

Iris ter Schiphorst



Iris ter Schiphorst (Photo © Silvia Beck)

OPERAS

Bernarda Albas Haus (with Helmut Oehring)

(The House of Bernarda Alba)

1999

1 hr 30 min

A dance-theatre piece

Text: Based on the play by Federico García Lorca

deaf soloist (female), soprano (male); 7 dancers;
elec.gtr-db-live electronics

"The company that performed Bernarda in Basle goes further in terms of abstraction than all others who have attempted to translate this play into dance. The fable is interesting only in that it creates a hysterical atmosphere which is intended by Schlömer and Oehring: a pressure cooker of suppressed passions, in danger of exploding almost from the start.

The music is involved in the creation of this atmosphere more actively than with most of the other dance pieces... an unconventional form of music consisting of melodically interpolated noises: sung cantilenas soaring over clusters, nervous sawing of the double bass, electronic explosions behind which, almost inaudibly, Schubert's Ave Maria or the distant singing of a muezzin unfolds...

For an hour and fifteen minutes the performance works itself into the nervous centre of the audience." (Jochen Schmidt, FAZ, 19.11.1999)

"The three authors are apparently of like minds and perceptions, thus the resulting dance theatre piece is amazingly coherent. Helmut Oehring and Iris ter Schiphorst wrote a score that reciprocates between extreme states of slow-motion leading to standstill on the one hand and musical congealment in piercing noise on the other. Monotonous repetitions, fractures, new starts of the same ideas, loops, some isolated sounds from outside (bells, a bird) and time and again fragments from Bach and Schubert – memories of the past, of a perfect world, a sense of yearning lost in the noise of an age-old gramophone. To Lorca's characters, Oehring and ter Schiphorst added a peculiar couple, whose function resembles that of the evangelist in Bach's Passions. In reality, though, the two added characters personify the impossibility of telling a story which is actually set in the world of emotions. One of them is the deaf actress Christina Schönfeld, who recounts the basic story of Bernarda Alba and her daughters in sign language, the other is countertenor Arno Raunig, whose text is naturally incomprehensible, as it is sung in cantilena style, and who literally fills the main characters' fate with expression. Throughout the whole work the couple seems strangely unwieldy, also in the musical context, because – though doing what you would expect them to do – they are ultimately impossible to understand.

On the basis of this score, Joachim Schlömer produced a choreography for the ensemble of the Basel dance theatre company which was characterised by realistic symbolism, featuring the stage and dress colours (or non-colours) black/white and occasionally red (Frank Leimbach, Gesine Völlm). The only 'real' dance is a fatal flamenco. Like the music, the dancing style is dominated by discontinuous, fragmentary elements: disturbances, random activism, eruptions leading to nothing. Only Bernarda Alba, with her slow gait and movements, represents frightening steadiness. In all the premieres, music and dance merged to a black emotional theatre consisting of gesture, movement and sound, uncompromising, unvarnished, brutal, but moving. The dancers of the Basel dance theatre company and the musicians Peter Kowald (double bass), Markus Retschnefki (prepared piano, keyboard) and Jörg Wilkendorf (electric guitar) gave definition to dance and sound. And at last I got hold of a seat in the Hebbel Theatre, to experience the necessity of the Dolby surround acoustics (Torsten Ottersberg)." (Giesela Nauck, Positionen, February 2000)

World Premiere: 11 Nov 1999

Basel, Switzerland

Joachim Schlömer, choreographer; Theater Basel

EFFI BRIEST (with Helmut Oehring)

2000

1 hr 30 min

Music theatre psychogram in four acts

Text: Libretto by Helmut Oehring and Iris ter Schiphorst, after the novel by Theodor Fontane (G)

deaf soloist (female), voice, male soprano, female speaker;
solo trp-3cl-2tp-perc(2)-acc-pft(=sampler kbd)-elec.gtr-elec.bass gtr-2vlc.3db-live
electronics

"The famous story of the noble daughter who is married and has a lover does not happen for the first time in the Briest family. Hardly accidentally, the introductory scene makes it clear that the daughter is going to be married to the former adorer of her mother, Baron von Instetten for the purpose of social advance. The hopes of both fail, the mother wastes away, Instetten advances, Effi dies from unloving coldness. Thus a female fate is passed on from one generation to the next.

