes with the Rolling Stones – singing Sympathy for the Devil, of course...*

*Höller has devised his own compositional system that enables him to integrate electronic and instrumental elements. Vocally and orchestrally, though, the musical language recalls Lulu more than anything else, and Berg's opera seems to have been one of his major influences. It is certainly very singable, and the Cologne cast, led by Richard Salter as the Master and Marilyn Schmiege as Margarita, with Franz Mazura as a baleful Voland, clearly mastered it superbly. Lothar Zagrosek steers a lucid course through the score, and though the sound can't avoid some of the stage noise, it manages the balance between live instruments and electronics very faithfully. It's a fascinating and important opera, based on a wonderful book."*

*(Andrew Clements, The Guardian, 22 Dec 2000)*

**World Premiere: 20 May 1989**

Opéra (Palais Garnier), Paris, France

Hans Neuenfels, director; Roland Herrmann, Karan Armstrong, James Johnson and others

Conductor: Lothar Zagrosek

## FULL ORCHESTRA

### Aufbruch

– Dank an Bonn –  
1998/99, rev.2004

15 min

for large orchestra

3(III=picc).3(III=corA).2.bcl.2.dbn-4.3.3.1-timp.perc(4):marimba/cyms(lo)/t.bells/glsp/vib/  
BD/tam-t/crot/tamb/sleigh bells(hi)/3bowed  
cym/tom-t/maracas/bongos/SD/cast/wdbl(lg)/tpl.bl/tgl-2harp-pft-strings

**World Premiere: 01 Jul 1999**

Marktplatz, Bonn, Germany  
Bamberger Symphoniker  
Conductor: Hans Zender

### Aura

1991/92, rev.1996

21 min

for large orchestra

4(III,IV=picc).3(III=corA).3(III=bcl).3(III=dbn)  
-4.3.3.1-perc(5):vib/wdbl(lg)/t.bells/tom-t(lg)/maracas(hi,med,lo)/5cym(different  
pitches)/marimba/TD/sleigh bells/4gong(different  
pitches)/glsp/xyl/3tam-t(hi,med,lo)/crot/BD/SD/timp/tamb-harp-kbds(2players):pft/cel/sy  
nth(Yamaha SY77 or SY99)-strings(14.12.10.8.6)

*"Aura breathes a Boulezian sensibility, radiating a post-serialist impressionism that seems far more French than German-modernist. The scoring is wondrously transparent, luminous, even when the full orchestra is engaged. And Höller uses his color palette with extreme subtlety; Debussy would have adored its delicately inward play of son et lumière. Almost everything in Aura appears to be happening just beneath the surface. Fragments of melody sputter to life in the divided strings; a ghostly haze of woodwinds is punctuated by a Messiaen-like flurry of vibraphone, piano, and harp... I certainly look forward to hearing this absorbing new work again, and I hope Barenboim will give us that chance one day soon."*

(John von Rhein, Chicago Tribune, 13 Oct 1995)

9790060106231 Study Score - Hawkes Pocket Score 1316

**World Premiere: 12 Oct 1995**

Symphony Hall, Chicago, IL, USA  
Chicago Symphony Orchestra  
Conductor: Daniel Barenboim

### Feuerwerk (aus "Sphären")

2004/06

9 min

for large orchestra

3(III=picc).2.corA.2.bcl.3(III=dbn)  
-4.3.3.1-timp.perc(4):vib/t.bells/xylorimba/SD/BD/crot/maracas/tam-ts/3cym(also  
bowed)/sleigh bells/tom-ts/bongos/wdbl/tamb-harp-pft-strings

## Magische Klanggestalt

1984

11 min

for large orchestra

3(III=picc).3(III=corA).3(III=bcl).3(III=dbn)  
-4.3.3.1-perc(4):tgl/crot(ant.cyms)/glsp/2xylorimba/vib/t.bells/3cym(hi,med,lo)/3tam-t(hi,  
med,lo)/2SD(snares off)/2TD(snares off)/2tamb(different pitches)/sleigh  
bells(1pair)/maracas(1pair)/BD/timp-2pft(I=cel,II=elec.org or synth)  
-harp-strings(14.12.10.8.6)

9790060077685 (Full score)

