



Program Notes of Matthias Pintscher's Works

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■ *beyond II (bridge over troubled water)*

for Flute, Viola and Harp (2020)

Matthias Pintscher's **Beyond II (Bridge Over Troubled Water)** was composed on the occasion of a digital New Music Festival, which Daniel Barenboim organised at the beginning of July 2020 at the Pierre Boulez Saal in Berlin, thus during the corona pandemic and its restrictions and confinement. Born during the confinement, the work is a reference to Claude Debussy Trio for flute, viola and harp as well as to a song by Simon and Garfunkel. "It was the perfect opportunity to finally compose for the Debussy Trio", Matthias Pintscher says: "This work is among the most significant works in the history of music. It leaves no composer indifferent, whatever his generation or aesthetic. The instrumentation is perfectly balanced: the aim here is to find common ground between the three instruments, to explore the vocabulary they share, rather than to play on their differences." The connection to the song by Simon & Garfunkel refers to the aura: "It is carried by such a disarming palette of colours. When it enters, Paul Simon's voice doesn't sound like a man's, but a viola's. ... I wanted to create something that would be in the same 'spirit', with my own musical voice - there are no quotes from the song in my piece." The title "Beyond II" as well relates to a previous composition "Beyond (a system of passing)" for solo flute, it is like a palimpsest and puts the musical material into the context of the trio.

The piece "Beyond II" was of course a product of current circumstances: "I feel a kind of emotional darkness in it. ... Just like the orchestral piece 'Neharot' I'm finishing at the moment, which is in the same sound universe: it reminds me of a Bruckner symphony, with all its virtuoso parts rising from

a dark magma that flows slowly, imperturbably. It is winter music, composed in the middle of summer - another effect of confinement! In the Trio, I also aspire to a form of fluidity. The trajectory is quite simple: the music unfolds and explodes, only to dissolve in a great pause, which occurs exactly at the equilibrium of the golden ratio. For a while it seems as if nothing happens, then everything that has already been said is returned to the listener, who is left with the feeling of a still vibrant memory. I then take over the speech and extend it in a luminous gesture that seems to leave us for a beyond of reality. In the end, this piece is like a gift to the musicians and to myself, since I gave myself the time to compose it.”

Marie Luise Maintz

■ **bereshit** for Large Ensemble (2013)

*As from nothing, something created, something natural comes into existence: Matthias Pintscher has taken this as his theme in his new ensemble composition **bereshit**, which was premiered in May 2013 by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.*

“In a beginning ...” refers to the biblical creation myth: **bereshit** is the first word of the Torah, of the Old Testament. This concept contains the idea of an approximation — “a” beginning, not “the beginning”, a turning point. This is the starting point of Matthias Pintscher’s composition **bereshit** for large ensemble. It deals with nothing less than the act of creation, the formation of the natural. “As if you woke up in the pitch darkness of night in a strange room and only realised after a few seconds where you were. In this state you attempt to make out the shapes of the space. It is a beginning of a beginning from absolute darkness and shapelessness. Quite cautiously and gradually particles free themselves, then condense and fit together in shapes.” Pintscher describes this feeling as the starting point for his composition.

Imagining the creation of things is both a metaphor for the creation, the creative act and its incomprehensibility. It ultimately also describes the process of perception, of a person’s development of awareness. It is a philosophical reflection in itself. A portrayal of this can be found in music as an art of processes. “**bereshit** emerges from an initial sound as if from an absolute nothing, from a sound which subsides into percussive noises, from which elements then disentangle themselves and condense. It is a very

organic piece, the material is treated quasi chronologically, it develops slowly. The composition emerges from the idea of freeing an entire compendium of sounds, gestures, rhythms, orchestrations from an original state of sound. There is a central note, an F, which opens the piece and stretches through the piece like a horizon.”

A genuine conception of processes, which Matthias Pintscher has developed in his most recent compositions – such as the Violin Concerto **Mar’eh** and the choral work **she-cholat ahava ani** for example – becomes, as it were, the programme here: “What interests me is the flowing sounds and colours, the conception of a sonority in perspective. The piece is about this great river, about a continuum of sounds and events which is continually transformed as the piece grows. Only gradually do things solidify, and there are solo episodes. **bereshit** continues what I have developed in sonorities in recent years. In its conception of sound and spatial effect, this piece goes far beyond the chamber music-like dimension of the ensemble forces.”

Marie Luise Maintz

■ ***Profiles of Light*** for Cello and Piano (2012-15)

Now I for piano solo

This piano work, composed on the occasion of Pierre Boulez’s ninetieth birthday, refers in its title to American artist Barnett Newman, who numbers among the twentieth-century abstract expressionists. In his famous essay “The Sublime is Now,” Newman wrote in 1947: “The image we produce is the self-evident one of revelation, real and concrete, that can be understood by anyone who will look at it without the nostalgic glasses of history.”

This music turns out to be an emphatic experience as soon as one makes the attempt to forget one’s playing and listening experience and personal conditioning, as far as that is possible.

Now II for cello solo

Now II is the second part of a triptych called “Profiles of Light”, the first part being for piano solo (“Now I”), the second part for violoncello solo and the concluding part, called “Uriel”, being for the two instruments together.

