

“A sound world that has immediate access to its listeners”

Michael Boder on Haas' *Morgen und Abend*

What happens in the opera?

Boder: That is not at all easy to describe, although the difficulty naturally lies in Jon Fosse's novel, *Morgen und Abend*. The first part is only concerned with the birth of a person, and the second is only concerned with the death of this same person who had just been born. The part called life, or whatever could have constituted the action, is simply omitted. And so, as a result, everything concentrates on these two happenings. You could say that it is a kind of meditation on the two ends of your own life, or of life itself. From a musical perspective, Georg Friedrich Haas has created sound spaces where there is much that has not yet been heard before. It is always a good thing when New Music says something that is really “New”, instead of just presenting new sequences of notes. The way that Haas deals with harmony, using instrumentation but also distortion, enables him to create his very own sound world. In particular, it is a sound world that has immediate access to its listeners and addresses them directly without currying favour.

Georg Friedrich Haas himself has also spoken about these sound spaces. What exactly is a sound space in Haas' music?

Boder: Well, we are dealing with an opera here, where there are singers, an orchestra and a chorus. You can deploy the singers in such a way that they are the main transmitters of the content and are accompanied by the orchestra. Or the orchestra and chorus create a kind of space in which the singer does something entirely different and is independent. This is the path chosen by Haas, and that is why I call it a sound space which acts as a platform for this opera, this action or non-action, this meditation. I would almost like to go as far as saying that Georg Friedrich Haas has created a kind of sacred space with a pagan setting, if something like that can exist. However, the music has a devout element as well. That immediately suggests itself due to the subject of

the opera.

*Haas' music changes the listeners' perception of time
virtually imperceptibly.*

I would like to use two structural elements to characterise the music as used by Georg Friedrich Haas in his work. In opera, since the aria ensemble structure was abandoned, creating a kind of “big picture” or rather clearly formulating the trio of duration, musical form and dramatic progression has become the central task. On the one hand, in Haas' music we now find acceleration and deceleration spanning many minutes, which changes the listeners' perception of time virtually imperceptibly. It is as if you are being forced to accept an alien sense of time. This is very close to the subject, as it is about empathising with how the life of another person has progressed, as it were. On the other hand, there is a parallel process in the treatment of the tonal perception: you can hear a descending chromatic line over a lengthy period. The length of time means that you totally lose any connection with the tonal situation. What remains is a continual, slow, inner downward slide, as if you were sinking inexorably into quicksand – this is also very close to Jon Fosse's world of thought.

The singers gain tremendous vividness in Haas' opera.

Could you describe the relationship between the singers and the orchestra?

Boder: The fact that the singers mostly do not sing together with the

orchestra or the musicians naturally lends them tremendous vividness, which is highly interesting and very touching. There are a few places where the singers do sing with the orchestra, and this effect is employed very intentionally. Generally speaking, the singers do something that is entirely independent.

The microtonality used rather cautiously by Haas in this work corresponds very theatrically with situations in which two singers sing without heeding one another, as it were, without seeing or hearing each other. That is very evident. On the whole, the clear and decisive simplicity in the choice of structural resources in this work is astounding. It could remind you of Bruckner. It is probably thanks to this decision taken by Haas that his music has immediate access to the listeners – even though they do not know exactly how and why.

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