

ENSEMBLE MODERN

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You are wherever your thoughts are

Steve Reich



Anlässlich der Europäischen Erstaufführung von *You Are (Variations)* im Januar 2005 sprach Hermann Kretzschmar mit dem amerikanischen Komponisten über sein neues Werk.

Ensemble Modern: Listening to this piece and comparing it to other works the Ensemble Modern has performed in the past – e. g. *Music for 18 Musicians*, *City Life* or *Three Tales* – I have the impression that structurally the piece is like a sum of these earlier works.

Steve Reich: Actually when I wrote this piece I started with the attitude that I would simply enjoy myself

composing and go back to earlier pieces as a starting point. The piece I wrote before this piece was *Cello Counterpoint*. It's the most difficult of the counterpoint pieces and harmonically the most dissonant. I worked very hard on it and I think it's a very good piece but in *You Are (Variations)* I decided to just go back to the world of *Tehillim*, *The Desert Music*, *Music for 18 Musicians*, start that way – you know when you hear the beginning of *You Are (Variations)* you could think it's the beginning of *The Desert Music* – and see where that led me. In other words I was not trying to consciously do something new. I was just starting by doing something that I knew – and – let's see what happens.

EM: You use no electronics but only four pianos, strings, winds and the choir.

SR: And two vibes and two marimbas. – Exactly. I felt, after *Three Tales* with all that sampling and technology that I needed to compose several pieces that were just music. And this is already the third piece. There are two smaller ones that I already did, *Cello Counterpoint* (2003) and *Dance Patterns* (2002).

EM: But it surprised me that in *You Are (Variations)* you only use live instruments.

SR: When I had composed so many pieces like *City Life* or *The Cave* and then *Three Tales* I used so much sampling and computers that I finally felt, basta! – I've had enough. I needed a break, I needed to work with just musical instruments. Now I'm writing still another instrumental piece, this time for the London Sinfonietta to be choreographed by Akram Khan, an indian dancer. It's for three string quartets, four vibraphones, and two pianos. So I'm in an acoustic period. But I'm still using amplification.

EM: For each instrument?

SR: Yes. In *You Are (Variations)* every instrument and voice is amplified. Basically it's mostly for the winds, strings and voices and a little bit for the pianos and percussion. It was premiered in Los Angeles and there they had three on a part for the strings so there where three first violins, three seconds, three violas,

three cellos and one bass. In London and Frankfurt I think we have only string quartet or possibly two but two string quartets are difficult to keep in tune. And also in Los Angeles they had three to a part for each singer for a total of eighteen singers. Here in Frankfurt and London we have one to a part for a total of six singers. So we'll need a little bit more amplification for the voices.

EM: So we now have more of a chamber music version.

SR: Yes, it will be a little bit more precise and with a bit more of a sharper edge because there won't be any doubling.

EM: Was it your decision to do it this way?

SR: It can be done either way. I liked the idea of three for a part, particularly for the strings, but I haven't heard it with one to a part, so I'll find out in Frankfurt. But the singers you know, Synergy is so good. They sound fantastic by themselves. I wrote the piece so it could be played by a single string quartet. All double stops are possible with one player. So it can be played either way. And when I hear it with Ensemble Modern and Synergy I'll probably love it and it will just work in a different way.

EM: Another thing that surprises me is the form of the piece. It is depended upon the text but not as constructed as for example *Three Tales* where the

parts are more contrasted. So *You Are (Variations)* is much more like a musical monolith.

SR: The first and the third movements move around harmonically but the second and the fourth only use the harmonies two, four, six and five – basically I wanted to see if I could do something that was interesting this way and I think because of the harmonic rhythm – the rhythm in which these chords move which is quite unpredictable – it works extremely well. I wanted to write something which I found emotionally very moving. And I hadn't worked like this since many years ago, in *Tehillim*. The form, the variations, are really because the texts are so short.

EM: Why did you choose them, though?

SR: Purposely, you know the piece *Proverb*?

