

THE MAULWERKER

maulwerker performing music - condensed

compositions for body, sound and space

Festival di Performing Music was the name of a festival in L'Aquila, Italy, to which the Maulwerker were invited with Dieter Schnebel in 1989.

If the shutting and opening of the piano lid by David Tudor in *4'33"* was a first performative action in music, then Cage's idea of silence shifted the focus of attention in principle to activity: *0'00"* is scored for "disciplined action". Sounds require activity in order to be generated. In the act of creation, acoustic and visual aspects meld. Experimental music of this kind calls for the conscious composing of actions that generate sounds.

Performing Music denotes the connection between eye and ear, body and sound and space, the interfaces between the acoustic and the visual.

The Maulwerker embody the new breed of interpreters necessary for this, interpreters who make theater not by supplying psychological subtexts, but instead by performing activities plain and simple, wholly apart from intention. The activities stay musical at first; they start from the sense of hearing. Maulwerker make music.

At the Universität der Künste Berlin, the Maulwerker trained in music, singing, playing instruments, musicology and music theory, stage costuming and video art, acting and movement, performance art and, crucially, experimental music and music theater with Dieter Schnebel. If Cage worked with the "Tudor factor", so Schnebel's experimental music theater oeuvre has made use of the Maulwerker factor:

The interpreters of open works decisively shape the performance and realization of a piece.

Well-versed in Cage's *Song Books* and *Theatre Piece*, in Schnebel's *Maulwerke* and body compositions, in the event concept of George Brecht as well as in other Fluxus-movement compositions, the Maulwerker embody the know-how to consciously realize the processes in open scores, to assume the responsibility delegated to the performers, and to present the works with physical presence and precision, musical intelligence and sensibility and, of course, vocal virtuosity.

Starting in 2005, the *maulwerker performing music* series offered seven conceptual evenings, each of which illuminated an aspect of performative music.

Some took the material as their point of departure: body compositions (*poeme für füße*), language compositions (*translationen*), vocal extremes (*Halt's Maul*); others centered on methods and structures: composition as a process (*pro cedere*), formal compositions (*XXXOOOXXX (numbers & circles)*). The evening *Situationen* investigated transitions between art and life with activity-based scores that used interactivity and installation to extend the classical form of concert presentation. *Geschnebeltes* presented new pieces by Dieter Schnebel, syntheses of body, language and vocal compositions, a unique form of chamber-music-theater.

For each evening of the series, different composers were invited to write for the Maulwerker and develop new works with the ensemble, resulting in numerous premieres of works by Antonia Baehr (*1970), Alessandro Bosetti (*1973), Johnny Chang (*1979), the artist duo c.o.m.things, Jürg Frey (*1953), Gisburg (*1966), Robin Hayward (*1969), David Helbich (*1973), Michael Hirsch (*1958), Ariane Jeßulat (*1968), Sven-Åke Johansson (*1943), Travis Just (*1976), Henrik Kairies (*1966), Christian Kesten (*1966), Lau Mun Leng (*1977), Andrea Neumann (*1968), Katarina Rasinski, Dieter Schnebel (*1930), Craig Shepard (*1975), Mark So (*1978), Josh Thorpe (*1975), Antje Vowinckel (*1964), Steffi Weismann (*1967), Emmett Williams (1925-2007) and Istvan Zelenka (*1936), as well as the German premieres of works by Lucio Capece (*1968), Adam Fong (*1980), Elana Mann (*1980) and Adam Overton (*1979).

Programming

We have assembled a condensed and heterogeneous concert program, distilled from the perennial *maulwerker performing music* series, which displays a cross-section of performative composition concepts. All the compositions make strong artistic statements in themselves. The composers represent a younger generation that has been involved in a lively exchange with the Berlin scene and the Maulwerker.

It's precisely the potential to work *between* genres that interests younger composers in working with the Maulwerker. David Helbich, who as a composer likes to engage with the dance and performance scene, enhancing each context with resources from the others, composes gestures, movements and actions for the Maulwerker. Antonia Baehr incorporates everyday phenomena like laughing or screaming into austere rhythmic and formal structures. Travis Just works with the vocal virtuosity and experience of the Maulwerker, forming textures using fricative and plosive sounds. Alessandro Bosetti is interested not only in the vocal dimensions of the Maulwerker, their work with language as music, but also in the chance to make discourse part of the piece, to bring the creative process itself into the work. Georg Klein and Andrea Neumann sound out the possibilities of body, voice and electronics via contact microphones and set-ups in spatial scenarios.

Antonia Baehr (*1970): *HA-HA-HA-AH-AH-AH* (2008)

Alessandro Bosetti (*1973): *Ouagá* (2006)

Alessandro Bosetti (*1973): *The Pool and the Soup* (2007)

David Helbich (*1973): *Haltungsschaden* (2005)

Travis Just (*1976): *Quintet 1: Five Voices* (2006)

Georg Klein (*1964): *Hibiya (Dadayama)* (2006)

Andrea Neumann (*1968): *Klingende Körper* (2007)

The Maulwerker expect to grant composition commissions in 2010 to Sabine Ercklentz (*1967) and Annette Krebs (*1968). These compositions could expand the current concert program.

The concert program is open to other suggestions.

