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Forum Neues Musiktheater der Staatsoper Stuttgart

VOYEUR Premiere

Music theater piece by Jörg Mainka
based on texts by Alain Robbe-Grillet and Ludwig Wittgenstein

Conductor: Errico Fresis **Live Electronics:** Manuel Poletti, Carl Faia **Director:** Hans-Werner Kroesinger
Video, Space: Philip Bußmann **Costumes:** Siegfried Zoller **Dramaturge:** Regine Elzenheimer **Featuring** Andrea Dewell (actor),
Claudia Neubert (soprano), Mathias Max Herrmann (actor), Ralf Peter (countertenor), and Stefan Röttig (baritone)

Premiere on 14 Jul 2004 at 8 p.m.

Additional performances 15 -18 Jul 2004, 8 p.m.

“Narration in the strict sense of the word has become impossible.” (Robbe-Grillet)

“What can be shown cannot be said.” (Wittgenstein)

Alain Robbe-Grillet's detective novel *Le Voyeur* and Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* form the basis for a new piece currently being developed at the Forum Neues Musiktheater. Its musico-theatrical narrative form is distinguished by an extreme spatial situation and by the presence of live electronics and video as integral elements. Jörg Mainka's music theater piece *Voyeur* combines Wittgenstein's linguistico-philosophical reflections on the possibilities and limits of the representation of the world with the narrative technique of Robbe-Grillet's *nouveau roman*, which breaks with the narrative tradition of the nineteenth century. The literary adaptation of cinematic techniques like repetition, cutting, and dissolve and the elimination of psychological characterization produce a story which—because it is told in such a fragmentary and discontinuous manner—is primarily created in the mind of the reader-spectator. The protagonist, Matthias, travels to an island as a clock salesman and appears to murder a young girl there. The depiction of events from the perspective of a character driven by obsessions and the absence of all commentary blur the boundary between reality, memory, fiction, and fantasy. A camera-like registration and measurement of the environment and ludicrous arithmetic examples concerning the sale of the clocks and the time available for it mingle—in temporal leaps and leaps of consciousness—with the fetishistic contemplation of young girls' and women's bodies, sexual and sadistic fantasies, and the attempt (as desperate as it is senseless) to construct an alibi for an act that we are not even certain was actually committed. It is just as unclear who is really the voyeur, Matthias with his warped and pathological view of reality, or the reader-spectator, who projects his own fantasies onto the representation of events. The obsessive aspect of this technique of omission or ellipsis is also a feature of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. The seemingly palpable consistency of the numeric and logical sequence of Wittgenstein's text is only the negative foil for what is most essential to the book, which is beyond the reach of language and was therefore not written. Curiously, toward the end of the text, phenomena like God, death, and mysticism begin to come up, phenomena that point beyond the text and its discursive and logical language.

In its critique of language and perception, this material contains the seeds of its transformation into music theater. Jörg Mainka's music revolves around the compositional problem of the relationship between material and form, objectifiable order and the transgression of that order, structure and expressivity. Applied to music theater, this problem becomes, above all else, the

question of the relationship between structural organization and the possibility of allowing music—along with language and image—to turn into narrative, gesture, and character.

The work on *Voyeur* is work in progress of a very special kind: the piece is coming into being in close collaboration between the composer and the team. Not until the end will the compositional, staging, visual, and dramaturgic readings of the material come together into a total music theater text in which piece and production merge.

This performing text, however, has its gaps and open spaces. The use of live electronics in the context of music and video turns the interaction of text, music, body, image, and space into a dynamic one. The possibilities of medial and spatial irritation zoom in on the *Voyeur*'s central theme: who is seeing and who or what is being seen proves to be a question of gaze and perspective, or—to quote Robbe-Grillet—a “search for something that is not the true [le vrai], but the real [le réel].”

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