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# MUSICAL COMPOSITION FOCUSING ON THE QUALITY OF PRESENCE IN PERFORMANCE

WIESENFELD, RUTH

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University of Plymouth

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**MUSICAL COMPOSITION FOCUSING  
ON THE QUALITY OF PRESENCE IN PERFORMANCE**

**by**

**RUTH WIESENFELD**

**Volume I of II**

**A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth**

**In partial fulfilment for the degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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Ruth Wiesenfeld

Musical Composition focusing on the Quality of Presence in Performance

### **Abstract**

This practice-based research into the quality of presence in performance explores a compositional approach that originates from the question of what might lead a person to seek musical or sounding utterance. It aims at opening the awareness-space towards a listening not only to the musical-acoustic event, but to the performer as a whole. Consequently different forms of notation and processes of rehearsing that address the psycho-physical constitution of a performer are investigated; a strong focus lies on the sensorimotor aspect of playing an instrument. The portfolio comprises fourteen pieces (for soloists, chamber ensembles and orchestra) as well as four collaborative projects with performance artists. Most of the pieces have been performed live: documentation on CD and DVD is included.

The written part of the thesis provides a commentary on the process of bringing these pieces into being. In particular, issues of notation and rehearsal are addressed here, which are of special concern as to the transmission of conceptions regarding presence, embodiment and kinaesthetic sensitivities. I explain how the body of compositions deals with various notions of listening: receptive listening and – in the chapter on the orchestral piece *spun yarn* - listening as a sense of touch as well as listening in wonder. Illustrated by several performance projects I outline the concept of the audience as witness rather than as observer. Additionally, I describe how I use imagery to inscribe possible stimuli for musical or sounding utterance into my compositions. To demonstrate how this research contributes to new knowledge in the field of musical composition, I compare it with similar yet different positions exemplified by Mauricio Kagel's "instrumental theatre" as well as Helmut Lachenmann's "musique concrète instrumentale" and place it against more recent trends and developments. These evaluations will show that there is no other approach to the quality of presence within musical composition coinciding exactly with mine.

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## Portfolio - List of Pieces, Documentations and Performances

**1.SZENARIEN** (cycle of seven compositions to be staged in the indicated order as an evening length production):

*I name you* (2006)

for singing and speaking trombonist

Duration: ca. 9 minutes

Text: Paul Auster

Documentation: score and audio recording (CD 1, track 1)

Performed at a *jour fixe* of the *Berliner Gesellschaft für Neue Musik*

Date: 04 September 2006

Venue: new thinking, Berlin, Germany

Performer: James Fulkerson

*Akt- the particularity of nakedness* (2003)

for male and female speaker, piano, trombone

Duration: ca. 7 minutes

Text: Marguerite Duras

Documentation: score, audio recording (CD 2, track 3), video (CD-Rom "videos", file "Akt")

Performed at the opening of Daniel Wiesenfeld's exhibition *Balls*

Date: 13 May 2004

Venue: Kunstverein Landshut, Germany

Performers: Sarah Nunius (female speaker), Jochen Decker (male speaker),

Gerhard Gschlössl (trombone), Ruth Wiesenfeld (piano)

*wer weiss* (2004)

for cello and speaker

Duration: open

Text: Ruth Wiesenfeld

Documentation: demonstration of material on audio recording (CD 1, track 2)  
performance of material in *Cello und Tanz* (CD-Rom "videos", file "CelloTanz")

*Lichtungen* (2005)

for female speaker, accordion, clarinet

Duration: ca. 8 minutes

Text: Ruth Wiesenfeld

Documentation: score, audio-recording (CD 2, track 4), video (DVD "Lichtungen")

Performed at the festival *48 Stunden Neukölln*

Date: 24 and 25 June 2006

Venue: empty shop in Neukölln, Berlin, Germany

Performers: Milena Tschikov (accordion), Matthias Badczong (clarinet), Ruth Wiesenfeld  
(female speaker)

*the fisher of pearls* (2005)

for male speaker, bowed piano (two players), cello, clarinet, trombone

Duration: ca. 10 minutes

Text: Ruth Wiesenfeld

Documentation: score

*open-close* (2006)

for speaking and singing accordionist

Duration: ca. 5 minutes

Text: Stéphane Mallarmé

Documentation: score, audio-recording (CD 2, track 5)

Performed at a *jour fixe* of the *Berliner Gesellschaft für Neue Musik*

Date: 04 September 2006

Venue: new thinking, Berlin, Germany

Performer: Christine Paté

*...for a brighter silence* (2006)

for male + female speaker, cello, accordion

Duration: ca. 4 minutes

Text: Paul Auster

Documentation: score

## **2. Other compositions in chronological order**

*sans le dire* (2004)

for Marimba solo

Duration: ca. 5 minutes

Documentation: score

*weiß (rhapsody)* (2006)

for piano solo

Duration: ca. 9 minutes

Documentation: sketch of score; audio-recording (CD 1, track 7)

Performed at the unveiling of Daniel Wiesenfeld's *American Bavarian Rhapsody*

Date: 15 September 2006

Venue: private

Performer: Ruth Wiesenfeld

*Hautfelder* (2006)

1. Version for five violas

Duration: ca. 18 minutes

Documentation: score

3rd Prize in the Composition Contest 2006 by the Viola Stiftung Walter Witte

2. Version for string quartet (2007)

Duration: ca. 18 minutes

Documentation: score, audio recording (CD 1, tracks 3 - 5)

Performed at the opening of the show *Lust for Life. Die Sammlung Ricke*

Date: 20 September 2007

Venue: Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein

Performers: Bode Quartett

*manourney* (2006)

for male trio (speaker, flute, small zither-like instrument)

Duration: ca. 10 minutes

Documentation: score, audio recording (CD 1, track 6)

Performed at the Concert-Installation *einfach kompliziert – grafisch notiert* organised by the

*Berliner Gesellschaft für Neue Musik*

Date: 21 December 2006

Venue: Akademie der Künste am Hanseatenweg, Berlin

Performers: Thomas Gerwin (speaker), Klaus Schöpp (flute), Tobias Dutschke (small zither-like instrument)

*Shark Synchrony* (2007)

for double bass, tuba and accordion

Duration: open

Documentation: audio recording (CD 2, track 1)

Performed at the opening of Daniel Wiesenfeld's show *swimmers and sharks*

Date: 7 July 2007

Venue: Josettihöfe, Berlin

Performers: Jochen Carls (double bass), Sebastian Kunzke (tuba),

Ruth Wiesenfeld (accordion)

*weiß (auf grau)* (2007)

for piano solo

Duration: open

Documentation: score

*spun yarn* (2007) for orchestra

Duration: ca. 15 minutes

Documentation: score, audio recording (CD 2, track 2)

Performances:

Dates 7, 8, 9 March 2008

Venues: Flavel Centre, Dartmouth; Central Church, Torquay; St. John's Church, Totnes

Torbay Symphony Orchestra, Conductor: Richard Gonski

### **3. Collaborations**

*Cello und Tanz* (2004-2005)

for dancer and cellist

Duration: ca. 20 minutes

Documentation: excerpt of the first performance on (CD-Rom "videos", file "CelloTanz")

Performers: Janine Schneider (dance), Ruth Wiesenfeld (cello)

Performed:

1. in the context of the exhibition

*statements, now – portraits of female dancers in Berlin's off-scene*

Date: 16 September 2004

Venue: Schillerpalais, Berlin

2. at the opening of the exhibition *The last portrait. Death masks from three centuries*

Date: 14 November 2004

Venue: Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

3. at the 2nd European Feldenkrais Congress *learning in motion*

Date: 31 March 2005

Venue: Freie Universität Berlin, Henry-Ford-Bau, Germany

*Für die Vögel* (2006)

Performance piece by Janine Schneider (dance) and Ruth Wiesenfeld (cello)

Duration: ca. one hour

Documentation: photos

Dates: 14, 15 July 2006

Venue: Giardino Segreto, Südgelände Schöneberg, Berlin, Germany

*beneath b* (2007)

Performance piece by Anne Bregentzer

Duration: ca. 18 minutes

Documentation: Video on DVD *beneath b*

Performed in the dance series of *Koreografen-Kollektiv Freiburg*

Date: 23, 24, 25 March 2007

Venue: E-Werk Freiburg, Germany

*PARCOURS DE REVE* (2007)

Open air performance for dancer (Janine Schneider) and accordionist (Ruth Wiesenfeld)

Duration: ca. one hour

Documentation: photos

Dates: 23, 25, 26, 30, 31 August and 1 September 2007

Venue: Giardino Segreto, Südgelände Schöneberg, Berlin, Germany

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everybody involved in the evolution of this project. First of all I thank Frank Denyer for countless thought provoking discussions and for his generous support and profound engagement.

I have been very fortunate to work during this period with wonderful musicians and performers who helped me to bring my pieces to life. It has been a great pleasure to explore this elusive territory with them and I thank them for the openness, patience, courage and sensitivity with which they approached my music: Richard Gonski and the Torbay Symphony Orchestra, the Bode Quartett, Luigi Gaggero, Jochen Carls, Sebastian Kunzke, Thomas Gerwin, Tobias Dutschke, Klaus Schöpp, Christine Paté, Matthias Badczong, Milena Tschikov, Gerhard Gschlössl, Jos Zwaanenburg and particularly James Fulkerson, who has given his generous support to my work from the very first piece of music I wrote.

I am very grateful to Bob Gilmore for all his clarifying and reassuring feedback, to Michael Turnbull and Paul Baiersdorf for assisting with all their expertise and fine instinct in rehearsal as well as in questions of translation. Thanks to Anne Bregentzer and Janine Schneider for inviting me into their artistic worlds. Further I would like to thank all the people around Dartington College of Arts who have made each of my visits so delightful and inspiring - thanks especially to Patrick Ozzard-Low for giving me a sense of home away from home and to David Williams for his carefully listening resonance. I am extremely grateful to both my parents who are backing my artistic endeavours each in their own bountiful way.

Above all, I acknowledge my debt of gratitude to Daniel Wiesenfeld, to whom this thesis is dedicated. I thank him for all his stimulating imagery as well as for his constant loving support and encouragement, his enthusiasm, deep understanding and wonderful sensitivity. Finally, I wish to thank Ben for arriving just in time to get me focused.



## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award.

Programme of study: MPhil/PhD in music composition

Publications (or presentation of other forms of creative and performing work):

### **Presentations:**

- Research Seminar at Dartington College of Arts, 18 April 2005
- Jour fixe bgnm (Berliner Gesellschaft für Neue Musik) 04 September 2006, performances and interview
- *Listening as a Sense of Touch* at the Orpheus Institute during their seminar *The Musician as Listener*, 22 – 23 May 2008, Ghent, Belgium

**Most recent performances** (for a complete list of performances please see pages 8-13):

- *spun yarn* performed at Flavel Centre for the Arts (Dartmouth), Central Church (Torquay) and St. John's (Totnes) on 7,8 and 9 March 2008  
Torbay Symphony Orchestra, conductor: Richard Gonski
- *Hautfelder* performed in Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein on 20 September 2007  
Bode Quartet

### **Presentations attended:**

- *Kulturelle Dialoge I* (Cultural Dialogues I)  
"Spielen im künstlerischen Prozess" (Playing within the artistic process)  
7 Mai 2004; Akademie der Künste Berlin  
with Hanspeter Kyburz (composer) and Kuno Lorenz (philosopher)

**Conferences attended:**

- XIII. International Congress of the *Gesellschaft für Musikforschung* (society for research in music): "Musik und kulturelle Identität" (Music and cultural identity)  
16 – 21 September 2004; congress centrum neue weimarhalle, Weimar, Germany
- 2nd European Feldenkrais Congress *learning in motion*  
30 March - 03 April 2005; Freie Universität Berlin, Henry-Ford-Bau, Berlin, Germany

**External contacts:**

All the musicians and performers I have worked with in the frame of this project, particularly James Fulkerson (Amsterdam), Richard Gonski (Devon), Bode Quartett (Berlin), Thomas Gerwin (Berlin) and Anne Bregentzer (Brussels).

Format of submission for PhD:

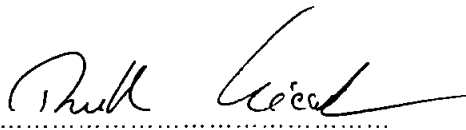
Practise-led Research

Volume I: written component (commentary)

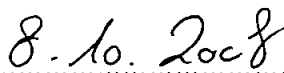
Volume II: portfolio

Word count of main body of thesis: **32.712**

Signed.....



Date.....



# Musical Composition focusing on the Quality of Presence in Performance

## Introduction

### Overview of the research project

This practice-based research investigates various ways to engender a specific quality of presence within the performance of music. It explores a compositional approach that addresses the performance event as a whole, taking into consideration notions of listening, embodiment and sounding or musical utterance. The physicality of playing an instrument, the psycho-physical constitution of a performer's body have always been present in my compositional thinking through my training as a contemporary dancer and my experience as practitioner of the Feldenkrais method<sup>1</sup>. But they crystallized as central constituents of my approach only when I asked myself, within the frame of defining my research area, what fascinated me most about music. I realized then that music or sound in its reproduction on a recording - without the physically perceptible presence of the one(s) who produced it, never had an effect on me as striking as the one evoked in an actual performance. But what exactly do I find so intriguing in a live performance? Can a compositional approach facilitate a certain quality of the performers' presence, or is it too elusive to be addressed in a piece? How can it be communicated to the musicians? What are the implications of these concerns for a rehearsal process? This complex of questions formed the point of departure for my research project.

As my compositions address the issues mentioned above in many different ways, my portfolio comprises works of various kinds. Apart from the plan to challenge myself with an orchestral piece, which was unknown territory for me as I usually work with individual musicians or small ensembles, I set off with no specific instrumentation or scale of durations in mind. Some of

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<sup>1</sup> The Feldenkrais Method is a somatic learning method designed to improve our innate human abilities. It is named after its creator, Moshé Feldenkrais (1904–1984), a distinguished scientist, physicist, engineer and master of Judo. Feldenkrais made fundamental and far-reaching discoveries regarding our understanding of the relationship between how we move and how we think, feel, sense, and learn.

the pieces were specifically composed as part of the larger cycle *SZENARIEN*, an evening-length project that explores the question of what it is that sets a body in motion and how the acoustic results of those impulses may sound. In addition to the compositions, various collaborations with performance artists are part of my body of practical work.

During this research period I had the great opportunity to work with a variety of committed performers, from amateurs (the Torbay Symphony Orchestra as with Anne Bregentzer and myself on the accordion) to specialists in contemporary music (James Fulkerson, Christine Paté, Matthias Badczong and Luigi Gaggero amongst others). Most of the pieces written as part of my research have been performed live and the second volume of my thesis contains documentation of these performances on CD and DVD. It goes without saying that my specific concern with the quality of presence in performance is almost impossible to capture in any other form than the live event. For exactly this reason it is planned that a live performance of selected works from my portfolio will precede the oral examination.

The subject matter of this research, combined with my aspiration to deal with it in my works in as subtle a way as possible, implies that what I have been aiming at in the compositional process might not always become evident or easily perceptible in performance. How to deal with these imponderables has been one of the intricacies within this project. Developing a new work and finding an adequate notation is only the first stage of my working process. As soon as the rehearsals begin, a new phase is entered and the nature of the composition determines where the focus will be. If a piece is based on a specific sound world, the focus of rehearsing will be on getting these sounds right – exactly as I have imagined them. If the piece is based on a certain quality of presence, as is the case in most of my works, the focus will be on engendering this particular quality. Often, however, the kind of presence that comes into being when a composition is played for the first few times in rehearsal is different from what I had envisioned. Then the question arises whether I should push the performers as far as possible to attain my original intention or whether I should focus on unearthing the potential embedded in the encounter of specific performers with the material I offer, even if this might lead to a quality that differs from what I initially had in mind.

In most cases I trust that my original concerns have become an intrinsic part of the composition and will be present within the performance even if in a very subtle way. Then in rehearsal I follow a more intuitive path instead of trying to prove the point of my initial complex of thought. Thus, in the end, the specific quality of the musicians' presence in the performance emerges from our interaction within the rehearsal process. I demonstrate, in the written component of my thesis, how my growing awareness of this process has effected my compositional approach during the course of my research.

The written component further provides a commentary on the works and their compositional processes. It shows how my approach responds to and makes use of imagery and, in addition, it explains how it is stimulated by non-musical areas of thought such as Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue. An emphasis is placed on the notion of listening - listening as a sense of touch, receptive listening and listening in wonder. This part of my portfolio further discusses issues of embodiment in the performance of music as well as the concept of the audience being a witness rather than an observer. As many of the issues were addressed in a public discussion between Thomas Gerwin (composer and chair of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Neue Musik) and myself in September 2006, a transcription of that conversation is enclosed in the Appendix.

### My approach in the context of recent trends and developments

Debates over the nature of the actor's presence have been at the heart of key aspects of theatre practice and theory since the late 1950s and are a vital part of the discourses surrounding avant-garde and post-modern performance. These debates explore terms essential to the theatrical event, addressing the spectator's encounter with the performer, the actor's "authenticity", "aura", "authority" and self-awareness and relationships between "live" performance and its mediation, documentation or trace. Experimental theatre's engagement with video and new media has further heightened the importance of these issues (Giannachi, Kaye, Slater, Shanks) [2007] [approximately 2 screens]).

The notions of presence as well as various aspects of the body and physicality have become a central subject not only in theatrical performance, but also in the visual arts, in music and in all the hybrids that are formed between the different artistic disciplines now:

Numerous individual approaches and statements arise in response to a world which is more and more virtualised and dominated by the media. They also show the influence of other cultures and the body images that are present within them (meditation and rituals, for example) and document a more and more detailed scientific research on the body, its functions and inner activities, which are transferred to the outside as data via interfaces with various designs. (Gerlach) [2006].

Contemporary approaches in the realm of music that explicitly deal with the performers' physicality and presence comprise different forms of experimental musical theatre (Aperghis, Goebbels, Oehring, Sciarrino, Hespos etc.); the use of digital interfaces to transfer physical movements into sound (Laetitia Sonami and her "Lady's Glove"); the relation of human being and machine (Stelarc); and the application of live video either showing close-ups of the act of producing sound (Karassinov) or juxtaposing the live performers with their audiovisual presentation on screen (Beil). These are a few selected examples only. For a broader study of related thought and a comprehensive compilation of current notions of body images within the performance of music, see the website *Körper & Musik* by Julia Gerlach, (Gerlach) [2006].

The approaches I list here may originate from concerns and questions that are similar to mine, yet the authors find very different solutions and answers. When looking at the complex of musical utterance, I personally prefer to stay very close to its basic constituents – the impulse for playing, the performer, the sound and the listener. I look for a sense of purity and immediacy here, which I perceive as being diminished as soon as any extra devices or media come into play. I personally think that a subtle shift of focus in a conventional performance situation can make a big difference to the listener's experience. This is one of the reasons why I don't create work in the area of experimental music theatre: here - in a context, which is unambiguously theatrical - the notions of embodiment and physicality are present in ways that are too obvious for my concerns. As soon as something as volatile as the presence of a performing musician is dealt with explicitly, as soon as it is exhibited or staged, it loses its fascination for me. In my work I search for that which is palpable, but not obvious. Consequently the issues mentioned above are not put into the spotlight of a performance, but I take them only as points of departure for the compositional process, trying to inscribe them into a piece, as I will demonstrate in the following chapters.

In the chapter "Correlation between practical work and theoretical reading" I will discuss similarities and differences between my approach and Mauricio Kagel's instrumental theatre (*Instrumentales Theater*) as well as Helmut Lachenmann's *musique concrète instrumentale*.

## 1. Opening: "An Ear alone is not a being" (Cage 1968, p.32)

Musical performance implies more than the mere experience of music. The audience is witnessing a performer in relation to musical thought, to sound and to the prerequisites of an instrument. The quality of the musician's engagement with the task-at-hand not only affects the acoustic result, but strongly influences the way in which the performance will be received. In a performance of music I am fascinated most of all with listening to a person in his or her musical utterance; consequently as a composer I am mainly concerned with the circumstances under which the sounds are brought into existence and with the quality of touch through which they are produced. By opening the awareness-space (*Aufmerksamkeitsraum*) to the performer as a whole I wish as a composer to provide within the presentation of music

a concentrated space for inter-subjectivity  
and the flaring into appearance of the 'face-to-face'<sup>2</sup>. (Williams 2002, p.18)

My composing is focused on bringing about a certain quality of presence and creating a space for encounter, a "space of appearance":

the space of appearance [is] the space where I appear to others as others appear to me,  
where men [sic] exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but  
make their appearance explicitly (Ahrendt cited Williams 2002, p.21)

As one way to achieve this - to "make a performer's appearance explicit" - I enter into the compositional process by directing my imagination, my inner hearing, not merely to sound and music, but by asking myself what might move a person to seek musical or sounding utterance. Hereby I try to take into consideration as many planes of the performance-event as possible. Thus for each piece I conceptualise a specific existential initial-situation, from which

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<sup>2</sup> The notion of 'face-to-face' refers to the writings of Emmanuel Levinas. (for example: *Ethics and Infinity*, 1985, p. 85-92) I quote from the introduction to David Williams' thesis "Spaces of Appearance: Writings on Contemporary Theatre and Performance" and refer to the notion of 'face-to-face' in the specific contexts of both this text and the performance of music.



gradually all other decisions can be derived. Let me exemplify this by commenting on the process of composing *I name you*, a piece for a speaking and singing trombone player.

## 2. I name you

The trombonist James Fulkerson commissioned this piece, which I wrote in 2006<sup>3</sup>. My considerations for the initial-situation started from a contradiction inherent in the instrument. The trombone has the function of a megaphone; it amplifies the sounds produced by the mouthpiece, but also various mutes are used to subdue this amplified sound which hinders it in its development. Two opposing forces are at work simultaneously. So what is it that needs to be expressed, and against which kind of resistance? The realization that, beside the sounds produced by the instrument, the voice of the musician speaking or singing could be used, added further complexity to these considerations. Because the performer can express himself acoustically in many different ways, his utterance is not necessarily motivated by one source only – each voice (instrumental, spoken, sung) could derive from a different impulse. This has consequences for the basic psychophysical constellation of the piece, but also for the acoustic plane: how do the different means of sound production relate to one another? Are they complementing or are they obstructing one another? Are they separate entities or do they add up to a common third element?

In seeking the initial-situation for a piece, I am always attempting to define an inner necessity for the performer's utterance, to ascribe this as it were to the piece – an attitude, an impulse, a reaction. To identify this energetic source for the sounds to be brought into being is essential for engendering a specific quality of presence in the performance. It provides a key element from which I derive all other decisions in the process of composing. For this solo trombone piece, in picking the spoken formula *I name you*, which throughout the piece transforms more

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<sup>3</sup> James Fulkerson, based in Amsterdam, is a musician and composer who has always been associated with performing and promoting experimental music and experimental composers. He is the founder of the Barton Workshop, an ensemble focusing on performing the leading edge of contemporary music.

and more into pure sound, I chose the act of naming as occasion for the performer's utterance. This unites all the above considerations and provides a context for the tension between expressing and holding back.

Naming is a creative, but contentious act, whose danger lies in the appropriation of something, thus depriving it of its infinite number of possibilities and reducing it to the seemingly essential. Old testament religiosity reflects this through the name that can't be pronounced. Attempts at translating the Divine Tetragram as "I am, who I become" or "I will be present, as he who is present", indeed, stress the "ever anew" (process) as opposed to the "permanent" (being).<sup>4</sup> In order to articulate the search for a possible name - which implies an exploration and an attempt to comprehend the essence of something - in my composition the words "I name you" are followed by musical/acoustic elements emphasising the becoming of the tone, the finding it ever anew:

"It is a finding without seeking; a discovery of what is most original and the origin." (Buber 1996, p.128)

In the parts of the piece where the performer is simultaneously playing and speaking, adding his own voice to the sounds produced instrumentally, the focus is on the performer's sensory experience: he listens to that which is becoming, feels the beats produced by the friction of voice and instrumental sound. In this context the words "I name you" cease to signify "I am giving you the name" and mean "I discover you" or "I discover you as" or maybe "who art thou" instead. The transition between spoken word and sound is fluent in two senses: with the course of the piece, as the initially clearly pronounced formula gradually transforms into mere sound, and at each of the junctures where vowels are followed by instrumental sound. These start with a colouring (achieved through a specific mouth position) corresponding to the vowel *u* / *oo*, as a follow up to the spoken *you*, and then mutate through *o* to *a*, as a prelude to the spoken *I*. Except for some interruptions and breathing pauses, the piece could thus be read as a permanent cycle of the vowels *a* - *I* - *ae* - *u* - *o* - *a*, produced by the mouth cavity and the

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<sup>4</sup> cf. Ouaknin 1998 for a fuller discussion of these aspects.

voice of the trombone player - partly amplified by the trombone, partly without the amplification. The words "I name you" are thus not isolated, but they integrate with the following sounds and become a connected musical phrase.