**World Premiere: 16 Mar 1986**

Musikhalle (Laeisz-Halle), Hamburg, Germany  
Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Hamburg  
Conductor: Hans Zender

## Sphären

Sechs Klangbilder für großes Orchester

2001–06

40 min

for large orchestra and live-electronics

3(II=afi,III=picc).2.corA.2.bcl.3(III=dbn)  
-4.3.3.1-timp.perc(4):vib/t.bells/xylorimba/marimba/SD/BD/crot/maracas/gongs/tam-ts/3  
cym(also bowed)/sleigh bells/tom-ts/bongos/wdbl/tamb/vibraslap/slit dr/plate  
bells-harp-pft-sampler(eg AKAI)-strings

*"A beautifully sounding 40-minute kaleidoscope... We heard (and saw) in the phrases and shapes of the Wind Game the dust or the leaves creating a stir, and enjoyed in the pizzicato study of Rain Canon how the water dropped, splashed or hit the metal. In Firework, a catapult of embers raged, while in Earth Layers you could have sworn that blocks were forming, shifting and piling up on top of each other. And beyond all these individual sensations, the magic Spheres were spreading radiance, enigma and debauchery."*(Gerhard Bauer, Kölner Stadtanzeiger, 09 Apr 2008)

9790202532324 (Full score)

**World Premiere: 04 Apr 2008**

Philharmonie, Köln, Germany  
WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln  
Conductor: Semyon Bychkov

## CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

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### Feuerwerk

2004

9 min

for 16 instrumentalists

1.1.1.bcl.1-1.1.1.0-perc(2):I=crot/vib/xylorimba/tam-t/bowed cym(med);  
II=3wdbl/3tom-t/SD/BD/3cym(also bowed)/maracas/sleigh bells(also crot/vib)  
-pft-strings(1.1.1.1.1)

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**World Premiere: 09 Apr 2005**

Forum (Studio), Leverkusen, Germany

musikFabrik

Conductor: Zsolt Nagy

## SOLO INSTRUMENT(S) AND ORCHESTRA

### Fanal

1989, rev.1996–97/2003

18 min

for trumpet and small orchestra

2.2(II=corA).2(II=bcl).2(II=dbn)  
-2.0.2.1-perc(2):glsp/vib/xylorimba/t.bells/2tam-t/5cym/3wdbl/5tom-t/SD/TD/BD-pft-synt  
h(Yamaha DX7II)-harp-strings(3.0.2.2.1)

*"The image of a flame, leaping high or slowly dying, lies behind the work, and John Wallace's account was a brilliant pyrotechnical display. The music of Höller – and this work in particular – deserves to be heard much more often."* (Barry Millington, *The Times*, 14 May 1997)

9790060113741 Study Score - Hawkes Pocket Score1364

**World Premiere:** 17 Jun 1991

Auditorium des Halles, Paris, France

Jean-Jacques Gaudon, trumpet; Ensemble InterContemporain

Conductor: Hans Zender

### Pensées

(Piano Concerto No.2)

1990–93

30 min

Requiem for piano, large orchestra, live-electronics and tape

solo pft(MIDI grand);  
3(III=picc).2.corA.2.bcl.2.dbn-4.3.3.1-timp.perc(5/6):xyl/marimba/vib/crot/glsp/gongs(different sizes)/6cym(different sizes)/3tam-t(different sizes)/2SD(snares on & snares off)/BD/t.bells/tom-t(lo)/wdbl(lo)/maracas/TD(snares off)/bell tree-harp-synth(Yamaha SY77 or SY99 with expander & 'Synthworks' software)-computer(Macintosh with 'Max' software)-4-channel tape with 4loudspeakers,mixing desk-strings(14.12.10.8.6)

**World Premiere:** 11 Jun 1993

Philharmonie, Köln, Germany

Pi-hsien Chen, piano; Kölner Rundfunk-Sinfonie-Orchester

Conductor: Hans Zender

### Piano Concerto No.1

1983/84

18 min

for piano and orchestra

2(II=picc).2.2(II=bcl).2(II=dbn)  
-4.3.3.0-perc(3):timp/crot/glsp/t.bells/2vib/xylorimba/2wdbl/tgl/3cym(hi)/2tam-t-harp-cel-strings(12.10.8.8.6)