In order to recount this in a more general way, the two authors deliberately separate role and text. The theatre of voices is underlined with acoustic sounds which, rather than a drama, create a mood, an atmosphere. The instruments, which combine an ensemble of new music with rock guitar, accordion and big-band, are marked by a sense of reduction. Sounds, often pianissimo, appear dampened, tending towards polluted noise. To this are added radio signals, hissing noises and voices as if from a film, their flatness suggesting emptiness and loss of perspective." (Frank Kämpfer, NZfM, 3/2001)

"genuine theatre music which paints states of with a variety of shades." (Stefan Keim, Die Welt, 13.03.2001)

World Premiere: 09 Mar 2001

Kunsthalle, Bonn, Germany

Christina Schönfeld / Salome Kammer / Arno Raunig / Ingrid Caven / Jörg Wilkendorf /

Ulrike Ottinger, dir; Ensemble musikFabrik NRW

Conductor: Wolfgang Ott

Euridice

2001/02

chamber opera for voice, chorus, dancers, 7 instruments and electronics

1 dancing singer (female), 3 dancers/narrators (female), dancer (male);
bfl.dbcl-perc-pft(=kbd)-vln.vc.db-electronics

"The voice, and voices, are at the heart of the piece. They whisper and moan, try to get a word in, remember, reconstruct. Iris ter Schiphorst's chamber opera Eurydike, Szenen aus der Unterwelt (Eurydice, Scenes from the Underworld) struggles with the myth of silence... Suspecting a buried layer of cultural history, the Berlin-based composer focusses on the self-reflection of this woman who, from Monteverdi to Gluck, has always been silent... In this work, gestural dance performance, singing, verbal comment and instrumental parts merge in an eloquent, touching manner..." (Frank Kämpfer, Deutschlandfunk/Musikjournal, 23 September 2002)

"... In comparison, Iris ter Schiphorst's Eurydike, Szenen aus der Unterwelt (Eurydice, Scenes from the Underworld), which opened the evening at the Theater am alten Markt (...), is much more memorable, and – not only regarding its well-grounded view on Eurydice, a figure neglected in the myth – more modern than the two ensuing parts of the Orpheus cycle. A few serpentine instrumental lines from the cello and violin at the outset are sufficient for ter Schiphorst to create a much more suggestive atmosphere than her colleagues achieve with all their acoustic and visual kerfuffle ..." (Wolfgang Sandner, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 24 September 2002)

Die Gänsemagd

nach dem Märchen der Brüder Grimm

(The Goose Girl)

2009

1 hr

Opera for children

Text: Libretto by Helga Utz (G)

c.6 singers;
bcl-accordion-vlc-sampler

Der Ort ist nicht der Ort (with Helmut Oehring)

(The place is not the place)

2000

1 hr 10 min

A music-theatre 'action'

Text: Libretto by Iris ter Schiphorst and Helmut Oehring (G). Graphics by Hagen Klennert

3 soloists;

0.1.bcl.1-0.3.0.0-perc(3)-elec.gtr-elec.bass gtr-kbd-4vln-live electronics

"The real excellence of the composing duo Oehring/ter Schiphorst has been, and remains, their highly original tonal imagination and the extreme, often raw energy of their music, which draws on an extensive range of experience from jazz to electronic music, rock and pop right up to advanced artistic music. It would be promising to extend this musical potential, which in any case is latently theatrical, visually and scenically, however it would have to be produced more accurately and consistently than at the première." (Raoul Mörchen, MusikTexte 86/87)

World Premiere: 26 Oct 2000

Deutscher Pavillon, Hannover, Germany

Arno Rauning, soprano/L Lixenberg, soprano/Christina Schoenfeld, sign language;
Ensemble Aventure

Conductor: Christian Hommel

FULL ORCHESTRA

Ballade für Orchester: HUNDERT KOMMA NULL

frei nach einem Anagramm von Unica Zürn

1999

18 min

for orchestra

4.2.2.2bcl.0-4.4.4.0-perc(3)-harp-prepared pft-sampler kbd-strings(10.0.0.8.6)

"The audience was intrigued to hear Iris ter Schiphorst's first orchestral composition... Musically, she is rooted in avant-garde rock music, and it is impossible to miss the affinity of this new work, bearing the ultimate title Hundert Komma Null, to the best of rock (King Crimson, Univers Zero) in the three sections Machine A, B and C. The three-part work was inspired by an anagram (Life, that's terrible) by Unica Zürn and is divided into three verses that are interspersed by three Machine sections and concluded by a refrain. The work is pervaded by a strong sense of structure. The verses have an air of brittle intimacy; they are like an anti-sentimental lamento, with a gossamer melos and piercingly thin wailing – hybrid figures between vibrato and glissando. This impression is brutally interrupted by the machines. The orchestra mutates into a courageous, collective metallophone, in fantastically violent instrumentation." (Christoph Schlüren, Frankfurter Rundschau, 22 February 2000)