In *I name you* the player doesn't present something, he allows us to observe his immersion in an intimate dialogue with his instrument. The kind of listening suggested here, therefore, is a "listening not to the concert, but to the psyche, oscillating between stage and seat" (Kahn cited Hill. [no date] [approximately 4 screens]). For me the performer himself is the subject of this composition: his psycho-physical constitution, his movement, mime play, the tuning of his energies - these are all a part of it. During the rehearsal process with James Fulkerson we realized, for instance, that a direct look to the audience would destroy the integrity and intimacy of the piece. Therefore the eyes should be directed towards the instrument or closed. I included this among the playing instructions at the beginning of the score. Another result of the rehearsal process has been left out of these instructions: I asked James Fulkerson to retain in the performance the posture he adopted in rehearsal (the head slightly bowed to the shoulder, his half-profile towards the audience) as this was a very suitable form of embodiment for the inner attitude that the piece is based on. But if it had become a part of the playing instructions, there would have been the danger that the performer adopts the indicated posture without attaining the inner state, the expression of which this posture had originally been. It would thus turn into an empty and superfluous gesture.

These two examples indicate how close the questions of performing *I name you* have come to the area of acting, although there is no strictly scenic element. The performer does not embody a figure or character; he is not an actor in this sense. There is no "as if" as in Berio's *Sequenza V* for solo trombone. There the playing instructions at the beginning clearly state the actorial aspect of the performance:

...the performer (white tie, spot from above etc.) strikes the poses of a variety showman about to sing an old favorite. Inspired, he extends his arms, he raises or lowers his instrument (...) with movements which should appear spontaneous, he hesitates. Just before section B he utters a bewildered "why?" and sits down without pausing. He must perform section B as though rehearsing in an empty hall." (Berio 1968)

Here "acting" is requested rather than "being" and the performer knows the role he is supposed to enact – at first the "variety showman" about "to sing an old favourite", later - after having uttered the question "why?" – "as though in an empty hall". In *I name you* there is no such figure standing between the performer and the process of embodiment of an extra-musical complex of thoughts.

Here the executant invests his own being in the process of interpretation (...).  
A commitment at risk, a response, in the root sense, responsible. (Steiner 1989, 7-8)

This finds concrete expression for instance at the very beginning of the piece: here playing occurs only while inhaling which leads to a porous, unforeseeable sound quality. Or at the points where attention is directed towards the transition of air and breath into sound - fragile, swaying moments, acoustically uncontrollable. Or in the sung phrase *you will forget your name* which the trombonist most likely has to perform with an untrained singing voice. Regarding the use of an instrumentalist's amateur voice, please see the discussion with Christine Paté in the interview that is attached as Appendix. This interview also addresses the notions of intimacy and "being rather than acting", particularly in the part of the talk that followed the première of *I name you*.

### **3. wer weiss**

Exposedness, fragility and dialogue with the instrument are also elements of *wer weiss* (in English: *who knows*), a piece for preferably male cellist and male or female speaker, created in spring 2004. The starting point for this project was the image of a male cellist on a large stage, absorbed in playing, observed from behind and to one side by another person, who after a while asks the following questions:

"Wer weiss, sind Sie vielleicht um den Verstand gebracht, mein Herr?

Um die Phantasie? Auch ums Herz? Um alles? Um die Schönheit?

Um alles? - Erinnern Sie sich."

English translation:

Who knows, dear sir, perhaps you have been deprived of your senses?

Of your fantasy? Even of your heart? Of everything? Of beauty?

Of everything? – Remember.

This image of cellist and speaker did not come from nowhere. As part of my research, I had been studying concert reviews to get an idea of which aspects of a musical performance were taken into special consideration by the critics. I came across a review of a piano recital given by Daniel Barenboim in the Wiener Musikverein (April 2004). It has the title: "Feel at home. Daniel Barenboim dares his comeback as Great Pianist with all the 32 Beethoven Sonatas".

I quote beginning and end:

Just before the last piece he stands up once again and asks a favour: "Please, don't take photographs! For the eyes it is....", he takes his hands to his face. His voice is bright, soft, friendly. Probably they kept using their flashes even during these last words - the music tourists - and did not understand what this with his eyes was supposed to mean. Can he, the dazzling, be dazzled? Many have come here to see a wonder creature – or two: Barenboim and Beethoven. In the age of 61, Daniel Barenboim dares his comeback as Great Pianist. (...) Into this expectancy, into the fading applause and into the murmur before the first piece he plays like someone who bursts into the surge. (...)

Do the hands not make it any longer? Oh yes, as long as he puts his mind to it. After the break during the second evening he gives opus 14, nr. 2 with his irresistible cheerfulness of a man-of-the-world. And then "Les Adieux". As if made in one casting and seen from inside, immersed in warm light, the finale with a brilliance embracing the world. He really wants to fill the whole hall with this joy and to do so he needs each single note; the Steinway shines like a bonfire. There are standing ovations and Barenboim lifts his hands like a star. The notion of a circus is involved here, a ring and a crowd, glitter and danger. He simply needs that. This Daniel grew up in Beethoven's lion's den with all its monsters and muses of the Classic, he will go into the arena with them until he has to be dragged out. There will be further crashes and high-altitude flights within the next 25 Sonatas. Cycle means circle – like circus. The music tourists with their flash lights have not completely misunderstood this musician after all. (Hagedorn 2004, translation from German: Ruth Wiesenfeld)

This review also appeared online as an audio-file read by the author (Volker Hagedorn).

Listening to it, I imagined a composition where this text would be played back over

loudspeakers together with the live performance of a cellist. I deliberately did not want to use the piano, as I feared that the connection to the text might become too one-dimensional and that reference points would be taken too literally. The atmosphere of a solo cello recital in my eyes could be close enough to a solo piano performance. I intended to cut all the phrases of the text containing a direct reference to the piano to avoid confusion. In the end only a few phrases withstood my process of erasing. Simultaneously the questions mentioned above evolved: "Who knows, dear sir, perhaps you have been deprived of your senses?" Etc. For a while I tried to combine these questions and the phrases remaining from the review into a new text, but in the end I found the review's language too prevailing. I also abandoned my original idea of the voice coming from speakers, as I perceived a voice devoid of corporeal presence as too omnipotent for my concern. So I was left with the questions, which I decided should be spoken live.

Now I had to find a music that would plausibly give rise to these questions. Experimenting with my cello I came across a physical movement that engendered a suitable tonal reaction: a saltando downstroke rising over all four strings in the manner of an arpeggio with a clear rhythmical form and a fragile, tentative quality. Precise, unadorned, but elegant. This is a tonal motif just as much as it is a movement motif. Together these two form an inseparable interweaved unity, constituting the cellist's material. The source for this sound-movement-form is the need to feel oneself in the meeting with an other - instrument, sound. Not the acoustic result is at the foreground of the performer's actions, but a complex net of kinetic, tactile and acoustic perceptions. I perform this material in *Cello und Tanz* (see the corresponding chapter); an excerpt of this project is included in my portfolio as video recording on the enclosed DVD 3 (file "CelloTanz").

For the saltando downstroke the fingers of the left hand are each on a different string, with a very short distance between the fingers. This position of the hand is retained throughout the whole piece; there are eight possible positions. These were chosen so as to produce flageolet-harmonics if the fingers only lightly touch the string. This rhythmic flageolet-arpeggio is only one of the possible acoustic results of the movement motif. It is not the acoustic ideal,

although it may seem so, because of its melodic character and because of the precision required for its execution. In the process of composition it was the first result of the search for a music that might provoke questions in the mind of the observer. But these harmonics often don't sound, and are barely audible or breathy. Through the unusually narrow positioning of the fingers and the jumping of the bow, it is practically impossible to hit the flageolet-harmonics with perfect certainty. For a while, I attempted to improve my technique to a degree that might make this possible, but with time I began finding noises and unintentional sounds at least as fascinating. My listening had changed. It was not any more a control instance, but attained an attitude of reception. *Wer weiss* demands from the cellist an attitude of quiet attention, patience and openness as well as extremely fine tuned senso-motorics. These qualities of embodiment are as much part of the material of the piece as movement and sound. Thus the cellist's play thus is no longer a process of planned execution of a premeditated interpretation, but leaves space for confrontation with the materiality of the instrument, of the sound, and one's own body.

Through the movement of his right arm, the player starts the impulse for the sound and its Gestalt, he listens to his instrument's reaction and responds to it in the next movement. Instead of the whole movement, fragments of it can be executed, miniature motifs, which should retain in themselves the character of the original sound-movement-form. The pitch and colour of sounds in *wer weiss* possess a very sensitive fragility; they arise from a precarious balance of gravity and touch.

Here the focus lies on the quality of contact between bow and strings: how are the strings set to vibrate, how are they kept in vibration, how are they stopped vibrating? How much pressure to use with the bow, how much pull, what kind of friction happens between string and bow-hair? The bow jumps. At what speed, how much control is there, what's the distance between bow and string; are the points of contact changing or is it jumping at the same spot? Pulling the bow back, too, is a part of the movement. It's a backward stroke without contact with the instrument, allowing the sound to draw to an end and initiating the subsequent stroke.

The whole movement quality should be flowing and smooth, it should be executed with as little muscular effort as possible. The smaller and finer the efforts involved, the richer the sensory information available. A dialogue arises between player and instrument – as if the player, through his movement, is asking the cello a question, which is answered by the tonal reaction of the instrument. Musician and instrument are sufficient to themselves; the music is nothing other than the result of mutual reciprocation, like a child playing, lost to the world, endlessly exploring a single object in sensuous curiosity, or repeating a movement over and over again for the sheer joy of doing so. But while the child does not feel observed, the cellist exposes himself to the eyes and ears of the audience in this carefully tentative dialogue. Like the trombonist in *I name you* he takes a risk, in that he must partially relinquish control over sound and instrument. His presence requires a certain porosity, a daring and generous vulnerability, that allows his mental and emotional world to emerge from behind the sound.

Our reaction to musical performance doesn't happen merely on the acoustic plane of perception; it involves a whole kinaesthetic complex. We see and feel how the performer's body moves; we feel the rhythm of the movement and its relation to gravity; we perceive changes in its tensile qualities – the dynamics and efforts with which it is performed.

Neurological examinations have shown that the observation of other people's activities triggers the reaction of mirror neurons, thus leading to a neuronal reaction largely similar to the activity involved in the actual execution of an action (Altenmüller 2005, p. 326).

Perceiving a movement or action, therefore, directly influences our proprioception<sup>5</sup> by arousing a neuronal reaction. The perceiver is turned into a co-actor. This also applies to the perception of activity in a context of performance. This empathic element in the experience of a performance of music is at the basis of my compositional thinking. For each piece I try to design a different physical texture or quality, which will not only affect the sound, but – as an integral element of the overall performance situation – may also communicate to the audience. In this sense, for me, composing is about engendering a palpable presence in the face of an Other's acoustic utterance.

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<sup>5</sup> Proprioception is a sensory feedback mechanism responsible for motor control and posture. Often it is referred to as our sixth sense.



Through the almost static tempo, the multiple repetitions, the emphasis on physical-haptic aspects, the extreme reduction of the material and the detailed execution, the cellist's corporeality in *wer weiss* can be observed as if through a microscope. The listener is given the time and space to empathize. Then, after a while, the observer's questions:

"Wer weiss, sind sie vielleicht um den Verstand gebracht, mein Herr? Um die Phantasie? Auch ums Herz?" etc. (Who knows, dear sir, perhaps you have been deprived of your senses? Of your fantasy? Even of your heart? etc.)

I imagine that this analytic gaze will interrupt the empathic communication of player and public. It observes from a distance, sees the cellist as an object, questions and judges him and his play. If earlier meaning arose from and through the act of perception, now the public is thrown into the tension of two opposing perceptive attitudes. The observer's questions have turned the cellist into a protagonist, an agent of meaning, and thereby brought the spectator's attention into an oscillating transition between the perception of the cellist in his specific presence, his "phenomenal body" and the reading of his "semiotic body" focusing on the character created by the gaze of the onlooker (for a discussion of the terms phenomenal and semiotic body see Fischer-Lichte 2004, chapter 4).

In Martin Buber's words - which do not specifically speak about music, but about the nature of relations and dialogue - the perspective of the onlooker could be associated with the kingdom of the It, whilst the cellist's presence, his relation to the instrument and to sound partakes in the area of the Thou. Buber's philosophy of Dialogue sees humans as existing within relations, and these are of two radically different kinds: I-It - and I-Thou-Relations:

The world as experience belongs to the basic word I-it. The basic word I-You establishes the world of relation. (Buber 1996, p.56).

The I-It-relation is the normal, day to day relation of people to objects in their environment.

But people tend to regard and treat fellow humans as an It – they see the other person with distance, perceiving him or her as an object, an aspect of the environment, bound up in causal chains:

The life of a human being does not exist merely in the sphere of goal-directed verbs. It does not consist merely of activities that have something for their object. I perceive something. I feel something. I imagine something. I want something. I sense something. I think something. The life of a human being does not consist merely of all this and its like. All this and its like is the basis of the realm of It. (Buber 1996, p.54)

The I-Thou-relation has an altogether different quality. This kind of encounter with fellow people or with the environment, to which one can just as well respond in this manner, includes one's whole inner being. For Buber it is characteristic of I-Thou-relations that true encounters can only happen within this frame. The condition is to leave aside any preconceptions, to drop all reservations and really step into dialogue with the other:

The relation to the You is unmediated. Nothing conceptual intervenes between I and You, no prior knowledge and no imagination; and memory itself is changed as it plunges from particularity into wholeness. No purpose intervenes between I and You, no greed and no anticipation; and longing itself is changed as it plunges from the dream into appearance. Every means is an obstacle. Only where all means have disintegrated encounters occur. (Buber 1996, 62 – 63)

The kind of encounter which I intend to facilitate in *wer weiss* between the cellist, the instrument and the sound, is analogous to that described by Martin Buber as the I-Thou-relation. But:

Every You in the world is compelled by its nature to become a thing for us at least to enter again and again into thinghood. (Buber 1996, p.147)

The immediacy of the relation can be sought, but it can never be forced, it is always elusive, it needs constant renewal: "It is not the relationship that necessarily wanes, but the actuality of its directness." (Buber 1996, p.147)

But whatever has thus been changed into It and frozen into a thing among things is still endowed with the meaning and destiny to change back ever again. (Buber 1996, p.90).

Due to the specification of gender in the question "who knows, dear sir" *wer weiss* should be performed by a male cellist, which raises the question how this material can be rendered accessible for another performer. How much of it can be put into written form? Could notation

be an appropriate way to communicate its ideas? The exact sequence of sounds is irrelevant; setting it would run counter to its intentions. On the other hand *wer weiss* isn't pure improvisation, although I think that an improvisatory aspect is necessary to retain the "actuality of its directness".

When looking for a form, for a structure to contain these materials and to spread them out over time, I found no satisfying solution. To work from a specific organisation of the text without actually being in a rehearsal context with cellist and speaker didn't make much sense. I wasn't sure yet about the speaker's quality of presence within this piece and thus needed to work it out in rehearsal. The cello-material, this one sound-movement-form seemed so self-contained, that it resisted any attempt to give it a coherent course. Apart from its fragility and exposedness the material had a very static and persistent character, confined, withdrawn, like a cocoon – qualities needed to both engender and stand up to the observer's questions. I had laid down the rule that the sound-movement-form could be played either complete or in fragments on eight different positions of the left hand - sound with the down-stroke, silence with the up-stroke. So I had numerous particles, which resembled pieces of a mosaic, but no form to shape them to. On the one hand, it didn't seem to matter when a given element was going to be played, as long as the overall atmosphere stayed the same. On the other hand, each time I wanted to fix a certain course, I felt as if I was imposing an artificial framework that obliterated the material's integrity. I then tried to use chance operations - throwing dice and organising numerical charts - but soon realised that they provided me with a structure originating from the wrong source.

In my process of thought, I finally returned to the material's starting point. It had come into being as a counter-concept to a performance of music as described by the review quoted above - a glamorous event, a "peak moment", a "superlative" consisting of a hero - the charismatic "Great Pianist" - and of the crowd eager to watch his battle with age, virtuosity and Beethoven. *Wer weiss* is of a very different nature – it cannot be performed as if "bursting into the surge". It is neither a competition nor a proof of exceptional skill, but a cautious dialogue with the instrument. When these interrelations had become apparent to me, I

realised, that through the motivation which had engendered the material, its formal structure was already incorporated: like any true dialogue it was unpredictable and needed to be disclosed in the moment of performance.

As there was no immediate occasion for a performance coming up, I put this project aside for a while and revisited its material when I was invited to collaborate with the dancer Janine Schneider in September 2004 (see chapter 10.2). As *wer weiss* hasn't been performed yet in its originally conceived version for cellist and speaker, I have not worked on it with another cellist. I assume that the only way to convey it to performers is to rehearse with them like choreographers work with dancers – teaching them the material and then looking for strategies to engender the specific energy, focus and psychophysical quality that the sound-movement-form is asking for.

#### 4. Hautfelder

*Hautfelder* (originally for five violas, written in 2006, re-written for string quartet in 2007) makes reference to Daniel Wiesenfeld's triptych of the same name (which in English would be "fields of skin") showing three different positions of a breast of a man, whose fingers are pressed into his skin, pulling at the skin and deforming it. It seems as if not merely the skin represented, but the canvas itself is exposed to these deforming forces, being extended or compressed, leaving an impression of three-dimensionality and stressing the morphology of the surface. The content of the triptych derives from the same source as the cellist's play in *wer weiss*: the need to become aware of oneself – in the case of the pictures by touching and deforming one's own skin, in *wer weiss* by being exposed to the materiality of the instrument in the haptic contact of bow or fingers with the strings. My exploration of the tactile dimension in playing a string instruments that began with *wer weiss* – the tension of the strings, the tension of the bow, the friction of bow and strings, how the bow touches the strings, is drawn across them, pressed onto them, bouncing off them – is taken up again and continued with *Hautfelder*.

Daniel Wiesenfeld's *Hautfelder* do not present skin, but convey its sensation, render it palpable in its transparency, vulnerability and malleability. The torso exposes itself – to the grip of the fingers as well as to the eyes of the observers. In order to express exactly this sensation in the composition and to convey the specific power of communication and reception of skin (our largest sense organ), I direct the players' attention first towards the bodily contact with the instrument, and then also to the smallest changes in the sound.



Illustration No. 1

*Hautfelder I – III* (1999) by Daniel Wiesenfeld

Technique      Oil on canvas

Size            100 x 120 cm each

The piece consists of three pictures, each picture entailing 18 temporal units (bars without measure) of about 20 seconds each. The bar's acoustic elements repeat throughout a temporal unit, until one of the players decides to proceed to the next unit. Whose turn it is to take this decision is marked in the score. The duration given is just a rough mark; the actual time is left to the player's discretion. After the first player moves to the next unit, the others follow in order. Within each picture, the players start consecutively. But the player to start is not set; this decision should be made in the moment. A very sensitive quality of attention and a high receptive ability is demanded from all the performers by the temporally half-open structure. This particular state of awareness relates to skin as a sense organ. The players have to react to the others' decisions in a continuous state of attentive spontaneity. They need to listen extremely carefully, because the changes from one unit to the next are often minute. The overall sound needs to be so transparent that the slightest nuance remains audible at any time.

The temporal musical process accords with the reading of the pictures from left to right. At the start of the composition I set a grid of five vertical sections (for the five violas) and eighteen horizontal sections (for the eighteen temporal units) over each of the pictures. The acoustic material for each of the areas (each temporal unit) arose through actual work with my cello, as I had no viola available. Of decisive importance were each picture's colour range and its specific bodily motif comprised of the action of the fingers, of the part of the torso depicted and of its spatial composition in the painting. Each of the musical pictures concentrates on the kinaesthetic feeling of its visual counterpart. Thus the senso-motorical activity of the player is focused on the sensation of tractive forces in section *Field 1*, on the pressing and drilling of the fingers in section *Field 2* and on pinching as well as the concentration of all occurrences onto a very small area in section *Field 3*. The position and action of the painted hand in the middle picture bears a striking resemblance to the position of a string player's left hand and thus in *Field 2* the left hand has become quite prominent through detailed instructions of vibrato and increased glissando actions. Besides these senso-motoric themes specific for each of the paintings there are additional decisions resulting from their shades of colour, from transitions between dark and light, cold and warm, or monochrome and transparent – always

in relation to the overall sound, which I designed as a constantly changing organic tissue with varying grades of permeability.

The acoustic actions of the players mostly result from unconventional techniques bringing about a strong component of noise. Because they never possess the exactness of a saturated full tone they relate in their exposed-ness to the vulnerability of the paintings' unprotected torso. In order to be able to notate these intricate sound structures in detail, I decided to set the following parameters for each action: the quality of the vibrato, the amount of bow, which part of the bow is used, the point of contact between fingerboard and bridge, the intensity of bow pressure. These are divided into six levels, from level one (the bow-hair barely touches the strings) to level six: scratching sound. These systematizations occurred only after I had found the acoustic actions in direct, physical contact with the instrument. They are spontaneous kinaesthetic and synaesthetic reactions to the scanned areas of the pictures.

What was of most importance for me in transposing the triptych to another medium is now inscribed into the composition by way of the bodily-sensual contact with the instrument, the texture of the overall sound and the specific attention demanded from each of the players. Thus the score could do without a reproduction of *Hautfelder*, the painted triptych. Had I laid special stress on the acoustic transposition of the scanned areas, I might have enclosed the scanned version of the paintings with the score. The players would thus be able to focus their acoustic actions directly on the areas of the grid they refer to. As to the relation of pictures and composition, I feared that the players would mostly focus on translating the visual into acoustic expression, and thereby would translate visual colour scheme into sound-colours, visual textures into acoustic textures, etc. The haptic-motoric plane of perception so characteristic for this piece would probably disappear from its execution. Yet for me the nature of information provided by the paintings mainly consists of psycho-physical experience and sensation. I do not see this triptych as simply visual pictures that I turn into music, instead I use them as imagery for the compositional process and for the players' mental and physical focus of thought. Every sound, every sound colour has a corresponding physical organization,



a specific pattern of muscular contractions and relaxations, bone alignments, thought patterns. In order to avoid an abstract idea of sound dominating this physical organization, which should instead be formed by the piece's underlying imagery, the score contains non-gridded prints of *Hautfelder*. In the playing instructions I address the connection of pictures and composition as follows:

This structure demands a very poised quality of attention from the players, which corresponds to the effect of the triptych *Hautfelder* - the paintings by Daniel Wiesenfeld on which this composition is based. These paintings do not present skin (our largest communication and sense organ), but convey its sensation, render it palpable in its transparency, vulnerability and malleability. In the performance of the composition, the sounds as well as the instrument should be approached in a similarly palpable and perceptive manner. A strong focus lies on the way the bow touches the strings

The players' activity demanded in *Hautfelder* is largely prescribed in the score, except for a certain freedom regarding the timing of the piece. The worlds of the pictures, therefore, will influence mostly the "how", the quality of the actions. By being included in the score, they come to form the cognitive, emotional, sensory and motor background for the players' sounding activities. In conjunction with the playing instructions they suggest a specific physical state, which becomes the motive for acoustic utterance, in this case mediated through painting.

#### *Hautfelder* for string-quartet

When I was asked if I had a piece for string-quartet to be played in a concert preceding the opening of the show *Lust for Life. Die Sammlung Ricke* in the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, I re-arranged *Hautfelder* accordingly. A recording of this version played by the Bode Quartett is enclosed in the portfolio. The performance was reviewed as follows:

(...) in an organic swelling and dying away of dynamics and movement, the music rendered the absorption of light, brightness and darkness, cold and warmth as well as the transitions from one to the other audible, whereby the interpreters themselves had to determine the exact moments of change intuitively – with a breathtaking result. The four young interpreters lived up to this demanding task and gave rise to «Hautfelder» as a vivid, breathing, fascinating phenomenon. (Liechtensteiner Volksblatt 2007, translated from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld)

## 5. manourney

*manourney* (written in 2006) for speaker, flute, small zither-like instrument (both instruments are amplified) and a pre-recorded tape also uses a painting from the triptych *Hautfelder* (see opposite page). The imagery of this piece combines the painting's narrative aspect with a sentence as well as a story from Paul Auster's *White Spaces*: The sentence is:

"I ask whoever is listening to this voice to forget the words it is speaking."