EM: We did it in London.

SR: O.k. In *Proverb* I learned that in using one short text you are forced to develop just this one idea. I liked this very much and I wanted to go back to that kind of composing. When you have a long text you must travel with the text wherever it goes. And I had done this of course in *The Desert Music*, *The Cave*, and *Three Tales*. So here I wanted to go back to *Proverb* and I picked four short texts. I think they are very interesting to people just because they are so short. Three of them are from the Jewish tradition,

one from Wittgenstein, but a lot of people said to me they were like Zen Koans: very short aphorism that invite meditation. "You are wherever your thoughts are." That's true of people, and it's also very true about listening to music. When you are really listening your consciousness is filled with the music and wherever the music goes, that's literally where you are. Someone taps you on the shoulder and you come back to another reality. But when you are listening your mind is filled with the music. Wherever the music goes, you go too, if you are really listening. Obviously if you are watching TV or listening to the radio this is something different. It is a truth about human beings that they can be physically somewhere but their mind can be elsewhere and that's really where they are.

EM: But you also use this sentence pronouncing only two words. So they get also another meaning. It makes a difference if you only say: "You are".

SR: Yes, exactly. What happens is when the piece begins you have the sopranos singing "You are" very long. And the tenors sing very short "You are". The women are very long and the men are very short. So it's a little bit funny and it's almost like two different texts. One is fully augmented and abstract like Perotin and the other is as if you were talking. The second variation it's just the opposite: the tenors have the very long tones and the women have the short ones. So this is how I began the piece. Each

section treats the text differently. It's always harmonized differently, though my original idea was to keep a constant chord progression throughout. Instead, I started changing a couple of the chords. And I thought: "I like this!" I decided to go with my musical intuition and not with my plan that I made before I started composing. And the result was that the harmonies began to get more and more removed from my original plan. And the only thing that always brings them back is a kind of D major dominant chord. But usually it's with a G in the bass instead of an A. So it's between a four chord and a five chord or an inverted five chord or whatever you like. But that chord is the heart of the harmony throughout the piece. The most dissonant part of this piece is in the second half of the first movement when the four pianos start playing by themselves and continue to the end of the first movement – there it's almost polytonal.

EM: Does the tension of the text correspond to the tension of the harmony?

SR: Well, sometimes it's a wonderful day, and you're looking at the clear sky, you feel fine and your back isn't bothering you or your girlfriend or wife has been nice and you're very proud of your work and other times your eyes are bothering you and you're going in for surgery, your wife has left you and you feel horrible – so by bar 130 it's getting a little bit darker (laughing). And it's getting darker all the way

till the end of the first movement. And then starts the second movement which is from the 16th Psalm, in the original Hebrew "Shaviti HaShem L'negdi". This means, "I place the Eternal before me". This could be literal – you can interpret this so that you keep the four letter Hebrew name of God as a visualization in your mind's eye. And I think this is perhaps one of the things King David meant in that Psalm. But in our day, it could mean that you keep whatever is most important to you in mind. What you think of the basis of your life. The most important things in your life enter into your consciousness when you're at certain points in your life. So it's a suggestion of where to put your thoughts. It's no longer saying "You are wherever your thoughts are", but rather, here's a possibility, here is something to meditate on. – And then at the end of that movement there is a pause because all the musicians are tired. The lips of the oboe player are tired and I feel Hermann and everyone saying: "I need a little break".

EM: How did you choose the texts?

SR: Oh, it took me six months of reading in Rabbi Nachman of Breslov who is the author of the first quote, and then reading the *Psalms*, and reading Wittgenstein and *Pirke Avot* from which the last text comes. I put these books in my suitcase when I was travelling and on the airplane and in hotels I would read. I have maybe twenty different versions of these and other texts – all short – in my computer. People

perhaps look at the texts and say it probably took you a few minutes. And I say: "It took me six months!" All these different possibilities, different orders and sometimes it was all in Hebrew or all in English or different quotes and finally I came up with this and it's the best I could come up with. These texts don't tell a story – but they do certainly make sense together. And they work well when repeated.