"Iris ter Schiphorst's orchestral ballad HUNDERT KOMMA NULL, a commission by musica viva, was keenly applauded at the premiere. The composer makes effective use of sounds (piano, saw) while electronic elements remain in the background. In a few wonderful moments, weird brass instruments interrupt the music, similar to Mahler's remote orchestra. Those elements are witty, refreshing and fun for the musicians, who were always comfortable, even in the midst of delicate rhythmic juxtapositions." (Gabriele Luster, Münchner Merkur, 14 February 2000)

"A totally normal concert... nothing but pure bliss. An unpretentious conductor – Martyn Brabbins, hardly known outside Britain – combined attention to detail with wit and ironic understatement, and so brought the musicians of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra to fill the Munich Herkules Hall with a vividly playful performance. This alone is rare enough. It was partly due to a programme that was, compared with other musica viva concerts, unusually light, without the familiar blood, sweat and tears. Instead, the music made abundant use of all sorts of pop sounds, embellishing them with peculiar, but revealing ornaments... How do I make wantonly shimmering PVC not only gleam with sounds but also tell a story which is existentially tragicomic? It was this element which linked the works of Ligeti, Vivier, ter Schiphorst and Adams in the concert. They were so wonderfully simple that you could whistle them on the street... In his string work Zipangu, Claude Vivier (1948–1983) ... underlies a harsh, Japanese-sounding melody with atmospheric interferences. This has an unsettling effect on the familiar – just as in John Adams' orchestral foxtrot, The Chairman Dances, which offers a good deal of humour at the expense of minimal and popular music all the way from the salon to South America. Brabbins did not fail to savour these musical jokes brilliantly. Even cheekier, but in a cool, barefaced manner, ... was HUNDERT KOMMA NULL by the Hamburg-born composer Iris ter Schiphorst. In this work, dry, grave classicism meets a 'girlie' pop march, before the two elements merge – in a classic three-movement structure, linked by attacca transitions. Tit for tat seems to be the motto of this encounter, without dogmatism, grumpiness or any sense of suppression. Surely never a musica viva audience went home in such a happy, relaxed mood as on this evening." (Reinhard J. Brembeck, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 15 February 2000)

"Iris ter Schiphorst breathes fresh air into so-called serious music, which has been so short of breath for some time now. She knows how to use unconventional sounds ..." (Volker Tarnow, Berliner Morgenpost, 12 May 2003)

9790202521540 Orchestra (Study Score)

World Premiere: 11 Feb 2000

Residenz, Herkulesaal, München, Germany

BR Symphonieorchester des Bayer. Rundfunks
Conductor: Martyn Brabbins

Dislokationen

Aus: ... auf der Suche nach dem Erhabenen...
2008/09

20 min

for orchestra and piano (amplified)

pft/kbd; 4(I,II=picc).3(I=corA).2.2bcl.2.dbn-6.4.4.1-timp.perc(3):
I=tam-t(med)/crash cym/cym(sm,med,lg)/SD/tom-t(lo)/t.bells with
pedal(C1-H1)/glsp/crot(C4,Eb4,C5); II=tam-t(med)/crash
cym/cym(sm,med,lg)/3cym(muted)/metal bl/SD/tom-t(lo)/BD/t.bells with pedal(C1-H1);
III=tam-t(med-ig)/cym(sm,med,lg)/4cym(muted)/SD/t.bells with
pedal(C1-H1)/vib-harp-pft(=CD player)-strings(14.12.10.8.6)

World Premiere: 03 Jul 2009

Herkulesaal der Residenz, München, Germany
Christoph Grund, piano; Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks
Conductor: Martyn Brabbins

FULL ORCHESTRA 5

Zerstören II

2006

25 min

for orchestra (amplified)

3.3.2.bcl.0.dbn-4.3.3.1-perc(3)-harp-pft-kbd(=sampler)-strings(10.8.6.6.4) - amplifier

An impressive premiere

Siegen. (Loh) Hans-Heinrich Grosse-Brockhoff, State Secretary at the Ministry of Culture, put it in a nutshell when he paid his compliments: one for "this Brahms" that had concluded the 50th anniversary concert of the South Westphalian Philharmonic Orchestra and one for the courage to venture a premiere at this festive concert in the Gläser Hall.

It was made possible by the support of the Art Foundation North-Rhine Westphalia. Iris ter Schiphorst, born in 1956, had entitled her commission "Zerstören II".