(Auster 2001, p. 174)

The story is as follows:

A man sets out on a journey to a place he has never been before. Another man comes back. A man comes to a place that has no name, that has no landmarks to tell him where he is. Another man decides to come back. A man writes letters from nowhere, from the white space that has opened up in his mind. The letters are never received. The letters are never sent. Another man sets out on a journey in search of the first man. This second man becomes more and more like the first man, until he, too, is swallowed up by the whiteness. A third man sets out on a journey with no hope of ever getting anywhere. He wanders. He continues to wander. As long as he stays in the realm of the naked eye, he continues to wander. (Auster 2001, 180 and 182)

The title of the piece originates from a printing error in my edition of this text. It fuses the words "man" and "journey" into "manourney". In correspondence to the male breast depicted in the painting and the three men mentioned in the story, the three performers should be male.

Before continuing to write about *manourney* I should devote some thoughts to the notion of "imagery", to the way I use this notion in the compositional process, and to the idea of "becoming the image".



Illustration No 2

*Hautfelder II* by Daniel Wiesenfeld (1999)

Technique      Oil on canvas

Size              100 x 120 cm

## 5.1 Imagery

My first encounter with imagery leading to physical action took place in Release classes taught by Máry O'Donnell Fulkerson when I was studying New Dance at the EDDC (European Dance Development Center) in Arnhem, NL. Her description of Release Technique runs as follows:

Release is a form of research into the relationship between thought and activity. It is a body/mind integrative technique through which engagement with imagery enhances and inspires imaginative responses and bodily movement. Images for consideration in Release are initially anatomical, and/or created from physics principles applied to dance, and later may arise from any sources (...). Any source that inspires the individual to a coherent and identifiable response, and that may be presented as a metaphor for consideration may be useful as inspiration within a Release class. (...) The Release Process inspires movement vocabulary, and indicates constructs of thought that may be used in movement creation and compositional decision making. (...) The Release Process may be used (...) to increase individual understanding of the act of performance, through the activation of imaginative resources and physical awareness. (O'Donnell Fulkerson 2005-6, p.10)

During my dance training I became so acquainted with this approach to generating material in the creative process that now – ten years later – I realize that I am also using it in my composition of music, but without being aware of it. I started to notice through misunderstandings - when I was speaking about the imagery underlying a certain piece of music and people thought I was referring to a painting or picture (which could have easily been the case, as I often collaborate with my husband, who is a visual artist). But images are not only visual pictures,

they are narrative spaces of possibility, dynamic conjunctions of particular elements (emotion, desire, space, rhythm, musicality, texture etc) that invite exploring and inhabiting; (...) they are "worlds" and speak of those worlds. (Williams 2002, p. 274)

I see my composing as creating worlds for the performers to enter, to activate their imaginative resources and to address their physical awareness; the latter especially in relation to the senso-motoric aspect of playing an instrument. Here the sensorimotor sense is usually used as feedback system to control the sound, whereas the nature of the imagery constituting my compositional worlds is directed towards the players' sense of touch – either in order to create a dialogue with the instrument (as described in the sections "I name you" and "wer weiss") or to engender a specific psychophysical state through the quality of touch

the sound world is asking for. All this leads to the construction of a particular body for one particular performance with its specific energy, focus, and psychophysical quality, which is as

much part of the piece as its actual sound. Body and body-awareness have become content and energetic source for my music; not in terms of enacting emotional states, but through imagery that suggests to the performers the point upon which attention is centred in the act of playing or speaking. In *manoumey* for example the painting, which is part of the score, focuses on the fingers of a man probing into his own skin. A related action like plucking a string can tell the player something about the physical contact between the skin and the string, about the relationship between the quality of the finger's movement and the vibration of the string, about the effort involved in the action and the resulting quality of sound.

Centring attention upon any of these ideas can develop physical thought. It can integrate the idea and the act. (O'Donnell Fulkerson 1999, p.11)

The player will thus not pluck the string in order to produce a particular sound that the score is asking for, but his intention, his involvement in the act of plucking – the quality of his being present in it – will be affected by the image. David Williams puts it this way:

Images are working when they take the performers into a new analogous space, when their bodies are now being thought – a thinking-in-action accompanied by an awareness of themselves doing it. (Williams 2002, p. 275)

How does this affect the audience's perception?

The action of looking can include the process of seeing thought happen in another person. (O'Donnell Fulkerson 1999, p.11) Direct contact of body and mind are revealed. Energy is seen naked. It is not the personality alone which becomes visible. It is the total mind and body self. When mind and body are united the result is a very simple, direct expression of intention. One can see through the whole person to find this intention, the person becomes transparent. (O'Donnell Fulkerson 1999, p.93)

I would call this specific quality of transparency "porosity" - the performers' minds showing through their actions, letting the observer perceive the behaviour of their thoughts through the way they approach a certain task. I consider this porosity absolutely essential for encounter as described in the opening section, for "the flaring into appearance of the face-to-face" to take place in a performance situation.

## 5.2 manourney continued

The imagery of the text and the painting underlying *manourney* engendered decisions regarding each performer's materials. As I prefer not to unpick my reaction to the imagery analytically, I will simply describe the actions of the performers (for more specific details please consult the score). The speaker is reading the story, his reading is soft and subdued. When he has reached the end of the text, he starts at the beginning again. Larger spaces in the text indicate a break, during which the speaker inhales. This inhalation should happen through the nose, compressing the windpipe, in order to make the sound caused by drawing the air in through the throat audible. For the making of the pre-recorded tape the speaker is to be recorded whilst repeating the sentence (including breaks of decreasing duration in between the repetitions). The flautist plays whistle tones with or without fundamentals (simultaneously or in succession) with a focus on nuances in tone colour and the percentage of air in a single tone. Also his inhalation is audible. The materials for the small zither-like instrument include arpeggio, the plucking of one single note, the combination of two pitches, vibrato (by swivelling the instrument) and rhythmically regular tapping with one or more fingertips (one after the other) against the back of the instrument in the opening section. All three performers are amplified to enable them to perform their actions very softly. This creates an exposed and illuminated intimacy resembling the atmosphere conveyed by the painting. This impression of exposed intimacy is intensified through the audible inhalation of both the flautist and the speaker. The overall very soft sounds gaining volume through amplification mirror the two opposite directions of the painted man's movement: the one side of his ribcage is turned towards the observer, which is also the direction his left arm is taking. Yet he turns away into the shadow, seeming to spiral back into himself.

I did have distinct ideas about the sound world and the overall atmosphere of the piece, but I also wanted to find a form open enough for the performers to attend to their own connections to the images; to relate to them not in my way, but in theirs. The challenge was to find a notation that was coherent and open at the same time. In the end I came up with three individual graphic parts giving instructions about materials and the overall structure, yet

leaving room for each player to develop his individual route through the piece. I included the painting in all the three parts, but deliberately didn't mention anything about the way the performers should relate to it (or the text). I believe that by its pure presence the imagery will have a strong effect on the performers' decisions and hope that my form of notation will let it reverberate in the moment of performance.

*manourney* was premièred in the *Akademie der Künste am Hansetaenweg* in Berlin during the last concert of the series *einfach–kompliziert* (simply–complicated) organised by the Berliner Gesellschaft für Neue Musik in 2006. This concert was actually a concert-installation - an exhibition of graphic scores, from which a few were realized. This was one of the rare occasions, where I heard a first performance of a piece of mine without having been involved in the rehearsal process at all. As I had never written a score before where so much had been left open, this was an especially interesting experience for me. The performance conveyed the atmosphere just as I had imagined it, which was a great surprise. Only details were missing (the audible inhalation for example). Nevertheless, I made a few structural changes subsequently; so the score that is in my portfolio now, is a more recent version than the one on which the live recording of this first performance was based (CD 1, track 6).

I only heard much later, that when the scores were selected for performance, there was a disagreement about *manourney* between Klaus Schöpp (the flautist) and Tobias Dutschke (the percussionist of this group who in my piece played the small zither-like instrument). Klaus Schöpp argued that the score didn't provide enough information for the players, whereas Tobias Dutschke said that he was used to playing this kind of music and that he instinctively knew it would work out fine. In the light of this argument Klaus Schöpp's statement regarding *manourney* in the audience discussion following the performance (with the musicians, Prof. Dr. Helga de la Motte and Dr. Christa Brüstle) is particularly interesting:

"This score is not, as you first might think, a compilation of elements from various artistic disciplines, but it creates a whole world for me as musician to enter. First you wonder what she wants you to play – no pitches are indicated, no durations, nothing - but later in the process you realize that somehow these choices just happen by themselves." (Klaus Schöpp, 21.12.2006)



The fact, that this change of mind had taken place without me being involved in the process reassured me that the score itself suggests how it needs to be approached by the performers and also what the reason for utterance consists of here: the desire to slip into a fictive character's skin, to inhabit his physicality, to investigate his world and that which within a performer might respond to it.



Illustration No 3

Tobias Deutschke performing *manourney*

Photograph by Daniel Wiesenfeld





Illustrations Nos 4 – 5

*manourney* in the concert-installation *einfach kompliziert – grafisch notiert*,

Akademie der Künste am Hanseatenweg, Berlin

Photograph by Daniel Wiesenfeld

## 6. weiß (rhapsody)

### 6.1 weiß (rhapsody) - description

The investigation of a more abstract world - the world of colour – served as stimulus for the piece *weiß (rhapsody)*, which I wrote when asked to play the piano at the unveiling of Daniel Wiesenfeld's diptych *American-Bavarian Rhapsody* in September 2006. Once again, I was going to write a piece of music in response to a visual artwork, but in this case, I was very aware of the fact, that during the performance, paintings and music would share the same space. Consequently, my first considerations in the compositional process addressed the nature of the interrelation between paintings, music, performer and audience. I particularly thought about the part the performer (in this case myself) would play in this: should I - by virtue of the music - tell something about the paintings, should I try to trace them acoustically or to mirror the atmosphere evoked by them? Into what kind of dialogue with the visual worlds should I enter? I also asked myself if the paintings really needed music at all. They speak for themselves, have their own rhythms and pulse, volume and energy.

At first sight, the *American-Bavarian Rhapsody* is an ironic, almost sarcastic work. If, however, one takes a closer look, it reveals its multi-layered and in terms of meaning quite ambiguous nature. I did not want to suggest a certain interpretation or to diminish the diptych's intellectual complexity by means of my composition. Since music so easily manipulates the way a piece of work from a different medium is perceived (as we can see in one and the same movie scene to which two different pieces of music are added), this influence on a possible reading of the paintings was hard to avoid. The fact that each of the paintings contains its own musical genre - swing on the American, traditional brass band sounds on the Bavarian side - provided an additional challenge to my deliberations: should I ignore these intrinsic tunes or make them a subject of my compositional process of thought?



Illustration No 6

*American-Bavarian Rhapsody* by Daniel Wiesenfeld (2006)

Technique Oil on canvas

Size 180 x 110 cm each



Again and again, I returned to the question of whether there was anything the paintings could gain from an acoustic companion. Eventually I came to the conclusion that the music would serve them best by not interfering with the subject matter depicted, but creating a space for attentive listening to both paintings and sound instead. I wanted the performance of music to have the effect of a zoom, focusing the audience's attention in a way that would allow them to dive into the visual worlds with a heightened sense of awareness and the openness of mind needed to look behind the American-Bavarian surface. To make this work, I assumed, I would have to incorporate this desired mental state myself when performing the piece. What kind of sound material would be able to provide me with a degree of abstraction high enough not to correlate with the diptych's narrative? With strong focus, yet enough space and openness to guide each audience member into their own discovery of the paintings? Where could I forge links between paintings and sound, avoiding the delicate issue of interpreting the images?

Looking carefully at the diptych with all these questions in mind, I was struck by the painter's use of the colour white. Visually it caught my eye, as what at first seemed to be white in fact contained a great deal of various shades and nuances of other colours. Additionally I noticed that through its appearance in the prominent dress code of both the American and Bavarian protagonists it played quite a central part in the narrative aspect of both paintings. On the Bavarian side, it is also to be found in the artificial clouds (with a strong shade of grey) and in the overcast sky showing through the ceiling of the tent, which calls the depicted nature's authenticity into question. From a phenomenological point of view, white has quite interesting characteristics: rather than as actual colour, it is perceived as the visible absence of all colours and at the same time as the sum of all colours. This might be explained by the fact that a white surface reflects all colours and hardly absorbs any of them. It is thus strongly influenced by the lighting conditions of its environment. Within these considerations, a possible link between the paintings and a world of sound began to emerge. The piece to be written was going to be an immersion in the colour white and its manifestation in Daniel Wiesenfeld's *American-Bavarian Rhapsody*.

In order to attain the focus I needed for the reasons described above, I reduced the visual input to two mostly white details - one from each painting – as imagery for the music:



Illustrations Nos 7 and 8

Title: Details from *American-Bavarian Rhapsody*

Each of the chosen details constitutes its own, distinct visual world in terms of painterly gesture, nuance of colour, texture, form, movement and immobility. I was looking for a sound world that could both encompass these contrasting elements and still give the impression of a self-contained entity. The vastness of countless different colours united within the colour white seemed best captured by the microcosm of one single string struck on the piano,

reverberating; or by the interval of an octave. The different gradations and nuances of white, which both its ambience and the colours it reflects determine, have an equivalent in this microcosm of one pitch blending with other pitches and textures. These are intuitive responses and translations from one medium into another which I do not intend to analyse or justify, just as I am not able to explain why I perceive d" as giving the "whitest" impression of all the keys of the piano and therefore chose it as my central pitch in this piece. I can only describe and explain the process of compositional decision-making.

With the two visual details internalised and the listening focus on d and the octave, I improvised on the piano until I found satisfying textures, proceedings, rhythms and shades that I associated with the colour white<sup>6</sup>; far enough removed from the paintings to hold their own, yet with sufficient proximity to relate nonetheless. Faced with the task of finding an overall form for the piece, I once again struggled with the question how much of it and which elements should be determined, and where it could stay open for spontaneous responses in the moment of performance. This piece is concerned most of all with the forming of attention, thus I felt the need to create a framework within the score which would give the performer enough room for exploring the imagery, but also entail a very specific focal point. As a result throughout the entire piece the main task for the performer lies in touching d" (in one passage d'") in a way that it is constantly audible. Her listening focus consequently needs to be directed to how the sound of one d" turns into the next one, even if other pitches are simultaneously played. The beginning, for example, consists of a very extended crescendo plus accelerando turning into a decrescendo plus rallentando, produced through repetitions and reverberations of only d" (the left pedal stays down throughout the passage). All that matters here is how the string is set into motion, how it vibrates and how the next touch modifies this vibration. The microcosm of d" is observed as if through a magnifying glass. I chose this very reduced, very concentrated passage as a beginning in order to enable the audience to become still and ready for reception on a basic sensory level; to turn their attention inwards to perceive their response to the energetic state of a sound and to the change of this state. I intended this quality of perception to be transposed to the way they

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<sup>6</sup> My choices are to be seen in the sketched score on page 53. As I will explain in the following chapter, no final version of this score exists.

look at the paintings – moving away from a looking that wants to grasp and analyze towards a conceiving of their immediate responses to texture; colour, rhythm and choreography.

During the course of the piece more pitches come into play, but d" and its reverberations have to be constantly discernible; even in a very fast, rhythmical passage towards the end, which pays tribute to both the dance contained in the American side of the diptych and a typically Bavarian rhythm, the *Zwiefacher*, which is not explicitly depicted in the Bavarian side, but strongly suggested by the traditional costumes and the characteristic scenery. After I had finished the piece, I came across the following legend,

dating back to the cradle of humankind: the infinite white line. There exist drawings by guards, painted in an infinite white line.(...). Whoever searched for access to an afterworld, had to pass these guards. Only those, who were able to retrace this infinite path in the sand without interruption, gained a prospect to life after death. Whoever drew this infinite line, automatically fell into an arising rhythm, accelerating into a state of trance. (La Roche [2004] [approximately 4 screens]).

This legend about the cultural history of the colour white unfortunately doesn't state where the myth originates from. But even if not very clear and out of context, it had a vivid effect on my world of imagery. A linking association with the aural and tactile focus on the uninterrupted presence of d" and the fast rhythmical section at the end of the piece suggested itself. The thought of the infinite white line thus became a mental foundation for playing *white (rhapsody)*.

Formally the piece consists of often self-contained fragments, strung together. Durations of single events, repetitions and whole passages are in general up to the performer. Occasionally they depend on the time a certain sound takes to reverberate. This improvisatory aspect and the fragmentary character of the piece correlate with the musical allusion to be found in the diptych's title *American-Bavarian Rhapsody*:

in ancient Greece a rhapsody was an epic poem recited by a professional reciter, mainly played as an introduction to festivities. Since the end of the 18th century, a rhapsody is a vocal or instrumental composition often based on the thought of an epic recital; free-flowing in structure, episodic yet integrated, with an air of spontaneous inspiration and a sense of improvisation. (Brockhaus Riemann Musiklexikon 1979, VI. 4 p.41, translated from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld)

## 6.2 weiß (rhapsody) – Notation

The draft score of *weiß (rhapsody)* consists of a sketch which is perfectly legible for me, but nobody else would be able to make sense of it (see opposite page). The task to prepare an intelligible score for my PhD portfolio (in 2007, about one year after I had composed *weiß*) gave rise to a whole complex of questions: does *white (rhapsody)* exist without the paintings or should it only be played within their presence? Should reproductions of the paintings be part of the score or only the details I had chosen to focus on? What form of notation would be able to convey both my use of imagery relating to the colour white and the perceptual concerns of the piece; how much of the notation could be visual, how much verbal and how far would I get using the conventional system?

In a first attempt I used prints of the two details and placed transparency sheets onto them, on which I intended to transpose a written out version of my sketch using graphic as well as conventional elements; an additional sheet was going to provide verbal instructions regarding the continuity of *d''* and its underlying symbolic imagery. For various reasons I never finished this version. To begin with, I couldn't find an aesthetically pleasing way to represent the two details – taken out of context and for someone who hadn't seen the actual paintings they didn't seem to make sense. Apart from that there were too many notational issues I couldn't resolve: I tried various ways to notate the extended repetition of *d''* in the beginning, for example, but not one of them conveyed the complex of thought and perception behind it as concisely and directly as I aimed at. I could, of course, have used the conventional terms *rallentando* and *accelerando* in combination with *crescendo* and *decrescendo* hairpins, but these expressions and signs of musical terminology seemed so far removed from what was actually happening when I played, that I saw no sense in using them here. They give instructions on what to do, but not on how to do it; they prescribe the external coordinates (increasing and decreasing volume, becoming faster and slower), but don't say anything about the sensory focus, the contextual substance of and the imagery behind this action.





All these issues could have been integrated in the score as verbal instructions and explanations, but I suspected that such a form of transmission wouldn't be immediate enough regarding the nature of my concerns.

The initial impulses for this piece had comprised phenomenological characteristics of the colour white and the concern to shape the attention of the audience in a certain way; later, symbolic imagery of the uninterrupted white line was added. My compositional choices had further been influenced by the content of the paintings and the fact that I was writing the piece for their unveiling. On the one hand I began to consider *weiß (rhapsody)* as a performance of mine belonging to a showing of the paintings, which would mean that there was no need for a transferable score to exist. On the other hand, I wanted to pursue these notational difficulties, which seemed to contain a fundamental issue waiting to be resolved. To be able to deal with them, I decided to remove the context of the paintings, but to stay with the subject matter of the colour white. I also cut out all the passages containing a sequence of specific pitches as these always forced me back into the conventional system of notation, which earlier had proved to be unsuitable for my endeavour. So a new piece came into being: *weiß (auf grau)* - translated: *white (on grey)*.

## **7. weiß (auf grau)**

The acoustic material for *weiß (auf grau)* consists of three basic constellations of sounds in succession: there is the repetition and reverberation of d'', a fast rhythm and an extended tremolo with different speeds, pitches, textures and character. These three constellations are notated on grey cards in white acrylic paint, using the most immediate and concise visual translations I could find for them (see opposite page).

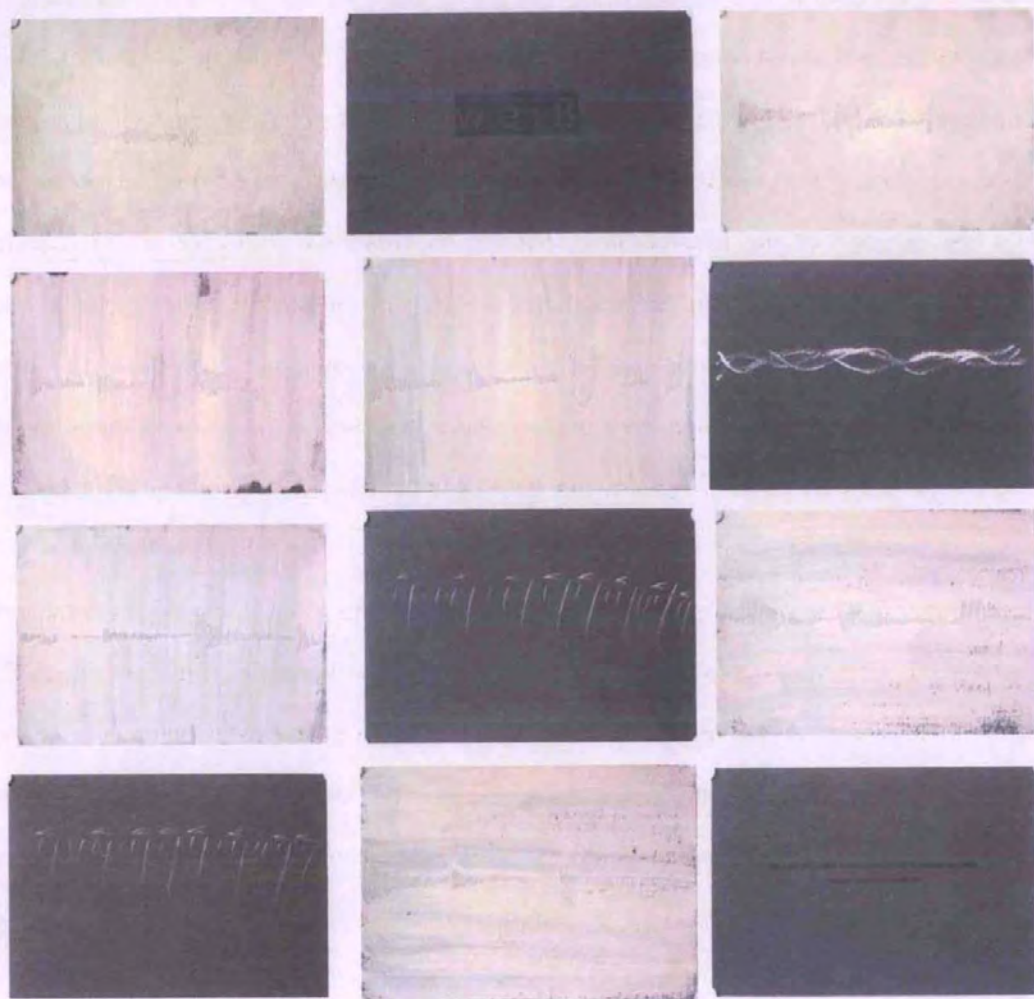


Illustration No 10

Photo of the cards of the score *weiß (auf grau)*

Especially during my attempts to notate the repeated d'', it occurred to me that for my purpose here the action of notating this material needed to resemble the action of playing it. When covering the card with a layer of white, the paint dried very fast, so I had not much time to scrape the sound wave-like shapes into it. As a result, I didn't aim at a specific visual outcome, but followed the physical impulse of the gesture similar to the reverberations of a key hit on the piano – the way it is hit determines the way it will resound (the left pedal can influence the duration of the reverberation, but not the essential character of the sound). Similarly to the action of playing on the piano and not being able to change the sound afterwards, in producing the score I could only scrape in one direction - whenever I tried to change what I had done by moving my scraping device backwards, or covering the scraped bit up again, the paint would react in a way that destroyed the image.

The score consists of single cards, which can be arranged into a field. The original employs paint, which makes it impossible to be copied, as the different versions would never exactly resemble one another. For this reason and also to obtain more practicability, whenever I need to produce a copy of the score, the cards are reproduced as prints of photographs. One way to arrange them is indicated on the back of one of the cards. Structure, timing and duration of the piece are up to the player. Although pitches are indicated, what exactly is to be played is not determined. The only verbal instruction specifically addresses the performer's focus of attention: "the sound of d" (attack or reverberation) should be continuously audible. Imagine it as an infinite white line".

