

SIKORSKI

magazine



NEW OPERAS

Raskatov's
"A Dog's Heart"
and Weinberg's "The Portrait"

*Music, Literature
and Philosophy:*
Peter Ruzicka



editorial

Dear Readers,

From both the organisational and economical standpoints, operas are by far the most costly genre that a music publishing house has to supervise. But when the result stands and the project begins to come to life on the stage, all the troubles are quickly forgotten. A large number of people, from the director and conductor to the vocal soloists, have lent the musically narrated story new and sometimes unexpected aspects and points of view. Two phenomenal opera premieres this summer were the operas "A Dog's Heart" by Alexander Raskatov in Amsterdam and "The Portrait" by Mieczyslaw Weinberg in Bregenz.

The circus is also a stage art like opera, even if its stage is an arena. In this issue you will read about how difficult it is to find the right music for the right number and the right timing for the individual sequences. True circus-music classics from our catalogues are of course Shostakovich's "Second Waltz," Khachaturian's "Sabre Dance" and Kabalevsky's "Comedians' Galop."

On 24 October 2011 one of our most important composers, Sofia Gubaidulina, will be celebrating her 80th birthday. In a compilation, you will find out about all the important concerts, events and new publications concerning the Russian composer.

We wish you much reading enjoyment and many interesting discoveries,

Dagmar Sikorski
Dr. Axel Sikorski



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NEW OPERAS:

Raskatov's "A Dog's Heart" and Weinberg's "The Portrait"

That is a very strange story indeed: a surgeon who experiments a lot with people in order to make them younger; an operation in which human organs are transplanted into a dog, thereby creating an uncontrollable creature; a second operation so that more chaos will not occur

The idea behind this plot, set to music by the Russian composer **Alexander Raskatov**, could be experienced by an enthusiastic audience at the Nederlandse Opera in Amsterdam, where Raskatov's opera "A Dog's Heart" was successfully premiered on 7 June.

The Choir of the Dutch Opera which commissioned the work, and the Radio Kamer Filharmonie Hilversum under the direction of Martyn Brabbins were the performers in this production sung in the Russian language. The audience expressed its gratitude to the performers with minutes of ovations. The first-class ensemble of singers, especially Sergei Leiferkus in the role of Professor Preobraschenski, under the intelligently witty leadership of Simon McBurney, who did not spare any effects of satirical realism, knew how to thrill the audience over and over again.

Alexander Raskatov succeeded in a major work with his first opera, "A Dog's Heart." His music, emanating lightness and esprit, perfectly corresponded with the grotesque novel adapted into a libretto by Cesare Mazzoni. The strong accentuations in the winds and percussion, the thrilling tempi and moderately frequently inserted quotations of Soviet propaganda music showed that the composer, with his "A Dog's Heart," is continuing a line of tradition beginning with Dmitri Shostakovich's "The Nose" and including Alfred Schnittke's "Life with an Idiot."

Content of the Opera "A Dog's Heart" at a Glance:

The surgeon, Professor Filipp Filippovich Preobraschenski, who has specialised in rejuvenation operations, and his assistant, Doctor Ivan Arnoldovitch Bormental, transplant the pituitary gland and testicles of a recently deceased petty criminal and alcoholic into the dog Sharik in an experiment. The dog survives the operation and assumes more and more human traits from day to day. A little later it becomes clear that he has inherited only the negative character traits of his "donor." He is aggressive, impolite, has bad manners and a tendency to drink alcohol. Sharikov, as he now calls himself, takes on a position as director of the Lower Department of Sanitation from Stray Animals at the Moscow Communal Economy. He increasingly associates with communists who try to play him against his "creator," Professor Preobraschenski, who thinks differently politically. But Sharikov becomes increasingly uncontrollable, so that the Professor decides to transform him back into the dog Sharik with the help of a new operation.

