

Jonathan Hepfer

DMA Percussion Recital (No. 2)
Friday, January 10, 2014, 7pm
University of California San Diego
CPMC Concert Hall

VON STEINEN UND STERNEN

ENTRANCE MUSIC:

John CAGE *Ryoanji*

Alice TEYSSIER Flute

In Memoriam János Négyesy

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Daniel TACKE (b. 1985) *Abend*** (2012) [12']

Alice TEYSSIER Voice

Walter ZIMMERMANN (b. 1949) *Glockenspiel*** (1983) [20']

Lewis NIELSON (b. 1950) *Herzplatten** (2013) [35']

Alice TEYSSIER Flute / Voice

* World Premiere

** US Premiere



[Caspar David Friedrich *Abtei im Eichwald* (1810)]

Daniel TACKE - *Abend*

I suppose this all begins when I moved in with Alice Teyssier at 47 Morgan Street in Oberlin, Ohio in 2005. We lived on the second floor of a three-story apartment building. Sometimes, late at night, we would hear strange sonorities emanating through our ceiling. Only late in the year did I figure out that there were two composers living directly above us: Daniel Tacke and Josiah Oberholtzer. In those days, I would rarely say more than hello to either of them in passing (I imagined that between the two of them, they maybe uttered 100 words per year), but they have both become long-standing friends and are two of the young composers whom I most admire.

One Thanksgiving years later at the famous Deyoe domicile in La Jolla, with football silently playing on television and conversations filling the room, Dan seemed to be totally immersed (with a type of concentration one encounters far too rarely in the world) in a barely audible, ethereal, impossibly beautiful piece with occasional strikes of a drum demarcating a mysterious division of time. The piece was called “einfalt. stille” (“simplicity. silence”) by Klaus Lang, whom I had never heard of before. In early 2012, I had the occasion to participate in the US premiere of this very piece, and I had the privilege of getting to know Klaus. At one point, I mentioned that I had recently read Eugen Herrigel’s “Zen in the art of Archery.” Another friend asked if I had read it in German, to which I responded that I hadn’t, because I just didn’t have the patience. Klaus remarked instantaneously upon the irony of my answer.

When I think of Dan, I think of something a friend said to me about a former mentor of his; despite the fact that only five years separated them in terms of physical age, the mentor always *seemed* to be about a century older than my friend. Dan, who is actually two years younger than me, has always possessed such an ageless presence. Simplicity and silence are the hallmarks of Dan’s work. What I learn from him is the importance of patience – of letting time pass in an atmosphere replete with tension, beauty and significance.

Abend (Evening) Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)

The sky puts on the darkening blue coat
held for it by a row of ancient trees;
you watch: and the lands grow distant in your sight,
one journeying to heaven, one that falls;

and leave you, not at home in either one,
not quite so still and dark as the darkened houses,
not calling to eternity with the passion of what becomes
a star each night, and rises;

and leave you (inexpressibly to unravel)
your life, with its immensity and fear,
so that, now bounded, now immeasurable,
it is alternately stone in you and star.



[Albert Tissandier from *Histoire de mes Ascensions* (1878)]

Walter ZIMMERMANN *Glockenspiel*

In the fall of 2008, I gave my master's recital at UCSD, which featured several canonical works of tremendous difficulty. As a reward for my arduous efforts leading up to that concert, I decided I owed myself the joy of learning a piece that would be simple, beautiful and easy. I knew of a piece by a called *Riuti* by the composer Walter Zimmermann which seemed to be nothing other than a beautiful lullaby, perfect for learning in the aftermath of a challenging recital. I budgeted about two weeks of practice time before it would be presentable.

One forty-page analysis later, I found that while *Riuti* far surpassed my criterion of beauty, it fully missed the marks of simplicity or ease of learning (it took me 18 months to finally present it). Learning *Riuti* has been by far the richest and most revelatory experience I have had as a musician. As I grew to fully understand what Zimmermann had done in terms of packing so much meaning into a piece of such apparent simplicity, his work, at least to me, verged on the miraculous.