EM: And it refers to the music...

SR: Well, the first, "You are wherever your thoughts are" certainly does. The second "Shiviti HaShem L'Negdi" ("I place the Eternal before me") is not about music, but is simply a text I set to music which I hope illuminates the meaning and spirit of the text.

After the Psalm comes the Wittgenstein. "Explanations come to an end somewhere". Wittgenstein was talking about science and also about how a child learns a language. Explanations come to an end somewhere in the sense that, for example, Newton, when he formulated the theory of gravity, was a genius, and everything he said was true. However, it turned out with Einstein that what Newton was describing was only part of reality and he wasn't aware of certain things because it was not possible to be aware of them at that point because of the available measuring instruments, etc. Einstein opened up another reality that we weren't aware of. At one point we thought atoms

were the smallest bits of physical matter, then we discovered protons and neutrons, then we discovered quarks and now we talk about string theory and everything may be vibrating almost like music. So every 20 or 30 years in physics, which is the most basic of the sciences, you have some basic new insight that opens up a whole new door to another reality. And this is not because there was something wrong before, but just that we couldn't see this new reality at an earlier point. So we know that tomorrow we will see something we couldn't see today. In that sense, clearly, "Explanations come to an end somewhere". You know from your personal life as well, that many things you want to understand just happen and they surprise you and they are not what you expected and are not under your control. As I get older I realize I know less than I thought.

The last text is taken from *Pirke Avot*, which is an early part of the *Talmud*. The Hebrew says, "Eh'mor mah'ah't va ah'say harbay". The translation could be "Say little and do much". It's also a very contemporary text, a very American text – "Don't talk so much, just do it!". However, musically, the English "much" is a terrible word because it closes on the consonant "ch" just when you need a word that ends in a vowel you can sing for a long time. The Hebrew was perfect: "Eh'mor ma'ah't". A very short phrase, which sounds like what it means: "Say little". Then "Ah'say harbay", and it

sounds just like what it says: "Do much". Perfect for singing. You can extend all those vowels for a very long time, which I do. So I chose it. It's also interesting to work in a language people don't know. If you take a text whose meaning is clear but put it in a language people don't know, it makes it a little bit more mysterious. Stravinsky was talking about this by using Latin. You have a distance from the words. *You Are (Variations)* is a combination of some English and some Hebrew. The second and fourth movement are musically very similar, and the Hebrew texts, particularly in the second movement, are 'covered', they are not open to view, as befits sacred matters. You don't know what it means unless you look up the translation. I don't want to shine a bright light on it. If you are a person who will practice this, then you should know about it, and you'll take the time and effort to find out what it means, but if you're not, then it's covering up something that should be covered.

■

12.01.2005, 20 Uhr, Frankfurt,

Alte Oper Frankfurt

(4. Abonnementkonzert)

19.15 Uhr Einführung mit Steve Reich
und Kornelia Bittmann

18.01.2005, 19.30 Uhr, London

Barbican Concert Hall

Steve Reich: Tehillim (1981); Eight Lines (1979);

You Are (Variations) (2004)

Europäische Erstaufführung

Stefan Asbury (Dirigent)

Synergy Vocals

*You Are (Variations) ist ein Auftragswerk des Los Angeles
Master Chorale / Grant Gershon (Music Director),
Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts und
der Freunde des Ensemble Modern e.V.*

Tickets: 069-1340 400

www.alteoper.de

www.barbican.org.uk

Happy New Ears mit Steve Reich



Seit fast 10 Jahren widmet das Ensemble Modern seine Werkstattkonzerte »Happy New Ears« bedeutenden Komponisten, zentralen Werken und ästhetischen Fragestellungen des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts. Gemeinsam mit Gästen aus unterschiedlichen Disziplinen wie Musik, Theater, Naturwissenschaft oder Kunst werden werkspezifische Inhalte diskutiert und erläutert, exklusive Hintergrundinformationen – oftmals direkt vom Komponisten – schärfen die Ohren des Zuhörers.