Members of the international press travelled to Amsterdam for the premiere. With the opera premiered during the course of the Holland Festival, the Amsterdam Opera has "hit the bull's eye," as the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* wrote. Raskatov, completely a poly-stylist in the

Russian tradition, invented "short, effervescent numbers, powerful choral movements, concise ensembles, atmospherically threatening bands of sound, screeching sounds for women, nobly bourgeois material for the Professor played by Sergei Leiferkus." (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 15 June 2010)

Alexander Raskatov's "dog's music" was able to twitch, growl, whimper, wag, bark and look at the listener with the proverbial dog's eyes of apparent naïveté," said Frieder Reininghaus on *Deutschlandfunk*. "In the beginning there is a heap of misery – alone on the great white empty stage in the Muziektheater an der Amstel: a bit of skin and bones, dog's coat and dog's skeleton that can no longer even lose its chain because it has fallen so far from the social network that it no longer has one. A dog owners' sextet gets the object in motion and gives him a voice – a pleasant one and an unpleasant one. The great canine transformation can be stopped and taken back in Raskatov's first opera, after three hours of multi-coloured music. That is a beautiful characteristic of the theatre – of inestimable advantage compared to reality. The people in Amsterdam were delighted."

The British premiere of the opera under the title of "A Dog's Heart" is coming up soon at the ENO London on 20 November. The work will be sung in English there.

20.11.2010

ENO London, UK Premiere:
Alexander Raskatov, Opera "A Dog's Heart" (Engl.)
(Direction: Simon McBurney, Conductor.: Garry Walker)

NEWS

First Shostakovich Monument and International Shostakovich-Festival



A Shostakovich bust was unveiled on 12 July 2010 in Gohrisch. At the same time, the square on which the bust stands was renamed "Shostakovich Square." This is the first public place in Germany named after the Russian composer **Dmitri Shostakovich**. He stayed in Gohrisch for a health cure in 1960 and composed his **8th String Quartet** there, dedicated to the victims of Fascism and the war, as well as parts of the film music "**Five Days – Five Nights**." From 10 to 12 September 2010, the "International Shostakovich Days" also took place in Gohrisch – exactly 50 years after Shostakovich's first visit to the spa, famous for its fresh air. The three-day festival will now take place annually as the only regular Shostakovich Festival in the international festival scene. Among other works, the **8th String Quartet** and the **Chamber Symphony, Op. 110a** were performed in the presence of the composer's widow in Gohrisch. The latter work is the renowned adaptation of the Quartet by Rudolf Barschai. The high artistic quality of the performances is guaranteed by the Sächsische Staatskapelle Dresden, which helped initiate and artistically orientate the Festival.

ECHO for Peter Ruzicka's String Quartets

For many years, the Arditti Quartet has played a leading role in the performance history of the String Quartets of **Peter Ruzicka**. This is not least due to the fact that several works of this cycle were dedicated to this ensemble. Several years ago, the Arditti Quartet made a complete recording of the String Quartets Nos. 1 to 5 for the ECM label. There now follows the complete recording of the so far six **String Quartets** performed by the Minguet Quartet, soprano Mojca Erdmann and speakers Christoph Bantzer and Peter Ruzicka on the NEOS label (Neos 10822 / 23 - 2 CDs). The recording received an ECHO Award in July 2010 as Chamber Music Recording of the Year.

Raskatov's "A Dog's Heart", Weinberg's

Bregenz: A Weinberg Portrait and "The Portrait" by Weinberg



A most exceptional series of concerts and opera performances dedicated to the Polish-Russian composer **Mieczyslaw Weinberg** was presented at the Bregenz Festival this summer. At the centre of focus was, among other works, the German-language, Austrian and Western premiere of the opera "**The Portrait**" with the Vorarlberg Symphony Orchestra. John Fulljames was the director and the work was conducted by Rossen Gergov.

This work is Weinberg's second-to-the-opera, written in 1980 when he and his librettist Alexander Medwedew began to turn to the Russian literary classics Nikolai Gogol and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Concerning this choice of subject, Weinberg once said, "Gogol and Dostoyevsky have been among my favourite writers for a long time, in fact since my early childhood, and so my relationship to their works was a natural stimulus for my work on the two operas. I believe that Dostoyevsky's 'The Idiot'

and Gogol's 'The Portrait' treat subjects that will always stimulate artists and society, and that the works by the Russian classics will always continue to offer composers and film makers colossal and richly faceted possibilities in the future as well – the interpretation coming from a true, contemporary perspective."

The plot of the opera "The Portrait" based on Gogol is both exciting and relevant for artists of our time. At the centre of focus stands a painter who struggles both for his place in the history of art and his economical existence. Through the acquisition of an old picture he suddenly attains incredible wealth from which he allows himself to be dazzled and corrupted, so that he loses sight of his actual calling. As so often with Gogol, from whose literary work Dmitri Shostakovich also selected the basis for his grotesque opera "The Nose," the obsession determines the fate of the protagonist.