**World Premiere:** 03 Dec 1985

Royal Festival Hall, London, United Kingdom

Peter Donohoe, piano; BBC Symphony Orchestra

Conductor: Elgar Howarth

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## Widerspiel

1999, rev.2009

27 min

Concerto for two pianos and orchestra

3(III=picc).2.corA.2.bcl.2.dbn-4.3.3.1-timp.perc(3):3tam-t(sm,med,lg)/crot/3wdbl/3tom-t/marimba/xyl/2bongo/vib/cym(lg)/claves/t.bells/SD/BD/TD/3bowed cym/tgl/sleigh bells/tamb-harp-strings

*"The work, which was performed for the first time under the direction of James Conlon, has three movements, all of them rich in variation, and was developed out of one 'Klanggestalt', a series of 23 notes. Though strictly structured, the impression of this double concerto is dominated by its sensual sonic events; large parts of it even seem to have a narrative attitude: as though a group could be heard as the background against which individuals make more or less strongly marked utterances, passing on arguments or failing in an attempt to communicate, trying to interrupt and drown each other. Scenes with marginal groups (down to the double bassoon) and rhetorical intrigues. Tumultuous passages alternate with quiet discursive ones. From this musical political landscape emerge the twin peaks of two pianos that are continually drawn back into the tutti, only to come forward once again each time. Elena Bashkirova and Brigitte Engerer brilliantly battled their way through the tricky rhythmic structures and created the necessary clarity of the main lines.*

*Although York Höller did not have a set agenda and denies that his work is influenced by emotional associations or even landscape images, the score of Widerspiel seem to suggest a view out of an airplane window. The finer or more glaring nuances of colour and structural differences of the surfaces which are mostly clearly separated and hardly ever mingle into each other create basic patterns from which the dominant lineaments stand out sharply and piercingly. The rich variations in the linear movements, the counteractions and interplays, the sophisticated linkages of the two solo parts and the way they are embedded into an overall sound which is constantly brought into a different balance, all give intellectual pleasure. Höller said he wanted to write nothing but 'absolute music' though the term itself seemed obsolete to him.*

*Eventually, Widerspiel (the title being an allusion to Hugo von Hofmannsthal's invocation of 'something as marvellous as music or algebra') brings together what formerly was considered an indissoluble contradiction, whose sheer existence was denied by a part of modernism. Now, however, that pluralism has generally been accepted, a sense of relaxation has come so that a work drawing upon despised serialist principles can prove so 'beautiful', strangely 'harmonic', that grey musical academics gravely shake their heads during the interval, wondering if such a work can 'still be really modern'. It is. In the sense, however, that it achieves a kind of integration that not only reflects the compositional techniques of Boulez, Stockhausen and Bernd Alois Zimmermann but uses and modifies – deliberately, though with or without awareness – various figures and structural characteristics of Classical-Romantic music-making – most obviously in the eruptions of the Largamente and in the transition from that deep, sweeping middle movement to the Energico finale."* (Frieder Reininghaus, *FAZ*, 19 May 2000)

**World Premiere:** 30 Apr 2000

Philharmonie, Köln, Germany

Brigitte Engerer & Elena Bashkirova, pianos; Gürzenich-Orchester Köln

Conductor: James Conlon

SOLO INSTRUMENT(S) AND ORCHESTRA 7

## VOICE(S) AND ORCHESTRA

### Margaritas Traum

["Sinfonische Suite"]

1991

23 min

Scenes from the opera 'Der Meister und Margarita' for soprano, large orchestra and 4-channel tape

Text: by the composer after Mikhail Bulgakov (G)

3(I,II=picc/sop.recorders,III=picc,afi).3(III=corA).3(III=bcl).asax.2.dbn-4.4.3.1-perc(6-7):v  
ib/3gong/3tam-t/6susp.cym/bowed cym/BD/timp/glsp/crot/3tom-t/TD/sleigh  
bells/t.bells/3wood dr/xylorimba/tamb/chains/bongos/4metal  
bl/wdbl-harp-pft-cel-synth(Yamaha DX7)-elec.gtr-4-channel tape-strings(14.12.10.8.6);  
rock band:elec.vln/elec.gtr/elec.bgtr/elec.pft/perc(2):congas

