

SOMBRE – In the Shadows of our Time



Credit: Cécile Marti

SOMBRE – In the Shadow of our Time [Music Theatre]

with world premieres by composers Cécile Marti, Asia Ahmetjanova and J.B. Barrière

inspired by the music of Kaija Saariaho

Participants:

Robert Koller, CH, (Bass-baritone)
N.N., (Violin, Viola)
Aleksander Gabrys, CH, POL (Double Bass)
N.N., (Percussion)
Camilla Hoitenga, D/USA (Flute)
Eija Kankaanranta, FIN, (Kantele)

Jean-Baptiste Barrière, F, (Composition, Sound Design)
Aleksi Barrière, FIN/F, (Dramaturgy, Stage Direction)
Prof. Gary Berger, Audio and Video Coordination (Tour)

Tour 2026/27

November 2026 Basel, Gare du Nord
Beginning of 2027 Solothurn, Stadttheater (TOBS!)
Beginning of 2027 Biel, Stadttheater (TOBS!)
tbd Zurich

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1. Project Description "SOMBRE - In the Shadows of our Time"

Brief Description

This project is an interdisciplinary work of music theatre that questions cultural archetypes and memories. It was created in collaboration with three living composers (Cécile Marti and Asia Ahmetjanova from Switzerland, and Jean-Baptiste Barrière from France) who enter a dialogue with the chamber music of Kaija Saariaho.

The project is built around six works by Saariaho – including the eponymous *Sombre* – that explore ambiguous cultural figures and events, prompting original works by Marti, Ahmetjanova, and Barrière that are commissioned for this project that will later continue their lives as standalone pieces.

In the music theatre performance *SOMBRE – In the Shadows of our Time*, the nine works will be combined into a new staged whole, whose dramaturgy and stage direction are realized by Aleksì Barrière.

Type of Project:	Music Theatre
Duration of Performance:	approx. 80 minutes
Direction and Dramaturgy:	Aleksì Barrière
Set Design / Stage:	Cécile Marti
Audio and Video Coordination (Tour)	Prof. Gary Berger (ZHdK)

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2. Detailed Description, Structure and Dramaturgy

The two Swiss composers **Cécile Marti** and **Asia Ahmetjanova**, each respond with a newly commissioned composition to works by Saariaho, respectively to her flute work *NoaNoa* (after Gauguin's Tahiti diaries) and songs from her *Tempest Songbook*, a fragmentary setting of Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*.

Kaija Saariaho, who passed away in June 2023, is considered one of the most important composers of our time, in particular in the realms of opera and electro-acoustic music, and a shining role model for composing women. This project is not simply a tribute to her, but also an attempt to continue her life's work.

Building on important chamber music works from her oeuvre, and through compositional reactions to three of them, this performance will also be an expansion of the usual concert format into an interweaving of arts.

What makes this project unique is not only these newly composed works by young and established composers, but also the participation of two close collaborators of Saariaho that are also her family members: her son **Aleksi Barrière** (an internationally active director and the librettist of some of her late works) and her husband **Jean-Baptiste Barrière** (a formative figure at IRCAM Paris and precursor in the fields of both electronic music and video art). In addition to being involved in the creation of the evening's artistic unity, they will contribute to the new commissioned works as director/librettist and composer/sound designer respectively. Other trusted collaborators of Saariaho's are involved in the project: the flutist **Camilla Hoitenga**, for whom she has written most of her flute music, and **Eija Kankaanranta**, who performs the kantele, the traditional Finnish zither, whose repertoire Saariaho has expanded in collaboration with her.

“The Bad Conscience of our Time”

Saint-John Perse, a writer who has inspired Kaija Saariaho in many of her works, described the poet as *“the bad conscience of his time.”* Saariaho's music explores the layers of dream, subconscious, hidden realities that make up the human mind and our cultural fabric. In the same way that her operas are more interested in moral ambivalence than in epic heroism, all of her works tackle difficult topics through problematic figures. One of them is the poet Ezra Pound, a promoter of intercultural dialogue who also lost himself in the promotion of Mussolini's regime. Pound's fragmentary songs of regret form the text material of *Sombre*, this production's central work, to which Jean-Baptiste Barrière will respond with a setting of Primo Levi's poems about his experience as a Holocaust survivor and the anxiety that history will repeat itself.

