

Wilhelm Killmayer (1927)

Seite 1 25'39

Jugendzeit 12'20

Poème symphonique (1977)

© 1978 B. Schott's Söhne, Mainz

Verschüttete Zeichen 12'42

Essay symphonique (1977/78)

© 1979 B. Schott's Söhne, Mainz

Seite 2 20'25

Überstehen und Hoffen 9'54

Poème symphonique (1977/78)

© 1978 B. Schott's Söhne, Mainz

Im Freien 10'18

Poème symphonique (1980)

© 1981 B. Schott's Söhne, Mainz

Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, München

Dirigent: Hiroshi Wakasugi

Mitschnitt eines öffentlichen Konzertes am 20. März 1981 in München, Herkulessaal

Schallplatten-Aufnahme mit freundlicher Genehmigung des Bayerischen Rundfunks

Technische Bearbeitung: Ulrich Kraus

Cover Design: Günther Stiller, Taunusstein

Foto: Peter Andersen

© + © 1982 Wergo Schallplatten GmbH, Mainz, W. Germany
Printed in Germany

The music of Wilhelm Killmayer needs no declaration of facts, nor a declaration of love. Like almost no other music it 'emanates from itself', is autonomic and autistic. He who thinks this music is strange, is on the right track. The word 'strange' is meant in the sense used by Schumann (Fremder Mann - Stranger . . .) in Schubert's inflection (Fremd bin ich eingezogen. - As a stranger did I come . . .) and in the shudder of Valentin (Hemd rhymes with fremd - shirt with strange, in German). He who stays on the ridge knows about the fall. Let us consider this:

The Time of Youth - even if different in every case - sounds the way it does here: image follows image, one evoking the other, experience gets through, so does doubt; because the time of youth is always **later**, when it is already in the past.

Buried Signs - that is the real state of music. We must discover the signs and decipher their weathered writing, not in order to reconstruct something, but to experience reality without dressing. They are pieces of the extreme for all concerned: composer, musicians, listeners.

Survival and Hope - that is the held breath, held while surviving, relentlessly, in order to survive, forced to achieve a balance. The effort is measurable by the stress affecting the constant pulse of the breath. Convulsions increase precisely because they do **not** allow the breath to escape. At the end: a call.

In the open air - that is outside. Having escaped the routine hygiene of art music, the sound itself has now the word. It **can** come from outside (nature) or inside (already music), but not necessarily. The liberated composer is also in the open air (Cézanne by his mountain): listening into nature, he articulates more artificially than ever. In Paul Celan's book of poetry **Zeitgehöft** (farmstead of time) I found this:

The trombone passage
deep in the burning
hollow text,
at torch height,
in the hole of time:
learn listening
with the mouth.

Wolfgang Rihm
(translation Stefan de Haan)

fin al punto

Münchener Kammerorchester

Leitung: Hans Stadlmair

The woods so wilde

Ensemble »Musik unserer Zeit«, München

Heinz Winbeck (Dirigent)

Hermann Dechant (Flöte)

Ulrich Stranz (Viola)

Erich Ferstl (Gitarre)

Andreas Vonderthan (Schlagzeug)

Walter Neulist (Schlagzeug)

Heidi Sepp (Schlagzeug)

Hermann Holler (Schlagzeug)

Roland Leistner-Mayer (Schlagzeug)

Peter Kiesewetter (Klavier)

Wilhelm Killmayer (Darabukka)

Wilfried Hiller (Orgel)

Schumann in Endenich

Ensemble »Musik unserer Zeit«, München

Paradies

Wilhelm Killmayer (Klavier)

unter Mitwirkung von Wilfried Hiller)

Wilhelm Killmayer, geboren 1927 in München, studierte 1945 bis 1950 Klavier, Dirigieren und Komposition, 1950 bis 1953 Musikwissenschaft und war ab 1953 Kompositionsschüler von Carl Orff, lebt in Frankfurt/Main.