## 8. Receptive Listening

That the only really set element in the score of *weiß (auf grau)* refers to the direction of the performer's listening has been a very conscious choice. I share Helmut Lachenmann's view when he says that

the immediate subject matter of music is not the world (...), the subject matter of music is perception perceiving itself (...) that is: to listen in a different way, to discover new antennas within oneself, new sensors, new sensibilities; thus it also means to notice one's own changeability (Lachenmann 2004, p118, translation from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld).

...where perception invades the structure of the familiar, that which was once familiar appears to be foreign once again. By renewing their relation to that which has been familiar until now, the listeners change, become aware of their precondition as well as of their ability to break through it. Thereby they become strangers to themselves again, turn into adventurers again, full of new possibilities and surprises. (ibid. p 119, translation from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld)

Whether music or sound can affect us this way, strongly depends on the quality of our readiness to receive, to react and to register change. It also depends on the degree of activity and passivity within our listening. In my most recent works, I have been concerned with a receiving way of listening as opposed to a hearing actively directed towards something. In composing, performing and also with regard to the audience, I look for a listening that is more receptive than analysing - a state of attentive alertness for the possible reception of sound similar to when we defocus our eyes and let the images sink in. What we see then is more blurred, but our periphery vision extends and we get a better impression of the whole. The muscles involved have to soften – and although still in contact with the outer environment, our state of mind changes from directedness towards the outside to a receptive perceptiveness. We allow the image to come towards us instead of making an effort to grasp it. What kind of listening experience an audience member in a performance of music will have is of course unpredictable. However, I think that as a composer, I can suggest and perhaps enable a certain mode of perception through the way I engage the performers' listening attitudes to the sounds they bring into being.



## 9. *shark synchrony*

My preoccupation with what I call “receptive listening” also manifested itself in *shark synchrony* – again a musical response to two paintings by Daniel Wiesenfeld – the diptych *swimmers and sharks* (see opposite page). *Swimmers* shows synchronised swimmers choreographed in a way that looks more like a fight of Amazons than a water ballet. Its counterpart *sharks* depicts two sharks and a swarm of much smaller, almost transparent, shimmering fish underwater. One of the sharks just broke through the surface of the water, the bubbly foam created by its diving is still visible. In the other painting one sees clearly what is happening over water, but also parts of the bodies under water are shimmering through the surface. *shark synchrony* needs to be performed in the presence of the paintings, it does not exist independent from them. Both the music and the paintings were created in 2007.



Illustration No 11

*swimmers and sharks* by Daniel Wiesenfeld (2007)

Technique Oil Painting

Size 200 x 300 cm each

When thinking about music to go with these visual worlds, I tried to imagine the listening perception of the creatures depicted. Underwater, human hearing is distorted. As sound travels much faster through water than it does through air and even faster through the dense bones of the human skull, we can detect no difference in the timing of sounds arriving at our ears and thus cannot discern the direction from where it came. There must be a strong difference in how synchronised swimmers hear the music for their choreography depending if their ears are over water or under water. The thought of a constant change between these two modalities was stimulating, yet in the end it didn't help me to find a way into the music. I was afraid that this juxtaposition of the acoustic atmospheres over water and under water might become too obvious, too much of a cliché. I then did some research on the listening perception of a shark and was fascinated with what I found out: its senses are perfectly attuned to its surroundings. Hearing and vibration detection are fundamentally linked.

A shark's main vibration sensing mechanism is the lateral line, which is visible externally by a row of tiny pores along each flank. A complex network between its inner ears and this lateral line provide the shark with very high sensitivity to vibration and any change of pressure occurring underwater. As the transmitting medium for sound for the shark is the water through which they swim, distinguishing what a shark hears with its inner ears from what it senses as vibrations via the lateral line is kind of a Gordian knot. Many shark sensory biologists refer to it as the acoustico-lateralis system. Further, a shark's hearing is adapted to detecting very low-frequency vibrations such as those made by struggling fish. (ReefQuest Centre for Shark Research [no date] [approximately 3 screens]).

The thought of low frequencies, high sensitivity to vibrations and pressure linked with the notions of acoustic orientation and disorientation became the point of departure for my *shark synchrony*. Also, large size played an important part – the two paintings are very big (2 x 3 meters each) and of course, one also associates a shark with much volume, weight and size. All these considerations led to my choice of instruments: accordion, tuba and double bass. I decided to play the accordion myself, which was an important factor for the final musical result. I have never played the accordion before, thus my possibilities were very limited. This didn't matter, as I intended to concentrate on very extended sounds, for which on the accordion no technical skills are needed. I actually saw this constraint as a good opportunity to focus on what I have always been fascinated with – the coming into being, the unfolding and the dying away of a sound. This focus reconnects with the receptive listening described



above, a listening placing particular emphasis on the receptive side, avoiding all extra effort and strain involved in wanting to take hold of a sound.

Due to the way an accordion functions, all that needs to be done for a sound to occur is to allow the bellows to open. Once set into motion, the instrument almost moves by itself. Also its closing on the way back is an action not needing much force, as long as the sound can stay soft. I was intrigued by this simplicity and the endlessly fascinating world of sound it created. Consequently the instructions for the accordion part are very minimal: choose a sound, let it unfold with the opening of the instrument, bring it to an end with its closing – listen. Due to the subject matter of the music, I turned my attention especially towards vibrations and sound waves, towards beats caused by friction and towards the physical sensation of the instrument vibrating against my torso. I gave the impulse by letting the instrument open and then did all I could to not interrupt the flow of the action and of the sound. Very subtle changes in the way I opened and compressed the bellows, which always occurred when I let the movement find its natural course instead of aiming at making it absolutely even, caused very subtle changes in the sound: the pulse of the beats became faster or slower, overtones appeared and disappeared.

I then talked to the two other musicians about the paintings and my concerns for this piece, showed them what I did with the accordion and asked them to join in. The accordion laid the acoustic foundation, which the others complemented, based on the areas of focus described above. As I had the impression that already our first attempts met quite well with what I had been looking for, I decided to stay with the concept of an improvisation. One issue to resolve in the rehearsals was to find within this "receptive listening" a balance between what Heinrich Jacoby calls "necessity and possibility". He states, that 'each utterance resembles a function, which doesn't need anything else than the allowance to function'. (Jacoby 1984, p.68) Jacoby sees successful utterances as functions, which run - after an impulse has been given caused by the need for an utterance - according to their inherent laws, without any extra activity on our part:

The clearer we are able to perceive and recognise the course and the repercussions of this function, the clearer we perceive - as a contrast - the coming in of activity (the use of possibilities) within utterances (...) The necessary is recognizable through the existence of the possible, just as the possible is only recognizable through the existence of the necessary. (Jacoby 1984, 68 – 69)

Due to the clarity and simplicity of our focus when playing *shark synchrony*, we recognized instinctively what constituted the “necessary” here. The question was whether we should enter the realm of “possibilities” and if yes, to what extent and how far away we could move from the “necessary” without losing an inner coherence. The challenge in this was to keep the focus on vibrations and beats in extended sounds, but to stay alert to the moment and not to develop tunnel vision. When we performed in the presence of the paintings, this became particularly acute. They were hung facing each other, thus creating a very dense spatial field and an energetic dialogue between themselves, which urged us to respond to it in the music. Due to its improvisatory nature, there is no score for *shark synchrony*, but a recording of a 20 minute session is enclosed in my portfolio (CD 2, track # 1).

## **10. COLLABORATIONS with performance artists**

The main issues I pursue in my composing and playing of music are not confined to a musical or acoustic nature. Asking what might move a person to seek a musical or a sounding utterance, entails the exploration of possible motivations for filling silence with sound. As the production of sound involves physical activity, the investigation of the impulse that leads from stillness to movement also plays an important part within this complex of thought. In addition for me the state of “receptive listening” as described above relates not only to hearing, but can be extended to all kinds of sensory and mental awareness. When I worked on the pieces and projects described so far, their actual sound was always in the foreground of my deliberations – even if I decided not to determine it completely. Eventually the collaboration with the Belgian performance artist Anne Bregentzer on her solo *beneath b*, provided a welcome opportunity to go further with my research into the state of both receptive listening and the quality of presence in performance - this time with the focus on the performer in her

entire being, beyond compositional or generally musical concerns. A video documentation of the première is enclosed on DVD.

## **10.1 beneath b**

*to give form to the whispers, squeaks and screams that stumble beneath*

*the heart and the conscious*

*to dialogue with whispering silences and bleeding hearts*

*to form what is not yet of sense but of living but of being*

*to give breath and resonance to silent forces within*

*because of body because of living*

*because the body is full of instinct and likes to move like trees and crocodiles*

*because matter matters*

(Anne Bregentzer, 2007. Programme notes)

Originally, Anne had asked me to join her project in order to help with musical issues. She wanted to use an accordion in this piece, but had never played an instrument before and also had no experience with performing or creating music. When we met for our first rehearsal, Anne had already spent quite some time working on the movement and voice material. Within this process she had identified the core of this piece to be "listening" - a listening to the moment, bringing about physical and vocal responses. To remain in this particular state of listening throughout the performance - in periods of stillness as well as in periods of high activity - provided a big challenge. As I was very interested in the performance mode that Anne was looking for and had gained some experience with related issues in my former works, I took on the role of directing the rehearsals regarding the quality of her listening. It became my responsibility to point out, when she was in that state and when she was not and to develop strategies for her to find her way back, when she had unintentionally left it.

Throughout the rehearsal process, Anne and I discussed dramaturgical as well as aesthetical aspects of the piece. Most of these deliberations belong to the field of Anne's artistic concerns, so I will not elaborate on them here. However, one part of our discussion is closely connected to my role in this collaboration and does seem relevant in this context: the question of whether a focus on listening and responding can provide a strong enough base for a piece. Anne was worried about being boring, not entertaining enough, not saying enough, not giving enough. As a witness at her rehearsals, I saw the danger of her not being able to enter that specific listening state, which would then lead to unmotivated, thus unconvincing movements and disconnected vocal utterances. In this case, the piece could very easily fall apart. But the moment she listened – patiently, cautiously – not only with her ears, but with her whole being, involving all of her senses, her stillness was resonant; the movements came from a strong centre and her vocal utterances sounded powerful. The more she worried about the success of her piece, the less likely she was to find the listening state. Thus, my dramaturgical input mainly consisted of strengthening her trust and reassuring her of the strong and immediate effect her listening state and the responses resulting from it had on me as observer. Even an occasional loss of this state wouldn't weaken the performance – on the contrary – when I saw her momentarily leaving it and then trying to re-enter and eventually succeeding, the essence of the listening state became even clearer for me. Her struggle gave me the impression of being a witness of her performance rather than an observer and thus heightened the immediacy of my experience.

What is this listening state to which I am referring here? It is not directed to anything specific and not limited to acoustic perception. It resembles an attentive state in which one intends to receive sensory impressions from the surroundings and to become aware of what is taking place in one's mind and imagination – attention given to the outside and to the inside simultaneously. While listening is an active state of awareness, it is also passive in the sense that it involves a receptive consciousness, an inner stillness, which allows for something to emerge, that might contain the stimulus for a response – an utterance. In Anne's case this meant through voice and / or movement. Utterance and listening can take place

simultaneously, as within the utterance the attention remains a listening one: it is tuned to the resonance of what is being done, to its echoes and to the difference it has made to the space.

The beginning of *beneath b* is designed as to make it easier for Anne to enter into the listening mode: she stands upright with her accordion, listens to the silence, then to how the first note she plays colours this silence, to the silence that follows the sound, to the next sound entering the silence and so on. Sometimes she uses her voice to go along with what she is playing, whereupon she doesn't always hit the pitch perfectly well. She listens to the dialogue arising between her voice and the instrument. It is not a singing we perceive here, rather a tuning of her voice to the sounds of the instrument as well as a tuning of her listening.



The next part involves movement and voice. Anne improvises, drawing on materials she has repeatedly encountered in her rehearsals. In this improvisation we see her face and her whole physicality revealing her listening. I include a few photos to exemplify this:









Illustration Nos 12 – 17 (previous pages and above)  
Anne Bregentzer performing *beneath b*  
Video stills

from the silence can come sound and more of sound  
and possibly loud possibly not possibly visual  
possibly sometimes sense sometimes a sense of  
closer to a loosening one

(Anne Bregentzer, email correspondence on *beneath b*, 28.08.2007)

Anne's use of voice in *beneath b* is quite particular. It is not singing, there are no words used and it does not serve the need for meaningful expression or communication. Neither does it resemble the taking apart of language in the sense of deconstructivism. What we hear are creature-like utterances, that are not trying to be the sounds of a certain animal. They just are. "Through sound each creature manifests its presence within the infinity of nature". (Fröhlich cited Rüdiger 1995, p.68). At times in *beneath b*, when one of these sounds meets a certain movement, something archaic seems to appear. We get a glimpse of it for a short moment only, as there is always also humour that in combination with aesthetic purity creates



a distance to this creature in her existential being. The following is a translation of the review written for the *Badische Zeitung* by Marion Klötzer (23 March 2007):

An avant-garde and nicely strange entrance into the piece: whilst a lonely figure, standing in the harsh play of lines created by light and shadows, squeezes dilettante sounds from an accordion in a virtually provocative way – nothing happens. Estranged, one internally had already started to scrape ones feet, when this green-headed creature lets out a completely creature-like scream, through which wide-awake attention begins to focus itself. With her head ducked, crawling, wagging her tail, beating with stumped wings, belling and mooing, Anne Bregentzer manages to sound out the border between body and mind, between consciousness and impulse, in an astounding and humorous way.

## **10.2 Collaboration with Janine Schneider | company no thrills**

### **10.2.a no thrills – Introduction**

Janine Schneider is a dancer living and working in Berlin. After her original training in classical ballet and Modern Dance (especially the Cunningham Technique) she turned towards Asian forms of movement art (Butoh, Tai Chi, QiGong) and studied sensory awareness after Gindler / Goralewski. The name *no thrills* under which she performs both as a soloist and with her company constitutes her artistic mission:

abstention from superficial curves of suspense as well as from theatrical effects in favour of subtle beauty, plainness and simplicity. Her choreographies resemble a research into archetypes of humanly possible movements like walking, standing and turning, whereby the performing bodies are confronted with issues of time and duration: positions and sequences are held or executed over extended periods of time. The dancers' experience of their movements is directed to the inner attitude they adopt in performing them, thus a highly refined awareness of body and mind is required. In her quest for movements intrinsic to the neutrality and unobtrusiveness of her pieces, which she regards as meditative fields, Janine develops a dramaturgical sensitivity in both herself and her dancers, that allows for the movements to be originated ad hoc, instantly composed. (Schneider) [no date] (translated from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld)

Our collaboration began with the dance video *Lelia and Orlando*, to which I provided the soundtrack. (*Lelia and Orlando*, 2002, directed and produced by Janine Schneider. Dance: Janine Schneider, voice: Brigitta Schmusch, texts: Virginia Woff and George Sand. Supported by *Künstlerinnenprogramm der Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur Berlin*.) In 2004 Janine presented the documentary exhibition *statements, now* portraying female dancers working in Berlin's off-scene. She asked me to perform with her as part of the exhibition's supplementary live program. To give me an idea of what she was involved with in her dance at that moment, she sent me the following lines:

The reduction in speed and the fragmentation of the movement's natural flow rouse complexity – habitual points of view are getting lost. I recognize: the disintegration is final. There is nothing irritating about this. This is what gives rise to matter-of-factness and depth (Janine Schneider, email correspondence on cello and dance, 29.08.2004, translated by Ruth Wiesenfeld).

These concerns bore a strong resemblance to my own process of thought when working on the cello material for *wer weiss* (see chapter *wer weiss / who knows*). So I suggested a rehearsal in which we both would simultaneously carry out the material each of us had been experimenting with, long before the idea of performing it together had taken shape. We went on for about 20 minutes and were surprised to find that "the piece" (later named *Cello und Tanz*) was already there - a concurrence of two utterances originating from a very similar aesthetic concern, each pronounced in its own artistic language. An excerpt from our first performance of this piece is included as video on CD-Rom (file *CelloTanz*, please double click to open).

## **10.2.b Cello und Tanz – Music**

Janine's invitation to perform with her caused me to look at the material of *wer weiss* (see chapter 3) again in a different context and setting – stripped bare of the observer's questions and performed by myself, which released me both from the worry of how to render this material accessible for another player and from the issue of notation.

I followed my plan not to use any predetermined structure and to let the material unfold in the moment, which proved to work well. I played on the down-stroke and during the silent up-stroke tuned my inner hearing to what should come next, which I then played on the following down-stroke. Occasionally a saltando bow playing a very short particle uses both up-stroke and down-stroke. As the nature of the material is not only acoustic, but also haptic and kinaesthetic, my inner hearing referred to sound as well as to movement and touch. Performing together with a dancer transformed the nature of the movement aspect within my playing. Originally it had been of an experiential nature, related to proprioception and sensory awareness; now I also took the aesthetic component into consideration. Without thinking in choreographic terms, I became very aware of the fact that the repeated and thus significant movement of my right arm might be read in relation to Janine's positions and motions.

## **10.2.c Cello und Tanz: Dance (Arabesque)**

Janine within her movement repertoire in this piece re-examines the arabesque –

one of the basic poses in classical ballet, taking its name from a form of Moorish ornament. In ballet it is a position of the body, in profile, supported on one leg with the other leg extended behind and at right angle to it, and the arms held in various harmonious positions creating the longest possible line from the fingertips to the toes. (...) The forms of arabesque are varied to infinity. (American Ballet Theatre, Ballet Dictionary) [no date].

Contained in this pose and its variations are two basic directions of the body: "efface" (open) and "croisé" (crossed) – both referring to the arrangement of the legs and the angle in which the dancer's body is presented to the audience. Also included in this pose is the possibility of a relevée (standing on the balls of the feet). The way in which Janine physically approaches the pose of the arabesque and its constituents here is far removed from its original context of classical dance. In a ballet phrase an arabesque usually ends a sequence of steps, which gives it the air of a rather static, representational position allowing the dancer to display her perfect line and technical excellence. Strong muscular effort is needed to overcome the laws of gravity and to give the impression of easily standing on one leg with the second one high up in the air, the lower spine bent in an extreme angle.



Illustration No 18  
Ballet dancer in an Arabesque Position  
<http://www.images02.heinspirit.jpg>

In Janine's performance there is no strain and no trying - neither the neuro-muscular patterns nor the posing components usually associated with an arabesque appear in her movements. Her focus solely lies on her relation to space. In choosing to do a relevée for example, this decision is made in order to change the spatial plane, whereas in a classical context it would always be associated with the desire to be higher up in the air and to overcome the forces of gravity. With her body slowly re-tracing classical lines in a matter-of-factly, architectural way, Janine seems to come across them almost incidentally, listening to their geometry, then using them as transitory passageways into her own distinct movement vocabulary, where details strongly come into focus: a bent wrist for example, a rotation of the lower arm or a foot turned inwards. Each single movement - no matter if it originates from classical or idiosyncratic vocabulary - stands for itself, is a temporary organization of the body in relation to space. Most of Janine's movements in this piece are laid out in such a way that an arabesque would always be a possible choice. Yet a recognizable arabesque only appears a few times. These few nonetheless are so significant that any other movement will most likely be read in relation to them.





Illustration Nos 19 - 20  
Janine Schneider and Ruth Wiesenfeld performing *Cello und Tanz*  
Video stills  
Camera: Daniel Wiesenfeld

Janine's decision-making process is very visible and thus can be easily observed by the audience. Her movements are slow, calm and controlled. She never uses the forces inherent in momentum or gravity, which allows her to take any decision at any time. Stripping her

material bare of any meaning or function, she treats each weight shift, each gesture with the same importance, whereby the classical elements are taken out of their codified language. Focusing on details such as *croisée* and *effacé*, the line of an arm, the inclination of her head, Janine aims at each single gesture to be "crystal-clear and as fragile as glass" (Janine Schneider, email correspondence on *Cello und Tanz*, 29.08.2004, translated from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld). The transparency of her dance as well as the readability of her aesthetic decisions lends her presence the specific quality of "porosity" I described earlier – "the performers' minds showing through her actions, letting the observer perceive the behaviour of her thoughts through the way she approaches a certain task" (see chapter *Imagery*).

#### **10.2.d Cello und Tanz - Music and Dance**

How do music and dance interrelate in this piece? As mentioned earlier, our materials have come into existence independently. When we perform, I do not look at Janine, unless she happens to be in my field of vision. My decisions are not directly shaped by her choice of movements, but her presence, her moving body with its own rhythm, energy and texture affects them, although I cannot describe in what way exactly. Janine considers my sounds as impulses, which she either takes up or lets pass by. Texture and volume of the sounds play an important role for her, as they have an immediate effect on her physicality.

We have performed this piece on several occasions, each time in a different context. The first performance took place within the frame of the exhibition *statements, now* (see above) on September 16th 2004. The second time we performed it in during the opening of the exhibition *The last portrait: Deathmasks from three centuries* in the Georg Kolbe Museum Berlin on November 14th 2004. The third performance was part of the cultural program staged during the 2nd European Feldenkrais-Congress "learning in motion" in the Freie Universität Berlin on March 3rd 2005. The only predetermined decisions within this project concerned Janine's costume, lighting (if provided) and our use of space. All three parameters changed depending on the particular performance situation. Janine chose one spatial pattern she would follow through, usually leading her from one end of the space to the other – either

from stage left to stage right or from back to front. When she reached the end of her pathway, the piece was over. I always placed myself somewhere in the middle of this path to make sure that a permanent change in our spatial relationship would occur and that there would be a moment where the distance between us was going to become very dense.

Visual, aural and kinesthetic elements meld within this piece, the porosity (as described earlier in the chapter on imagery) within the presence of both performers adds to its particular atmosphere. Yet I mainly perceive it as a visual field, a surface on which calligraphic ornaments are inscribed. Musically this impression arises through the precise gestalt of the cello's original sound-movement-form and its gestural character, which reminds me of a combination of image and letter, of pictogram and alphabetic sign. A strong sense of calligraphy, architecture and geometry is also radiated by Janine's movements. This, I assume, is closely connected to her exploration of the arabesque – a balletic pose as described above, but also the quintessential Islamic ornament, in which plants and leaves grow according to the laws of geometry rather than to the laws of nature. One of the factors that influenced the nature of Muslim Art is a religious rule that forbids the use of human or animal forms in order to prevent the worship of idols and figures, which were condemned. Thus Muslim art has a tendency to concentrate on pure abstract form as opposed to the representation of natural objects.

The art of arabesque is defined as ornamental work used for flat surfaces consisting of interlacing geometrical patterns of polygons, circles and interlocked line and curves (Chambers, Science and Technology dictionary 1991). However, originally it consisted of a surface ornament of conventional plant forms with artificial objects and geometrical lines, arranged to form an ordered composition (Saoud) [July 2004] [approximately 3 screens].

In a similar way the arabesque as a ballet pose also celebrates abstract form. As in classical dance in general, the body tries to overcome laws of nature and adapts to laws of geometry instead. For a ballerina the arabesque constitutes the body's finest signature and thus can be seen as her specific trait. As I explained before, in *Cello und Tanz* Janine's approach to this pose is of a very different nature: she retraces, re-examines its lines and intersects them with forms of a different background regarding the vocabulary of dance. Thus instead of presenting an Arabesque – a pose, ornament of highest precision – she provides the

audience with its residues. The taste of it is still there, the memory, but not the aura that usually goes with it.

Janine's dialogue with the arabesque is very similar to the dialogue that I have in this piece with my cello and the sound-movement-form (see chapter *wer weiss*). Another parallel is that we both work with elements having the air of residues. My cello material is based on the notion of an arpeggio which due to its unpredictable and fragile nature and unusual harmony in *Cello und Tanz* is as far removed from what is associated with it in classical Western concert music as Janine's arabesque is removed from its balletic origins. After our performances people often asked how we rehearsed to obtain this intricate coherence between music and movement. As mentioned earlier, we hardly rehearsed at all and also didn't direct our attention to communicating with each other when we performed. I think our duet works, because the origins of the materials and our attitudes towards what we do bear a strong resemblance. This might also explain my feeling that this piece could last for a moment or over a long period of time, and still in its essence remain the same, as if what lies behind our strongly reduced and seemingly basic materials had inscribed itself into them, so that the piece resembles the extension of one single instant where movement and music coagulate into an unchanging image.