The other Saariaho works featured in this performance turn to the layered history of colonial hegemony: Paul Gauguin's Tahiti notebooks, that serve as the starting point to Saariaho's *NoaNoa* for flute and electronics, are also at the centre of Cécile Marti's new work that dramatizes the exotifying gaze through which anonymous women are turned into works of art. And then, Saariaho's songs from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, set on a remote tropical island, explore the tension between the colonizer Prospero and the indigenous slave Caliban, which will be expanded in a new work by Asia Ahmetjanova.

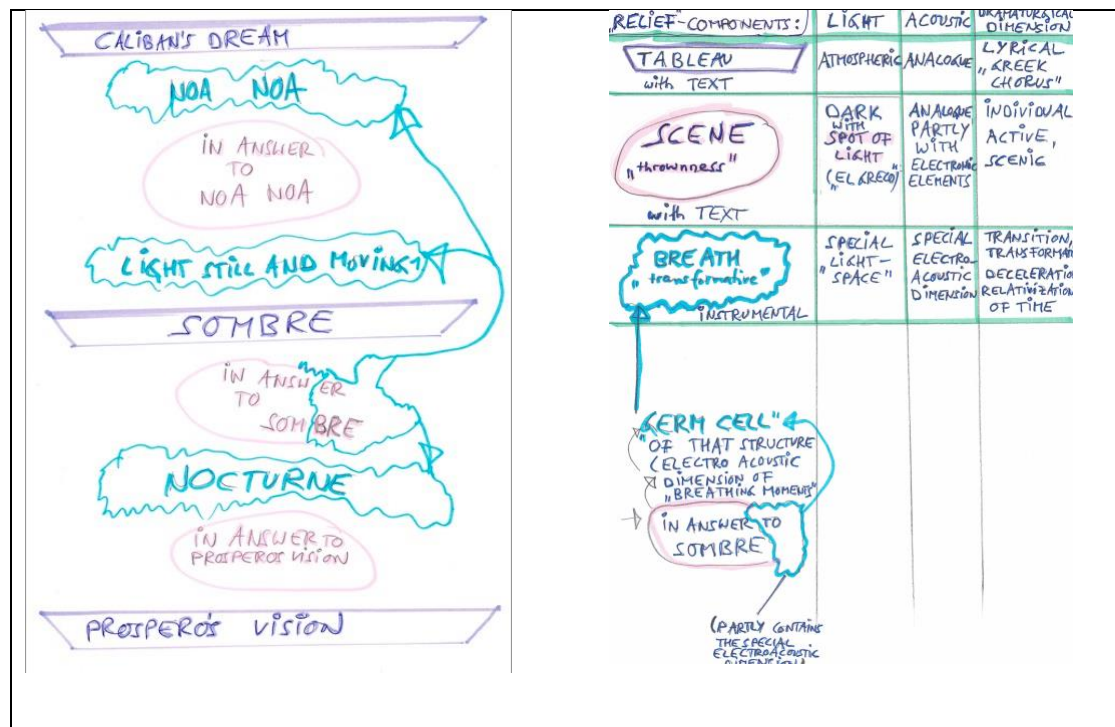
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A Dialogue Between Arts

Kaija Saariaho's works often find their origins not only in literary, but also visual impulses: for instance, in this concert, NoaNoa from the Tahiti paintings and woodcuts of Gauguin, Sombre from the dark paintings created by Mark Rothko (forming the environment of Houston's "Rothko Chapel" where the work was first premiered). For twenty years, Jean-Baptiste Barrière has been exploring the expansion of the concert situation through means of live video that reveal the multisensorial background of Saariaho's works.

Our performance is centering this communication between artistic disciplines which will be given a diverse treatment: Cécile Marti, who is both a composer and sculptor, will bring her own spin to her musical Gauguin miniature as well a participating in creating the performance's scenography, and Asia Ahmetjanova's intertwining of music and instrumental theatre will open new perspectives on Shakespeare, complementing the ones offered by Saariaho's acoustic theatre.