In Zusammenarbeit mit dem Medienpartner Hessischer Rundfunk – hr 2 und der Oper Frankfurt hat das Ensemble Modern in der Reihe »Happy New Ears« ein neues Schulprojekt entwickelt. In der Spielzeit 2004/2005 wird das Gesprächskonzert mit frühen Werken des amerikanischen Komponisten und »Vaters« der so genannten Minimal Music auch als Veranstaltung zur Musikvermittlung für Kinder und Jugendliche angeboten. Der Mitschnitt des Konzerts wird als Grundlage für eine Produktion dienen, die gemeinsam von hr2 und Ensemble Modern hergestellt wird, um sie hessischen Schulen für den Unterricht zur Verfügung zu stellen.

11.01.2005, 20.30 Uhr, Oper Frankfurt
(Happy New Ears)

Steve Reich: Clapping Music (1972);
Violin Phase (1967);
Drumming – Part One (1970-71);
Music for Pieces of Wood (1973);
New York Counterpoint (1985)
Steve Reich (Guest)
Kornelia Bittmann (Moderation)

In Kooperation mit Oper Frankfurt und hr2.



**Tickets: 069-1340-400 oder
www.oper-frankfurt.de**

Nähere Informationen: www.wissen.hr-online.de

Für Schulklassen und Kurse gibt es verbilligte Eintrittskarten. Diese können direkt unter der Telefonnummer 069-212-37432 bestellt werden.



Olga Neuwirth und Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster: ...ce qui arrive...

Presestimmen zur Uraufführung am 21. Oktober 2004 beim steirischen herbst in Graz.

■ *[Ein] Gesamtkunstwerk aus Sprache, Video und Musik, in dem neben dem Zufall auch die fragile existenzielle Basis von Schaffenden thematisiert wird ... Da tönt es mitunter regelrecht freejazzig, entschlüpft dem Sopransaxophon eine nicht unsentimentale Melodie. Und nicht nur einmal durchwandern kollektiv angelegte chromatische Abwärtsglissandi den Raum. Bis schließlich in der finalen Passage Liebestod-Motive (Wagners Tristan-Finale) aus dem Klangboden herauswuchern. ... Video, Text und Musik – hier ein Zusammenprall der Künste, eine Dreiecksbeziehung.*

(Der Standard, 23.10.2004)

■ *Auf der Bühne der List-Halle sitzen einander zwei Orchestergruppen gegenüber, in der Mitte ist eine Videoleinwand aufgezogen, dazu kommen Tonband-Einspielungen von Paul Auster, der aus seinem Buch vorträgt. In der Abkehr von herkömmlichen Gestaltungsmustern beschreitet das Werk den Weg zu einem formal radikalen »Musiktheater«, das nicht nur ohne Handlung, sondern auch ohne Personen sein Auslangen findet. ... Das hervorragende Ensemble Modern wird den Anforderungen der Partitur unter Franck Ollu spielend gerecht.*

(ÖÖNachrichten, 23.10.2004)



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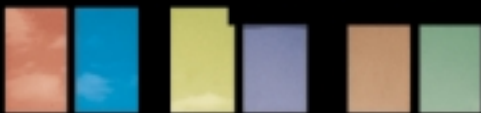
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Das Ensemble Modern wird gefördert durch die Kulturstiftung des Bundes und über die Deutsche Ensemble Akademie e.V. durch die Stadt Frankfurt, das Land Hessen, die GVL und die GEMA-Stiftung.

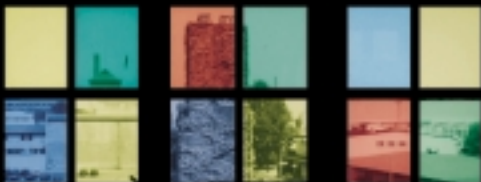
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Die Musikerinnen und Musiker des Ensemble Modern danken der Aventis Foundation für die Finanzierung eines Sitzes in ihrem Ensemble.