Content of the Opera "The Portrait" at a Glance:

The young painter Chartkov is urgently warned by his teacher not to sell himself for quick success with cheap painting. On the way home, a beautiful girl suddenly appears to him, reminding him of the "Psyche" painted by him.

For his last remaining money, the poor painter acquires the masterly portrait of an old man from an art dealer and hangs it on the wall. In a dream, he experiences how the old man steps out of his canvas and how the "Psyche" also comes to life. The latter escapes from the desirous old man and retreats back into her picture. But before the old man also climbs back into his painting, he leaves a number of shiny coins on the floor behind him.

Awakening from his dream, the painter becomes aware of reality, for the landlord asks him for the rent. When he touches the newly acquired portrait by chance, a thick roll of gold coins falls to the floor. Having suddenly become rich, the painter pays off his debts and terminates his lease.

Chartkov later finds out that the mysterious old man on the portrait is the evil money-lender Petromichali. Whoever takes his money is lost. Feeling affected, Chartkov covers up the mysterious picture with a cloth.

Years go by and Chartkov becomes a highly successful fashion painter. Having become fat and comfortable, he is infinitely convinced of his own significance. Visions of a "Psyche" who come to life continue to visit him, and he desperately has to acknowledge that he is unable to finish the painting. He gradually realises that he has taken the wrong path. Sunk into a large easy-chair, he listens to the voices of his teacher, the market dealers and his many clients. Chartkov dies. In silent magic, the figures of "Psyche" and the old man leave their canvasses and disappear.

Mieczyslaw Weinberg initially studied the piano in his home city of Warsaw with Józef Turczynski before he moved to the Soviet Union in 1939. He then studied composition at the Minsk Conservatory with Vassili Solotaryov until 1941. Beginning in 1943 he was a free-lance composer and pianist in Moscow. When he was imprisoned in Crimea in 1953 ostensibly for propagating the idea of founding a Jewish republic there, Shostakovich successfully committed himself to setting him free.

Similarly to that of Shostakovich, Weinberg’s catalogue of works primarily consists of a large number of orchestral compositions including 22 symphonies, and of chamber music and especially ballets and operas.

In addition to the Western premiere of the opera “The Portrait,” the Bregenz Festival also offered a selection of Weinberg’s equally magnificent and extensive production.

Works of Mieczyslaw Weinberg at the Bregenz Festival 2010 and other venues:

Austrian premiere: “**Three Palms**” for Soprano and String Quartet

German-speaking, Austrian and Western premiere Opera “**The Portrait**”

Austrian premiere: **Symphony No. 6** for Boys’ Choir and Orchestra

Austrian premiere: **String Quartet No. 15** (Quatuor Danel)

Austrian premiere: **Sinfonietta No. 1 in D minor, Op. 41** /

Austrian premiere **Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra in B-flat Major, Op. 94**

The Bregenz production of the opera “The Portrait” will be taken over on 18 December 2010 by the Pfalztheater in Kaiserslautern. On 2 February 2011 “The Portrait” will be presented in a new production by David Pountney in English at the Opera North Leeds. Finally, the French premiere will take place on 8 April 2011 in Russian at the Nancy Opera.

Weinberg Biography in German and English

David Fanning’s book “Mieczyslaw Weinberg: The Search for Freedom,” the first monograph on Weinberg’s life and work, has just been published by

Wolke Verlag in a German and English edition. The British Weinberg biographer excitedly tells the story of a composer who, similarly to Shostakovich, belongs to those artists “whose lives were marked by the catastrophes of the ‘brief 20th century.’” There are composers, to quote Fanning, to whom much more attention must be given than they have been allotted in music-historical works. And there are composers who were extraordinarily fruitful. “Mieczyslaw Weinberg is a rare case of a composer in which all of this applies in equal measure.”

David Fanning: Mieczyslaw Weinberg: The Search for Freedom, Wolke Verlag Hofheim 2010

Well-Known Unknown: Classical Opera Material Newly Interpreted

This is not the first time that the composer and Academy Professor Jan Müller-Wieland, who lives and works in Munich, has had recourse to well-known material of music history – not only in order to process it, pour it into new forms or add ideas to it, but also to develop completely new ideas and subjects based upon it. Thus he has written a chamber version of Beethoven’s “Egmont” Overture in the special septet combination of Stravinsky’s “The Soldier’s Tale.” Together with his wife, the author and librettist Birgit Müller-Wieland, he has recently narrated a completely new version, in both music and content, of Wagner’s “Ring” tetralogy entitled “Der kleine Ring” (The Little Ring). In so doing, he purposely does not use a single Wagner quotation.