The whole of the concert finds its unity in Jean-Baptiste Barrière's multimedia design (video and electronics), and the dramaturgy, stage direction, and lighting of Aleks Barrière, that organize the dialogue between arts and artists into a collective meditation. Kaija Saariaho's music, which is based on the creation of a suspended time, forms the ideal mental space to delve beyond the surface, into our past and our unconscious, deeper in than in a normal concert situation.



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Paradises and their dangers

Both Gauguin and the characters of *The Tempest* speak of their exotic islands as a 'Paradise.' Ezra Pound, in his regretful fragments, laments: "I have tried to write Paradise." These idyllic visions have a background of appropriation and wrecking that Kaija Saariaho's settings explore by examining the ambiguity of all beauty, destructive when we try to cling to it and impose it. The aesthetics of Italian fascism shortly embraced by Pound are an example of this.

However, Pound uncovers an alternative: "Do not move / Let the wind speak / that is paradise." By giving space to the unnamed, the smallest shared sensations, the invisible stories, an alternative form of beauty, whose ephemerality is unbraced, can take the stage. This performance is the attempt to explore this direction through an intermedia, immersive experience that lets associations flow from our shared collective history, its sounds and images and silenced voices, not dominating time but unfolding in its interstices.

Cultural Memory to Dream Up a Future

When he is about to give up his temporal and supernatural power, *The Tempest*'s character Prospero utters the famous motto: "We are such stuff as dreams are made on." This is not just an observation on the fleetingness of human existence, but a way of describing the building blocks of our humanity: generations of accumulated dreams that are present in each and every one of us.

Facts alone do not tell the entire story of our species. Kaija Saariaho's works give a broad place to subjective realities, and to dreams in which our past and our desires come to us in familiar or foreign forms, as sensorial experiences. We are taking up this method to expand it to an evening in which dream-logic will have a key role to play as a structuring force, even and especially as we deal with topic of male and female desire, attraction to charismatic leaders, generational trauma, and colonialism.

There is no vagueness in these 'dreams,' however: each is going deep into a specific genealogy of memories and images, realized at the highest level by outstanding artists of their respective disciplines. In this way the dream of a shared artistic experience can be realized.

3. Outstanding Women

Kaija Saariaho has been described as one of the most important composers of the present and as a shining role model for women in music. This also explains her relevance and significance for the composers Cécile Marti and Asia Ahmetjanova.

During the last years of her life, Kaija Saariaho collaborated with kantele player **Eija Kankaanranta** – as one of the world's leading interpreters of this typical Finnish instrument – on multiple new works and arrangements of earlier works for plucked strings. They are arranged and authorized by the composer for Eija Kankaanranta and will be made available to us especially for this project. The kantele will also be

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heard in the newly composed works and gives the production a special color emphasizing the musical context through this Nordic element.

Asia Ahmetjanova is a composer of experimental and contemporary music as well as a pianist of the classical and contemporary repertoire. The experimental way of dealing with musical material and the human body, as well as her own personal spirituality in her compositions and works of classical piano literature, are in balance in her artistic and compositional life. For Asia Ahmetjanova, the individuality of each person and their personal approach to music is very important. She rejects any form of generalization of people and their activities. This way of thinking is also reflected in her compositions.

Cécile Marti is one of those rare talents who is equally recognized and active - both as a composer and as a visual artist. With these special abilities, she will lend a defining facet to the cross-disciplinary conception of the project:

In addition to her new composition, she will also be responsible, as a visual artist, for designs integrated to the scenography of the performance as a whole.

Camilla Hoitenga, like Eija Kankaanranta, is one of Saariaho's most important interpreters and companions (see also her recently published article below) and is known worldwide for her premieres of many chamber music and flute works by the most famous contemporary composers of the last 40 years.

Together with Robert Koller, she performed Sombre at the annual meeting of the Sacher Foundation and at the Schwetzingen SWR Festival (live broadcast by SWR Kultur) on the recommendation of the composer.