Antonia Baehr (*1970): HA-HA-HA-AH-AH-AH (2008)

In a severe three-beat corset that gets filled out with both gestures and vocals, the HAs slowly evolve into laughter. The laughs finally derail, causing the structure of the composition to bust out from within – madness spreads.

Repeat what you just did as exactly as possible. But since this undertaking can only fail, for identical repetition is impossible, try next time to repeat the alteration that just crept in....

Alessandro Bosetti (*1973): The Pool and the Soup (2007)

In *The Pool and the Soup*, Alessandro Bosetti combines his interest in the musicality of language and his predilection for “game pieces”. The material consists solely of freely inspired speech and is organized by playing rules. A prompter instructs the vocalists via hand signs, organizing forms like solos, duos or tutti and influencing musical parameters such as pitch, tempo, volume etc. Bosetti is interested in the relationship between the individual and the group – the “chaos aspect” of a group – and how structures take shape within it.

Alessandro Bosetti (*1973): Ouagá, November 2004 (2006)

An unedited field recording of children playing soccer in a courtyard in Ouagadougou, the capitol of Burkina Faso. A vocal quartet that merges with it and diverges, plays with/against it, samples utterances, cheats on the rules, affirms diversity and then forgets about it. The four vocalists have selected a fund of sounds from the original field recording and learned them by heart. They follow the rules supplied by the composer and give each other instructions, in the process constructing the piece anew in every performance.

David Helbich (*1973): Haltungsschaden (2005)

with:

Hallo 5 (for air guitar), 'schnipsen' and 'klatschen zählen' (both from Keine-Spiele) and more

Haltungsschaden

... attends to things floating and fixed

... grabs fragments from a frantic world

... twice courts lonesome hearts

Encountering each other in a new context, the three free pieces named in the subtitle make fresh connections and plan an attention-getting disruption.

One says: when the other one speaks, is the third one happy?

Haltungsschaden signifies a fallback to physicality.

You may relax: mouth closed – eyes open. One.

All this is accompanied by a band.

Travis Just (*1976): Quintet 1: Five Voices (2006)

The piece works with fast rhythmic fricative textures and sustained seconds. The two textures confront each other in alternating blocks. The structure's high degree of abstraction betrays an affinity to visual art.

Georg Klein (*1964): *Hibiya (from: Dadayama)* (2006)

In realizing *Dadayama* in 2006, the composers Georg Klein and Tetsuo Furudate created a spatial and sound situation that reflects on Dadaisms in Germany and Japan from today's point of view.

Georg Klein's independent composition for the Maulwerker and live electronics works mostly with fine, unobtrusive tones that organically adapt themselves to the situation at hand. Positioned symmetrically along the long sides of the space are four separate loudspeakers, which Georg Klein has assigned to the four Maulwerker ensemble performers. Each vocalist is equipped with a small radio microphone that transmits to one of the loudspeakers. An acoustic mirroring situation develops in which the performers communicate with their acoustic feedback. Soft mouth sounds and merely grazing the microphone with the skin turn into larger-than-life musical events. The microphone penetrates the speech sounds. Feedback from mouth, body and loudspeaker mix with the words of Dadaist texts, especially the Dadaists' self-definitions and statements about themselves.

Andrea Neumann (*1968): *Klingende Körper* (2007)

Using a special "experimental protocol", the piece *Klingende Körper* investigates the relationship between individual and group, as well as the elements that transform a number of individuals into a seemingly unified organism: six performers lie in a clump alongside and on top of each other, their bodies and voices wired with microphones. Triggered by movement and sound impulses, the clump alters both its form and its sound structure during the course of the piece while constantly maintaining the impression of being a "mass".

The dissolution of the individuals' external boundaries contrasts with the concentrated mental presence demanded of each performer. Interplay between these elements (inaction/relaxation in the mass, the activity of giving impulses and of reacting both physically and acoustically) is necessary both in order to exist as a clump as well as to be transformed as a clump.

THE MAULWERKER

Michael Hirsch, Ariane Jeßulat, Henrik Kairies, Christian Kesten, Katarina Rasinski, Steffi Weismann, Christian Kesten

existing in their present form since 1993, are specialised in the common territories between music and theatre, music and language, music and space, sound and silence. The ensemble shows its repertoire of contemporary (vocal) music and experimental music theatre on an international level, i.e. works by Schnebel, Cage, Kagel, Fluxus... In addition, they frequently work with young composers, radio play authors, sound artists and directors.

The ensemble members' backgrounds vary between classical singing, acting, composition, performance, instrumental music, costume design and direction. All members have studied experimental music with Dieter Schnebel at some point in their higher education. They all work as soloists beside their activity with the ensemble.

Over the last years, **The Maulwerker** have performed in Benelux, Bulgaria, Germany, France, Israel, Italy, Japan, Macedonia, Russia, Scotland, Switzerland, Slovakia, Spain, Czech Republic and the USA; at Maerz-Musik Berlin (2006), Musica Viva Munich (2005), Festival UltraSchall Berlin/ Deutschland-Radio (2006), Festival Stimme+ ZKM Karlsruhe (2006), KKL Luzern/Switzerland (2006), Theater Basel/Switzerland (2006), Festival Jeunesse, MUMOK Museum Moderner Kunst Vienna/Austria (2005), Festival Klangraum/Raumklang Cologne/Germany 2004 und im TESLA Podewils'sches Palais Berlin (2005/06/07).

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