Werke für die Bühne: »La Buffonata« »Yolimba oder Die Grenzen der Magie« (beide zusammen mit Tankred Dorst) »La Tragedia di Orfeo« (nach Poliziano) »Une leçon de français«

für Orchester: Sinfonie 1 (Fogli), Sinfonie 2 (Ricordanze), Klavierkonzert

Vokalmusik: Sappho für Sopran und Orchester, Tre Canti di Leopardi für Bariton und Orchester, Shakespeare-Lieder (Tenor und Instrumente), Blasons (Sopran und Instrumente), Salvum me fac (Bariton und Klavier), Altissimu (Sopran und Schlagzeug, Flöte)

Chormusik: Chorwerke nach Texten von Tasso, Goethe, Racine, Charles d'Orleans (Sept Rondeaux für sechs Frauenstimmen), Jacopone da Todi (Lauda für Chor und Orchester), Franz von Assisi (Laudatu), Ungaretti (Cantetto)

Kammermusik: Per nove strumenti, Streichquartett

fin al punto (1970)

Die Ruhe enthält bereits die Katastrophe in sich. Aus der Ruhe wächst die Bewegung, die sich selbst bis an den äußersten Punkt ihrer Kraft treibt, an dem sie dann zusammenfällt. Es ist der Punkt, an dem man aufgibt, hinter dem man ins Freie gelangen kann.

The woods so wilde (1970)

Ich gehe durch die tonkargen spätherbstlichen Wälder und ich höre meinen Schritt und ich höre mein Herz schlagen; ich höre die Geräusche der langsam sich ergebenden Natur und den Widerhall eines Vogelschreis in meiner Erinnerung. Immer tiefer gerate ich in das Innere, wo Erschrecken und Ruhe sich nahe sind, wo die Furcht stillhält.

Schumann in Eendenich (1972)

Schumann begab sich in seinem vierundvierzigsten Lebensjahr freiwillig in die Heilanstalt von Eendenich; er nahm am Lebenskampf nicht mehr teil. Dieser jünglingshafte Mensch war mehr und mehr ein »Fremder Mann« in einer Umwelt geworden, die erwachsen, »groß« sein wollte. Daran litt er. Die Klaviertaste war für ihn die Nahtstelle zu einer Welt, in die er flüchten, der er sich anvertrauen konnte.

Paradies (1972)

ist das Gegenstück zur Verlassenheit, ist Zusammensein.

PETER MICHAEL HAMEL

How to listen to this Record

This Killmayer record should be heard like a live concert where the listener is present.

There are soft passages followed by abrupt bursts such that the dynamic range on the tape is too great to be transferred to the record.

On account of the true concert space sound the dynamic range cannot be equalized.

The transfer to the record therefore must be done at the expense of a few decibels;

on the record Killmayer's music should sound in an artificial space that conveys the music directly to the listener's own inner space.

Yet, now there is noise.

But, as to "conditional noise" during their music, Killmayer reacts like Morton Feldman: they are an intrinsic part.

The two are similar in many respects:

often very soft -

pianississimo -

fibrous periodicity -

very conscious as to the combination of harmonies and accords.

Both do their composing at the piano.

Both are preoccupied with the "real time".

Both have a certain restlessness

irrespective of (or because of?) their often quiet sounds.

Also, both do not write out of an inner quiet

but rather toward it.

The great difference:

Feldman lingers in the quiet -

falls asleep,

Killmayer seeks to relieve the tension

at its climax.

He is in distress himself,

treads through the inner depth

("searching for the better ego")

in continuous motives

or in limitation to an ever repeated interval

with sudden heartbeat accompaniment

(melodic passages from his "bella canzona" period).

Then the climax - molto crescendo - percussion tremolo

or the crack of a whip,

a torrent of water.

Schumann ended at Eendenich.
Or the inner gate opens.
Longing for paradise full of anxiety -
at the gate of autodissolution.
Nobody can help,
everybody must find the opening for himself.

The present trend in music
toward deepening helps Killmayer (to say it rudely).
He is in high esteem by the youngest colleagues:
many young Munich composers play his music.
Many older ones like to accept the tension,
expecting the climax.
The avant-garde outlaw establishment values him less
(perhaps because of this).
Killmayer should have formed his feeling of time and tension
by electronic media.
But he has never been attracted
by electronics, tapes or computers.
Musico-sociologically he remains a chamber musician,
he is "threatened" with the appointment to a university,
he makes a living with opera for TV and radio
and theatrical music (which - contrary to teaching -
is despised by Germany's avant-garde).
He is an instrumental composer
and has no technological thinking,
no technical intellect
but rather a literary consciousness.
He is not music-immanent enough
to feel himself an avant-garde,
he is an itinerant musician.
No musician by the head
but musician by thought
with the inner longing
to let himself loose.

Killmayer's music can be listened to
without avant-garde expectations
("Oh, that I have already heard from ...")
and oscillations want to be listened to neither "apperceptively"
nor emotionally,
rather transcendently.
According to Orff, Killmayer's music
should be listened to in a dimmed room:
tones of the soul.