The characteristic style of this work is surely unsettling – if it is also destructing is a question that must remain open. The answer certainly depends on the circumstances under which the music is heard. During the final rehearsal in the morning, the sampled electronic sounds were much more in the background. As a result, completely different associations came to mind...

There was a strong impression of new life evolving while in pain – 'embryonic' sounds diverging in various directions, thus representing inner turmoil. In the intense concert atmosphere, the music sounded more aggressive, if hardly destructive. The aesthetic form held the diverging elements together, so much so that even an almost peaceful ending seemed possible – less as a reminiscence of what had been before than as an agreement with what was to come at the end of the process. According to the conductor, Russell N Harris, the biggest challenge for the musicians was to produce the tonal features indicated by the composer – to generate sounds they had never before produced on their instruments. The composer herself was quite impressed by the musicians' commitment and readiness to try new things... The festive audience cheered the performance with loud applause. (...) The concert had opened with the 'Roi Lear' overture, a work in which the terrible fate of this disturbing Shakespeare character was not told in a simple programmatic way either. After the break, the concert was superbly continued with Brahms' symphony No. 1. There were, however, listeners who found it difficult to return to Brahms after ter Schiphorst. (Westfälische Rundschau, 25 February 2007)

"... The BBC Symphony Orchestra then reassembled for a performance of Zerstören II (2006) by Iris ter Schiphorst (born 1956) – best known, perhaps, for collaborative work with Helmut Ohring, but here demonstrating a formidable idiom in her own right. The title, translating as 'Destroy', is as unequivocal as the music in conveying abstract images of violence and dislocation, with Schiphorst ensuring that the frequent recourse to extremes – whether textural, timbral or dynamic – is underpinned by a sense of onward (not necessarily goal-directed) movement and given definition by the subliminal tonal follow-through. The outcome is a work whose inner complexity does not preclude that visceral immediacy which both demands and holds one's attention, not least in a performance as responsive as this. It also marked the welcome return of André de Ridder, whose expertise in this music is undoubted. A pity, though, that the BBC seems currently not to be giving its Maida Vale concerts the publicity they deserve: indeed, the only 'difficult' aspect about this concert was finding out whether it was happening at all!" (New German Music Reviewed by: Richard Whitehouse)

World Premiere: 23 Feb 2007

Leonhard-Gläser-Saal, Siegen, Germany
Philharmonie Südwestfalen
Conductor: Russell N. Harris

FULL ORCHESTRA 5

CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

BROKEN oder: "Why don't you say a word..."

2002

15 min

for orchestra and sampler

1.1.1.bcl.1-2.1.1.0-perc(2):l=bass marimba/SD/tam-t/lg
dr/3sups.cym(hi,med,lo)/cym/t.bells(e'.g); ll=vib/lg
dr/BD/SD/hi-hat/3cym(muted)/cym/1pair of hand
cym/3susp.tom-t/1tom-t/t.bells(eb'.d'.c#)/tam-t(shared with perc1)-perpared
pft(=sample kbd)-strings(6.5.4.4.2, may also be performed with 2.2.2.2.2)

World Premiere: 11 May 2002

Nikolaisaal, Potsdam, Germany

Kammerakademie Potsdam

Conductor: Sian Edwards

SOLO INSTRUMENT(S) AND ORCHESTRA

Vergeben/Bruchstücke zu Edgar Varèse

2007

15 min

for percussion, wind instruments and piano

4(I=picc).4.3.bcl.0.dbn-4.4(I=picc)pt).4(IV=ttrbn).1-perc(2,I=solo)-pft(=kbd)

"The 'Double' theme was tackled in multi-faceted variations and aesthetic approaches by Iris ter Schiphorst in her Vergeben/Bruchstücke zu Edgar Varèse, a work of dynamic consistency."
(Gerhard Rohde, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 5 November 2007)

World Premiere: 02 Nov 2007

Funkhaus Wallrafplatz, Klaus-von-Bismarck-Saal, Köln, Germany
Dirk Rothbrust, perc / Udo Falkner, pft; WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln
Conductor: Peter Rundel

ENSEMBLE AND CHAMBER WITHOUT VOICE(S)

... und Pommernland ist abgebrannt

(deutsches Schreiben)

2003

11 min

for wind trio

bfl.corA.bcl(amp1)-CD player-effect machine

World Premiere: 09 Nov 2003

Berlin, Germany

Trio e-vent: Kirsten Reese, Birgit Schmieder, Erich Wagner

Aus Kindertagen: verloren

(From Childhood Days: Lost)