After plenty of email correspondence over a few years, I managed to track Walter down in Berlin (as he himself had done years ago with many American composers in his astonishing collection of interviews entitled *Desert Plants*), and we met at Barcello's Salon Sucré, which is one part bakery and one part hair salon, by his home on the Görlitzerstraße. Not long after this inspiring and supportive encounter, I resolved to play Walter's second (and even more obscure) percussion solo *Glockenspiel*.

This piece, which comes from the composer's cycle *Sternwanderung* ("Star Wandering") lasts about 20 minutes, and is in five parts. The texts come from Jean Paul's *Des Luftschiffers Giannozzo Seebuch*, which is effectively the imaginary travel log of an air balloon captain named Giannozzo. Jean Paul was writing at a time when the hot air balloon was practically a brand new invention: this was the first time man had been able to see the Earth with such a sense of distance. Here, Zimmermann evokes the oscillating desires of Schopenhauer's porcupines (who on a winter's night wish to be neither too close nor too far from each other): when one is too permanently bound to the soil, one envies of the freedom of birds and flying kites. When one has spent too much time soaring amongst the stars, one longs to touch the stone.

(from *Des Luftschiffers Giannozzo Seebuch*) Jean Paul (1763-1825)

I did not know which land grew verdant beneath me;
it was quiet for a long time sometimes a carillon would ring out,
from some city hidden below me then it was cool (...)
but between heaven and earth I was at my loneliest (...)

I was suddenly lifted up into blue heights.
How the sun shone in her silent sky,
so calm and cold above the sweltering earthly hell (...)
I was tired of the inhabited country
and so thirsty for the empty, pure sea.



[Sandro Botticelli Dante e Beatrice (between 1480-1500)]

Lewis NIELSON *Herzplatten*

It seems strange to me today to recall the sensation of walking into Lewis Nielson's office as an applicant to the Oberlin composition program. Lewis glanced at the scores I had brought in, and I could read immediately in his face that our interaction was going nowhere. I suppose this was his prescient way of telling me that I was to become an interpreter and not a composer. Nearly a decade later, Lewis has become a friend, a mentor and a surrogate family member – a moral compass with respect to making music.

What has happened in between that interview and now is the result of many strong influences I was extremely lucky to encounter. However, I can unequivocally state that my fundamental outlook toward the importance and urgency of making music is due to Lewis' influence. This attitude is never something that Lewis asserts verbally; one merely senses that when one is working on one of his scores in his presence, *something critical is happening – something essential to the human experience*. Although, I have never witnessed anything less than complete cordiality and patience in Lewis' interactions with musicians (or anyone, for that matter), one reads his *desperation to be heard* in his body language.

When Lewis was in San Diego last year for the recording of his percussion sextet *Tocsin*, he proposed to me the project which was to become *Herzplatten*. I remember discussing the texts (which deal with the various roles that the heart plays in life, from the amorous to the clinical) that he proposed, and listing myriad ideas regarding pieces he should listen to for influence, as well as pitfalls I would have liked for him to avoid. I could also read in his face that while he was politely nodding in agreement with my suggestions, I was absolutely wasting my breath; the piece was already written in his mind. An inner force was guiding him to write this and nothing could intervene. Several months later, two packages arrived in San Diego. One contained three large gongs which Lewis, for no good reason, decided to donate to me. The other contained four copies of the finished score to *Herzplatten*. I honestly can't remember which package weighed more. Upon glancing through the 48 pages I received, I knew that this was a gauntlet that Lewis had thrown down for Alice and me. Without ever having read Dante's *La Vita Nuova* (to which the piece owes its structure of nine movements and much of its text), I conjured the image of Lewis ripping out his own heart and throwing it at the page. The piece may be only for a duo, but it feels to me like a magnum opus. This is truly *Musik als Existentielle Erfahrung*.