WILHELM KILLMAYER

Wilhelm Killmayer (date of birth: 21st August 1927) is a native of Munich and Munich has held on to him. Here he went to the gymnasium and here he studied composition and conducting with Hermann von Waltershausen, musicology with Rudolf von Ficker and finally composition (once again) with Carl Orff. When he wrote the Sappho cycle at the age of 23 he had been teaching for three years already at the Trapp Conservatory in Munich. Early works originality aroused interest: "Canti amorosi" for soprano, tenor and chorus, "Romanzen" to words by Garcia Lorca for soprano, piano and percussion, "Shakespeare Songs", for tenor, violin, clarinet, bassoon, piano and percussion, "Concerto for Piano and Orchestra" in one movement and "Kammermusik für Jazzinstrumente".

In 1954 he was awarded the prize of the Fromm Music Foundation (USA) for his "Missa brevis", in 1957 awarded the "Kulturpreis" of the city of Munich, and in 1958 a scholarship to the Villa Massimo in Rome (which he revisited as a guest in 1965). In 1965 he is awarded the "Premio d'Italia" for "Une leçon de français", and in the same year he wins an award for further studies from the city of Stuttgart. He assumes the post of Professor of Composition at the High School of Music in the Bavarian capital in 1973. Killmayer, who was ballet conductor at the Bavarian State Opera from 1961 to 1965, has often conducted his own works – and in particular the first performances – both in the theatre and in the concert hall.

Since the middle of the 70's he has been strongly drawn partly to classical forms and instrumentation, partly to distinctive personalities. Thus he writes "Schumann in Eendenich" for chamber ensemble. "To John Field" (Nocturnes for piano) and the "Brahms Bildnis" (Piano Trio). He sees the four symphonic poems "Jugendzeit", "Verschüttete Zeichen", "Überstehen und Hoffen", "Im Freien" as personal confessions.

In both the "Piano Quartet" and "Überstehen und Hoffen" the maintaining of a pulse in spite of permanent pressure is experienced; in the orchestral work the sufferer seems to be dedicating all life's forces to maintain this even rhythmical function. Tension and fear are vividly symbolized in sounds. The 3rd Symphony "Menschenlos" (1978) represents expectation, heroism, resignation, and Utopia as phases of existence. In the "Field-Nocturnes" the basic situation is that of stress

and menace mitigated by perseverance, yet here too anxieties and depressions are expressed.

Killmayer sees his work as the attempt to "enthrall the world in which one finds oneself by depicting it". "Fin al punto" for string orchestra, "Überstehen und Hoffen" and the "Piano Quartet" he calls "Belastungsstücke" (pieces related to stress). They are concerned with prevailing over an irritatingly fragmentary world. But there is more to Killmayer than this. The reverse of this sombre side of his work is cheerful and captivating. A wide range of humour predominates in the Ballet Opera "La Buffonata" with characters of the Commedia dell'arte, in the musical burlesque "Yolimba" and "Une leçon de français". It is also to be found at isolated moments in other works, e.g., in the "Französisches Liederbuch". He has even succeeded in writing "hits" in the lighter vein such as the quick Polka "Encore" and the Waltz "Zittern und Wagen", commissioned by the South German Radio for the programme "Studiotage der leichten Musik".

The lighter element does not however spring from a harmless temperament. The two contrasting moods of dark and light are inwardly connected. This gives a two-sidedness to many of Killmayer's works. It is similar to the ancient Greek idea of the mime with the two faces of Janus wearing both the tragic and comic masks.

Sappho

"Music has for me the character of speech" Killmayer says in a conversation with the critic Wolfgang Schreiber; he devotes an essay in the magazine 'Melos' to the problem of "Speech as music". He has made a study of Lorca, Shakespeare, as well as of ancient French and Italian texts and later set to music poems by Goethe, Racine and Tieck. Hölderlin has inspired both his "Drei Gesänge nach Hölderlin" and an opera, on which he is at present working. He has made this poet's treatment of language the subject of a comprehensive study of the sources.

Having become familiar with the syntax of Ancient Greek while still at school and, as Orff's pupil, with the possibilities of a fresh musical interpretation of it, he wrote the cycle "Sappho" – five songs for soprano and small orchestra, which had been commissioned by the Bavarian Academy of Arts. The first performance took place on the 8th February 1961 in a series of Broadcasts called "Musik unserer Zeit" given by the Süddeutscher Rundfunk in Stuttgart, conducted by the composer.