2004/05

22 min

for 2 instrumental ensembles, electric guitar and performance CDs

Text: Iris ter Schiphorst and quotations from the novel 'Emilia gerät in die Kriegswirren oder O der neue Tag' by Karin Spielhofer (G)

left side of room: prepared pft(=sampler)-vln.vlc; right side: 2vln.vla.vlc-elec.git

"It was left to the fourth composer, Iris ter Schiphorst, to set things straight and redeem the ideal of advanced, demanding musical composition with a brilliant new work. Commissioned by the radio station Deutschlandfunk, the premiere was the climax of the 'Forum of New Music 2005'. Concrete instrumental sounds were amplified throughout, enriched and 'charged' by sampled recordings... In Aus Kindertagen: verloren (From Childhood Days: Lost), a highly-organised ensemble setting is interspersed with children's rhymes and quotes from novels... a technique the composer also employed in other works... The bottom line is that this portrait concert came as a godsend for the 'Forum of New Music 2005'. (Georg Beck, neue musikzeitung 4/2005)

"The biggest sensation was no doubt the Berlin-based composer Iris ter Schiphorst. Her rich soundscapes are made up of an original mixture of noisy sounds (with the instruments amplified electronically) on the one hand and highly expressive musical narration on the other. Commissioned by Deutschlandfunk, Aus Kindertagen: verloren enthralled the audience with its coherence and the original use of the electric guitar ..." (Bonner General-Anzeiger, 9 March 2005)

World Premiere: 05 Mar 2005

DLF Sendesaal, Köln, Germany

Anton Lukoszevieve, vlc / Gordon MacKay, vln / Christoph Grund, pft // Ensemble 01 / Daniel Göritz,

La Coquille et le Clergyman

Musik zum gleichnamigen Film von Germaine Dulac

2004

40 min

for 12 instruments and soundtrack

0.0.0.0-0.0.0.0-2 pft(pre).sample keyb-harp-eg-perc(2)-CD-str(1.0.1.2.1)

"The music of the Dutch/German composer Iris ter Schiphorst related to the film quite naturally... a genuine unity of image and music. Sometimes it follows the associations very precisely, sometimes it takes its own path. Ter Schiphorst manages to elicit a very individual sound from the instruments: thin and unreal. This fits the film superbly ..." (NRC Handelsblad, 7 April 2005)

"The interwar years are one of the most exciting periods in the history of cinema. The young medium was a welcome playing field for the avant-garde of art forms in which the audience – whether in private circles or in public cinemas – was given the opportunity to watch radical or even scandalous things. Not long after making viewers acquainted with naturalistic celluloid representations of reality, the first artists set about thoroughly deconstructing their all-too-familiar viewing habits. When expressionism along the lines of Wegener, Murnau or Lang had become the stylistic mainstream, directors like René Clair, Fernand Léger and even agitprop artists such as Joris Ivens came up with short films which often caused a public stir. Within this cinematic world, between expression and Dada, Charlotte Elisabeth Germaine Saisset-Schneider (whose pen name was Germaine Dulac) earns a special place. She was one of the first to introduce surrealist techniques into film-making. Whilst in Paris, she created an unsettling, egregious work which broke the barrier between the representational and the absurd in both form and content – and two years before An Andalusian Dog.

La Coquille et le Clergyman (The Seashell and the Clergyman) is a psychoanalytic nightmare about sexual frustration and desire. In the very first sequence, the rather unspectacular entry of one of the three main characters is transformed into a horror scenario by extreme slow-motion: reality is disintegrating completely, giving way to visualised emotional states. People are crouched on ceilings, sharing heads along a vertical axis; desires flow out of people like ghosts while walls come loose from their foundations.

Each scene virtually overflows with visual showpieces such as double exposures, cross-fades, distortions and extreme contrasts of sharp and blurred images. Techniques like these are intended to visually externalise the troubled inner life of a clergyman who is pining after an unattainable beauty, challenged by a rival.

Another piece which tells a story in a much more conventional, though similarly controversial way, is L'invitation au voyage (Invitation to a Journey), a work about the secret desires of a married woman for erotic change. We follow her to a dubious night-club, on a journey which forms not only the title of the work but also describes its psychological plot. The shy but adventurous woman gains the attention of a handsome captain but is dismissed when he, discovering that she is married, loses his affection for her.