(See under 8. Previous Projects)

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4. Programm

KAIJA SAARIAHO

Caliban's Dream (from Tempest Songbook)

Bass-baritone, Flute, Kantele, Double Bass

(Premiere of the version with kantele)

2'30'

NoaNoa

for flute and electronics

10'

CÉCILE MARTI

New work in response to NoaNoa

Premiere

12'

KAIJA SAARIAHO

Light Still and Moving I

for flute and kantele

3'

Sombre

for baritone, bass flute, percussion, kantele, double bass

21'

JEAN-BAPTISTE BARRIÈRE

New work in response to Sombre

Premiere

12'

KAIJA SAARIAHO

Nocturne for violin

6'

ASIA AHMETJANOVA

New work in response to Tempest Songbook

Premiere

12'

Kaija Saariaho

Prospero's Vision (from Tempest Songbook)

for baritone, bass flute, percussion, kantele, double bass

(premiere of the version with kantele)

4'30'

Duration: approx. 80 minutes

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5. Descriptions of the Compositions

Description of the new composition by Asia Ahmetjanova

The new composition with the working title "Vii" will be composed as a response to Kaija Saariaho's main composition "Tempest Songs". It is an interdisciplinary ensemble piece that presents a unique ensemble of kantele, violin, double bass, percussion and bass-baritone. Text excerpts from the original work serve as the poetic basis of the piece.

The composition dispenses with electronics and instead uses the voice of the bass-baritone in innovative ways, both as a solo and as a choral element within the ensemble. Moreover, the piece invites ensemble members to contribute their voices, within a comfortable dynamic range of mp-mf, focusing on 'imperfect' and authentic vocal expressions. This includes humming, whistling and differentiated pronunciation of the text.

Beyond the music, the composition integrates minimal choreography and some staging elements. This creates an immersive stage experience for both the performers and the audience in the concert hall. -- A.A.

Description of the new composition by Cécile Marti

The new composition will refer to the imagery of Paul Gauguin and his time in Tahiti. In particular, the cross-reference to NoaNoa and the composition of the same name by Kaija Saariaho for flute and electronics will be established. The immersion in the color compositions of Gauguin's imagery plays a major role, which creates its own new acoustic image through the instrumental colors of the instruments and registers used.

Using text fragments, broken down to the most elementary parts of sometimes only vowels and consonants, human language becomes sound and pictorial story, interwoven with string, wind and percussion sounds. -- C.M.

Description of the new composition by Jean-Baptiste Barrière

Jean-Baptiste Barrière is writing a new piece (based on texts by Primo Levi) with reference to Kaija Saariaho's major work SOMBRE, which from a formal perspective forms the nucleus for the special electroacoustic spaces of the "In the Shadows of our Time"

6. Performances 2026/27 «SOMBRE - In the Shadows of our Time»

November 2026 Basel, Gare du Nord

Beginning of 2027 Solothurn, Stadttheater Solothurn «TOBS!»

Beginning of 2027 Biel, Stadttheater Biel «TOBS!»

tbd Zurich

7. Previous projects of the musicians

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Schwetzingen SWR Festspiele 2016

Sombre (Kaija Saariaho)

In collaboration with Kaija Saariaho, Camilla Hoitenga, Robert Koller and Jean-Baptiste Barrière

<https://radiohoerer.info/komponistinnenportraet-kaija-saariaho/>

Links to the recording of SWR-

Schwetzingen SWR Festspiele 2016

Sombre (Kaija Saariaho), (Recording for documentation purposes only)

<https://cloud.robert-koller.com/s/2yGdQ8Dbd247yXl>

<https://cloud.robert-koller.com/s/epjmETA99JRAxb>

<https://cloud.robert-koller.com/s/cqaBidPsi63mX9R>

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|------|---|
| 2022 | Toblach, Gustav Mahler Musikwochen
https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=qxBQMngNfHM&ab_channel=Sáralván |
| 2016 | Kopenhagen, NJORD New Nordic Music Biennale
https://twitter.com/NJORDbiennale/status/693524212980514816 |

8. Biographies

ASIA AHMETJANOVA

Asia Ahmetjanova is a composer of experimental and contemporary music as well as a pianist of classical and contemporary repertoire. The experimental way of dealing with the musical material and the human body, as well as her own personal spirituality in her compositions and works of classical piano literature are in balance in her artistic and compositional life. For Asia Ahmetjanova, the individuality of each person and their personal approach to music is very important. She rejects any form of generalization of people and their activities. This way of thinking is also reflected in her compositions.