Sappho lived around 600 B. C., surrounded by female pupils and companions in Mytilene, the capital of the Island of Lesbos. The Grecian Alkaios, also a native of Mytilene, and the Roman Horace, who wrote odes after her manner, have both sung the poetess's praises. Sappho wrote love songs for solo performers, nuptial songs in the form of chorusses, and hymns to the gods. A mixing vessel, which supposedly belongs to the period between 480 and 470 B. C., and is preserved in the State Collection of Antiques in Munich, portrays her and Alkaios; in this picture both are playing the lyre. Grillparzer wrote a tragedy called "Sappho" (1818) and Gounod wrote an opera with the same title (1851). The "Sapphic Ode" by Brahms (words by Hans Schmidt) adopts one of her verse meters.

In the music of Ancient Greece it was largely a matter of the art of finding vocal melodies to suit poems. An important factor thereby was the subtle rhythm of the melody in its

relation to, and formal dependence on the text. The mode or key, the rhythm, instrument, and emotional mood were all closely connected. The "ethos" of the music was determined by the inner structure of the mode (the distribution of whole and semi-tones). Quarter and third tones were also sometimes used. No music has been handed down of Sappho's period and it is barely reconstructible, but it is known that with it the climax of a subjective manner of expression was reached.

Killmayer sets the original text of the poetess to a melody which conforms to the ancient language. He complies with sensitivity with the laws of prosody, which deal with the quantities (long and short) and the relative degrees of pitch. In choosing his modern instrumental ensemble he may have had in mind the Ancient Greek lyre, phorminx or kithara, the doubled-reeded instrument aulos and the panpipes or syrinx. He uses 4–6 flutes (one of them piccolo) 4–6 oboes, 4 harps, piano, and percussion instruments for five players (tom-toms both medium and bass, large and small cymbals, bass xylophon, tambourine, chinese temple blocks, bass drum, side drum, tympani and gong). In each song the grouping of the instruments is varied. Killmayer often follows the principle of heterophony: singers and instrumentalists perform in succession or simultaneously different variations of the same basic melody, each one modifying it in a different way. In each song there is one note of predominant significance. Particular words are emphasized by effective changes in the degree of the scale.

I.

The soprano begins – *molto espressivo* – with a leap of a fifth (E flat – B flat) which reappears in the course of the first movement; sometimes in the voice, sometimes in the flute. The initially somewhat small compass of the highly florid vocal melody is increased: the interval of the fifth is extended to the octave at the cry of "chaire". The harmony changes at this point. The new degree A is supported by "bourdon" tones on the flute and reappear at the end of the song in the harp and piano. The voice part demands virtuosity. The flute plays "concertante" together with the voice, partly alternating and partly simultaneously. Various melodic fragments play between them.

II.

Hymn to a beauty and to Hymenaios, the God of marriage.

This lively movement begins with an agitated rhythm on a medium-pitched tom-tom. It dominates, in extended passages, both the beginning and the end of the movement and inexorably regulates the sequence and rhythm of the voice part with its sometimes brilliant coloratura. The beat of the medium tom-tom is joined by the complementary rhythm of a high and a deep tom-tom; harp and piano reinforce a dynamic crescendo. The vigorous motive of two harps appears three times. When Hymenaios is addressed, the flutes, oboes, and piano play a variant of the theme announced at the beginning by the soprano, circling around a central note in a high register. The relentless basic rhythm is reinforced by other percussion instruments (bass drum, and cymbals).

III.

In this Elegy, long held chords based on F sharp, played by three flutes with infrequent accents by the harp, sustain the

delicate "rubato" melody of the voice. The interval of the fifth f sharp-c sharp is obscured by an added c, but is not bereft of its function.

IV

The highly ornate voice part is accompanied by a long held "tremolo" on the bass-xylophone and harp in octaves. At the point in the poem where the culmination of the light of the moon is described, this "point d'orgue" changes its root position. At the end of the movement three flutes contend with the soprano.

The sharply accented, excited call of the voice part is seconded by complementary rhythms in Bongo, small cymbals and tambourine, but the mood rapidly changes to a plaintive one. In a much slower tempo a rhythmic double beat now insistently marks the first beat of every bar on the piano, chinese temple block, tympani and later in the harp; it accompanies the rest of the movement.

Siegfried Goslich
(Translation: John Bell)