The collage technique – less spectacular than that of La Coquille et le Clergyman but used in an equally skillful way – is focussed on the main characters and is rarely interrupted by visionary excursions. Avant-garde artists of the 1920s often used music to heighten the effect of their visual ideas. A striking example, apart from the collaboration between René Clair and Eric Satie, is Fernand Léger's and George Antheil's 'Ballet mécanique'. Germaine Dulac, who was drawn towards film by 'beautiful background music' (see fd 22/02), is another director who shows a strong affinity with music as an element of film. Unfortunately, no scores or musical sequences to her two short films have survived, and the music used today follows a 21st-century approach. Fortunately, however, the present work did not dismiss the classic chamber music instrumentation in favour of the synthesizer improvisations so often heard in today's silent film arrangements.

Due to its numerous dance sequences and conventional nar

ETIUS (with Helmut Oehring)

ensemble version of: Als ob: Suite
2000

for flute, 2 cl, accordion, 2 perc
fl.2cl-perc(2)-pft-acc

Im Vormonat (with Helmut Oehring)

1997/8 15 min

for ensemble
oboe-bcl.bn-pft-perc-vln.vlc.db

World Premiere: 21 May 1998
Grosser Sendesaal, Saarbrücken, Germany
Ensemble Aventure

Marriage Proposal

for ensemble

Mischwesen (with Helmut Oehring)

after the poem SILENCE by Anne Sexton
for deaf mute soloist (female), three trumpets and keyboard
1998 20 min

Text: Anne Sexton, Iris ter Schiphorst, Helmut Oehring

World Premiere: 21 Nov 1998
Kunstencentrum, Gent, Belgium
Asko Ensemble
Conductor: Roland Kluttig

Mischwesen (with Helmut Oehring)

Version for deaf mute soloist, trumpet, bass clarinet, cello and keyboard
1998 20 min

Text: after the poem Silence by Anne Sexton and texts by Oehring/ter Schiphorst

Mischwesen (with Helmut Oehring)

Version for deaf mute soloist, trumpet, trombone, tuba and keyboard
1998 20 min

Text: after the poem Silence by Anne Sexton and texts by Oehring/ter Schiphorst
deaf soloist (female), trumpet, trombone and tuba

My Sweet Latin Lover

2002 15 min

for plugged flute, 2 percussions and 5 electric guitars
“... Iris ter Schiphorst's My sweet latin lover for the amplified solo flute, sampled keyboard, two percussionists and an electric guitar quintet brought the concert to a close with a brilliant success. The bright introverted band of sounds in which the flute and short texts are embedded is, time and again, broken up by jagged attacks. Schiphorst's uneasy idyll is an intelligent continuation of Frank Zappa's legacy ...” (Anton Sergl, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 10 June 2002)

My Sweet Latin Lover II

2002 10 min

for plugged flute, electric guitar and live electronics

Prae-Senz (Ballet Blanc II) (with Helmut Oehring)

1997

20 min

for violin, cello and prepared piano/sampler

"... an exceptional case in the so-called serious music – whether contemporary or not: a musical work written by two authors, self-taught Helmut Oehring (born in East Berlin in 1961) and his versatile companion, Iris ter Schiphorst (born in Hamburg in 1956).

Hardly known, she declares the conventional distinctions between pop, jazz and avant-garde invalid, just as the pressure to be up to date, which applies to suburban rappers as well as to IRCAM subscribers.

The music was written by hypersensitive Helmut Oehring, who suffered a trauma in his childhood (he is the son of deaf parents who has never seemed to have recovered from the 'sonic shock' of learning spoken language at the age of four and a half) and Iris ter Schiphorst, a 'pasionaria' of multimedia performance (the former bassist and rock drummer has devoted herself to the exploration of instrumental sounds). Thus marked by an inherent sense of devastation, the music still has a precursor in B.A. Zimmermann...

PRAE-SENZ, the first piece in the programme of Brussels-based Ictus Ensemble, is a direct allusion to the German composer: the trio ... entitled "Ballet blanc II" refers to Zimmermann's Présence (Ballet blanc...) ... like its precursor, it uses collage and quotations. Yet, in a radically oppositional way, the composers have banned the apocalyptic rush from their score, along with the spiritual elements. The red light of varying brightness gives the performers the impression that they have escaped into a bunker. Explosions and gunfire, understood in this sense, ... are abundant.

