

## Alexis Agrafiotis

### 5 songs after poetry of Paul Celan for tenor and piano

from „Fadensonnen“ (© Suhrkamp Verlag Frankfurt am Main 1968)

1. Der Schweigestoss 2. Heddergemüt 3. In den Geräuschen 4. Redewände 5. Tagbewurf

Q: What difficulties arise to set a poem in music?

A: Today you can not just put a music background under the text. It is important to fill the mood with the appropriate music I do not say set in music.

Q: To put means in some way there is missing something in the text.

A: Here arises the question if one can at all set in music poetry, I mean poems which have a great inner dynamics. That's why it is clearly understandable that the poetry set in music in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century is not often great literature. It is the great achievement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps also its fail, to have relation with great literature, similar to the opera (German: Literaturoper).

Q: This is inevitable an interpretation.

A: Also the printed poem in its layout is an interpretation of the manuscript. the greatness of poetry lays in the possibility of different reception, which is expressed in each different setting in music.

Q: How far away You go, with Your interpretation of the text?

A: Actually I do not want to interpretate the text, but to achieve in a personal way an ontological approach to the text.

Q: What do You mean with ontology?

A: Ontology as the shining of the being, of extreme human experiences, which concern all of us throughout the generations. I mean with this human boarder areas beyond the Holocaust.

Q: At Paul Celan the stillness or the unspeakable is surely much inspiring.

A: Exactly, it is hard work not to transpose the stillness easily with rests, but on the one hand with the economy of music material, and on the other hand with the concentration to the essential, where Paul Celan is a great master.

Q: How did You transpose this in detail?

A: I went different paths: In „Der Schweigestoss“ the singing part consists of a constant search to speak, while only consonants are spoken or singed until finally the whole phrase is heard. In „Heddergemüt“ I let repeating parts of the sentence, which is rarely in contemporary settings in music. Different colouring of the vocals I used in „In den Geräuschen“. Morphologically „Redewände“ are variations of a material (instead of a theme), a material which is common to all songs: a 10-ton-row, without g und c sharp. It is used the third pedal as pedal-store of the 10 notes 8 (spread all over the key board). In „Tagbewurf“, finally the first part of the texts only spoken.

Q: The clear pronunciation of the consonants is very important...

A: Normally at music settings the notes are put to the vocals and the exact pronunciation of the consonants (place and duration) is left to the choice of the singer. I avoided nearly everywhere this freedom and set an exact pronunciation..

Q: Is it not becoming in this way artificial?

A: The exactitude of the pronunciation is based upon the normal speaking and in the interpretation it should not be felt as foreign and artificial. Besides, in each music setting there is something artificial.

Q: Did You use Paul Celans own voice in readings of the broadcast?

A: Paul Celan is an excellent reader. Actors could have lessons with him in declamation. Each consonant is clearly audible with a inconspicuous but with a coining meaning. In his voice the chosen word, after long search, is exactly reflected. That is why I handled so exactly with each part of a word.

Q: There is not much freedom for interpretation...

A: It should not be interpreted but the meaning should declamated appropriately, chanted would be the wrong word.