Aventisfoundation



Internationale Ensemble Modern Akademie



Pressestimmen zu den Abschlusskonzerten des 1. Internationalen Kompositionsseminars mit sieben Uraufführungen am 3. und 4. Oktober 2004 im hr Sendesaal Frankfurt.

■ *Das erste »Internationale Kompositionsseminar« des Ensemble Modern ist abgeschlossen: Ein Jahr lang hatten in zwei Arbeitsphasen sieben jüngere Komponisten zusammen mit Helmut Lachenmann gearbeitet, ihre mitgebrachten Werkansätze vollendet... War die meisterliche Hand Helmut Lachenmanns an den Produkten der Nachwuchs-Komponisten zu spüren? Die höchst sensiblen Klangverläufe, die vom fabelhaft agierenden Ensemble Modern ... geboten wurden, mochten darauf hindeuten. So unterschiedlich die konzeptionellen Ausgangspositionen der ... Künstler zwischen 24 und 35 Jahren auch waren – Crossover-Strickware in den verschiedenen bekannten Maschen wurde hier an keiner Stelle geboten.*

(Frankfurter Rundschau, 06.10.2004)

■ *»Was kann Komponieren heute sein?« Die Frage stand für Lachenmann ausgesprochen über der Veranstaltung. Die Aufgabe bestand also vor allem darin, die Freiheit dieser unmittelbaren Nähe des Schaffensprozesses zum auf-führenden Ensemble Modern und zum Komponisten Lachenmann möglichst sinnvoll zu nutzen und dann formal zwingend umzusetzen ... Die Klang-Ergebnisse ließen indes allesamt aufhorchen. ... Nach den bereits absolvierten Konzerten der Instrumental-Stipendiaten war dies abermals ein gelungener Einstand der Internationalen Ensemble Modern Akademie, eine Art hochkarätig innovative Wanderuniversität, in der die Lehrer die Musik ihrer Schüler spielen. Mehr Respekt geht nicht.*

(FAZ 06.10.2004)

Komponisten: Franck Bedrossian (Frankreich), Dai Fujikura (Japan/Großbritannien), Saed Haddad (Jordanien), Arnulf Herrmann (Deutschland), Márton Illés (Ungarn), Marko Nikodijević (Serbien) und Johann Tallgren (Finnland)

Dirigenten: Alexander Adiarte (Philippinen) und Alejo Perez (Argentinien)

Musikwissenschaftler: Christine Anderson und Gordon Kampe (beide Deutschland)

Dozenten: Helmut Lachenmann, Franck Ollu



Das Internationale Kompositionsseminar wird ermöglicht durch die Allianz Kulturstiftung. Die Konzerte fanden statt in Zusammenarbeit mit hr2.

Konzerttermine Ja

11.01.2005, 20.30 Uhr, Oper Frankfurt

(Happy New Ears)

12.01.2005, 20 Uhr, Alte Oper Frankfurt

(4. Abonnementkonzert)

18.01.2005, 19.30 Uhr, London, Barbican Concert Hall

Werke von Steve Reich

29.01.2005, 20 Uhr, Philharmonie Essen

John Adams: Chamber Symphony (1992)

Hanns Eisler: Kammer-Symphonie op. 69 (1940)

Anton Webern: Symphonie op. 21 (1927/28)

Arnold Schönberg:

Kammersymphonie Nr. 1, op.9 (1906)

Martyn Brabbins (Dirigent)

02.02.2005, 20 Uhr, Philharmonie Essen

Frank Zappa: Greggery Peccary & Other Persuasions

Omar Ebrahim, David Moss (beide Stimme)

Franck Ollu (Dirigent)

09.02.2005, 20 Uhr, Paris, Cité de la Musique

Arnold Schönberg: Dreimal tausend Jahre op. 50a für

gemischten Chor a cappella (1949): De profundis

(Psalm 130) op. 50b für sechsstimmigen gemischten

Chor a cappella (1950)