As in a rock concert, the scenery gives the music a strange air of ecstasy ..." (Pierre Gervasoni, *Le Monde*, 18 October 1998)

9790202521083 Violin, Cello, Prepared Piano, sampling keyboard

World Premiere: 17 Sep 1997

Hebbeltheater, Berlin, Germany
Ictus Ensemble

Zerstören

2005

10 min 20 sec

for ensemble

1.1.1.dbcl.0.dbn-1.1.1.1-perc(2)-pft-sampler-strings(1.1.1.1.1)

*"One of the most impressive pieces of the festival was Iris ter Schiphorst's Zerstören which transforms the global omnipresence of violence into multifarious reactions in sound, creating an 'internal film' that captivates with an unfathomable thrill." (Dirk Wischollek, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 4/2006)*

*"Zerstören, with its layers of sounds, its agitated sequences, its psychologically resonant vibrations and attacking noise, is a reaction to reality – a kind of self-defence in music." (Gerhard Rohde, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 16 May 2006)*

*"... The two sheets of sound that were slid into each other in Iris ter Schiphorst's gripping ensemble piece Zerstören (Destruction) had almost bodily presence. The energies accumulated in them finally burst, before slowly going out towards the end of the work." (Stefan Drees, *Positionen* 68, August 2006)*

World Premiere: 05 May 2006

Theatersaal, Witten, Germany
Asko Ensemble
Conductor: Hans Leenders

ENSEMBLE AND CHAMBER WITH VOICE(S)

A.N. (evita-che guevara-madonna) (with Helmut Oehring)

1998 15 min

for 2 voices, 8 instruments and live electronics

basset hn.dbcl-3tpt.2trbn-perc(2)-prepared pft(=sampler,harmonium)-
gtr(=elec.gtr)-elec.bass gtr-vln.vla.vlc-live electronics

World Premiere: 30 Mar 1998

Lüttich, Belgium

Ensemble der Hochschule Lüttich

LIVE (aus: Androgyn) (with Helmut Oehring)

1997 23 min

18 songs from the poem LIVE by Anne Sexton

Text: Anne Sexton

voice-prepared pft(=kbd sampler)-vln.vlc-live electronics

World Premiere: 26 Apr 1997

Witten, Germany

Salome Kammer; New Music Chamber Ensemble

LIVE (aus: Androgyn) (with Helmut Oehring)

version for counter tenor, violin, cello, prepared piano/sampling keyboard
1997 23 min

18 songs from the poem LIVE by Anne Sexton

Text: Anne Sexton

World premiere of version: 08 Feb 2007

Fruchthalle, Kaiserslautern, Germany

Tim Severloh, counter tenor; Kammerensemble Neue Musik

Polaroids (with Helmut Oehring)

1996 20 min

for female deaf soloist, male soprano, 12 instruments and live electronics

female deaf performance artist.counter tenor-3tpt-3perc-keyb.sampler-elec.gtr-bass
gtr-3vln-electronics

World Premiere: 20 Oct 1996

Donaueschingen, Germany

Ensemble Modern

Requiem (with Helmut Oehring)

1998 55 min

for three counter-tenors, 12 instruments and electronics

Text: after the 9 psalms: O Ye Tongues from The Death Notebooks by Anne Sexton

basset hn.dbcl-3tpt.2trbn-perc(2)-prepared pft(=sampler,harmonium)-
gtr(=elec.gtr)-elec.bass gtr-vln.vla.vlc-live electronics

DISINTEGRATION OF VALUES

The decision to write a requiem in response to the commission of the Festival d'Automne did not come as a surprise. The real surprise is the follow-through. 15 instrumentalists (some of them equipped with sophisticated electronic devices) and three singers are committedly exposed to the wildest disintegration of values in this century. The composers, grave-diggers of a culture focussed on individual works, maintain only one element of music: its manifestation through vibrations (waves?), hardly modulated, without an (ordering) system, completely released. Vibration (?) of a funeral march, played by two trombones (original by Mozart) over a nightmarishly pulsating tutti; vibrations of horror (made up of sounds that resemble a crowd of evil spirits); vibrations of religious distortions (a synthesiser with the qualities of a harmonium).

Conflict-ridden from beginning to end – you will have noticed by now – this is not a requiem that will help your soul find peace. However, it provides some moral consolation, in a situation where contemporary music is increasingly challenged by the absence of any frame of reference for language.

(Pierre Gervasoni, Le Monde, 18 October 1998)

World Premiere: 13 Oct 1998

Opera National, Paris, France

Ictus Ensemble

Conductor: Georges-Elie Octors

rumgammeln + warten (with Helmut Oehring)

2001 15 min

for solo voice, deaf woman, ensemble and CD

Text: Oehring/Schiphorst

9790202531532 **Solo (German Sign Language), Voice, Ensemble, CD**

(Playing-Score)

World Premiere: 07 Nov 2001

Paul Sacher Halle, Basel, Switzerland

Salome Kammer / Christina Schönfeld; Ensemble Aventure

Conductor: Christian Hommel

Silence Moves I (with Helmut Oehring)

1997

1 hr

Soundtrack for an imaginary film

Text: Text by Iris ter Schiphorst (G)

voice-prepared pft/sampler-elec.bass gtr-vln.vlc-live electronics

"Scenic fantasies/Perfect performance at the Days of Contemporary Music.

