

Stephane Ginsburgh:

Peter Ablinger | Voices and Piano

Peter Ablinger est compositeur et chef d'orchestre. Sa musique est pour le citer "fondée par une interrogation radicale sur la nature du son. [...] le bruit doit être utilisé pour ce qu'il est en lui-même, en dehors de toute dimension signifiante." Il nous parle des Voices and Piano dont nous entendrons deux créations le 16/12 au festival Images Sonores 2011.

(english unedited)

Pianist Mark Knoop will perform a series of your Voices and piano for the next Images Sonores festival in Liège. Could you tell us a few words of the general idea of these pieces and more particularly of the one you wrote for this occasion ?

The general idea probably has to do with the fact that, when somebody speaks to me, I never miss the melody of the speech, but sometimes the meaning. When i was a young boy and my mother asked me to go to buy a pound of butter, 10 eggs and a loaf of bread I listened very attentively and I loved how she spoke to me, than swung on my bike, ride to the store, wait in the line until it was my turn - only to realize that I didnot listen to the content of the message - and had to ride back home to ask...

Maybe we can say Voices and Piano generates something beyond meaning also. Not even exactly melody, more something in between, maybe it generates listening - at least I wish it would.

I have only private things to say about the new pieces as the selection of a certain voice allways has to do with myself. Alltogether the cycle is a large encounter of voices "in me". Together the cycle is a self-portrait almost. - Shure, I choose Jacques Brel because this performance is in Belgium. But Jacques Brel was on my list anyway.

Actually both, Brel and Nina Simone I learned to know through my elder sister, who, when I was about 16, took me with her on long travels through Italy and France while we heard music from her car-cassette player. Brel and Simone were very prominent in here cassette repertoire...!

**Do you apply specific electronic treatment to the voices ?
What are they ?**

The voices, as heard through the loudspeaker, are untreated. I did not change anything. Just made the selection. But the piano part comes from a spectral analysis of the respective voice. And for this analyses I use software that is especially written and developed for me. Thomas Musil is the name of the programmer, he works at the IEM (Institute of Electronic Music) Graz, Austria, and it is a big gift to me to have this collaboration in a continuous way which meanwhile lasts like decades!

Voice is not only sound, it is also bears meaning as discourse. How does voice discourse combine itself with the musical one, and does it result in a new meaning ?

More important than the meaning of a voice is its personality, and its relationship with me. Some of the voices were written without the slightest idea about what its meaning was. The content may have an influence on the character of a piece but more it is always the person, the icon, or even the cliché that a person represents. So for example in "Brel" you might hear a valse musette, in "Billie Holiday" a bit of Bee Bop. Differently to that "Alberto Giacometti" is more a portrait of his hands when modelling in clay (- watch the piano player's hands at this!). But also the content can do its work: "Carmen Baliero" speaks about the rain in Buenos Aires, so the piece' structure has resulted in a 'rain piece'.

You usually use famous voices for your pieces. What qualities do you expect of them ? Would it be possible to give voice to anonymous ones ?

...anonymous ones - that's a good question! Although, there are some exceptions already in the cycle - at least people like Carmen Baliero are only locally famous. And the last piece until now is the voice of a Berlin kid - nobody famous at all. But the question remains, 90 percent of the voices are worldwide known celebrities. In the sense of the "self portrait" that I talked already about it is probably a very Sartre-like thought that it is always the OTHER that creates ourself. Other people - in many respects - are like mirrors to us, and we are projecting our own expectations onto this mirror. With people that not only I know but also many of the audience know I can share that reflection - that reflection of a reflection!