Klaus Huber: Die Seele muss vom Reittier steigen

(2002) Französische Erstaufführung

Luigi Nono: Sara dolce tacere. Canto per 8 soli (1960);

Cori di Didone für gemischten Chor und Schlagzeug (1958)

Luigi Dallapiccola: Canti di Prigionia

für Chor und Instrumente (1938-41)

Heinz Holliger (Dirigent)

Kai Wessel (Countertenor)

Max Engel (Baryton)

Walter Grimmer (Violoncello)

SWR Vokalensemble Stuttgart

09.02.2004, 20 Uhr, Frankfurt,

Haus der Deutschen Ensemble Akademie

»Offene Ohren«

Geschlossene Veranstaltung für

die Freunde des Ensemble Modern e.V.

15.02.2005, 20.30 Uhr, Oper Frankfurt

(Happy New Ears)

Klaus Huber: Intarsi. In memoriam Witold Lutosławski

für Klavier und 17 Instrumentalisten (1994)

Heinz Holliger (Dirigent und Moderation)

Klaus Huber (Gast)

Ueli Wiget (Klavier)

18.02.2005, 20 Uhr, Dublin,

Helix Arts Centre, University Dublin

(Eröffnungskonzert RTE Living Music Festival)

Hans Werner Henze: L'Heure bleue (2001)

Detlev Glanert: Geheimer Raum (2002)

Frank Corcoran: Quasi una Visione (2004)

Uraufführung

anuar – März 2005

Wolfgang Rihm: Jagden und Formen für großes Ensemble (1995-2001) Irische Erstaufführung Sian Edwards (Dirigentin)

Jagden und Formen *ist ein Auftragswerk von KölnMusik, Festival d'Automne à Paris, Europäischer Musikmonat 2001 und Ensemble Modern.*

09.03.2004, 20 Uhr, Frankfurt,

Haus der Deutschen Ensemble Akademie
»Offene Ohren«
Geschlossene Veranstaltung für die Freunde des Ensemble Modern e.V.

12.03.2005, Berlin, Ort NN (MaerzMusik)

felt|ebb|thus|brink|here|array|telling (2001-2004)
visual : aural : acoustical : sculptural music
Benedict Mason: Komposition, Choreografie und Raumkonzept

Musikalische Leitung: Franck Ollu

Kompositionsauftrag des SWR. Ein Projekt des Ensemble Modern und der Internationalen Ensemble Modern Akademie und unter Mitwirkung der Jungen Deutschen Philharmonie in Zusammenarbeit mit den Donaueschinger Musiktagen, MaerzMusik / Berliner Festspiele. Mit Unterstützung der SHURE Distribution GmbH und der BHF-Bank Stiftung.

14.03.2005, Neapel,

Teatrino di Corte, Palazzo Reale
Patrizio Marrone: Neues Werk Uraufführung

sowie Werke von György Kurtág, Mark André, Brian Ferneyhough, Helmut Lachenmann, György Ligeti, Steve Reich und Pierluigi Billone

16.03.2005, 20 Uhr, Brüssel, Palais des Beaux-Arts (Ars Musica) Belgische Erstaufführung

18.03.2005, 20 Uhr, Alte Oper Frankfurt

Einführung um 19.15 Uhr

30.03.2005, 20.15 Uhr, Concertgebouw

Amsterdam Holländische Erstaufführung
Olga Neuwirth / Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster:
...ce qui arrive... (2004)

Dirigent: Franck Ollu

Ein Auftragswerk der European Concert Hall Organisation (ECHO) für das Ensemble Modern in Koproduktion mit Fabrica Musica und steirischer herbst. Mit freundlicher Unterstützung durch die Europäische Kommission (Kultur 2000) und die Ernst von Siemens Musikstiftung.

Das Ensemble-Modern-Abonnement in der Alten Oper Frankfurt wird gefördert durch die Kultur-Stiftung der Deutschen Bank.



Änderungen vorbehalten