## 10.2.e Für die Vögel (For the Birds)

### 25 Japanese animal haikus in dance, music and spoken word

The next project Janine invited me to (in 2006) was based on haikus - short poems, originally Japanese, in three lines, with seventeen syllables arranged five, seven, and five. One of

*the shortest of all forms, haiku is a "people's poetry" that records the visionary moments of everyday life. A haiku expresses a moment of vivid awareness/perception sparked by observation of the world. It shares this experience with the reader through concrete imagery and uncluttered language; that is, it presents directly the object(s) that moved the poet - birds flying, dew on a leaf, a woman's bright gown on a grey day, etc. (Bristow 2003).*

Janine was planning to recite a selection of both traditional and modern haikus (original Japanese, translated to German by Jan Ulenbrook, see p.82-83) in the course of her physical performance and asked me to play the cello. This is how she describes the piece:

*The poems from bygone days – composed by Japanese from all classes – resemble magnets of silence. In their strong imagery they should stand for themselves in the first place. Later the question arises how they relate to the presence of the dancer, who provides the visual ground for possible associations with the spoken words.*

*Stillness. Slow beginning of first minimal actions. Strolling – placing signs into the air – pausing again – speaking one line or the other – gestures of upper body and arms carrying a breath into the space. A number of beings appears; the woman steps in the background, remembers, is left over or lights up as a new motive within the viewer's world of experience.*

*Within the monolithic events of consistent dynamics human being and spoken language project onto each other, illustrate the other, comment on it or evade. In spite of the haikus' origins and the costume, which I designed in the style of a traditional Asian kimono, I want to place "Für die Vögel" (the title is taken from the title of a book by the American composer John Cage) in the here and now, as an avant-garde performance. The texts revolve around moments – seeming poor at first sight, later however telling of great inner richness – in which the protagonist perceives animals, nature and light. (Press release by Janine Schneider, July 2006. Translated from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld.)*

We performed this piece in the open air – in the *Giardino Segreto* (from Italian: secluded garden), which is part of the *Südgelände Schöneberg* - a former shunting yard that was abandoned for almost fifty years after it had been shut down in the 1950s. During these years it gradually became overgrown. Today the area is a nature reserve, accommodating a variety of animals and plants in danger of becoming extinct. Railway relics still standing around, an old water tower and various objects of art, add to the very distinct atmosphere of this area.

The *Giardino Segreto* was designed by the artists' group ODIOUS. Following the rules of a giardino segreto in the Italian Renaissance, order was of highest importance here: nothing was left to chance. Geometric laws following the Pythagorean dogma determine the spatial arrangement of trees, bushes, flower beds, axis, pathways, walls and sculptures. This kind of design was supposed to heighten the visitor's experience of the contrasts between dark and light, between sun and shade.

By performing outside, in this particular location with its history and concerns, a number of elements already participated in our performance even before dance and music had come into play: the garden's strong visuals and peculiar atmosphere, light and wind, the sound of the environment (mainly birds, trains and announcements through the loudspeakers of two nearby train stations) and of course the haikus with their own imagery and cultural background. Janine's movement vocabulary remained quite uninfluenced by all these stimuli. As usual she moved calmly and in a controlled way, drawing on archetypes of humanly possible movements like walking, standing, being on one leg, being on the floor, articulating torso and arms. Movements constituted only one part of her performance, which in this piece was marked by the constant change of how and as what she was perceived. There were long periods of stillness when she became part of the environment, emphasizing the visual experience of the performance. We were lucky to always perform on breezy evenings, so that the wind playing with Janine's bright orange costume became a strong element within the piece, especially during those moments of stillness. The haikus were scattered throughout the piece. Whenever Janine presented one of them – with a carrying, reciting voice – she suddenly turned into a narrator. Shortly after that her presence would change in such a way that she was perceived within the haiku's imagery world. Whatever surrounded her became the haiku's setting. She herself turned into the protagonist experiencing animals, nature, seasons, objects and emotions or - as described in her press release - evoking the imagination of the beings just mentioned. Her performance was improvised, only the haikus had been selected in advance. When and where she recited which one was a spontaneous decision, often engendered by a specific sound, a spatial setting, a physical sensation or a particular atmosphere of light.

The following Haikus were recited by Janine during the performance in an improvised order:

*In seinem Glase  
Der Goldfisch baß erstaunt blickt,  
Daß heute Herbst ist.*

*Vom leeren Hause  
Am Tore ruft die Grille  
Zur Abendsonne.*

*Im ersten Tau nun  
Dort, wo der Eber nachts schlief,  
Der Rasen aufsteht.*

*Auf kahles Astwerk  
Hat sich die Krähe niedergesetzt:  
Des Herbstes Abend.*

*Mit welchem Ernst mich  
Die Uferschnepfe ansah  
Am späten Abend.*

*Die Blüten fallen  
Auf beide Pferdeohren  
So sanft und ruhig.*

*Als ich mich umsaß,  
Der Mann, der grad vorbeiging,  
Schon lauter Nebel.*

*Wenn es nach mir geht,  
Verspätet sich die Lampe  
Am Frühlingsabend.*

*Im Abendlichte  
Schwebt durch die Gassenflucht doch  
Ein Pfauenauge!*

*Wo bei dem Regen  
Sie wohl noch hingehen will,  
Die Weinbergschnecke?*

*Ganz unerwartet  
Rief doch am Regentage  
Der graue Kuckuck.*

*Es hat mich erblickt  
Und macht ein saures Gesicht  
Die alte Kröte.*

*Räum doch den Platz dort  
Und laß mich Bambus pflanzen,  
Du, alte Kröte!*

*Zur Entengrütze  
Ein schwarzer, kleiner Falter  
Dort schaukelt, gaukelt.*

Der Abendwind schlägt  
Das Wasser an das Bein leis  
Dem grauen Reiher.

Ich hab nichts weiter  
Als meine Seelenruhe:  
O welche Kühle!

Verliebte Katzen  
Mit überlegenen Mienen  
Nach Hause gehen.

Wie Neid erregend  
Sich in die Stunde fügen  
Verliebte Katzen.

In Kyotos Straßen  
Duchstreift doch nachts der Kater  
Die Freudengasse.

Im Frühlingsregen  
Geschichten sich erzählend  
Gehn Schirm und Mantel.

Zum Licht der Funzel  
Im Abendregen hängen  
Die Trauerweiden.

„Tag, ach, Tag nachte,  
Nacht, ach, Nacht tage doch bald“,  
Die Frösche quaken.

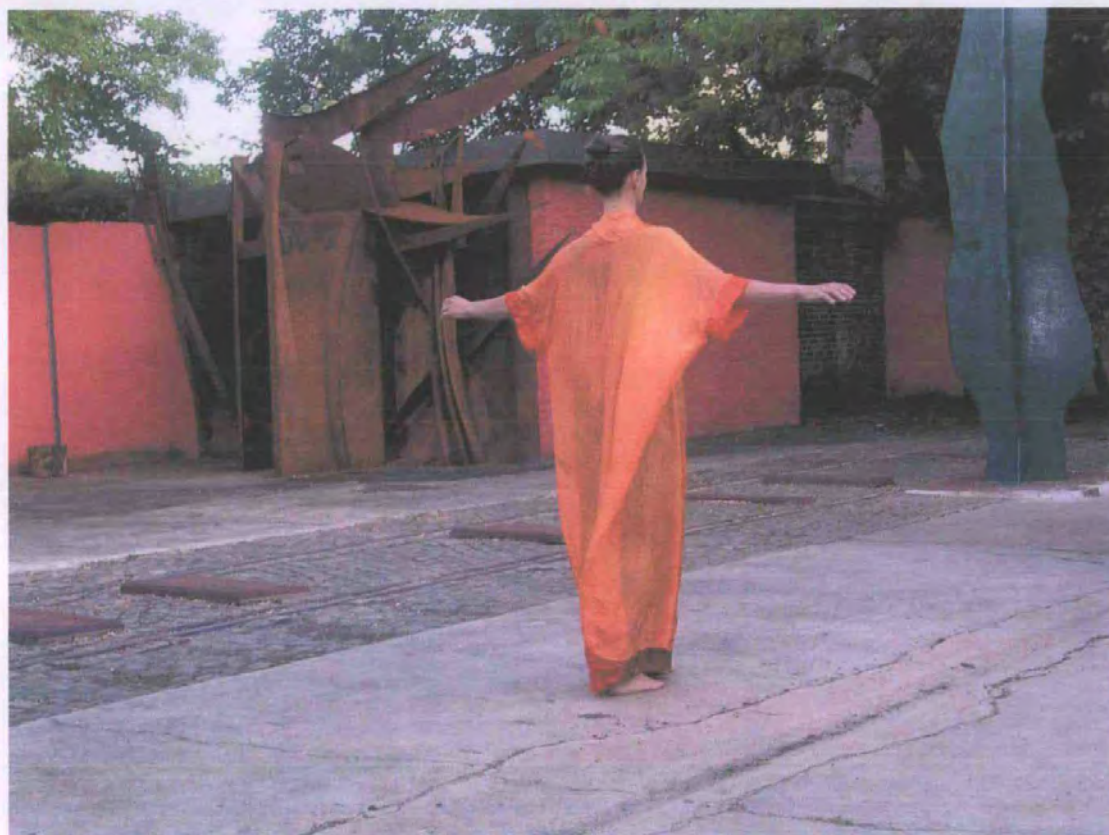
Bei meiner Klausur  
Der Teichfrosch von Anfang an  
Vom Alter quarte.

Es sprachen kein Wort  
Der Gast, der Hausherr und auch  
Die weiße Aster.

In aller Ruhe  
Blickt auf die Berge dorthin  
Die Feuerkröte.

Die Schlange schlich fort.  
Die Augen, die mich ansah,  
Sie blieben im Gras.

(Ulenbrook, 1995)



Illustrations Nos 21 - 22  
Janine Schneider performing *Für die Vögel*  
Photograph by Astor Schneider

## Music

When we met for our first rehearsal in the *Giardino Segreto*, we decided to run the piece in full length (ca. one hour) without a preplanned strategy of how music, dance and words should interrelate. As a point of departure I was going to use the cello material from *wer weiss*, but with the possibility to extend and vary it. In the course of the run I was overwhelmed by the vast number of elements already present – the visuals and acoustics of the surroundings, Janine's movements and voice as well as all the imagery suggested by the haikus. How to add yet another voice to this polyphony of voices? I didn't want my music to simply provide another layer or to illustrate the associations that were evoked by the words; also it shouldn't be a commentary on Janine's movements. Silence and stillness played such an important part in the piece that there was always a danger of doing too much, thus destroying it. At the same time I feared that if I was holding back too much, the music would be too weak and might seem superfluous. In order to find a coherent approach, I tried to identify my role in this performance and what quality of presence was needed from me, which I did more by experimenting during the rehearsals than through intellectual analysis. I found that there was a fine balance between all the elements as soon as I took long periods of time to be still and listen to the overall situation, intersecting my silence with "sound poems" that structurally bore a slight resemblance to the haikus.

Similarly to our way of being with each other in *Cello und Tanz*, each of us followed her own strand of activity, being aware of the other, but not communicating directly. Again I often didn't see Janine's movements and never thought about my acoustic utterances as music created in response to her dance. She treated my sounds as one of many components entering her world of imagination. There was no hierarchy between all the different elements that were part of this performance; we did not tie them together in any clear way. This asked the viewer for a paratactic mode of attention aiming at not understanding immediately and at staying open to finding relations, correspondences and insights in moments where one least expected them. This non-hierarchy of elements was enhanced by our spatial set-up: there was no stage, no space secluded for the performers. We used the whole garden. If the audience wanted to see us during the whole performance they had to move around.



What made this piece particularly interesting for me to perform were its many different qualities in the numerous moments of stillness. A stillness could comprise the flaring into appearance of the world of a specific haiku or Janine's contemplation of it. It could give rise to the enhanced perception of a strong visual moment or contain the afterimage of one of my sound poems. Often an absence of deliberate sound or movement from our side was a way to invite the audience to perceive the moment as it was created by the visuals of the garden, the light, the wind and the sounds of the environment.



Illustration No 23  
Janine Schneider and Ruth Wiesenfeld performing *Für die Vögel*  
Photograph by Astor Schneider

## 10.2.f PARCOURS DE REVE

a dance-like performance with live music, supported by the spoken word, integrated into a sculpture garden



Illustration No 24  
Invitation postcard PARCOURS DE REVE  
Photography: Ute Stephan

"the hands weighed down by heavy strings made of silver.  
Only going backwards resisted the vortex from underneath – on blue plateaus."

(Janine Schneider, translation from German: Ruth Wiesenfeld)

What seems to be a tour through an exhibition of art, during which a group of experts and visitors moves across the site, passing strange objects like the monster or the gigantic gate with view of the cypresses made by the artists group ODIIOUS, is the performance PARCOURS DE REVE.

What seems to be the fictive protocol of a dream – transposed in a weave made of dance and narration either directly addressing the viewer or presenting fragments of texts from the distance, embedded in a sound substance that never breaks off, overlaps the audience's state of being awake, demands for itself the status of reality.

(Janine Schneider, translated from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld)



*PARCOURS DE REVE*, our most recent collaboration, took place again in the *Giardino Segreto* (August 2007). In this piece Janine related to the sculptural objects scattered throughout the area by taking them as visual points of departure for sequences of dreams. She told these dreams either in a narrating, matter-of-fact way or in a condensed and poetic way, and explored their scenery within her physical performance. In between these sequences she led the audience through the garden like a guide, informed them about the course of the performance, pointed out certain sites to them and asked them to follow us along. *PARCOURS DE REVE* took place in the twilight. We started when it still was light and finished in the dark, which always made the ending very intimate as the audience had to come quite close when in spite of the disappearing light they still wanted to see Janine's movements. This way they were almost pulled into the dream, becoming participants or witnesses, the usual distance between audience and performer could not be maintained.

For me the entrance into *PARCOURS DE REVE* wasn't easy. The content of the dream sequences combined with the visual impressions of Janine's movements and the garden's atmosphere at nightfall set a distinct but ethereal tone. I thought that whatever I did might be too obtrusive and could easily ruin the delicate interplay of forces. But Janine insisted and so I was looking for a way to be firm in my presence, but inconspicuous and very subtle at the same time. This purpose reminded me of a poem by Margaret Atwood:

The air that inhabits you for a moment only...  
I want to be that unnoticed  
and that necessary

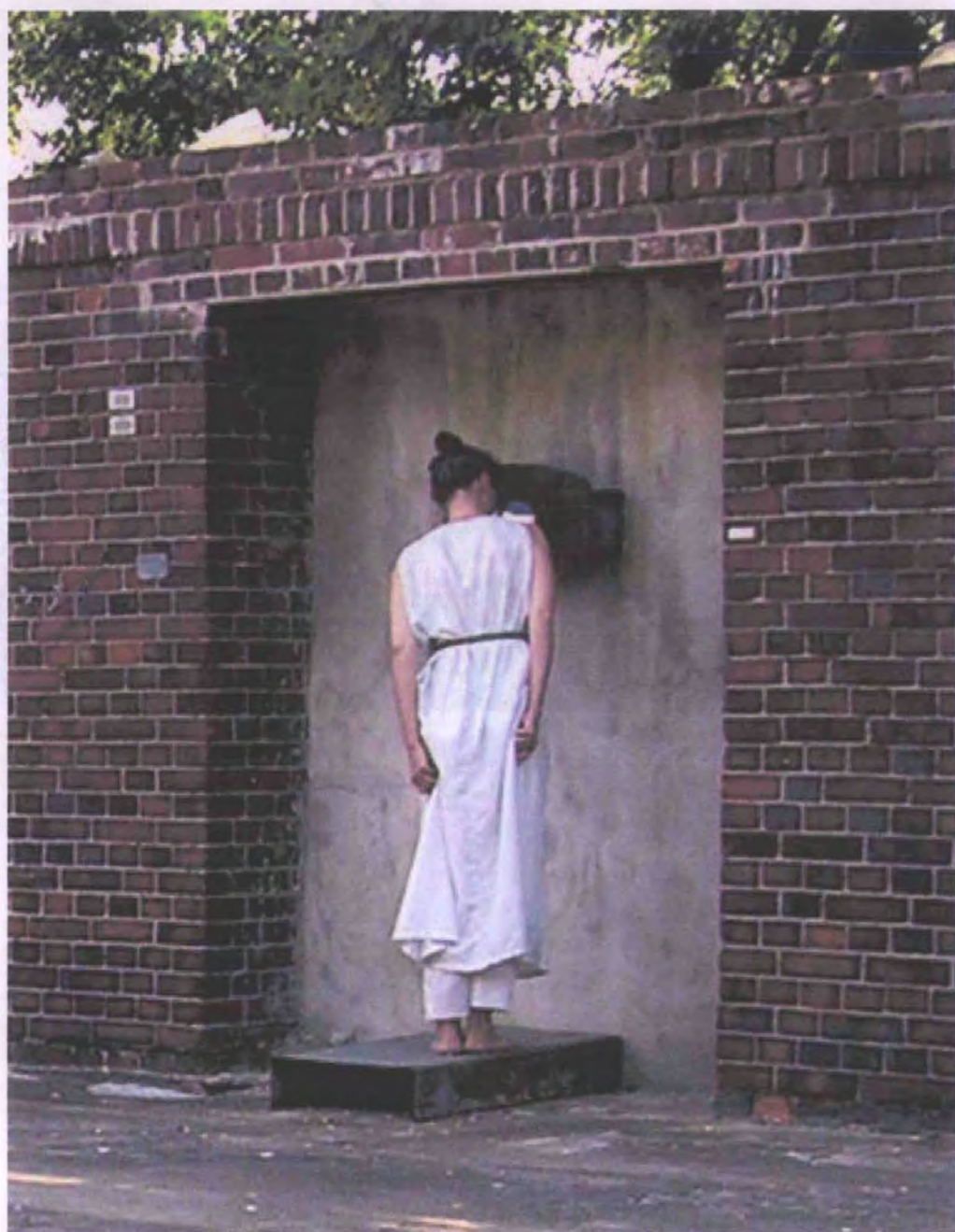
(from the poem *Variations on the word Sleep* by Margaret Atwood)

In the end I decided to use my accordion and chose one specific sound for each dream sequence, which I then sustained as long as the corresponding dream scene lasted. Sometimes I made changes within the dynamics, sometimes I didn't. My intention was to give each sequence its own oscillation frequency, to color the air in a different shade for each dream. In this performance I focused on the vibratory sensation of sound and thought of it as

bringing its medium and its surroundings into corresponding vibration, creating what is really a force field of acoustic energy.(Kittelson 1996 p33)

My intention simply was to find the frequency that was closest to what each dream sequence radiated and to turn it into sound - vibration of the air - in order to provide one more sensory channel for the audience to be drawn into what was happening. When Janine switched into her guiding mode, I walked with the audience to the next site, becoming part of the group. When she performed her dreams, I remained in one place, spatially related to her and became part of the dream scenery, apart from one sequence, where I walked along a wall outside of the garden, so that the audience couldn't see me, but heard the wandering sound.









Illustrations Nos 25-27  
Janine Schneider performing PARCOURS DE REVE  
Photographs by Astor Schneider

During our six performances I found it difficult to enter the mental state that was needed to fill material which is reduced in such a radical way with the appropriate quality of presence, giving all one's attention to the playing of one extended sound. What got in my way were worries regarding the expectations of the audience. I feared they might become very bored or even angry, maybe annoyed by the monotony of the long sounds. Had we had a large, enthusiastic audience my worries might have subsided, but the evenings were quite cold, sometimes there was even rain, and only very few people attended, and all of them did not always stay. Also the fact that I don't really know how to play the accordion in a conventional way must have contributed to my insecurity. Even though the simplicity of my material was a choice, it was a choice from a very small amount of possibilities. Had I done something similar on the piano, I might have felt more secure, as in that case I could have easily played something else. Nevertheless I still think that I chose the right approach for this specific setting and wonder what lies at the heart of my inner conflicts. I assume that to reduce the experience of sound to its vibratory sensation was going one step too far for my personal aesthetic and artistic concerns, especially in a collaboration with Janine who regards her pieces as fields of meditation. Her concern is of a spiritual nature; in her performances she is looking for tranquillity of mind and a form of enlightenment. The main aim of her artistic work is to place something salutary against the fixation on worldly pain which in her opinion constitutes most forms of contemporary theatre. What I find problematic in this approach is that it aims at putting the audience in a specific state of consciousness, which gives the work a manipulative quality in spite of all its subtlety. In our former collaborations I had not perceived this as a difficulty, but here I think it was the reason why I wasn't at ease with my performance. The nature of the experience that my sounds were aiming at was too close to the exclusive and at times rigid aspect of Janine's work, with which I do not agree. In a different context I might have had no problem with this extreme reduction.

## **11. spun yarn**

### **11.1 spun yarn (origins)**

Immediately after the performances of *PARCOURS DE REVE* I began to work on *spun yarn* for orchestra (September 2007). To write an orchestral piece had been one of the challenges I wanted to face within my PhD research, as I was curious to see how my approach, which is so concerned with the individual musician, would hold up when confronted with a large group of players. To write it at this point in time – after my fascination regarding sound had temporarily been reduced to an absorption in vibration and beats – was a welcome occasion to widen my field of curiosity again. During one of my stays at Dartington I had met Richard Gonski, the conductor of the Torbay Symphony Orchestra - a regional non-professional orchestra committed to performing not only standard orchestral repertoire, but contemporary works as well. He offered me the opportunity to write a piece for them. I don't know if I would have taken on the challenge of such a large scale work without knowing that the result was actually going to be performed. The prospect of writing for this orchestra had been in the back of my mind throughout my research period, but for a long time there was no impulse strong enough to prompt me to put my plan into action. I finally felt the need to write for an ensemble of this size when I realised that one of my former compositions – *the fisher of pearls* which I had composed in 2005 for male speaker, clarinet, trombone, cello and bowed piano – needed to be rewritten, because I wasn't happy with its original version.

### **11.2 the fisher of pearls**

The initial impulse for the work on *the fisher of pearls* was the personality of the speaker for whom the piece was written: a story-teller and an exact, sensitive observer whose gaze does not intrude but causes to emerge; a gaze of wonder, surprise and slight estrangement at times, turning poetic by the distance it maintains in spite of its empathy and deep involvement. So the starting point for this piece was not an image, but the quality of a gaze; not a phenomenon, but a certain way of perceiving, which nevertheless needed something to

be directed at in order to become noticeable in performance. After various deliberations of what this gaze might be turned to, I finally chose the obvious as the subject of the speaker's observations: the musicians and the world of sound they engendered. I then collected words and phrases that I associated with the perception of sound, whereby the specific quality of the speaker's perceptiveness was very present and had a strong impact on the choices I made. When as a next step I arranged a selection of these text fragments into what later became the first of nine stanzas, I did so with a musical mind, considering the speaker's voice with its own texture, rhythm and melody. The words of the first stanza appear again and again in the following stanzas, but in different combinations each time, giving rise to new images and slightly varied rhythms – although the metre of the first stanza is retained as a rhythmic basis. As the piece continues the heard image-world takes on a life of its own and more words are added gradually, so that the final stanza hints at story.

Then the music was to come about – a music whose poetic, evocative description had a prior temporal existence. On no account did I want a reverse illustration, i.e. now to devise the sound colours and textures that the text had associatively described. Instead I asked myself what the impulse for the musicians' playing could be and what quality of presence would justify the text. As an inner stance I had in mind a kind of harkening for them – a mode of attention very similar to the narrator's perceptiveness. A listening to what is coming about in the present moment.

All interpreters listen to themselves while playing, yet in the course of rehearsals they will have developed a particular idea of the sound. The ideal sound is already present in the imagination before playing, so the listening of the interpreter is aimed at comparing the tonal result with the imagined ideal. But in *the fisher of pearls* (similarly to *wer weiss*) I wanted to make the listening itself audible – not to think of the sound as the goal, but as the result of the sensory contact with the instrument. Not as expression, but as an extension of one's physical being in a state of highest perceptiveness. This approach had the following compositional consequences: the parts for clarinet and cello became microtonal, as the semitone seemed to me to be too wide for a searching, tentative intention. I saw the parts for the clarinetist and

the trombonist as a tonal colouring of the breath, and for this reason they also play while breathing in. The physical relationship to the piano – via the fingertips and keys – was to my mind not intimate enough for the concerns of this piece, so I used the technique of the “bowed piano”: two players vibrate the strings inside the instrument with bow hair or fishing line. The volume is around piano throughout the piece. The musicians should use a minimum of force in order to retain a maximum of sensitivity. Language and music are connected through a clear, steady pulse. This pulse is obligatory for the speaker, even though the delivery of the language is subject to his own idiosyncratic diction. Regarding the spatial arrangement in performance I imagined the musicians all very close together, the speaker standing separate, observing, maybe walking.