Now Jan Müller-Wieland has taken on the great romantic opera “Der Freischütz” and adapted it completely freely for a small ensemble. The premiere of the work, renamed “Der Freischuss” with new spoken texts by Luise Rist, will take place at the Neuköllner Oper in January 2011. 🎭

20.01.2011
Neuköllner Oper Berlin
World premiere:
Carl Maria von Weber /
Jan Müller-Wieland,
Opera “Der Freischuss.” A free
adaptation of Weber’s “Freischütz”
for small ensemble
(Spoken texts: Luise Rist)

Amaryllis Quartet plays Lin Yang and Xiaoyong Chen



The Amaryllis Quartet is presently concentrating on contemporary music from China. Just this summer, the ensemble performed the world premiere of the **1st String Quartet** of the young woman composer **Lin Yang**. With **Xiaoyong Chen**, who lives and works in Hamburg and received a portrait concert one and a half years ago in the “neues werk” of the NDR, the Amaryllis Quartet also wishes to emphasise its close relationship to the Hamburg composers’ scene. The Amaryllis Quartet will perform the world premiere of Chen’s **String Quartet No. 3** on 28 November 2010.

Norbert Schultze: 100th Birthday



He is not only the composer of the immortal “Lili Marleen.” **Norbert Schultze** created melodies that revolutionised the musical in Europe at a time when it was just beginning its development. “**Nimm uns mit, Kapitän, auf die Reise**” (Take Us Along on the Trip, Captain) from the musical “Käpt’n Bay-Bay” and “**Ach, ich hab in meinem Herzen**” (Oh, I Have in My Heart) from “**Schwarzer Peter**” are titles that everyone was talking about and remembering within the shortest period of time; they have lost none of their popularity today. On 26 January 2011 we shall be celebrating his 100th birthday. There is a great deal to discover in Norbert Schultze’s large catalogue of works, including the neo-romantic opera “**Das kalte Herz**” based on Wilhelm Hauff’s fairytale of the same name and the ballet music to “**Struwwelpeter.**”

Gubaidulina: 80th birthday 2011



On 24 October 2011, Sofia Gubaidulina will celebrate her 80th birthday. We have compiled a list of events taking place until then and afterwards:

22-24 October 2010

Weingarten:

International Weingarten Days for New Music

25 October 2010

Sofia Gubaidulina to receive the Aleksandr-Men Prize in Weingarten

Geir Draugsvoll will make guest appearances in 2011 in at numerous concert stages of Europe and the USA with Sofia Gubaidulina's Bayan Concerto "Fachwerk" (Half-Timbering)

5-12 February 2011

Lisbon:

Gubaidulina Festival at the Belém Cultural Centre

14-20 May 2011

Los Angeles:

Gubaidulina Festival, organised by California Arts, including US premiere of "Glorious Percussion" with the LA Philharmonic under Gustavo Dudamel

27 June – 2 July 2011

Bastad (Sweden): Gubaidulina is Composer in residence at the Bastad Chamber Music Festival

30 August 2011

Lucerne: World premiere of a work for the 12 cellists of the Berlin Philharmonic

20/21 October 2011

Amsterdam:

World premiere of Concerto for Orchestra with the Concertgebouworkest Amsterdam under Mariss Jansons (further performance on 22 October 2011 in Rotterdam)

22-24 October 2011

Amsterdam:

Birthday Concerts with the Radio Filharmonisch Orkest and the Asko/Schönberg Ensemble

9-13 November 2011

Hannover: Gubaidulina Festival

NDR + Hannover Music Academy

2nd half of November 2011

Moscow: Gubaidulina Festival, led by Wladimir Toncha and Friedrich Lips

24/30 November 2011

London:

UK premiere "Fachwerk" (Half-Timbering) and "In tempus praesens" (Geir Draugsvoll, bayan, Anne-Sophie Mutter, violin, London Symphony Orchestra, dir.: Valery Gergiev)

CD Releases in 2011

"Fachwerk," "Silenzio" with Geir Draugsvoll, Trondheim Symphony Orchestra and others
NAXOS

"Ravvedimento," "Fata morgana," "At the Edge of the Abyss" and others
Ivan Monighetti, his cello ensemble and the Basilea Guitar Ensemble
ECM