From Dante's *La Vita Nuova*

I.

A gentle thought that speaks of you
comes to linger with me often,
and speaks of love so sweetly
that I makes the heart consent to it.
The soul says to the heart: "Who is this one,
who comes to console our mind,
and whose power is so mighty
that it lets no other thought stay with us?"

**From Paul Celan's *Lichtzwang* (C) /
Hannah Krall's *Shielding the Flame* (K).**

I.

They handed me a spoon, a spoonful of life.
- (K) Arie Wilner

II.

To each loving and gentle-hearted friend,
 to whom the present rhyme is soon to go
 So that I may their written answer know,
 greetings in Love's own name, their lord, I send.
 The third hour of the time was near at end
 when every star in heaven is aglow:
 'twas then Love came before me, dreadful so
 that my remembrance is with horror rent.

Joyous, he appeared in his hand to keep
 my very heart, and, lying on his breast.
 my lady, veiled lay asleep.
 But he awakened her, and of my ardent heart
 aflame, he humbly bad her taste:
 I saw him, at last, in tears depart.

III.

III. Then I realized that you were thinking
 about the quality of my dark life,
 so that over my heart came a fear
 of revealing with my eyes my wretchedness.

IV.

My lady carries Love within her eyes,
 whereby what'er she looks at gentle grows.
 Towards her, where she passes, each man draws,
 and, met by her, with tremblingly heart replies.
 His forehead bent, he pales and nearly dies,
 so deeply his defects he sees and sighs.
 Envy and pride dare not to her stay by:
 then help me, ladies, praise her to the skies
 Every most humbling thought and every bliss
 rise in the heart of one who hears her speak,
 so he who sees her first is truly blest.
 And if her faintest smile be manifest,
 to tell it, word is vain, and mind is weak
 so new and dear a miracle it is.

V.

The eyes grieving for the heart's pity
 have from seeping suffered pain...

I wish to speak to no other
 than the gentle heart that is in a lady;
 and I will write of her as I weep, for
 she has gone from us to heaven suddenly,
 and has left Love with me, sorrowing.

My sighs give me great anguish,
 when thought in the oppressed mind
 brings before me her who has divided my heart:

To weep in pain and sigh in anguish
 destroys my hear whenever I find myself alone.

VI.

You, who along the road of Love proceed,
 stop, and pay kindly heed
 if there be any grief as grave as mine.
 I beg you but to listen to my plea,
 and then you will agree
 that to all torment I am door and key.
 Not for the little goodness that's in me

II.

"The heart is working normally. He now joins the main artery to the vein with a special bridge. Arterial blood is beginning to flow into the veins. He waits again. The heart moves.. Another spasm. Then a few more fast spasms and the heart begins to work, slowly, regularly. The blue veins become red from arterial blood and begin to throb. The blood is flowing away nobody knows exactly where, but it is finding some outlet through some of the smaller runoffs. Several more minutes pass in silence. The heart is still beating, without any interference."

"Alone with the heart, which is moving in its sack like a tiny, frightened animal. For it is still moving."

- (K) Marek Edelmann

III.

"heart smaller than the fist of a corpse."

- (K) Marek Edelman

IV.

The wild-heart, domesticated
 by a half-blind stab

into the lung,

Air gushes forth

slowly, soaked with blood
 shapes itself

into the rare promise of
 authentic

side-

life

(C)

V.

"...about the anterior myocardial infarction with the left anterior hemiblock. This is very important because, up till now, it has never been possible to rescue anybody from this sort of heart attack. People die in these circumstances in a somewhat peculiar way: they lie quiet, silent, more silent, yet more quiet, with every passing hour, and gradually everything inside them slowly dies. Legs live kidneys brain...Until one day the heart simply stops and the person is dead. It happens so very quietly, so inadvertently, that a patient on the next bed may not even notice. When a person with an anterior myocardial infarction with left anterior hemiblock is brought to the hospital, one can be sure that this patient is going to die."