As part of the biannual competition 'Blaue Brücke', the 'intrors' ensemble gave a performance on Saturday during the 11th Dresden Days of Contemporary Music at the Little Theatre... The premiere featured a 'space performance' for voice, instruments, sampler, video projections and live electronics. To me, the musical and dramatic events, being a kind of chamber opera, became a new type of Gesamtkunstwerk. The sequence of scenes expressing death, loneliness, torpor and the search for words and language was exciting as it was narrated, not in a logical, verbal way, but artistically encoded in images. Five parts were listed on the programme sheet. To me, it seemed more like eight, worked out like a chamber symphony, shining from different angles and eventually returning to the beginning of the moved silence whose first word is death. And it was the search for language, for expression in speech, that characterised the ending... It was a perfect show, impressive ..." (Friedbert Streller, *Sächsische Zeitung*, 06 October 1997)

"An author with a sampled/staged audio play: Iris ter Schiphorst's Silence moves at the Podewil.

... In Silence moves, Iris ter Schiphorst, has created a screen on which elements of audio play, film and theatre consistently interweave. In pure circle surround sound, the overture opens with changing soundscapes, noisy radio texts and the projection of an intentionally scratched film on a gauze canvas – elements which recur in the interludes. A voiceover suggests a wide range of associations, which is, however, signified more precisely by a sense of individual isolation and the will for expression through language in the following scenes.

All this happens in oppressive pictures, following a consistent, fast-paced dramaturgy... The accompaniment for the brilliant vocalist Anna Clementi, provided by the 'intrors' ensemble with electric violin and bass and the composer at the piano and sampler, is modelled on rock and pop ostinatos. Thus every scene is given a characteristic, fairly coherent musical material. What makes Silence moves a really entertaining performance throughout the full hour of its duration, however, is the complexity of its multi-media references." (Volker Straebel, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 12 October 1997)

World Premiere: 12 Oct 1997

Kleines Schauspielhaus, Dresden, Germany

Anna Clementi, voice; Ensemble Intrors / ter Schiphorst, Ottersberg, Oehring

Silence Moves II (with Helmut Oehring)

1997

25 min

for voice, ensemble, live electronics and film

voice-pft/sampler-elec.gtr.bass gtr-perc-vln-live electronics

World Premiere: 10 Nov 1997

Centro Ricerche Musicali, Rome, Italy

Ensemble Intrors

Wie ein Wasserfisch

(Like a Water Fish)

2003

14 min

for voice and 8 instruments

"... Iris ter Schiphorst's ... Wie ein Wasserfisch (Like a Water Fish) ..., premiered at the Forbach rendez-vous musique festival, was music which, in its combination of strictly modern sound and relaxed use of rock or pop styles, was both fresh and fascinating ..." (Saarbrücker Zeitung, 10 November 2003)

PIANO(S)

Eden cinema

1995

18 min

for piano and sampler (1 player)

Eden cinema II

1996

15 min

version for prepared piano

9790202521595 **Piano (optional CD on hire only)**

INSTRUMENTAL

Hi Bill

2005

2 min 50 sec

for solo bass clarinet

"As the title Bass clarinet suggests, the music on this CD is dominated by the low woodwind instrument. Volker Hemken, solo bass clarinetist in the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra since 1992, presents his instrument with a sequence of both attractive and demanding contemporary works.

Iris ter Schiphorst's Hi Bill! is 'a little homage to endless hours in smoky clubs and rehearsal rooms.' The rhythmic-melodic force field is enriched with screaming, singing, hissing and flapping noises, evoking impressions of jazz. One is sometimes reminded of Eric Dolphy's improvisations." (Das Orchester 11/2006)

Miniaturen für Violoncello und Akkordeon

2008

20 min

vcl, accordion

Availability: UK, the British Commonwealth, the Republic of Ireland, the USA and Canada

Vielleicht gestern

(Maybe Yesterday)

2005

for solo bass clarinet

World Premiere: 03 Oct 2006

Festspielhaus Hellerau, Dresden, Germany

Volker Hemken, clarinet;

VOCAL

Changeant

2004

10 min

for solo voice and soundtrack ad lib.

Geschlossene Welt