Complete chamber music with double bass.
3 CDs with Martin Heinze, Elsbeth Moser and others
NEOS

"Seven Words," "In croce"
Inaki Alberdi, Asia Pold the Orquesta de Euskadi and others
MOR-BO

"Gallows Songs a 5"
Truike van de Poel, Students of the conservatory San Sebastian
MUSIKENE COLLECTION

"Repentance"
David Tanenbaum and his ensemble

"Repentance"
Ivan Monighetti and an Irish ensemble

World and Local Premieres

10 June 2010

Munich

Prinzregententheater

World premiere: Peter Ruzicka, "TRANS" for Chamber Orchestra
Munich Chamber Orchestra
Conductor: Alexander Liebreich
Work commissioned by the Munich Chamber Orchestra

15 September 2010

Bonn

World premiere: Peter Ruzicka, "... ÜBER DIE GRENZE" for Violoncello and Chamber Ensemble
(Daniel Müller-Schott, violoncello, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, cond.: Peter Ruzicka)

17 October 2010

Peking

World premiere: Peter Ruzicka, **HÖLDERLIN SYMPHONY** for Baritone and Orchestra
(Thomas Bauer, baritone, China Philharmonic Orchestra, cond.: Peter Ruzicka)
- Beijing Music Festival

November 2010

Bucharest

Rumanian premiere: (scenic)
Peter Ruzicka, the opera "**CELAN**"
(co-production with the Bremen Theatre)

10 March 2011

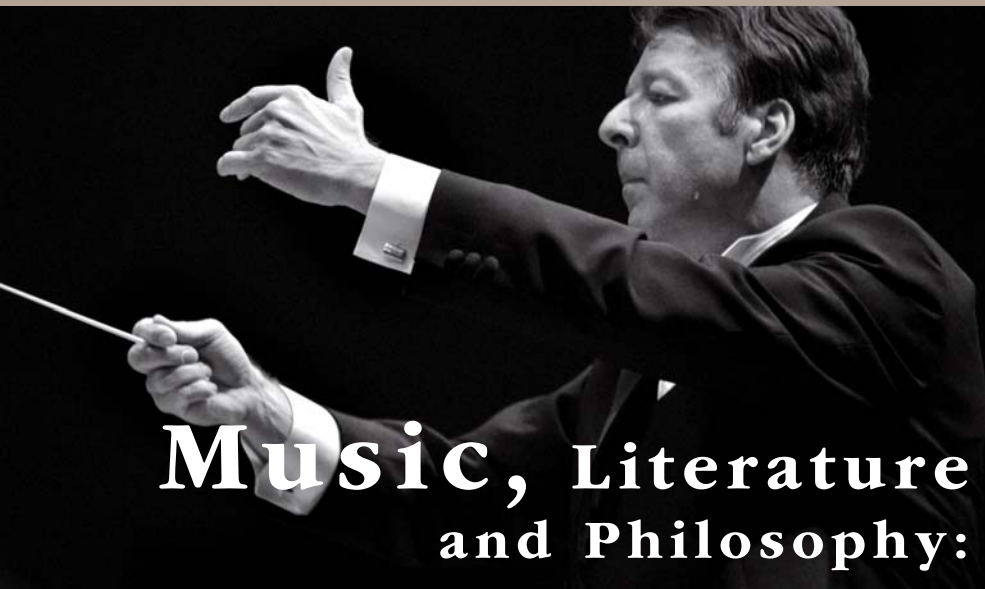
Hamburg

World premiere: Peter Ruzicka "**EINSCHREIBUNG**". Six Pieces for Large Orchestra
(NDR Symphony Orchestra, cond.: Christoph Eschenbach)

15 March 2011

Basel

Swiss premiere: Peter Ruzicka, "**HÖLDERLIN**"
(Vera Nemirova, director)



Music, Literature and Philosophy:

Peter Ruzicka composes music, writes about music and allows himself to be stimulated by philosophical writings to his works. Already in 1998, a collection of his essays entitled "Invented and Found Music" was published by Wolke Verlag.

There followed in 2009, from the same publisher, the second volume entitled "INS OFFENE" ("Into the Open") with talks, lectures, and specialist articles by Ruzicka from which many conclusions can be drawn about his own musical works. During the course of a compositional self-portrait Ruzicka frequently designates his compositions as self-referential in their design. They reflect conditions, events or sensitivities, according to the composer, and form complex immanent reciprocal connections. "At times this also leads to 'divergences': a core thought, at first only existing as a temporary notation, undergoes a kind of cellular division in the compositional process."