**World Premiere: 11 Oct 1991**

Stefaniensaal, Graz, Austria

Linda Watson, soprano; ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien

Conductor: Mario Venzago

### Traumspiel

(Dreampplay)

1983

25 min

Sound-poem in 5 parts after Strindberg's play, for soprano, large orchestra, live-electronics and 8-channel tape

Text: August Strindberg, in the German version by Peter Weiss (G,E)

3(III=picc).3(III=corA).3(III=bcl).2.dbn-4.3.3.1-timp.perc(5):crot/vib/t.bells/xyl/xylorimba/  
marimbaphone/cowbells/3cym(hi)/3gongs(hi)/4tam-t(hi)/2bongo/2SD/7tom-t(hi)/TD/BD/  
6wdbl/maracas/sleigh bells/tamb-harp-pft(=cel)-elec.org(=small EMS synth Aks ad lib)  
-strings(14.12.10.8.6)

**World Premiere: 18 Nov 1983**

Palais des Sports, Metz, France

Susan Roberts, soprano; Orchestre Philharmonique de Liège

Conductor: Pierre Bartholomé

## CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA

### Der ewige Tag

1998–2000, rev.2002

23 min

for mixed chorus, large orchestra and live-electronics

Text: Ibn Scharaf, Georg Heym, Pablo Neruda (G)

3(III=picc).2.corA.2.bcl.2.dbn-4.3.3.1-timp.perc(4):glsp/xyl/marimba/vib/t.bells/sleigh bells/maracas/tamb/tom-t(lg)/susp.cym/4tam-t-pft-harp-sampler-strings

*"Der ewige Tag, York Höller's choral symphony (if it can be so called), which was performed for the first time at a concert celebrating the 15th anniversary of the Cologne Philharmonie, has more complex similarities to the music of Gustav Mahler than two quotations from the 7th Symphony [which was performed in the same concert, ed.]. The use of vocal and instrumental elements in the same composition, too, seems a rather superficial reference. Rather than being a mere setting of words into music, the spirit of music as created out of language determines the shape of the work. The poetry chosen by York Höller ranges wide over time and space, extending far beyond the course of a day... This creates a superstructure of never-ending movement, whilst also allowing concrete textual interpretations. Semyon Bychkov and the symphony orchestra of the WDR managed to present this conflict consistently and with a constant transparency: both in the dramaturgy as a whole, and in the fine details of the 'Klanggestalt' (as the composer calls it): at the beginning, sustained string notes over which coloured flecks appear, splintered sounds in characteristically estranged forms, wind miniatures, a flute with double tonguing. Sometimes the sound condensed into opulent structures, saturated with sensuality. The chorus, too, set up tensions in contrast to the long-drawn instrumental sounds. The text was mostly left unbroken by the recitation, up to a point where the notes ceased to exist altogether: music as pure text."*

*(Norbert Stich, General-Anzeiger Bonn, 17 Sep 2001)*

*"With his Der ewige Tag, York Höller composed a 'sun's movement' from East to West: a poème musicale whose powerful orchestral sound-cavasses of sound have a refined rhythmic texture, are richly interwoven with broken figurations and cleverly shaded off against each other."*

*(Frieder Reininghaus, NDR "Musikforum", 17 Sep 2001)*

**World Premiere: 14 Sep 2001**

Philharmonie, Köln, Germany

WDR Rundfunkchor Köln / WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln

Conductor: Semyon Bychkov

## ENSEMBLE AND CHAMBER WITHOUT VOICE(S)

### Ex tempore

2000/01

13 min

for 9 instrumentalists

fl.ob.cl(=bcl)

-perc(1):vib/xylorimba/tgl/maracas/tamb/2SD/5tom-t/crot/3cym/tam-t-harp-pft-vln.vla.vlc

**World Premiere: 11 May 2002**

Museumsinsel Hombroich, Neuss, Germany

Ensemble Recherche

Conductor: Franck Ollu

### Fluchtpunkte

2006

15 min

for 5 instrumentalists

fl.corA.cl(=bcl)-pft-perc(1):gongs/marimba/vib/tom-ts/wdbls/vibraslap/crot/bongos/tamb

9790202532362 (Score & parts)