*The fisher of pearls* hasn't been performed yet, and when I looked at the score again about one year after it had been written I wasn't happy with the musical landscape that I had created for the text. It seemed too written out and – perhaps caused by my fear to be too illustrative – not imaginative enough in its sound world. Also I had the feeling that I had been over concerned with the metric interplay between music and spoken text, which had caused me to create a structural trestle too rigid to engender the particular quality of the speaker's gaze mentioned above. I now thought that a larger ensemble might be much more suitable, as it would not only provide me with a bigger choice of colours and textures, but also present a wider projection area for the speaker's perception. I had wanted to carve out his sense of wonder and his associations at the sight of a group of people going about their activity of producing sound and I assumed that an ensemble as large as an orchestra would supply a more adequate stimulus for this purpose than the four players I had employed in the original score. So I decided to write a new version of this piece for the Torbay Symphony Orchestra.



### 12.3 spun yarn - continuation

In the very beginning of the working process I juggled ideas regarding dispersing the musicians in space. I imagined them split up in several ensembles not confined to the stage, but spread out throughout the hall with the speaker walking in between the different groups and the conductor somewhere in the middle. The audience was going to be seated at the four walls, surrounding the event. Yet when I started to develop first sketches, I realized that through the division in small ensembles my thinking again was too detailed. I was fiddling about with a way to assemble the different groups and the speaker instead of creating an independent and generous sound world for the text to relate to. So I revisited my original intention to make the listening itself audible and to think about sound as the result of the musicians' sensory contact to their instruments and as an extension of their physical being in a state of highest perceptiveness. In order to enable them to be in that state I wanted to produce a score that would precisely tell them what to play and at the same time invite them to engage their physical, sensory and auditory awareness in the most comprehensive way possible. It was my intention to design a landscape of sound, where the playing would be placed in the realm of experience. I assumed that if the musicians were able to listen to what emerged in the present moment as an overall sound, instead of striving for an ideal ensemble and in doing so remained aware of the physical and sensorial aspects of their playing, the orchestra would be able to consist of individuals rather than of a mass of players. I conceived of the orchestra here as a large ensemble, as a vast number of vibrating sound sources, not as an orchestra in the traditional sense with all its history and implications. I regarded the instruments not so much as means to produce sound, but rather as objects with secret possibilities, from which one could lure out a particular tone when applying the adequate touch.

Suddenly in this process of thought I encountered difficulties regarding the role of the narrator, the role of the observer. One problem here was again the text and the impossibility to remain unrestricted regarding my choices of sound given my concern not to re-illustrate the acoustic imagery evoked by the words. Yet something else, I suppose, was at the core of the trouble: this piece and its original version – *the fisher of pearls* – were not the only

compositions of mine in which a figure like this narrator/observer occurred. Similar figures were also present in *wer weiss* and *manourney* – as described earlier in this text – and in the composition *Akt – the particularity of nakedness*, which will be discussed in chapter No. 14 *SZENARIEN*. I now realized that in all these pieces I had been very concerned with the musicians' absorption in the activity of playing, with their listening and their physical involvement with the instrument, but had never let this mode of performing stand on its own. In order to call it into question or to give it a context, which would justify it, create a distance to it or a cause of friction, I had taken to include another persona and/or the spoken word, as for example in *I name you*. I suppose this approach was caused by conflicting attitudes within myself – as if I had feared that the particular performance mode I was looking for would only be perceived as such in the face of another.

In the case of *the fisher of pearls* and its orchestral version it became clear to me then, that the attitude of wonder regarding sound and the way it is brought into being, which I had ascribed to the narrator, was the attitude that I should take on myself within my own compositional thinking, as this is the attitude that really lies at the heart of both my artistic and general interests – a "listening in wonder", a poetic listening:

Listening poetically means listening in wonder, like a child. (...) The poet John Keats used the phrase, "negative capability". It occurs when a person is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries and doubts, without an irritable reaching after fact and reason. (...) Listening poetically means not being set. It means not being fettered in expectations or needs for certain known ideas or feelings. Most difficult of all, it means not even demanding a meaning or theme that can be verbalized or understood. (...) poetic listening is poised and alert. It is willing to receive and wonder in a naïve way. Poetic listening requires the naked and hairy ears of the animal, who hears acutely, who knows the survival value of sounds and silences. It requires the ears of the youngest Dummeling in fairy tales, by definition under-rated, who knows how to listen to the surprising, to the underside. Poetic listening is inescapably open, as inescapably open as conductive hearing through bone and skin (Kittelson 1996 p.53).

So I decided to incorporate this attitude into the composition and thus to let go of the figure of the narrator/observer and of the spoken text. I did however keep the text and its acoustic associations as starting point for my compositional thinking.

In what way is this "listening in wonder" different from all the other attitudes of listening one could take on in composing? It takes nothing for granted and listens to each sound as if

hearing it for the very first time. It remains open for all the different ways in which 'sound' can be perceived. Listening in wonder means letting oneself being touched by the pure experience of listening - before meaning or association - being touched by knowing of the existence of another through sound.

The call to listen is the complete addressing to another subject: it places the physical contact between these two subjects above everything else: It creates the transfer: "*Listen to me*" means: *touch me, know that I exist* (Barthes, 1990, p.255, translated from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld).

This kind of listening in composing also acknowledges that when we share a space with acoustic vibrations our bodies are caused to resonate:

...apparently music can cross the distance from one body (interpreter) to another one (listener) in a particularly immediate way: because it is transmitted through air, through vibrating waves and sets the bodies involved vibrating through these rhythms and waves. Resonance – crucial musical phenomenon in which the thought of a body is always already included (Mahrenholz) [2002] [approximately five screens] (translated from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld).

To conceive of sound in this manner when composing directs my attention to the way a sound is physically present in space, to how it travels through the air and physically meets with the listener. Before thinking of anything else, this makes me consider what kind of touch I want to create – a very direct and basic approach: "I call it simplicity, the way matter is smooth and alone." (Dillard 1988, p.13) This approach also has to do with trust: trusting that the experience of one sound, played in the appropriate way, can be rich enough for a listener and does not need to be reinforced or commented on in order to catch someone's interest.

The biggest imprint that this approach had on my work on *spun yarn* was that I did not censor the acoustic imagery coming to my mind when reading the text, but looked for the most direct way to make them audible. Hereby the sound and the image of a bowed piano string predominated my very first considerations. It seemed like an immediate translation of my concern with how acoustic sources are put into vibration, are kept in vibration or are prevented from vibrating and it emphasized the haptic element involved in playing an instrument in a very visual way. I liked the fact that the sound of the string is hard to control,

as this element of uncertainty would call for an especially careful listening from the other musicians. Further I perceived the bowed piano as a perfect means to convey the imagery of the first line of the text: "a sound escaping into the night as in a touch you didn't know existed".

The bowed piano (with two players), two timpani and a vibraphone, constitute the central group of players in *spun yarn*. I conceive of them as a trio that continuously moves through the piece like a river of ongoing, slowly transforming sound. Sometimes we hear only one of them; sometimes they overlap. When designing the parts for timpani and vibraphone I was mainly focusing on resonance, on all the nuances in between *secco* and *laissez vibrer*. Corresponding to the bowed piano, the vibraphone is often played arco. The parts of timpani and vibraphone are related in their extended use of tremolo. Regarding the piece's unfolding over time, I imagined a crystalline wandering through iridescent textures, nurtured by the idea that within the trio's resonant viscosity a wide band of sound was ever present, which at times would be fanned out by the other instruments of the orchestra or illuminated in one of its aspects only.

As I had not written for orchestra before and wasn't familiar with the sound world and possibilities of all the instruments, I tried to meet with as many musicians as possible, described to them what I had in mind and asked them to play sounds (plain or involving extended techniques) for me that they thought would suit my endeavour. Knowing that most of the performers playing in the Torbay Symphony Orchestra are non professional or semi professional musicians, I only considered sounds that a good amateur would be comfortably able to play. Simultaneously with this process of collecting sounds, I wrote a "sound diary", a sketchbook in which I notated verbal descriptions of acoustic moments and atmospheres; for example:

space, calmness  
moving towards a centre

something very deep  
something very high  
the space in between

The trio: they merge into one another. Anything else illuminates the edges, adds a shimmer, changes the depth of focus, interrupts, emphasizes, creates friction, becomes blurred. Nothing else.

Within the sound world of *spun yam* and also in its notation I was looking for precision, but a kind of precision that nevertheless eludes control and allows for a certain indefiniteness. This concern is revealed mainly in the timing of the piece. There is no fixed duration for most of the events, instead either the players or the conductor decide to move on or to enter whenever the moment seems right. Again – similarly to the awareness of each other that is required in *Hautfelder* – the performers have to take responsibility for the final shape of the piece and thus need to listen and to respond to each other very carefully. I chose a form of notation that combines both graphic and conventional elements. The graphic elements are mainly employed to indicate the continuation of extended notes, tremolos and trills. They do not replace the role of the conventional notation – pitch, volume and approximate speed are still given in standard terms. I could have notated the whole score conventionally, but I decided to employ these graphic elements as well because they had formed the basic material for my first sketches and strongly determined how I conceived of this piece's sounding gestalt. Consequently I saw them as the most immediate way to communicate my conception to the performers. Each page of the score refers to one stanza of the text, which is written on it, but as it says in the instructions "it describes the imagery of the piece's sound world and is only included to suggest what the textures and colors refer to. It is not to be spoken or to be read aloud. It refers to the overall sound, not to specific instruments." The spatial layout of the text is different on each page of the score as I wanted to give each sheet its own visual form corresponding to each stanza's particular strand of imagery. I chose this form as a response to the spatial arrangement given by the notation of the music, not as illustration of the literal content. The performers play from the score, not from extracted parts, as they need to be aware of the whole in order to find the specific state of perceptiveness I am aiming at here.

## 12. To spun yarn from sans le dire

At the very beginning of this research project I had wanted to deal with the notion of disappearance. Above all I had been interested then in the apparently paradoxical starting point of a compositional process intending to direct the perception of the listener to that which no longer exists, or ceases to exist in the moment of hearing. A music that disappears on appearance, whose appearance is disappearance. Thinking about disappearance and appearance led to thinking about presence and absence, about exposure and concealment. I came to the conclusion that for my purposes the sound would have to embody the "in between" – the veil, the trace – that which gives us to understand that something was present, but is no longer perceptible in its original form.

It then became clear that within the paradox I wanted to use as the starting point of my compositional thought process were some fundamental aspects of artistic creation. In artistic activity the imagination plays an important role: the possibility, in our own thought-world, of giving rise to something that does not yet exist, and then – in reality – of enabling it to be experienced sensorially. The complexity of this process increases as soon as the concept of disappearance comes into play. Giving a thought a perceptible existence is then only the first step; the next must be to conceal, to re-veil, to return to the world of thought what has just been brought to life. A continual balancing act on the threshold of existence – the simultaneousness of "not yet" and "no longer".

It was exactly this fragile state, continually becoming and fading away, that I wished to investigate. I became more and more involved with the notion of the imagined, the "as if", the fleeting moment, in which the attention fluctuates between several modes of perception. It became clear to me then that what I was looking for was not to be found in the sound itself but in its producers, the musicians.

The musicians' bodies are the field in which, during the performance, all of the above takes place simultaneously. They are continually on the threshold between imagined and

sensorially experienced sound. They embody the intention of the composer, i.e. slip like actors into roles allocated from outside. The energetic states of the musical material are a consequence of energetic states in their own bodies. They function as translators, intermediaries. How far do they remain hidden behind this role, disappear behind the music to give expression to something other? Where do they reveal themselves, expose themselves? How are their bodies perceived by the audience? Purely visually or also kinaesthetically? Does how they use their bodies influence the reception of the music? And above all in what ways do the composition and the composer's intention contribute to a potential presence in the performer? What kind of emotional, mental and physical approaches to the piece and to the audience does a composition suggest, enable and let resonate?

### **13. sans le dire**

The very first composition in which I dealt with these questions, *sans le dire* for solo marimba, (written in January 2004) arose as a commission from the Italian percussionist Luigi Gaggero. It was a happy chance that he asked me to write a solo for him just as I was intending, for the above-mentioned reasons, to make the body of the musician the starting point of a composition. I had already heard and seen him in several performances. Although he is a brilliant musician, I always left his concerts with a slight sense of irritation. Why? Everything in his performance seemed perfectly choreographed - the way he walked towards his instrument whilst lifting the sticks, his facial expression mimicking the music's emotional connotations, even his breathing, each gesture. Not only choreographed, but calculated. The strongest impression I was left with afterwards was of distance; what I perceived above all was his interpreting mind. Both his presence and the sounds remained somewhat bodiless. To break through this distance, to bring him out from behind the perfection that to me had the effect of a mask, became the basic idea of the piece I was to write for him.

I knew that Luigi often conceives of sound not as coming into existence out of silence, but as preparing and colouring the silence to come after it has been played. In a somewhat similar

approach I produced a large amount of tonal material thinking about how its notation would be able to withstand erasure (i.e. rubbing it out, but not completely). I wrote several scores, then intertwined them with one another, only to delete the result almost entirely. What stood up to this process – the trace that emerged from the meagre remains – became the actual composition. Going from there I wrote a conventional score, which does not reveal the way it came into being. I wanted the material of this trace to be treated for what it is, not as the result of an obliteration.

The sound material originally arose from the idea of physical gestures. This was at the heart of my deliberations; the notion of extinction related to finding a form rather than to creating the tonal substance. With a percussion instrument in particular physical movement must take place before the sound can appear; if a sound is created by striking an instrument, the musician has to raise an arm and let it fall again to produce a tone. So in *sans le dire* I thought of the sound as the audible end of a movement. In this piece the various movement qualities alternate rapidly and require the player to veer continually between very different somatic intensities. At times there is silence when these alternations take place, but a silence in which a great deal happens: what has just been played fades away; the body of the musician remains in the corresponding state; the player must then select the right moment to alternate and find the impulse for what is to follow within himself. These exposed moments of transition between different modes of somatic intensity are intended to make the performance more transparent – to allow the musician to be observed struggling with requirements instead of presenting the mask of perfection. I wanted this struggle, the mental effort of a performance, to be visible to the audience.

The piece evokes a force which is never allowed to fully break out. It has an aura of resistance, which I assume is brought forth both through the compositional process of deletion, and through unwieldy passages that restrict the flow of movement. The reaction of the percussionist to these passages was very interesting: he didn't want to play the piece to me until he could perform it effortlessly. I explained that this was neither necessary nor desirable, as I was concerned with exactly this effort and that he should allow himself to be



observed making it. He replied that he would be happy to act the struggle in performance, but only once he had gained complete control over these passages – an approach that of course contradicts my intentions entirely. For reasons of time and spatial distance (Luigi lives in France and Italy now) we have not yet been able to rehearse. The first performance is planned for autumn 2008.

## **14. SZENARIEN**

### **14.1 SZENARIEN – Introduction**

*Sans le dire* is a very personal response to the request of a musician to write for him, a reaction to his specific stage presence. To further explore the above-described complex of questions compositionally, I decided to write a series of pieces that would approach the subject from different angles. This gave rise to the project *SZENARIEN* for male and female speaker, trombone, clarinet, two cellos, piano, accordion and a dancer. It consists of seven pieces that vary in their instrumentation from solo to almost the whole ensemble. *SZENARIEN* is designed as an evening-length production, but - besides two - each of the pieces also can exist independently. Each composition is based on its own quasi-scenic constellation, which determines the particular quality of the performers' presence. The whole cycle explores the question of what it is that sets a body in motion and how the acoustic results of those impulses may sound. I do not regard this project as musical theatre, but I was aware of creating personas and inevitably also some kind of narrative when I laid out the order of pieces, their instrumentation, concerns and atmospheres. There has not yet been a possibility to perform *SZENARIEN* as a whole. If it ever was staged, I would carefully design exits and entrances, transitions and lighting, thus placing it somewhere within the ambiguous area between concert and theatre. The focus here lies on the audience's oscillation of perception between the actual experience of sound and all the various parameters that are involved in its production.

If I had the possibility to stage *SZENARIEN* now – about one and a half years after I completed it – I might alter a few of my original plans. Some of the ideas must be tried in rehearsal before I can actually say if they work or not. In the following I will describe how I envisioned a performance of *SZENARIEN* when I was actually working on the project (from February 2004 until September 2006). Where my vision of the lighting is clear, I will mention it; where it is not, I won't. This description is an outline, not yet a definite version. Nevertheless, I regard it as important to provide a record of the intentions that I had at that time in order to demonstrate how my compositional attitude has shifted since then.

The composition *I name you* for speaking and singing trombonist – discussed in the very beginning of this thesis – serves as an opening, as an overture to *SZENARIEN*. Only the trombonist is present, there is a spotlight on him (not too bright), the rest of the stage is in the dark. When *I name you* is over, the two speakers and the pianist (female) enter the stage, the lighting changes to an overall, cold, bright light and with a piercing, fast passage *Akt – the particularity of nakedness* begins.

## **14.2 Akt – the particularity of nakedness**

For the origins of *Akt* for trombonist, pianist and two speakers (male and female), written in 2003, a particular psycho-physical state was decisive: an obsessive, biting pitilessness. This is reflected musically in extreme pitches, volumes above forte, endless repetitions (above all in the piano part) and a coarse, unadorned musical language. Physically the piece requires considerable strength and stamina. First I only wrote the music; it was supposed to be a duet, no text or speakers involved. Yet, after completing this version I realised that in its raw intensity I couldn't have it performed without an extra-musical context. Why? In my view, the music of *Akt* is too one-dimensional to create a listening space of the sort that I am interested in. It arose from a desire to use physical power in playing and to create high volume – the listeners have the choice to either become involved with it or not, according to their states of mind; there is no in between.

The obsessiveness of the musical material and its stripped down style reminded me of the underlying cruel atmosphere and the sparse language used in Marguerite Duras' novel *Blue Eyes, Black Hair*. It tells about a young woman, recently abandoned by her lover, who in a northern French beach cafe meets a man grieving for the same man as her, whom he saw once, but never spoke to. He pays her to spend the nights with him under the condition that she lets him watch her in her sleep. So she goes with him and night after night lies in a bare room, underneath a harsh light bulb, naked, covering her face with a black silk square. The language employed in the novel creates a great distance between its characters and the reader. At intervals an italicized passage in the text thrusts their situation into a darkened theater. An "actor" gives stage directions to the man and woman on reading their lines as if this was a drama and the readers were spectators. I chose a few of those lines and placed them in between passages of the music. In a performance of *Akt – the particularity of nakedness* the text should be spoken in either French or German. I have not yet found an English translation that conveys the harsh atmosphere of the original French version well enough. The two speakers, a man and a woman, deliver their text neutrally. In contrast to the strong physical exertions of the instrumentalists their presence seems almost indifferent. They stand near the audience, in front of the musicians, their distanced attitude veiling the great intensity of the players. *The hall would darken, the piece would begin.* (Duras: 1986, p.21, translation of this and the following quote from French by Ruth Wiesenfeld) is the first spoken sentence after an opening musical passage.

Later the text speaks of actors, of protagonists and of exposure in dazzling light. Music and language are kept clearly separate from one another in *Akt*, their reciprocal influence occurs exclusively on the level of content. The role of musicians in this imaginary theatre piece – as actors, protagonists or perhaps none other than as musicians – the reason for their playing and the function of the music – accompaniment, non-verbal statement or activity of the performers – is called into question by the text and left unanswered.

Concerning the story's protagonists, one actor would say, one would neither know who they are nor why they were chosen. (ib. p.61)

The text used in *Akt – the particularity of nakedness* deprives the musicians' presence in this performance of its implicitness and destroys the possible unity of a musical experience for the listeners. There is the phenomenon of music in its self-referentiality, but through the suggestion of a theatrical setting and the uncertainty regarding the roles of the four performers it cannot be experienced as such in this piece. Instead the audience's focus is made to fluctuate between a plurality of modes of perception. Most likely the perception of their own process of perceiving will be in the foreground of the audience's awareness rather than the actual music. In providing this context for the music of *Akt* I created the distance that I thought was necessary for the listening experience (see above). It seemed to me that through this setting I had created a variety of entrances to the harshness of the music, to its loudness and obsessive energy.

When I read *Blue Eyes, Black Hair* again at a later point I was struck by a passage towards the end of the novel, which expresses the protagonists' concern with having been the centre of focus throughout the piece and thus reminded me of my hesitation to let the music in *Akt* claim undivided attention:

The audience grows still and looks towards the silence, towards the protagonists. The actor points to them with his eyes. The protagonists are still exposed in the intense light on the brink of the river of light. They lie prone, their faces turned towards the audience. As if they were deeply dismayed at the silence. They look towards the hall, the outside, the reading, the sea. Their gaze is frightened, distressed, always guilty, as they have been the subject of the general attention, both for the actors on stage and for the audience in the hall. (ib. p.149)

After the performance of *Akt* the stage light is dimmed; all but the male speaker leave the stage and the cellist (male) enters. Together they perform *wer weiss I* (see the corresponding chapter) - a very fragile and fragmented moment within this cycle. Again musician and music are called into question, but this time the questions are directly addressed to the player, an answer is to be found within his playing: he plays in spite of the doubts expressed, which do not change what he is doing; he remains encapsulated in his tentative dialogue with the instrument.

Documentation of the première in *Kunstverein Landshut* is enclosed as audio recording on CD 2 (track 3) and as video on DVD 3, file "aktmovie" (please double-click to open).

### 14.3 Lichtungen

The two men exit, the female speaker, the accordion player and the clarinettist enter (ideally they are all female). I conceived of *Lichtungen* as of three female monologues taking place simultaneously - one of them being linguistic, the other two musical. All three are oriented to the same mental images. The text, highly rhythmical, in lyric form, disjointed and associative, seems to pour unstoppably from the speaker. I tried to capture thoughts and images here in the very first moment of their emergence, before sense and meaning are formed.

When *Lichtungen* was performed at a festival in Berlin in June 2006, the woman I had had in mind as a speaker cancelled at very short notice. I could not find a replacement for her, so I had no choice but to speak the text myself. As I had no experience with using my voice in a performance, I asked the director and dramaturge Paul Baierdorf to assist me in the rehearsals. He suggested not to access the text like an actress, thus not to think about the psychological and emotional aspects of the text at all, but to approach the words like a musician would do – setting a rhythm, speed, pitch and inflection, considering phrasing and volume. Further he pointed my attention to the physical activity involved in speaking – for example breathing and the movements of tongue, jaw, lips and diaphragm. He did not ask me to move in any special way, only suggested that I be aware of what was physically taking place - *to think of speech not as an extension of the mind, but as a function of the body* (Auster 2001 p.176) Similarly to my own concerns in *sans le dire* he wished to see the effort involved in the production of sound and also to perceive the corporeal materiality of my voice.

The beginning and end of the fifteen individual stanzas are set. The temporal connection between clarinet and accordion is fully composed, but in the course of each stanza text and music – apart from a few exceptional moments – move independently of one another. This leaves room for the speaker's individual prosody, which might slightly vary from performance to performance. Music and words are composed in a way that if the speaker takes the musicians' tempo as basis for her own speed, the temporal relationship between the text and the instruments will naturally fall into place. As an impulse for the instrumental voices I looked

for an inner necessity similar to the one that served as source for the text. I treated each of the two voices as a solo, thinking about them as verbal monologues. For the texture of the piece I wanted a quivering present, non-directional or going astray in all directions at once. The music was to provide support for the inner disunity of the text – despite sharing a similar emotional energy – like a skin drawn taut over opposing forces. In contrast to *Akt* and *wer weiss*, music and language arise from the same impulse in *Lichtungen*. They are interwoven like a monologue that exists in three linguistic versions and is spoken simultaneously by three different figures. At times the text can be understood, at times it is swallowed up by the music. This approach once again aims at the oscillation of the audience's attention with the intention to let their mode of perception fluctuate between the linguistic-semantic and the musical-poetic layers of the words. Originally I thought that the three performers should stand close to one another, almost in a line, the two musicians at the sides, the speaker in the middle. However, when we performed it, the acoustics of the space were so difficult that we were forced to place the speaker as far from the other performers as possible or else nobody would have been able to hear the text. A printout of the words is provided during the performance, so that whoever wants to may read along.

Within the cycle of *SZENARIEN Lichtungen* is one of the most immediate pieces. This threefold monologue pours out like a stream of consciousness; here for once neither the text nor the music are called into question, commented on or observed by the intruding gaze of another. Also the following section – *wer weiss II* for two cellists and one dancer – is designed to provide a kind of unity within the audience's perception of it.