Credit: Katerina Stankevich

As a composer, Asia has worked with numerous musical formations, including Basel Sinfonietta, Ensemble ö!, Ensemble Phoenix Basel, Duo Alto, Hyper Duo, Neue Vokalsolisten Stuttgart, Ensemble Latenz, United Instruments Of Lucilin, Duo Klexs, Ensemble Montaigne, Ensemble SoundTrieb and others. She has presented her compositions at festivals and events such as Darmstädter Ferienkurse (workshop with Yaron Deutsch and Uli Fussenegger), Festival Musica Strasbourg (Hyper Duo), London Ear Festival (Ensemble ö!), Tower of Babel II (Klangforum Wien), Ticino Musica Festival (presentations and performances) and International Young Composers Academy in Ticino.

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In 2023 Asia won the “Phoenix Trabant: Biennial Composition Competition” of the Ensemble Phoenix Basel. Also in 2023, her orchestral work “après le chant” (2023) received international recognition when it was included in the list of recommended works of the “69th Rostrum of Composers”.

Asia Ahmetjanova's career as a pianist includes numerous performances in various European countries as well as in the USA (Carnegie Hall) and South Korea (Tongyong International Music Festival). Other festival appearances include Wien Modern, Lucerne Festival, Darmstädter Ferienkurse, Archipel Geneva, Southhampton Arts Festival (USA), London Ear Festival and Estonian Music Days. She has worked with many renowned conductors, especially in the field of new music, including Matthias Pintscher, Baldur Brönnimann, Clemens Heil, Michael Sanderling, Christian Schumann, Francesc Prat and others.

In 2018, she gave a duo recital at the Carnegie Weill Recital Hall in New York.

Asia Ahmetjanova was born and raised in Riga, Latvia. After graduating from high school in Riga, she received her bachelor's degree in Tallinn, Estonia, in the class of Alexandra Juozapenaite-Eesmaa. She then studied Piano Major Performance with Konstantin Lifschitz and Minor Composition with Dieter Ammann at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts- Music as well as a second Master in Music and Art Performance with several internal and external lecturers, most intensively with Carola Bauckholt, Marianthi Papalexandri-Alexandri and Urban Mäder.

Asia lives in Zurich, works as a composer and pianist, is a member of Ensemble ö! (Switzerland) and a member of the music faculty of the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts- Music. Asia Ahmetjanova also gives lectures on contemporary piano music, her own compositions and art performance.

<https://ahmetjanova.com>

CÉCILE MARTI



Credit: Suzie Mäder

Cécile Marti studied composition with Dieter Ammann at the Lucerne School of Music, graduating with a Master of Arts in Music in 2010. She also took private lessons with Georg Friedrich Haas in Basel. She worked on a research project at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London under the supervision of Julian Anderson and received her doctorate in February 2017. She then completed a post-doctorate under the supervision of George Benjamin at King's College in London. Her violin concerto AdoRatio was premiered by violinist Bettina Boller and the Collegium Novum Zurich at the Lucerne Festival 2010. Her second orchestral work, “wave trip”, was premiered in Nordhausen DE in the same year. In 2015, “Thread” for violin and piano was performed at the Musica Nova Festival in Helsinki. The orchestral cycle “Seven Towers”, lasting 80 minutes, was premiered by the SOBS Symphony Orchestra in April 2016. Parts of it were

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performed by the Bern Symphony Orchestra under Mario Venzago and the Geneva Camerata. She has recently been commissioned by the Ensemble für neue Musik Zürich, the Sinfonietta Basel, the Zeiträume Basel festival and Radio France. Her works have been performed on all continents, including at the following festivals: Lucerne Festival, reMusik Festival St. Petersburg, Warsaw Autumn, Festival Présences Paris. In 2011, she was awarded the City of Zurich's Work Year. This was followed by a six-month studio residency for composition in London from October 2011 to the end of March 2012, which was sponsored by Landis & Gyr. Marti was composer-in-residence with the SOBS Symphony Orchestra for the 2016 season and was awarded the 'Carte Blanche' from the SUISA Foundation for 2018. In spring 2021 she received the Freiraumbeitrag from the Canton of Zurich. In addition to her work as a composer, she is also a sculptor. She works on freely chosen projects and themes, which are often linked to her compositions. This has resulted in a large number of sculptures that are either in dialog with music or represent free, independent works. For many years she has been supported by excellent Swiss sculptors. She recently opened her own studio-gallery in Wetzikon, where she works on cross-connections between music, sculpture and film. Cécile Marti works as a freelance composer and sculptor in equal measure. A special connection to the city of Zurich can be seen in two recent projects. The Musikpodium Zürich dedicated a concert and exhibition in the Le Corbusier Pavilion to her. The Zurich Chamber Orchestra gave her the commission mentioned in the link for a successful world premiere that attracted widespread attention.