**World Premiere: 09 Dec 2006**

Funkhaus Wallrafplatz, Klaus-von-Bismarck-Saal, Köln, Germany

Ensemble Recherche

## Gegenklänge

1984/96

18 min

for chamber ensemble

1.1(=corA).1.bcl(=cl2).1-2.1.1.0-perc(2):xylorimba/vib/2crot/3cym/tam-t/4bongo/5tom-t/B  
D/maracas/tamb/sleigh bells/timp-harp-pft-strings(1.1.1.1.1); tpt & trbn only in mvmts  
1&2

*"The insistent tone clusters of the piano in Höller's first movement, Improvisation on a motif by Johannes Brahms, sound similar to the portentously rigid rhythms in Bernd Alois Zimmermann's Roi Ubu music. The Brahms motif, with its lyricism of nature, is forgotten in any case after the wide-ranging play of the solo piano, though the characteristic series of notes of the quotation serves as a tonal resource. The third movement, Improvisation sur le nom de Pierre Boulez, was written fifteen years ago as a tribute to the sixtieth birthday of the great French... Now the composition, with its angular sound and accentuated rhythms, rounds off the Gegenklänge (ie, 'counter-sounds') of Brahms and Boulez in a consistent way. With motivic correspondences in the previous Intermezzo, Höller prepares the listener for the serially organized music with its very transparent sound. The striking bongo rhythm, which shifts the stress to the weak beats of the bar, has a dry, classicist effect in the finely tuned music, while the woodwinds continually contribute emphatic, expressive phrases. Pierre Boulez is not only paid respect to in the pitches and the rhythmical structure, both of which derive from the letters of Boulez's name, but, above all, in the well-balanced treatment of the parts and the formation of the ensemble, in the way of Boulez's own composition Marteau sans maître."*

(Achim Heidenreich, FAZ, 17 Apr 2000)

**World premiere complete: 15 Apr 2000**

Alte Oper, Frankfurt a.M., Germany

Ensemble Modern

Conductor: Stefan Asbury

## Improvisation sur le nom de Pierre Boulez

1984

4 min

for 16 instrumentalists

1.1.1.bcl(=cl2).1-2.0.0.0-perc(2):l=xylorimba/vib/4tom-t(different pitches);  
ll=4bongos(different pitches)-harp-pft-strings(1.1.1.1.1)

9790060075278 Study Score - Hawkes Pocket Score 1143

**World Premiere: 31 Mar 1985**

Baden-Baden, Germany

Ensemble InterContemporain

Conductor: Peter Eötvös

## Klangzeichen

2002/03

18 min

for wind quintet and piano

fl.ob.cl.bn-hn-pft

**World Premiere: 10 Sep 2003**

Jerusalem, Israel

Noam Buchman, fl / Gregor Witt, ob / Karl-Heinz Steffens, cl / Michal Mossek, hn /  
Daniele Damiano,

## String Quartet No.2

1997

21 min

9790060112485 (Full score)

9790060112492 (Parts)

**World Premiere: 25 Apr 1998**

Witten, Germany

Arditti Quartet

## Tagträume

7 Klangedichte für Violine, Violoncello und Klavier

1994

16 min

7 Sound-poems for violin, cello and piano

9790060112478 Piano, Violin, Cello (score & parts)

**World Premiere: 22 Apr 1995**

Witten, Germany

Ravinia Trio

## Trias

2001

14 min

for saxophone, percussion and piano

sax-perc(1).tom-t/SD/crot/BD/cym/tam-t/vib/wdbl/xylorimba/gong/slit dr/bongos-pft

**World Premiere: 31 Jan 2002**

Theaterhaus, Stuttgart, Germany

Trio Accanto

## Zwiegestalt

2007

25 min

for string quartet and piano

*"What particularly distinguishes this five-movement composition, a work equally successful both in its dramaturgy and in its formal organisation, is the well-calculated balance of expressivity and constructive thinking. This latter element is inseparably linked to the composer's personal issues, which have become the subject of artistic exploration by way of two series of notes derived from names." (Stefan Drees, klassik.com, 12 Jun 2008)*  
9790202532126 (Score & parts)