All three pieces are inspired by the work of Barnett Newman which has been a strong influence to my artistic understanding of what it means to cut through to the essence of reduction and most direct expression at the same time.

In some of Newman's painting I find the quality of intensely glowing light, but rather more some sort of "dark glowing"...something you also find in the music of the late Franz Schubert where there is the layer of gravity and nostalgia even under the happiest key signatures that you might find on the surface.

I find the cello is a very suitable instrument to represent that specific condition...accompanied by a piano that sometimes functions like the resonant body of the cello, maybe something like an imaginary aligote string attached to the cello.

It's a piece about resonances, the interior ones and the ones on the outside of human conditions, of life itself.

Uriel for cello and piano

"Uriel" is the third part of Matthias Pintscher's cycle "Profiles of Light".

As the title suggests: The Archangel Uriel plays his part in Judaism as well as in Christianity. On the one hand he is a symbol of the light and the glory of God, and on the other hand he symbolises the illumination of the soul, the spirit and the intellect. The strong expressive lines of this meditative calm flowing duet portray a moving dreamlike Uriel on a screen of stillness.

Marie Luise Maintz

■ **sonic eclipse** for Trumpet Solo, Horn Solo and Ensemble (2009-10)

*With **sonic eclipse** Matthias Pintscher has composed a three-part cycle for ensemble. The first two parts, **celestial object I and II**, were premiered by the Scharoun Ensemble in Berlin and Zermatt at the Berliner Philharmoniker's summer academy, and the third, **occultation**, have been premiered by Klangforum Wien on its 25th anniversary in 2010 in Witten.*

The phenomenon of the eclipse – the passing of one celestial body over another and the resultant blackout at the moment of total eclipse – is a symbol of a compositional process of convergence and finally the momentary fusion of completely diverse elements. "The musical idea is that in the first piece, the trumpet, and in the second, the horn, take over a solo function. The contours of the two pieces are quasi laid one over another in the third part, though the material of both the pieces is entirely heterogeneous and at the moment of coming together, fuses together. I was interested in investigating the repertoire for two very different instruments which belong to one family,

and in allowing both instruments to sound very differently. This entirely heterogeneous repertoire of sounds and shapes is slowly brought together and layered, and finally the ensemble is also drawn in, so that everything merges into one voice, one instrument and sound gesture, then subsequently also falls apart. Figuratively, this corresponds exactly to an eclipse.”

Pintscher attributes his interest in the cyclical, that is in compositions in several parts with related subjects, to a need to continually keep moving forwards: “I would like to carry on composing works which I have just completed. It is about searching for a completely new task and yet moving organically from one state to the next.”

Occultation is the title of the third part of *sonic eclipse*. What is meant is the moment of blackout when the celestial bodies cross over each other in a solar eclipse. In *occultation*, the musical material from the first two parts of the cycle is, as Pintscher describes, “compressed and laid over each other”. As in a stretto, the two repertoires are combined, merged, exchanged. They are so close to each other, that they overlap almost identically.” In *celestial object I and II* it is the solo horn and trumpet parts which are treated differently: the trumpet is “lighter, more flowing, more giocoso con brio, with florescences, festoons.” The horn in *celestial object II*, in contrast, plays in long, melodious lines. The repertoire of techniques used ranges from the smallest dynamics, through various performing techniques such as flutter tonguing, stopped, toneless blowing, to large expressive arches. In contrast, the trumpet plays experimentally, virtuoso-like. And it is these two opposites which are brought together in *occultation*. The characteristic contours are combined with each other, so that “finally the horn has a virtuoso gesture, and the trumpet a linear one. The ensemble is involved in this process of merging to a point of culmination where the whole ensemble breaks up.” Despite a great variety of colour, *sonic eclipse* is not about a tonal delimitation, as in the treatment of the string instruments in the cycle *Studies for Treatise on the Veil* to the boundaries of dissolving, but about haptic, tangible outlines. With this, Pintscher sees in his own compositional development a step towards the directness of the expression of his music, which no longer relates to the pictorial quality of painting or literature. And a breaking away from the filigree and descreet characteristic style occurs, from the principle of veiling, which was still included programmatically in the title of *Studies for Treatise on the Veil*.

Marie Luise Maintz

■ *neharot* for Orchestra (2020)

—Neharot means rivers, but also tears (in Hebrew)

—it also describes the tears of lamenting

—this music has been written during the worst period of many many covid deaths every day in the spring of 2020...and is clearly echoing the devastation and anxiety but also the hope for light that has so emotionally marked this period of our lives

—as the music is evoking flow as a sonic phenomenon it is also inspired by the mysteries of the cathedral of Chartres...where several rivers are crossing exactly underneath the location where Chartes has been built (and been rebuild after having burned down, being totally destroyed by destiny and arising againalso that a symbol for the emotional content of the music)

—I wanted to paint long sonic arches with the music...featuring the two harps extensively as a source of the sonic spectrum of the dark soundworld of Neharot

—the piece is a “tombeau”, a “requiem”, a “kaddish”...for all the people that we have lost during this unprecedented period

Matias Pintscher