In 2025 the fifth part of her monumental ballet cycle SEEING TIME for large orchestra was premiered by Bern Symphony Orchestra under Yoel Gamzou as well as her string quartet Polygon at Musikverein Wien.

<https://zko.ch/berichte/sehnsucht-nach-dem-orchester/>

<https://www.cecilemarti.ch>

KAIJA SAARIAHO



Credit: Andrew Campbell

Finnish composer Kaija Anneli Saariaho (pictured), who was born in Helsinki on October 14, 1952, died in Paris on June 2, 2023. Saariaho studied at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki under the avant-garde composer Paavo Heininen and founded the group Open Ears with Magnus Lindberg and others. She then continued her training in Freiburg im Breisgau with Brian Ferneyhough and Klaus Huber and from 1982 studied at IRCAM at the Center Pompidou in Paris. Saariaho's works have been performed at international festivals in London (1989), Jakarta (1989), Paris (1989, 1991) and Vienna (1993). In 1999, Kurt Masur conducted her composition "Oltra mar" for choir and orchestra with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. (*) At the Salzburg Festival in 2000, Kent Nagano conducted her first opera "L'amour de loin" to great acclaim, and in 2011 the recording received the Grammy Award in the Best Opera Recording category. In 2013, Saariaho was awarded the Polar Music Prize together with Youssou N'Dour. In 2021, she received the Golden Lion at the Venice Music Biennale for her life's work.

https://de.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaija_Saariaho

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ALEKSI BARRIÈRE



Aleksis Barrière is a French-Finnish director, dramaturge and author, and the artistic director of the French collective La Chambre aux échos. Productions he has directed in Europe, the USA and Japan have been acclaimed for their intercultural and intermedia approach and for addressing societal topics. Barrière's productions, working among others with conductor Clément Mao-Takacs, have been inspired by viewing 20th-century works in a new light (e.g. the war cantatas of Hanns Eisler in 2015, vocal music by Berio and Cage in 2017) and by collaboration with living composers (e.g. Kaija Saariaho's *La Passion de Simone* and *Only the Sound Remains*, Djuro Zivkovic's *Bogoluchie*). The music theatre work *Violences*, created jointly with composer Juha T. Koskinen (Finnish National Opera and Ballet, 2019) was noted by FMQ magazine as one of the most significant events not only of the Musica Nova festival but of the entire year.

Barrière has created multiple librettos for composers such as Kaija Saariaho, Juha T. Koskinen and Diana Syrse, and he is currently developing librettos for composers Outi Tarkiainen and Tomás Bordalejo.

His most recent productions include devised music theatre pieces for the Finnish National Opera and Ballet *Between* (2022) and *Earthrise* (2024), a new version with his own original text of *The Soldier's Tale* (Helsinki Music Centre, 2022), and new stagings of classics at the Espoo Organ Night and Aria Festival, of Britten's *Curlew River* (2023), Handel's *Messiah* (2024) and Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King* (2024).

<https://en.chambreauxechos.org/team/aleksi-barriere/>

JEAN-BAPTISTE BARRIÈRE



Credit: Maarit Kytöharju

The composer and multimedia artist Jean-Baptiste Barrière was born in Paris in 1958. In addition to his work as a composer, he pursued a scientific career at IRCAM from 1981-1998, where he was active in scientific research, teaching and composing. He supervised projects such as *Chants* (synthesis of singing and computer) and *Formes* (computer-controlled synthesis and composition). Today he works mainly as a composer for multimedia projects and art installations. He has created music for the Salzburg Festival, for international festivals in New York and Montréal and for IRCAM projects. His collaborations with international artists (including Pierre Friloux, Françoise Gedanken, Catherine Ikam and Louis Fléri, Peter Greenaway, Maurice Benayoun and François Schuitten) have taken him all over the world. His works can be seen and heard at major festivals and exhibitions far beyond the borders of Europe, as far away as Tokyo and Shanghai.