Examples of such "musical cellular divisions" are also found in the later and latest works of Ruzicka, again provided with meaningful but also ambiguous titles.

The orchestral work "TRANS" by Peter Ruzicka received its world premiere during the course of the 7th subscription concert of the Munich Chamber Orchestra on 10 June 2010.

Ruzicka has often worked towards a larger upcoming project in individual, independent works. The composition "VORGEFÜHLE" (Premonitions) written prior to his opera "CELAN" was an example of this. The new piece "TRANS" also stands at the beginning of an occupation with an operatic project to be realised in 2014. There exists no title or libretto as yet, but only a "vision," as Ruzicka says.

"'TRANS' is a kind of pre-echo – that's how I called it at that time, a piece that gradually approached the sonic identity of the 'Hölderlin' opera. The title 'Trans' refers to an area of material in which I will spend time. Specifically, it will be about the change from reality into something transcendental, having to do with the hereafter," says the composer.

The second major premiere event of the past summer was the interpretation of the new work "... ÜBER DIE GRENZE" (Over the Boundary) for violoncello and chamber ensemble by the frequently honoured cello soloist Daniel Müller-Schott and the Munich Chamber Orchestra directed by Alexander Liebreich.

In Peking, Peter Ruzicka will himself conduct the world premiere of his **HÖLDERLIN SYMPHONY** for baritone and orchestra on 17 October in his function as conductor of the China Philharmonic Orchestra. The baritone Thomas Bauer will be the vocal soloist of this concert during the course of the Beijing Music Festivals.

Ruzicka's first opera CELAN will receive its Rumanian premiere in November of this year in Bucharest. This is a co-production with the Bremen Theatre.

Finally, we wish to draw your attention to the world premiere of the latest orchestral work "EINSCHREIBUNG." Six Pieces for Large Orchestra with the NDR Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Christoph Eschenbach on 20 March 2011.

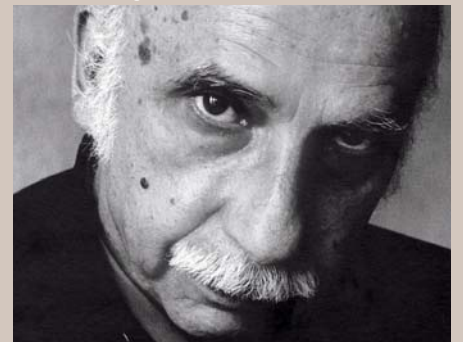
"Resonances" of Gubaidulina and Lutoslawski

The Ensemble Resonanz, resident in Hamburg, combines music from four centuries in unusual programmes in intelligent thematic constellations. The artist in residence Jean-Guihen Queyras (violinist and conductor) will interpret the famous "Sacher Variations," the "Musique funèbre," "Grave" and "Metamorphoses" of the Polish composer **Witold Lutoslawski** with the Ensemble Resonanz on 27 February 2011. The concert on 3 April 2011 during the course of the series "Resonances" will not take place, exceptionally, at the Hamburg Laeiszhalle, but at the Hauptkirche St. Katharinen in Hamburg. A selection from the "Lachrimae or Seven Tears" of the Renaissance composer John Dowland will be presented next to **Sofia Gubaidulina's** work "Seven Words" for bayan and orchestra. The bayan soloist will be Elsbeth Moser.

Newly Composed "Catchy Tune"

The young composer **Moritz Eggert** has composed a new piece for soprano and piano bearing the pregnant and promising title of "Ohrwurm" (Catchy Tune). The world took place in Chemnitz on 17 October.

Giya Kancheli at 75



Giya Kancheli has become a symbolic figure of New Music in the post-Soviet years, as Süddeutsche Zeitung already noted years ago. He creates a kind of music that draws an infinite breath, gets caught up in profound meditation, processes painful experiences in oppressive dreams – and is nonetheless miles away from kitsch and cheap sentimentality. In a very special way, the Georgian composer has the talent of lending expression to basic human experiences such as sadness, anger, loss, hope and faith in his music, directly referring to extra-musical subjects solely through the means of sound. In his opinion, the essence and task of music is self-reflection. Giya Kancheli turned 75 on 10 August.