**World Premiere: 12 Jun 2008**

Philharmonie, Alfried Krupp Saal, Essen, Germany

Anthony Spiri, piano; Minguet Quartett

## PIANO(S)

### Diaphonie

(Hommage à Béla Bartók)

1965, rev.1974

11 min

for two pianos

9790060065316 2 Pianos, 4 Hands

World premiere of version: 26 Feb 1984

Köln, Germany

Johannes Kalitzke & Richard Braun (pianos)

### Monogramme

14 Charakterstücke für Klavier

1998–2003

35 min

for solo piano

9790202531853 Piano

World premiere complete: 25 Jul 2005

Harenberg City-Center, Amphi-Saal, Dortmund, Germany

Tamara Stefanovich, piano;

### Partita

(Hommage à Bernd Alois Zimmermann)

1996

16 min

for two pianos

*"The Partita is a kind of suite in six parts, 'indebted to the spirit of Bach and Debussy', as Höller writes in the program notes. His play with chords and metres, however, is less indebted to the strictness of Bach than to the sound world of Debussy, though he does not exaggerate the impressionist moods.*

*Starting from the key note D, which is at first repeated in a tender manner, reminiscent of the sound of a little bell, then surrounded with additional notes, Höller builds his structures.*

*Gradually the harmonics and metrics become more complex, an excited Fugue is heard, or a sensual Fantasia, created out of broken chords in middle or high register. The concluding Gigue features a strong dramaturgical form, a presto movement with powerful dynamics of movement.*

*The performing ladies make a huge effort and, for all the accurate construction of this work, are always aware of the sounds, the rhythmic pulse and the harmonic subtleties of the music."* (Martin Schrahn, Ruhr Nachrichten, 13 Aug 1997)

*"The audience at the Ruhr Piano Festival liked York Höller's Partita. The composer received so much applause that the performers, Elena Bashkirova and Brigitte Engerer, had to give an encore of two of the six movements. Indeed a rare success for a contemporary work."*

(Gregor Willmes, Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung Essen, 13 Aug 1997)

9790060113659 2 Pianos, 4 Hands

World Premiere: 11 Aug 1997

Folkwang-Hochschule, Essen, Germany

Elena Bashkirova & Brigitte Engerer

### Piano Sonata No.2

(Hommage à Franz Liszt)

1986

17 min

for solo piano

9790060085512 Piano

World Premiere: 07 Jan 1989

Alte Oper, Hindemith-Saal, Frankfurt a.M., Germany

Ueli Wiget, piano;

### Piano Sonata No.3

2010/11

11 min 20 sec

9790202532430 Piano

World Premiere: 09 Oct 2011

Philharmonie, Alfried Krupp Saal, Essen, Germany

Fabio Martino, piano;

**Solo Play / Duo Play**

**2009**

3 min

for piano two hands or four hands

9790202532331 **Piano**

**World Premiere: 12 Jul 2010**

Folkwang Universität der Künste, Neue Aula, Essen, Germany

Tamara Stefanovich (Solo Play), with Pierre-Laurent Aimard (Duo Play), piano

## INSTRUMENTAL

### Duo per Daniel

2002

13 min

for violin and piano

### Mouvements

2009

22 min

for cello and piano

*"Commissioned by the NDR Höller wrote an imaginary dance piece in four movements the sketchy elegance of which is reminiscent of ballet scenes by Edgar Degas. Adrian Brendel (cello) and Christof Hahn (piano) managed to turn Höller's music cataracts into dance characters in such a vivid way that the listener thought to attend a choreographic suite by Pina Bausch."* (Lutz Lesle, Die Welt, 21 Feb 2011)

9790202532522 Cello, Piano

**World Premiere: 19 Feb 2011**

NDR, Rolf-Liebermann-Studio, Hamburg, Germany  
Adrian Brendel, cello; Christof Hahn, piano

### Pas de deux

1993

5 min

for cello and piano

9790060110382 Cello, Piano

**World Premiere: 19 Jun 1993**

Philharmonie, Köln, Germany  
Siegfried Palm, cello / Bruno Canino, piano

### Scan

2003, rev.2005

12 min

for solo flute (also alto flute)

9790202531846 Flute

**World Premiere: 11 Jan 2004**

Philharmonie, Foyer, Köln, Germany  
Michael Faust, flute;