#### **14.4 wer weiss II**

The trio exits, two cellists enter – the one who had played *wer weiss I* before and another one (male or female) who had not yet appeared. Both perform the *wer weiss* material. This section has not been performed or rehearsed so far. It only exists as part of *SZENARIEN*. As the exact form of the duet will be worked out in rehearsal by experimenting with various structures, I cannot say much more at this point about how the two cellists relate, but in order

to give an example of how I imagine the sound, an edited version of a short improvisation is included in my portfolio as audio-recording (CD 1, track 2). As the cellists play, a dancer (preferably Janine) will enter from stage left and will cross the stage quite at the back until she exits stage right. Within this short passage she will perform as she did in the project *Cello und Tanz* (see the corresponding chapter) – as if, whilst the cello material unfolds in the dialogue with a second musician – her presence took over from the figure of the observer who appeared in *wer weiss I* and replaced his disrupting gaze with an attitude of involvement and responsiveness. This is the dancer's only appearance in the whole cycle. I imagine her presence here as shadowy and inconspicuous. At the end of *SZENARIEN* one might even have forgotten that she ever appeared.

*Wer weiss II* will be followed by *the fisher of pearls* and its observing, yet imaginary gaze of wonder and openness.

## 14.5 open-close

When *the fisher of pearls* has ended, everyone exits but the accordionist who remains on stage to perform *open-close* (written in 2006). I perceived of *open-close* as a pendant to *I name you*. Towards the end of *SZENARIEN* I wanted to juxtapose its opening piece with another instrumental solo involving the performer's speaking and singing. The particular combination of voice and accordion obviously is strongly suggestive of chanson, but the singing I had in mind here has nothing to do with the notion of artistic song. Instead the use of voice in *open-close* is connected in a playful way to the notion of incantation – a ritualistic use of supposedly magic words.

When I was thinking about a text for *open-close* I had a strong memory of the words "comme si" – as if – written in large letters, framing the rest of the words on the fourth page of Mallarmé's *Un Coup de Dés*. Why they sprung to my mind then I cannot explain exactly, but I will try to disentangle the complex net of associations that supposedly lead to this sudden flashback. This "as if", this indication of mimesis, of a different reality implying the notion of



play had come to my mind previously when I was considering possible motivations for musical utterance: immersing oneself into the universe of a piece of music in order to become something else – e.g. to slip into a fictive character's skin as described earlier in the chapter on *manourney*. But this "as if" also hints at the creative aspect of play in general –

a playing that takes place in order not to be utterly exposed to the world, but to place worlds at its side which one has created oneself (K. Lorenz in the symposium *Kulturelle Dialoge I*, Akademie der Künste Berlin, May 7, 2004. Translation from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld.)

The creation of these worlds entails the designing of patterns, laws and rules specifically for them, which also plays an important part in ceremonial and ritualistic operations as for example in an incantation (the original subject of *open-close*).

Bearing all this in mind, I read *Un Coup de Dés* once again and found my attention caught by the two capitalised and italicised phrases "c'était" (it was) and "ce serait" (it would be) on the poem's seventh page (Hausmann, Mandelsloh, Staub, eds. 1978 p.240). Regarding my composition I was interested in their sound and rhythm as well as in their transitory character, their suggestion of future and past, but not of the present moment itself. The space in between these two words encapsulated for me the moment in between the opening and the closing of the accordion, the moment when inhalation turns into exhalation, the moment when transformation takes place. To complete the cycle of becoming and ceasing, as well as for rhythmical reasons, I added the phrases "jamais" (never), "jamais encore" (never again) and "pas encore" (not yet).

Regarding the relation of music and words I imagined a game designed around the coincidence of a certain word and a certain musical element similar to a game girls play tearing the petals out of a flower: each petal is accompanied by the alternating words "he loves me" or "he loves me not". The words that go with the last petal uncover the truth. In *open-close* a phrase to be played on the accordion goes with the spoken phrase "c'était, ce serait, jamais, jamais encore, pas encore" - an ascending line (e, f sharp, g, a sharp, b) with the notes held until they build a chord to which vibrato is added. The introduction of this material in part A is followed by part B where the word "jamais" is used as a continuum, intersected at times with one of the other four terms that constitute the original phrase. The



Part D resembles the shuffling of cards. The order of the words is rearranged again and again, going through all possible combinations supported by variations of the musical phrase. The piece ends with the repeated sung phrase "existât-il, commencât-il et cessât-il, se chiffât-il" ( if it existed, it would begin and end, it would appear), accompanied by the original musical motive. These words also stem from *Un Coup de Dés* (p.241). Each time the phrase is sung, one word is accentuated by a pitch sticking out from the phrase as it is played a few octaves higher than the other four. The singing of the performer in this piece resembles a singing to herself, almost a humming, maybe a strengthening of her trust in the ritual.

When I wrote *open-close* I did not have a specific player in mind. It was a lucky coincidence that Christine Paté, the accordionist who gave the première, is French and thus could speak and sing in her mother tongue. She became very involved with the piece and found that it evoked a strong resonance within her (see Appendix, p. 132). Before I rehearsed with her I had worried that I might not have taken the right approach to the notation of this composition. I sensed an inconsistency in the fact that the coincidences between music and words were predetermined and I feared that because of that the performance might lose the feeling of spontaneity and playfulness. But with Christine *open-close* took on such a life of its own that the score became less and less important anyway. So I decided to leave it as it was for the time being. If another player ever wanted to perform this piece, I might use this occasion to experiment with a different, more open form of notation.

## 14.6 ...for a brighter silence

SZENARIEN ends with the short quartet *...for a brighter silence* for female and male speaker, accordion and cello. I wrote this piece in 2006 as concluding part for this cycle; it is not meant to be performed by itself. The transition from the preceding solo is very direct - the cellist and the two speakers already enter as the accordionist plays her last note, which then turns into the repetitive pitch that marks the beginning of *...for a brighter silence*. The texts I am using here are assembled from various poems by Paul Auster (Auster 2001):

I am no longer here  
I have never said what you say I have said (from *White Nights*, p.66)

a voice that speaks to me only of smallest things  
not only things but their names (from *Interior*, p.70)

the voice echoing back to me is no longer my own  
I sing therefore of nothing  
as if it was the place I do not return to (from *Fire Speech*, p.112)

as if the singing alone had lead us back to this place  
no more than the song of it (from *Quarry*, p.170)

The ensemble here is divided in two and two - the female speaker is coupled with the accordion, the male speaker with the cello. One half of the text is assigned to the female speaker, the other one to the male speaker. Each text phrase is linked with a specific musical phrase. All these linkages do not change throughout the piece. The beginning and ending are set, the middle part is a structured improvisation. This quartet picks up strands of thoughts, structures and materials from the preceding pieces in several ways. Regarding the text there is a reference to the overture and its concern with the act of naming ("a voice that speaks to me only of smallest things, not only things but their names"). In terms of the ensemble's constellation there is a parallel to *Akt – the particularity of nakedness*, only in these two pieces both speakers are present on stage, both of them are quartets, both are clearly constructed of two couples. The relationships however are shifted: in *Akt* the two

instrumentalists are facing the two speakers; in *...for a brighter silence* each speaker is linked to a player. Language and music are separate from one another in *Akt*: in *...for a brighter silence* they are interwoven. As for the musical material, the voice of the cello has a strong resemblance to its harmonic arpeggios in *wer weiss*, the accordion carries over the pitches from the chord it has been playing in *open-close*.

Concerning its subject matter, this closing part of *SZENARIEN* resumes the notions of voice, speaking and song that have been present throughout the whole cycle, arising from my concern with impulses for and forms of sounding utterance. Although the notion of song plays a central role in the text of *...for a brighter silence*, the words are delivered as speech here, not as song. Yet this speaking never stands for itself, it only occurs in combination with musical phrases, as if the singing was divided in two, the speaker delivering the text, the instruments providing the song. This splitting of an original unity runs through *SZENARIEN* like a vein. The intention of the whole cycle is to let the audience's perception fluctuate between various modes of attention, which will inevitably lead to the disruption of an experience's entirety. This disruption appears within the dialogue of the player and the trombone in *I name you*, where the act of engendering an instrumental sound is not taken for granted, but turned into the subject of observation. It is present within the questioning of the performer's roles in *Akt - the particularity of nakedness* as well as in the observer's objectifying, disruptive gaze in *wer weiss*. In *open-close* it materialises as a fissure running through the accordionist whose awareness is forced to be twofold as she tries to coordinate the actions of speaking and playing.

## 15. Conclusion

I wrote *SZENARIEN* during the first three years of my PhD research (2003 – 2006). In my more recent works (*Hautfelder* and *spun yarn* in particular) the sense of disruption I described earlier diminishes and the focus shifts away from the oscillation of perception towards an immediacy of perception, as well as towards a sense of wonder and contemplation. I assume this resulted from a growing dissatisfaction with the commenting or observing instance that I had been installing in between the music / the sound and the way it was going to be experienced in several pieces of *SZENARIEN*. I became very aware of the fact that as much as I had been concerned with setting up the circumstances in a way that would allow for the musicians to be immersed in their playing, I had prevented the audience from just that experience of immersion. I had considered the spoken word and the presence of the speakers in *SZENARIEN* as a stimulus for the audience to become aware of the several levels of perception involved in a performance event. Doing so I would have agreed with Alvin Lucier that "the idea of my work is that the experience of perceiving the piece is the experience of being aware of yourself perceiving it" (Lucier quoted Denyer 2007). But now I find that as soon as my awareness is pointed to my own perceiving, a separation from the actual experience is very likely to occur. I am then observing the experience from the outside rather than being immersed in it.

I still consider the performers' possible impulse for engendering sound when I begin to write a new piece, but in my more recent works the answer I find does not manifest itself necessarily in a kind of scene as it has been the case in most of the pieces of *SZENARIEN*. Instead it is incorporated into the material in a more immediate way – through the physical, sensorimotor approach in *Hautfelder* for example or through the attitude of "listening in wonder" employed in *spun yarn* and its concern with applying the adequate touch to lure out a particular tone from a musical instrument. The haptic and textural element in playing an instrument and most of all the quality of touch have become a strong focus in my composing. The latter regards the activity of playing as well as the way I think about sound, but it can also be understood in a figurative sense. For me as a composer and in general

the informing agency is that of tact, of the ways in which we allow ourselves to touch or not to touch, to be touched or not to be touched by the presence of the other (Steiner 1989, p.148).

In the chapter on *spun yam* I described how I perceive of sound in terms of touch and vibration. To set up the circumstances in a composition in a way that makes it possible for the musicians and for the audience "to be within the material, to be part of the acoustic vibrations" (Varèse cited Claren 2000, p.130, translation from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld) matters much more to me than an "a-priori control of the sound" (ibid.). In order to stimulate a certain approach, a certain attitude or a specific quality of touch, I often incorporate elements into my scores, that suggest a particular texture and performance mode - the text in *spun yam*, for example or the paintings in *manoumey* and *Hautfelder*. Sometimes then the rehearsals are similar to the way performance artists work - how the performers relate to the material, how they embody it becomes more important than a precise realization of a preconceived arrangement of sounds (regarding this subject matter see also the interview in the Appendix, especially the discussion with Christine Paté). Occasionally this approach leads to works without scores as for example *wer weiss* and *shark synchrony*. Here the idea of the piece is transmitted orally as well as through experience and sensation during the process of rehearsing.

In the first stages of my research on composition focusing on the quality of presence in performance, I divided a performance of music into its constituent parameters; later I set out to recreate a unity of the performance event and its experience. I see my composing now mainly as setting up the circumstances for an experience of sound, outlining a particular nature of relations as well as suggesting different kinds of impulses for the production of sound. In this way I aim at engendering a listening which is receptive to the performance situation as a whole, including the sensorial perception of acoustic vibration as well as an awareness of the performers' presence within their musical utterance.

Behind all this lies, I suppose, my very personal concern to create within the performance of music a heightened awareness of the way we perceive and relate and also my wish to engender a sensual experience of connectedness:



musical-acoustic vibrations do not only penetrate the skin - this no-man's-land between human being and world, but they also cause it to resonate. Listening to music is the gesture that overcomes the skin by transforming it from a demarcation to a junction. (Flusser quoted Mahrenholz 2002, translation from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld.)

## 16. Correlation between practical work and theoretical reading

The reading I did during my research project was mainly based on detecting relations and differentiations between my own artistic approach and the work of other composers as well as on the notions of presence and listening from various disciplines' points of view (performance theory, musicology, philosophy and theology). Reading about and studying the work of other composers, whose concerns appeared close to mine at first view, was helpful for clarifying my own standpoint and for recognizing both similarities and differences. I will only give a few essential examples here, as a comparison of my approach with the approaches of others has not been particularly significant for my compositional work. All the following examples basically relate to the connection of sound and movement. This subject area proved to be the most revealing regarding my interests. Whenever somebody else's approach seemed similar to mine, I could tell whether it really was or not by looking at its attitude towards movement. I also found that the notions of presence and embodiment which are so important for my work, but not easy to grasp verbally and thus not often articulated, usually became evident within someone's conception of the relation between movement and sound.

I have been asked several times if I consider my work and in particular *SZENARIEN* as theatrical. George Aperghis' answer to this exact question precisely articulates my point of view:

Ce que je cherche, c'est une musique qui sorte du corps, où l'on retrouve cet état physique entre le corps de l'instrumentaliste et le corps musicale. Cela peut devenir théâtral ou non. (Aperghis quoted Woitas 2002). Translation (by Ruth Wiesenfeld): What I am looking for is a music that comes forth from the musician's body, where one regains this physical condition between the performer's body and the body of the music. This can become theatrical or not.

Another question that sometimes comes up regarding *SZENARIEN* is if and how it relates to Mauricio Kagel's notion of instrumental theatre (*Instrumentales Theater*), which Kagel in his essay *Neuer Raum – Neue Musik* (Kagel 1970, p 123-125) describes as follows:

The new performance practice intends to let the play of the instruments and the theatrical representation on stage become one. (...) Depending on the requirements of the piece to be performed, the musicians are either interpreters or co-authors of their parts. They do not embody any particular discipline, but only the role of a performing interpreter is ascribed to them. (Translated from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld.)

Already the point of departure of this line of thought is much closer to the area of theatre than mine, which relates to theatre through the consideration of both presence and persona of the performing musician, but never in terms of "theatrical representation". Physical movement in a performance of music is treated differently within Kagel's complex of thought:

Kinesis is the constituting element of instrumental theatre and it is considered within the musical composition respectively. The movement taking place on stage marks an essential difference to the static character of a conventional performance of music. (...) The basic idea is to modulate the sound events spatially: turning, sliding, flatter, pushing, doing gymnastics, walking, shifting – everything would be possible as long as it influences the dynamics of the sound and the rhythmic articulation or if resulting from these activities sound is originated. (ibid., translated from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld.)

I do not consider a conventional performance of music as static only because the musicians do not move around in the performance space. Within my compositional work I do not aim at making the musicians move more or in different ways than they usually do. What matters to me is that they become aware of the quality and the texture of their movements - not for aesthetic or theatrical reasons, but because the textural quality of a movement determines the quality of the sounds that it engenders. This textural quality again rises from the nature of the nervous impulse that triggers the movement. Thus - in contrast to Kagel's approach - I would look for a psycho-physical motivation if I intended to use any of the activities that he lists in the quote above (turning, sliding, etc.). To have a performer move in space only to spatially modulate a sound wouldn't be a strong enough reason for me on its own. This is exemplary for the discrepancy of Kagel's approach and my own concerns. Whilst he is looking at physical movement in space and the visual aspects of instruments or other sound

producing objects as well as of gestures intrinsic to playing music, I focus on the impulse for musical utterance and derive all other aspects of the composition from there.

I found ideas and questions in Vinko Globokar's book *Einatmen Ausatmen* which at first glance seemed to bear certain resemblances to my own, but on a closer look it became evident that Globokar's approach is quite different. In his piece *introspection d'un tubiste*, for example, he investigates

the gestures preparing the attack of a sound. (...) No doubt, I wanted to reach the core, I wanted to go into what happens before the actual sound is produced. I very much liked the idea of making minute anatomical details visible. I imagined how an audience member would observe the muscle contractions of a tuba player through a keyhole. Did I just say muscle contractions? Thus the tuba player would have to perform with a bare torso. But of course it is unthinkable to place each audience member behind a door – so I would be content with an intimate hall and a small lighting system. (...) I intended to give the audience the impression of intimacy and privacy by using single, strongly focused light beams, which would emphasize certain regions of the body, such as the corner of the mouth or the area of the diaphragm. (Globokar 1994, p.15, original French, translation from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld.)

Here movements are considered only from a physiological and again visual point of view (see Kagel). Only the relationship between movement and sound is being looked at; what is taking place even before the execution of the movement is not taken into consideration. But it is the beginning of the soundproducing process that I am interested in, as this is the most crucial moment for the acoustic result. The physical movement is informed by the nervous impulse. So in order to "reach the core" as Globokar says, I think one has to go beyond the physical movement – which in my eyes is only a means to transfer the nerve impulse to the instrument – and needs to explore the relationship between the initial stimulus and the resulting sound.

I recognize various similarities to my approach in Helmut Lachenmann's "musique concrète instrumentale",

a kind of music, in which the sound events are chosen and organised in a way, that gives as much consideration to the way they came into being as to the resulting acoustic qualities per se. Thus these qualities such as colour, volume etc. do not sound for their own sake, but they describe or signalize the concrete situation: one can tell by listening under which conditions, with what kind of material, with what kind of energies and against which resistances a sound or noise event is performed. (Lachenmann 2004, p.381, translation from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld.) The listening to music here is forced to set in further below: it turns into an artificially provoked observing of what it is that is taking place. (ibid. 308)

Lachenmann does not isolate the role that movement plays in the production of sound as both Kagel and Globokar do, but he considers the whole complex of energy which is transformed into sound. His conception of the listener's relation to sound is similar to mine regarding the aspects of witnessing and observing (regarding this subject matter please see also the interview attached as Appendix). But our points of view on the notions of sound and listening differ. For Lachenmann sound is

the characteristic result and signal of its mechanical production and of the energy which thereby has been used in an either more or less economic way (Lachenmann quoted Nonnemann 2000, p.21, translation from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld.)

By giving special emphasis to the work process that produces specific instrumental sounds he intends to

profane the sacrosanct "Wohlklang" (pleasant sound) as direct or indirect manifestation of mechanical actions, to de-musicalise it and to take this as the point of departure for creating a new understanding. (ibid. p.33)

Listening to his music should resemble

a concentration of the mind, thus work. Yet a kind of work that - as it is an experience of penetrating reality, a progressive self-awareness – is an experience of bliss (Lachenmann 2004, p 117, translated from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld).

A distinction between "sacrosanct" sound (*Wohlklang*) and a less clean sound that contains the trace of the mechanical-energetic work necessary for its production is not present at all within my thinking about sound in the process of composing. Maybe this results from the fact that this battle has already been fought by the generation before me, which enables a less biased conception of sound now. In *wer weiss* for example, a characteristic sonorous cello tone never appears, yet I never thought of refusal, disillusion or profanity in this connection. The nature of this specific piece simply asks for other kinds of sounds. I very much agree with Lachenmann that a sound should contain the "message of the condition of its production" (Nonnemann 2000, p.21), but I don't see why the notion of production has to be linked with work. I would say that of course an investment of energy is contained within each movement and thus within each sound, but the impulse for this energy and the form that it takes can be of many different kinds. Also an ideal mode of reception of my music is far from Lachenmann's notion of work. I do not conceive of the listener as of a "concentrated mind", but first of all as a *Resonanzkörper* (which means "sound box" as well as "resonating body"):

the subtlety of a tone is revealed through empathy. Empathy however is based on an inner resonance. Thus who listens (harkens) in an empathetic way, will become a resonating body (*Resonanzkörper*) so to speak. (Schnebel quoted Kogler 2003, p.92, translated from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld.)

I am aware of the writings of Heidegger on the notions of presence, wonder and listening, but I haven't read them in depth. They trigger a kind of response in me which is too far removed from my compositional thinking to be incorporated into the artistic process. I might be able to understand them intellectually, but in order to respond as a composer this is not enough, I want to really apprehend what I am reading, which in the case of Heidegger most of the time I don't.

The way I related to theoretical literature during my research was not characterized by the accumulation of knowledge or by looking for new ideas and methods, but rather by a sense of recognition and by finding an articulation, as well as a context for a concern, a thought, a question that had been present within my compositional thinking, usually in a non-verbal way, before. Many of my considerations regarding musical utterance for example are expressed in



the writings of Heinrich Jacoby (1889 – 1964) - a musician, improviser and reform-pedagogue who studied in theory and practice the human behaviour regarding perception and utterance as well as the basic problems of our ability to perceive and express from a biological-physiological, psychological and pedagogical point of view. His theories are very close to the ideas of Moshé Feldenkrais, which I studied in depth during my training as Feldenkrais-practitioner and which form the base of my general thinking and teaching. I have not elaborated them explicitly here, as this would have led too far away from the subject of music composition.

The theoretical source that had the strongest impact during my research was Martin Buber's *I and Thou*. It has become a philosophical / theological backbone for my composing. An ideal nature of what matters most to me both artistically and as a person – relation, dialogue and encounter – is formulated here. No other book I read so far deals in such a compelling way with what I consider as my strongest concern as composer: to elicit in a performance moments of palpable resonance and fulfilled presence.

The present – not that which is like a point and merely designates whatever our thoughts may posit at the end of "elapsed" time, the fiction of the fixed lapse, but the actual and fulfilled present – exists only insofar as presentness, encounter and relation exist. Only as the You becomes present does presence come into being. (Buber 1996, p.63)

## **Appendix**

### **Transcription of an interview with Thomas Gerwin and Ruth Wiesenfeld**

I translated the colloquial speech from an audio recording without editing it in order to convey the spontaneity of the spoken word.

Berliner Gesellschaft für Neue Musik

Jour fixe

Guests: Ruth Wiesenfeld and James Fulkerson

04 September 2006

Host: Thomas Gerwin

Location: New Thinking, Berlin

Performers: James Fulkerson (trombone) and Christine Paté (accordion)

Translated from German by Ruth Wiesenfeld



Thomas Gerwin: Dear audience, dear colleagues – I welcome Ruth Wiesenfeld and James Fulkerson. I will talk to both of them about their work tonight and there also will be some live presentations. Before we enter into the discourse, I ask James Fulkerson to start off this evening musically.

**James Fulkerson plays *I name you***

T.G.: Many thanks to James Fulkerson, who just played a piece written by Ruth Wiesenfeld. Where does the text come from?

Ruth Wiesenfeld: The phrase "I name you" was inspired by the line "I name you desert" from the poem *Spokes* by Paul Auster (Auster 1987 p.8); "you will forget your name" comes from his poem *Unearth* (ibid. p.28)

T.G.: How did the compilation of text come about – why this text?

R.W.: I will start at the very beginning. When Jim asked me to write a solo for him, I had just been listening to a CD with two different recordings of Oskar Werner reading Rilke's *Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke*. One of these recordings was made when Oskar Werner was still very young, the other one was made towards the end of his career. He was reading one and the same text - it was incredible to hear how his voice had changed, how different the two interpretations were, but also how one could hear the body, the aging body through this voice. I laid both voices on top of each other, the young one and the old one, just to see what would happen between those two voices. When I was thinking about a piece for Jim I wanted to work with these two voices in some way. My first idea was to deal with the concept of a young and an old voice, but I didn't get far with this. Then I

thought about sung voice and instrumental voice - this kind of suggested itself with regard to the trombone. It seemed interesting as on the one hand, the trombone functions as a megaphone for the voice - it amplifies everything - on the other hand, many kinds of mutes are used, especially in contemporary pieces. But why does one mute that, which one had originally wanted to externalise - to transport to the outside - and what could be an inner motive to immediately suppress the sound which one had set out to produce? Here I chose to use the phrase "I name you", because in my view it implied this conflicting subject matter - to give a name and to pronounce it, which of course is problematic - it takes away the openness and the secret. This "I name you" also interested me regarding the musician's relationship to his or her instrument, it could then also mean: I make you - I make you this - trying out a sound instead of giving a name.

T.G.: I think this just was a good key word: an inner motive - that what happens in between the voices - this is pretty much what you are fundamentally interested in - the spaces between the poles that you set. So you have the human voice on the one side and the instrument on the other - and then we heard a variety of combinations within this texture - maybe you could say something about that - concerning the various ways in which the sound of the voice and the sound of the instrument are joined together?

R.W.: Actually I am more concerned with vibration here and that Jim does not play the sounds for the sake of producing them or presenting them - but that he is aware of what is happening when voice and instrumental sound meet - to direct his attention towards his own sensorial perception - so that a sound is not made with the intention of extending it outwards, but rather as a question directed at the instrument. That's why there are all those fine nuances. The content of the text adds to this: in order to name something, one tries to comprehend that something in its very essence - so speaking of sound this essence would consist of oscillation, vibration.

T.G: Accordingly Jim didn't act this "I name you" in an effusive way or so, but he only took those words and played them into the instrument - or at its side, or there were refractions or

he spoke the words into the instrument – was there a nomenclature or something of this sort regarding the various approaches – when there is voice and when there is sound?