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[https://de.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Baptiste_Barrière_\(Komponist,_1958\)](https://de.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Baptiste_Barrière_(Komponist,_1958))

EIJA KANKAANRANTA



No Credit

Eija Kankaanranta is one of the most acclaimed players of the kantele, a traditional Finnish plucked string instrument. She is also a specialist in contemporary music and improvisation and has been featured in numerous world premieres by renowned composers such as Asta Hyvärinen, Michael Finnissy, Jukka Tiensuu, Lotta Wannäkoski, Juhani Nuorvala and Kaija Saariaho.

She was the first kantele player to receive a doctorate from the Sibelius Academy in 2009 and has performed as a soloist with the Avanti Chamber Orchestra, the Pori Sinfonietta, the Joensuu City Orchestra and the Netherlands Wind Ensemble. Her skills have been in demand in numerous formations such as the Uusinta Chamber Ensemble, the Tapiola Sinfonietta, the Moscow Contemporary Music Ensemble and the Athelas Sinfonietta of Copenhagen. In 2007 she recorded the solo CD Griffur. In 2017 she received a scholarship from the Arts Promotion Center Finland. She regularly performs in duet with Camilla Hoytenga. Eija Kankaanranta is supported by Koistinen Kantele Ltd as a sponsor.

<https://www.operadeparis.fr/en/artists/eija-kankaanranta>

ROBERT KOLLER



Credit: Kunarum Lee

Bass-baritone Robert Koller, born in Basel, has performed extensive solo roles with conductors such as Andrea Marcon, Heinz Holliger, Jordi Savall, Emilio Pomárico, Simon Gaudenz and Christian Schumann.

For example, he sang as bass soloist in Handel's "Siroe, Re di Persia" at the Musikhalle Hamburg and Zellerbach Hall/San Francisco with the Venice Baroque Orchestra under Andrea Marcon and at the Styriarte Graz under Jordi Savall. This was followed by leading roles and orchestral recitals at the Cervantino Festival Mexico, Gaida Festival Vilnius, Davos Festival, Società del Quartetto Milano, Cantiere Internazionale Montepulciano, Acht Brücken Festival Cologne, Teatro Colon Buenos Aires and at the Philharmonie Kiev. The

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Semperoper Dresden engaged him for the title role in “El Cimarron” in 2012. In 2013 he was heard as a soloist at the Ittinger Pfingstage and in 2014 at the Alte Oper Frankfurt under Heinz Holliger.

In 2015, he performed the bass solo in Beethoven's Ninth at the Berlin Philharmonie and the Aichi Arts Center (Japan), then in Holliger's “Dunkle Spiegel” at the Goldberg Variations Festival at the Alte Oper Frankfurt, in 2016 the leading role in the opera “Künstliche Mutter” at the Lucerne Festival and subsequently the solo parts in Mendelssohn's Walpurgisnacht with the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich and the solo part in “Sombre” (Saariaho) at the Schwetzingen SWR Festival. In 2017, he sang Noah in “Noah's Flutde” by Britten with the Basel Symphony Orchestra, Beethoven's 9th at the Kulturcasino Bern and the lead role in “Luther's Dreams” with the Brandenburg State Orchestra. This was followed in 2018 by Beethoven's Ninth in Toyota City and Puccini's Messa di Gloria in the Tonhalle St. Gallen and in 2019 by Haydn's Creation with the Basel Chamber Orchestra and Honegger's “danse des morts” with the Jena Philharmonic Orchestra, Elijah at the Kulturcasino Bern and in 2020 by the “Knaben Wunderhorn” (Mahler/Vassena) at the Ernest Ansermet Radio Studio in Geneva, El Cimarron in the Sendesaal Bremen and the memorial concert for Hans Heinz Schneeberger with Heinz Holliger.

In 2021 he was a soloist with the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra at the Kulturpalast Dresden with Zimmermann's last work, in 2022 at the Musikverein Vienna with “Abgrund” by Marc André, in 2023 with a solo recital at the Bern Festival with Salome Kammer and Kirill Zvegintsov. In 2024 he will be heard as a soloist at the Arnold Schönberg Center in Vienna (“Schönberg 150”) and under the direction of Heinz Holliger as a soloist in concerts celebrating the 100th anniversary of Klaus Huber with Collegium Novum Zürich and at the Schönberg Festival “Ich, Arnold Schönberg” at Frankfurt performing Ode to Napoleon with Florian Hölscher, Tim Vogler and members of the Elliott Quartett.