(K) Marek Edelman

VI.

Sound-dead sister-shell,
 let the dwarf-sounds in,
 they have been examined:
 together they muffle up the great heart

for his own noble breed
did Love so sweet a life to me assign
as made me often ties behind me hear
“O God, what dignity
could give this man a heart so rich and rare?”
All of my boldness I have lost today,
which from my loving treasure used to stir,
and so in poverty
now I dwell, most afraid all this to say.
And, eager still to imitate all those
who out of shame their inner want conceal,
bliss I without reveal,
but weep within and fret from all my woes.

VII.

for wicked Death with bitter want of rue
in gentle hearts his cruelty has shown,
wrecking whatever praise on earth is due
to a gentle lady above virtue's own.

VIII.

Come, gentle hearts, and hear my every sigh,
for it is pity now that wishes so.
Away all of my sighs in sadness go,
and yet I would of grief, without them, die.
Guilty these eyes of mine would prove if they,
oh, much more often than I would wish,
should mourn my lady with the greatest woe,
and soothe, in mourning her, my heart's dismay.

Come! You will hear them sigh and often call
my gentle lady, o lovely lady
gone to her virtue's worthy quarter.
For often they despise this life already
here in the body of this grieving soul,
bereft of its salvation totally.

IX.

The heart replies: “Oh, pensive soul,
this is a new little spirit of love,
who brings before me its desires;
and its life, and all its power,
come from the eyes of that compassionate one
who became perturbed at our sufferings.”

and bear it off on their shoulders to
every distress, every distress.

(C)

VII.

“Because only he – and not the world-famous Swedish
guest – had pulled out from hearts of peasants pieces of
rug, splinters, and window frames. It was thanks to this
that [just five years later, on June 20, 1952,] he was able to
open [her] [the heart of a certain Kwapisz Genowefa] and
operate on her mitral stenosis.” - (K) Marek Edelman

VIII.

"I didn't want it, I don't want this drink:
Let me puke it up.
I know life is a full bowl
and the world is good, good and healthy,
but..
- (K) Arie Wilner

IX.

"...life leaves my blood empty
life just leaves me cold, confounded,
it only gives me cerebral congestion,
It feeds others, but it drains me..."
- (K) Arie Wilner

THANK YOU: Alice (la mia Beatrice). Walter, Lewis and Dan. MR, Steve, Bernhard, Jan, Christian and Gordon. Billy. Alessandra. Jessica and Antonio. RXX, Trevor, Rei, Håkon, Alistair, Mark, Justin, Big Al and Big Freddy. Will & Cindy.

Jonathan Hepfer (b. 1983) is a percussionist and conductor focused upon repertoire of the avant-garde and experimental traditions. He began studying and performing classical music at age 17 after discovering the music and philosophy of John Cage. Subsequently, Jonathan attended Oberlin Conservatory, UC – San Diego and the Musikhochschule Freiburg (with the support of a two-year DAAD fellowship), where he studied with Michael Rosen, Steven Schick and Bernhard Wulff, respectively.

Jonathan has worked with such ensembles as Echoi, Ensemble SurPlus, Signal, ICE and asamisimasa. Since December, Jonathan conducted the US premieres of Jo Kondo's *Sight Rhythmics* and Samuel Beckett/Morton Feldman's *Words and Music* on the Monday Evening Concert Series in Los Angeles. He also performed Feldman's *Crippled Symmetry* in Marfa, Texas. In 2014, Jonathan will lead UC-San Diego's 'Palimpsest' in a program of works by Dallapiccola and Castiglioni. He will also join the Cologne-based ensemble 'hand werk' for their residency at Harvard University, and will present works by Nono and Stockhausen in San Francisco with red fish blue fish.