R.W.: Yes – first of all there is the spoken phrase “I name you” – here we discovered during the rehearsals that it works better when Jim speaks it relatively close to the mouthpiece – so that a certain intimacy can arise between him and the instrument – a closeness, a turning towards the instrument. We clearly decided that the speaking of “I name you” should not be directed at the audience. My following instruction regarding this phrase was to speak it into the instrument, then to gradually transform it into sound and finally to turn it into pure sound towards the end of the piece – we’ve been working together on the details of this transformation.

T.G.: I sense a development here – like waves that get bigger and smaller – and you are saying that he asks his instrument questions – maybe he even is questioning himself – is there an answer provided, a conclusion? Or how does it end?

R.W.: It remains a process. Although there also is this short line – “you will forget your name” – this was important for me regarding the poetry of the piece – as a third level – this line that makes everything lighter – for me it contains a poetic lightness, not the heaviness of a perpetual searching and digging.

T.G.: So at the end there is a kind of letting go.

R.W.: Yes – a letting go – a search that continues and is intended, but it isn’t heavy, it does not lead nowhere, it just is what it is.

T.G.: What we just heard and saw was a kind of scene – was this a scene as in musical theatre?

R.W.: Well, this is always the question – the difficult one – yes I do often think in a theatrical, dramaturgical way – my very first thoughts regarding a new composition, for example, are not directed towards pure sound, but to the questions what will be happening in the space, within the musician, what is the intention behind the sound, what is taking place between sound, musician and audience? Yet I try to answer these questions as far as possible – and one might call this a conservative approach – within my compositional thinking, that is to say without external, superimposed theatrical elements. Mostly I know the performers I am writing for and then what really matters to me is to create the possibility within my pieces that something from them is shown – something that seems important to be shown. So I try to create a frame or a scene – to prepare the ground in a certain way, which I hope will enable this specific aspect I am interested in to appear. If that is musical theatre – one can call it as one wants to call it – I personally wouldn't call it that, but I don't mind, if someone does – it's just that usually something quite different is associated with this name, so I don't think it is the most appropriate term for what I do.

T.G.: It was – as you say – a very intimate scene between him and his instrument – he didn't look at the audience, he also didn't exactly play for the audience – so we were witnesses.

R.W.: Yes – this I am also concerned with – that someone lets himself or herself be observed whilst playing – this is important for me.

T.G.: So he did not stage or exhibit himself in that sense, but we were allowed to witness this rather intimate and very fragile dialogue. And regarding the choice of sounds – why did you choose the sounds you did?

R.W.: Unfortunately I can't remember this very well; all the other elements are usually quite present in my memory, but then how the sounds end up being placed where they are...

T.G.: Are the reasons simply of a tonal nature?

R.W: I think the melody of the sung phrase "I will forget your name" (Ruth sings) came to my mind immediately when I read the text – so these are the pitches around which I then centred the sounds.

T.G: This leads directly to the question how this piece came into being – maybe as one example of your working process. Did you two work on it together, then tried it out and notated it or what was the process like?

R.W: I wrote it alone, then I gave it to Jim and he wanted to play it in a concert, but there was no possibility to rehearse together before – he lives in Amsterdam, my son was a very young baby then and I couldn't travel easily – so he wasn't sure about certain issues and in the end didn't play the piece in that concert, but then he came to Berlin and we had a few very intense rehearsals here. I made quite a lot of changes then – I had imagined, for example, that he would play much more often during an inhalation – I would have really liked him to do the "I name you" whilst inhaling from time to time – but there was too much strain in this sound, it didn't suit the overall atmosphere, so we cut it in the end. Also we worked out in these rehearsals what exactly he was going to do with the mutes and which ones he should use.

T.G.: "I name you" is really specifically tailored to Jim – could somebody else play it, too or is it really only for him to perform?

R.W: No, I do think that somebody else could play it as well – I will ask Jim to go through the score with me again and to make sure that everything he does is precisely notated.

T.G.: So what about this scene, where we just saw something very intimate taking place – that's why I'm asking – to what extent is this a personal intimacy and to what extent is it an intimacy that is artistically heightened, stylised, that presents intimacy per se?



R.W: It is a personal intimacy, but an intimacy that everybody – or let's say every musician, just to stay within the realm of performing music – carries within himself or herself and which I would carve out again in any rehearsal process. If someone who is very used to presenting himself or herself played this piece, I certainly would keep going in the rehearsals until this intimacy appeared - not an acted sense of intimacy, but an authentic one.

T.G.: Especially a performance like this needs a high degree of authenticity and there is always the question of how one gets there.

R.W.: Yes, this is a very interesting question – with a percussionist, for example, I had the following problem: some passages in his piece were quite difficult to play and I had wanted a sense of resistance, a struggle there – so he said something wasn't quite working in his playing, but I had written it like this on purpose. He always seemed above the material and his performances were always so perfect, that I was curious to see some kind of friction within his playing, a different kind of energy. When I asked him if there were technical impossibilities in this piece, if I should change some passages, he said no, everything was possible, he just didn't have complete control over the piece yet. So we talked about that sense of struggle and I said that I would like this to be palpable in the performance. He answered that once he had mastered the difficulties he would be happy to act the struggle. Unfortunately we still didn't have a chance to rehearse the piece, so a solution to this is still waiting to be found and exactly this is the question: how will we get there?

T.G.: So regarding Jim's performance – what was acted there? I had the feeling that he was just doing it - he didn't pretend to be anything, he didn't present anything, he just was it.

R.W: Yes – I think details play an important part here – when we rehearsed yesterday, for example, I realised that it makes a huge difference whether his eyes are turned towards the trombone or towards the score. Those are small things, externals, but this is where you really can bring out this sense of intimacy. So I think he didn't act anything here, he just allowed us to observe him in what he was doing.

T.G.: (towards the audience) This is of course a dialogue, but if any of you have questions or comments, please interrupt us any time. There will be an open discussion at the end, but if you urgently need to say something, please do.

Member of the audience: What bothers me is the score – the fact that a score is lying there.

R.W.: Ideally he would play by heart.

Member of the audience: So that there wouldn't be a score.

R.W.: Yes, but we didn't get there yet – this was the première – in the next performance...

T.G.: This was the première?

R.W.: Yes.

T.G.: Wonderful – yes, that's a good question. There are also musical theatre pieces that deal with the *prima vista*, so for those you would also need the score – this wasn't meant here, of course – but I would have seen it as that, I personally wasn't bothered by the score – it could have been about dealing with the notated music, but – that's the question...

R.W.: With the score being present there is a feeling of friction – still something stands between the player, the instrument and the sound. I am also interested in theatrical monologues – the presence of the score resembles the presence of the text written on paper which the actor would read from during a monologue, this adds yet another layer to the performance. I have to see Jim doing it without a score, before I can make a decision here. I guess the performance will be even more intimate then, stronger.

Member of the audience: Or also more authentic, as he would suddenly seem to be improvising.

R.W.: Originally that's what I had in mind.

T.G.: But there is also an amalgamation, a junction – there is also a part from you involved; in a certain way you are also present within the score. Otherwise the fact that the piece has been written, that a composer has been involved, would be only present in the back of one's mind. So how you stage this, is an interesting question. This piece is based on language and you have another example of how you work with language – this is on DVD, shall we have a look? Would you like to say a few words before?

R.W.: This piece is called *Lichtungen*; here I deal with the question what is a linguistic and what is a musical dialogue. Two musical dialogues are put right next to a linguistic one. In the performance that you will see now, I had to speak the text myself, as the speaker who was supposed to do it, had to cancel. This is definitely not the ideal version, but there was no other way to do it.

T.G.: Is there a specific context for this piece?

R.W.: I just finished a cycle of compositions with the title *SZENARIEN* for trombone, piano, clarinet, accordion, two celli, male and female speaker and a dancer. *I name you* is the opening piece, *Lichtungen* is somewhere in the middle – the performance you will see now took place at the festival *48 Stunden Neukölln* – so out of any context really besides the context of Neukölln. Also the space wasn't ideal, originally I wanted all three performers to stand close together, but this was impossible in this case as the space - an empty shop - has a very loud echo. If I didn't stand separate from and higher than the speakers, nobody would have understood a word.



***Lichtungen* is played on DVD**

T.G.: This was a very different way of dealing with text. Maybe first again the question: where does the text come from?

R.W.: I wrote it myself.

T.G.: Did you write it specifically for this piece?

R.W.: Yes – first I wrote the text, then the music.

T.G.: Please say something about the relationship between music and text.

R.W.: The text just came like that, but I knew that I was going to use it with music, that's why I wrote it in a musical way – often I knew the rhythm of the next line before I knew the words and it also was clear that in terms of its energy it was going to be a monologue bursting out of the speaker – very different from all the other pieces of *SZENARIEN* where I want to say something with very few words which nevertheless have strong implications. Here I wanted something that explodes and I thought about the music in a similar way. I knew the rhythm of a stanza, its pulse and duration, and was considering how the voice of the clarinet for example would transform its mental imagery into music. I did the same for the accordion, then I put both instrumental parts together and was looking for a way to make them correspond musically. In order to not have them act separate from one another, I made a few changes in each instrumental voice.

T.G.: How did you notate the text? It isn't acted in that sense, but declaimed – did you put stresses or rests into the written text?

R.W.: Each speaker has to find her own timing – the beginning and end of each stanza are set and notated, in between the timing may vary, but music and language set a clear pulse

which one can easily pick up. How a speaker deals with language apart from this is left to her - when the voice goes up, when it goes down, for example - I would need to hear it and then work on it in rehearsal. Speaking the text myself was an interesting experience - I had hoped to be able to work with an experienced speaker - I thought I would listen to what she does and then we would work on it together. I have no experience with speaking or acting, so I tried to approach the text in a musical way, the sound and the morphology of the words mattered to me and so did the movements taking place whilst speaking.

T.G: Is the piece completely notated?

R.W: You mean the music? Yes.

T.G.: Should it be conducted or is the speaker conducting it in a way?

R.W: No, no conductor is needed. The movement of my hand that you see on the DVD - I use this movement only for myself, I didn't want to just stand there, I needed a physical relation to the text through some kind of movement. The piece is notated; it works fine without a conductor.

T.G: And is there a kind of rubato, something that has been negotiated beforehand?

R.W.: All of this is written in the score, the music is designed in a way that it is easy for the speaker to adjust. Strangely enough, the timing of music and language just falls into place - we only had very few rehearsals and still it worked. We didn't even have to set our timing, I don't really know how this happened - I guess one of the reasons was that I worked with a pulse when I wrote it.

T.G: What role does this composition play within the complete cycle?

R.W: Chronologically it is placed in the middle. This is the piece that has the most amount of text; music and language are running parallel here. Regarding different qualities of energies, this is the most buzzing piece within the cycle; the other ones are calmer. Calm in various nuances, besides one, which is quite obsessive, yet very clear – as if built with blocks.

T.G: In Jim's piece you were working with layered sounds and with very advanced techniques, in this piece you refrained from using such extreme states. Is the reason for this related to the concept or to the content of the piece?

R.W: It just happened to turn out this way. It would have been difficult to incorporate these nuances as I wanted the language to be pouring out from the speaker with a certain necessity and I was looking for a similar energy in the instrumental parts.

T.G.: Regarding the performers' approach, you wanted it to be very clear.

R.W.: Yes – very clear and always relatively plain as far as the motor activity is concerned. That doesn't mean it is easy to play! The players should be able to take a very immediate approach; the accordionist, for example very rarely uses both hands.

T.G: So you were also aiming at a transparency regarding the listening, no clusters and no layers of sound.

R.W: Yes, that's right – I was thinking more in terms of lines – I imagined the sound of the three voices together as a visual pattern woven from three lines, intertwined – twice music, once language. In the recording that you just heard, my voice is too far in the foreground. When you hear it performed live, sometimes the language disappears behind the two instruments, sometimes one of the instruments is not audible - the three parts are more intertwined.

T.G.: We will introduce you to yet another facet of Ruth Wiesenfeld's work – a piece for accordion solo. Should we play this now to round off the evening? I welcome Christine Paté. The title of the work is *open-close*.

**Christine plays *open- close***

T.G.: Christine, thank you very much. Ruth, what is your motive for using these different languages?

R.W: Most of the text in this piece is taken from Mallarmé and Christine is French, which is very fortunate, as I much prefer to leave the text in its original language.

Member of the audience: Are there even more languages used within the cycle?

R.W.: No, only these three and these three are the only ones I know.

T.G.: Is there a specific reason for the cycle to be multilingual?

R.W.: No, not really. It has to do with the performers, I like it when they can speak their native language. The male speaker is English, that's why there is English involved.

T.G.: Christine – would you say that this piece is hard to play?

Christine Paté.: I find it more and more difficult as my expectations somehow become higher and higher – it comes very close, it has a deep effect on me. How one says the words is different each time – it always turns out different and also the sound always turns out different and each time one performs it or practises it, it is a different piece. The way words and sounds are put together and how they blend into each other is very interesting, it is very intimate, I find a density here, an atmosphere that can change each time.

T.G: Let us return to the subject of authenticity once again – a subject matter that is important for you – on the one hand there is the language, the native language, on the other hand there is the way the performers deal with their instruments – in my view, regarding the arrangement, this piece struck me again as related to a scene. Again we were witnesses of this scenario; here as well nothing was exhibited. Was there a difference for you in between those two pieces regarding their dramaturgy and the relationships between the players and their instruments?

R.W. Yes. This piece is placed towards the end of the cycle; the audience will have heard a lot of text by then, long texts, that's why I wanted something lighter here. Also there was the accordion, the voice, the singing and the French language – I imagined a more playful atmosphere here. In Jim's piece there is this searching, it is more heavy, whereas *open-close* resembles that game girls play, taking petals off a flower, accompanied by the words "he loves me, he loves me not" – I was interested in the relationship between the words and the physical action here, like a magical way of thinking, a childlike magical way of thinking – to open and to close the instrument, thereby producing certain sounds – which word will coincide with which sound, which word will win at the end – this is also a kind of search or a kind of questioning, but much more playful.

T.G.: And almost in passing the suggestion of a musette – in what way does this play a role for you at all – the history of the instruments? Especially with the accordion – when people pass by now and look at the window and see her sitting there – when they don't hear what she does, but only see her – they will probably imagine something very different from what she actually did. What role does this play for you? In the beginning the sound was closer to noise, later those very faint insinuations, rather playful, like a wink –

R.W.: Yes – for me here the question was – and that is a question I often ask – what is being pronounced and what is being said, meaning what kind of utterance is present within the music, within the sound and what kind of utterance is present within the singing. Especially in connection with the accordion this was an important question. When an accordionist sings

whilst playing his or her instrument, this is usually related to a very different genre, one would expect something quite unlike this piece. So yes, I have been thinking about this a lot and it seemed crucial to me, that for example the "jamais jamais jamais" is not sung, but spoken, yet it does turn into a kind of singing through the repetitions, but not exactly into a real song.

Member of the audience: May I ask – when Christine started to sing, I had the impression that the words didn't come out very clear – was this intended?

R.W.: No, not really. If we had rehearsed in this particular space and I had noticed that one couldn't clearly hear the words, I might have asked Christine to sing a little louder.

Member of the audience: Maybe I have a slight difficulty in hearing.

R.W.: But I also think that as the same words appear quite often, they don't have to be pronounced so clearly, that one always understands them well.

C.P.: This is however a whole new experience for me, for example singing and playing simultaneously – I realized that I still have difficulties with raising the volume of my voice without raising the volume of the instrument as well – I still need to make progress here. It is as if one had to play two instruments at once.

Member of the audience: It might also have been intended like that.

R.W.: Yes, maybe – to keep the singing a little softer, so it turns into a singing per se, a singing without much meaning.

T.G.: A short question regarding new media or other devices – could you for example imagine Jim and Christine using a microphone?



R.W.: No. I think that an amplified voice is completely different from a voice that isn't amplified. It would contradict what I am aiming at and what you have mentioned before – to be a witness of an intimate act. A microphone implies that something is quite extrovert, directed towards the outside.

T.G.: And in the second piece, where you were speaking yourself? Would using a microphone be unthinkable for you there as well or is it unthinkable for you in general?

R.W.: Nothing is unthinkable in general for me and the speaker who originally was going to do this part actually would have liked to use a microphone. I was thinking about this a lot and then decided that it should be done without amplification nevertheless. The amplified voice would otherwise meet with the non-amplified instruments; regarding the sound this wouldn't have pleased me at all. Also I consider it important that the speaker has to kind of fight in certain places in order to get through – if she had a microphone she might be able to articulate the text in a more refined way, but she could also lean back more.

T.G.: Whereas a singer has a trained voice. If these two have to speak or sing now, they are doing something that is unrelated to their field. A trained soprano for example easily carries over a church organ using the support of her diaphragm and so on, but this is not what you want, you are looking for something natural that in a way still contains normality.

R.W.: Yes. What also matters to me is that the sound isn't directed straight towards the audience, but that the audience in a situation like this – where speaking and singing are not done in a professional manner – has to really listen carefully, that they have to actively turn towards the sounds.

T.G.: To lean forward.

R.W.: Yes, exactly – what I really have in mind is a harkening as opposed to a being exposed to sound.



Member of the audience: This is just a comment and one might call it quite arbitrary, but as we are dealing with words here, there are semantics, there is a certain articulation involved – it is not a melody or just sound – there is the presence of the spoken words with the implicit semantics and in retrospect I am asking myself how this is being conveyed here in terms of the articulation and the semantics – let's say the musical articulation, what the instrument is doing. There is this intimate act, the voice is definitely also seen as an instrument, but in order to preserve this intimacy you don't want the microphone, which – if you used it – would make it clear that you are dealing with an instrumentality here. Well – I've just been thinking out loud.

R.W.: Regarding *Lichtungen* I would say that I didn't want the microphone, but that I did work with the voice like an instrumentalist. As I couldn't hear my voice from the outside, I invited Paul Baierdorf, a theatre director, to the rehearsals. We worked a lot on me thinking about the text in musical terms, my whole interpretation of the words is based on sonic and instrumental ideas, I rehearsed like a musician who thinks about where to put a crescendo or a decrescendo, what texture to use, what colour, what to stress, where to put a rubato etc. This mainly concerns *Lichtungen*, it was different with the two other pieces. The "jamais jamais jamais" I originally imagined to be said in a very different way, if I had done it myself, it would have sounded like this: "jamais jamais jamais". Christine did it in another way and I liked it, so I left it, it just turned out this way.

T.G.: I find that this is an interesting differentiation; we've got two different levels here, an amateur level more or less and a professional level. And both their voices belong to the amateur level, as neither of them is a trained speaker or singer. And this is exactly what I find so fascinating about it, to produce something that intimate – if an actor did it, it would be utterly different, yet if he / she did it well, one maybe wouldn't realize that he / she was an actor. That's why it also made sense for me that you were speaking yourself, again this conveyed the impression of something very immediate.

R.W: Regarding the accordion piece – if you look at the score you will see that it really isn't difficult to play from a purely technical point of view, but still it is not a piece an amateur could play. In terms of sensitivity for the sound and in terms of coordination it provides quite a challenge, so there is a big discrepancy between the outward appearance of the score and the actual demands on the performer.

T.G.: This fits very well to the overall theme of our programme this year – it is called "einfach-kompliziert" (simply-complicated), that's why I wanted to take a closer look at it.

C.P: Yes, it is hard, because you want to be able to do with your voice what you can do with your instrument, that's why one never is satisfied.

T.G.: So it is a very different kind of complication, of complexity or difficulty – it is not about virtuosity or about widening your hand in order to reach chords whose pitches are far apart or something like that, but the difficulty here is to coordinate the instrument with something ordinary, something they usually don't do in front of an audience.

Member of the audience: I would like to return to the notion of authenticity once again. I have the impression that you really work with different nuances of authenticity. I was just thinking that probably any musician is authentic – although there will be a difference when someone improvises, I could imagine yet another nuance here – and I think that as soon as someone works with a microphone it would be possible to engender quite an extreme situation of intimacy or authenticity.

R.W.: Yes, this might happen particularly because of this contradiction – because of the fact that the microphone at first prevents this intimacy - but I suppose in that case the use of the microphone would have to become the main subject of the piece.

Member of the audience: I would like to ask if you would differentiate between let's say an orchestral musician who plays from a score, just as Christine did right now and who certainly is not authentic in doing so and what she did previously or what we were hearing before.

R.W.: I only can explain what would make a difference for me: the difference would be whether my very first thoughts in the compositional process were directed at sounds or whether they were directed at creating a possibility to address this authenticity – which most likely will be present anyway in some form – to raise it as a subject even if only in an extremely subtle way, incorporating all that is inherent in a performance. I once saw a concert by the *Neue Vokalsolisten Stuttgart* and in five of the six pieces I saw no authenticity at all. I saw them executing the scores, but no more than that. Yet in the last piece it was suddenly there – at least that's what I felt – so I was asking myself why it was there now and not before, if this came about through the composition and in how far a composition is able to contribute to this specific quality of a performance.

T.G.: I would have also raised this issue at the end of our talk, clearly this is a question – what we now represented as being authentic is of course a staged authenticity – basically one would assume at first that any musician or performer, anybody who expresses something is authentic, as long as they are not forced to do something that they don't want to do.

R.W.: What really matters to me is the nuance, the very fine balance between a musician presenting herself / himself and a musician who lets the audience observe him / her whilst being immersed in the act of playing. It doesn't matter to me what piece a musician plays – I would say that as long as he / she radiates this willingness to be witnessed, that what we now have been calling authenticity is present within the performance.

T.G.: I was getting more at the combination of amateurism and professionalism. For me this appears in any musical theatre production or in all the interdisciplinary projects. Usually the performers have been trained in a different discipline. A dancer, for example, who has been studying movement, will always think in terms of movement, even if this movement produces

sound or music – the acoustic result might be good, but first of all she is dancing and that's what I was sensing here: the voice was the intimate part, it hadn't been elaborated, but it rather contributed another nuance, another level which added to the music.

Member of the audience: If I may add another question, as it fits exactly to what you were saying in the very beginning: would you say that there is one aspect which is extrovert, more communicative and another one, that matters to you, which is more like a monologue, self-contained, non-communicative? So does this "not acting" imply for you that there is no communication with the audience, not even a look directed towards the outside?

R.W.: Actually yes – the initial situation for the accordion piece, for example, is a kind of a ritual that one does alone – the taking the petals off a flower – here it concerns the instrument and the listening – yes, you're right it very much remains within itself. But not in *Lichtungen*, there the situation is different, I would say.

T.G.: Kind of hermetic.

R.W.: This certainly is related to the fact that it is a solo piece. In an ensemble piece I would think differently, but in a solo I always choose this scenic approach.

Member of the audience: I have another, a little more fundamental question: it is clear that in your music the instruments do not interpret the text, as it has been the case in music in earlier times. But then one could say: if I leave the instruments out, what will happen then? So what is going on when you start to write a piece – you have the text and thus a certain idea – what gives the impulse then for using instruments? How do you think in relation to the text – you are not concerned with interpreting it – so do you think in purely instrumental or polyphonical terms? Is the relation between text and instrument like the relationship between first and second violin?

R.W.: No. I would say that also here I start by thinking about the performer. Someone who plays an instrument will always have a different kind of presence than someone who speaks. I am fascinated with the performance of musicians because there is always an instrument between the person and his / her utterance. I have been studying dance – the presence of a dancer's body, the communication between the body of a dancer and the audience is completely different. I have always been more intrigued by the performance of musicians because – and Thomas, this relates to what you said before – they have not been physically trained (apart from the movements they need for their playing), but they are physically present on stage, they move. So each time I watch musicians play, I have the feeling that I see something in their movement that they themselves are not absolutely aware of, something they did not really intend to present exactly this way and this gives me a kind of admittance to their private world – do you see what I mean? And that's why I am looking for the music that is caused by exactly these movements, which produce the sound. So my impulse for instrumental sounds is a very physical one. In Christine's piece, for example, I wasn't fascinated with the pitches e, f sharp, g, a and b, but with the act of letting the instrument open and close – unfolding it and folding it again, I was fascinated with this movement in combination with language, text and rhythm. Or let's take this vibrato here – you can think about it from an acoustic point of view, but I would rather approach it physically, that means when I put the instruction *vibrato* here I am aware that Christine will make a trembling movement in order to produce it and I am thinking about this trembling more than about the actual sound. All this has to do with inner impulses that turn into sound.

Member of the audience: So in a certain way it is more or less a transformation from that which is present within the speaking?

R.W.: Yes – a transformation but transmitted through a different kind of energy and on a different level.

T.G.: Well – so far – thank you very much, we'll take a short break now, then the evening will continue with James Fulkerson.



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