<https://robert-koller.com/de/>

CAMILLA HOITENGA



Credit: Sonja Dirscherl

Flutist Camilla Hoytenga was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan (USA) and has lived in Cologne since 1980.

Extensive travels have taken the globally sought-after soloist not only to important international music centers such as Salzburg, Paris, Helsinki and New York, but also to festivals in more remote places such as the Kremlin in Moscow, Tongyeong in Korea, the city of Al Ain in the Emirates and the Forbidden City in Beijing. Camilla Hoytenga's New York debut was reviewed by Tim Page in the New York Times as “the most exciting program of the year”. Her performances as soloist with the Chicago Symphony and the London Philharmonic Orchestra have been described by the press as both

“brilliant”, ‘lively and enticing’ and ‘charismatic’, as well as ‘ideally transparent and precise’.

SOMBRE – In the Shadows of our Time

Today, Camilla Hoitenga is one of the outstanding flutists of her generation. She regularly gives concerts in the USA, Europe, Scandinavia and, since 1984, increasingly in Japan. Her specialty is contemporary music, and this interest brings the flutist to collaborate with numerous composers and composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen and Shoko Shida in Cologne, Kaija Saariaho in Finland and Paris, Kenichiro Kobayashi in Tokyo, and Anne LeBaron in New York. Camilla Hoitenga is also known for her collaboration with visual artists (e.g. Ansgar Nierhoff, Mutsumi Okada, Jörg Immendorff) and her improvisations in galleries and museums (e.g. in May 2006 with a “sound walk” on the island of Hombroich). Camilla Hoitenga can be heard on radio, CD and television recordings. The multimedia CD-ROM Prisma, as well as her CD L’aile du songe with the flute concerto by Kaija Saariaho dedicated to her, have received several awards.

<https://www.hoitenga.com>

PROF. GARY BERGER



No Credit

After studying percussion at the Zurich University of Music and a specialisation in electro-acoustic music, Gary Berger specialized in contemporary music and the interpretation and sound direction of live electronic works. He then studied composition with Iannis Xenakis and Julio Estrada at the CEMAMU Paris, IRCAM Paris and the Musikhochschule Zurich. His works have been performed at Lucerne Festival, Wien Modern, ISMC World New Music Days, SWR MATRIX Festival, among many others. He is professor of electro-acoustic and intermedia composition at the Zurich University of the Arts ZHdK.

www.garyberger.ch

ALEKSANDER GABRYŚ



Felix Groteloh

Aleksander Gabryś – double bassist, performer, composer – performs as a soloist with ensembles such as Klangforum Wien, Ensemble Modern, Collegium Novum Zürich, the Austrian Ensemble for New Music and others. Since 2001 he has been a permanent member of Ensemble Phoenix Basel. He has played in New York, Moscow, Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Cape Town, Montevideo, Tbilisi, Warsaw, Nairobi, Gothenburg, Paris, Berlin, Rome, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Novi Sad and Zurich, among others, as well as at festivals such as the Biennale di Venezia, MaerzMusik and Wien Modern.

SOMBRE – In the Shadows of our Time

In 2020 he was a resident at Stanford University, where he led a master class for composers and played a solo recital at the CCRMA.

Many composers, including Helmut Oehring, Ulrich Krieger, Douglas McCausland, Edward Bogusławski, Thomas Kessler, Ryszard Gabryś, Krzysztof Knittel, Junghae Lee, Michel Roth, Nicolas Tzortzis and Erik Ulman, have dedicated works for double bass to him.

Gabryś' artistic work includes works for double bass, chamber music and computer music, often with a tendency towards paratheatrical forms. His solo performances, characterized by expressive density, are anchored in the tradition of one-man theater. In 2024, he released the film "Sonata b" as an author, based on the Beelzebub Sonata by S. I. Witkiewicz. In 2025, his double bass concerto "Rio, my Rio" was premiered with the Ensemble Phoenix Basel.

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SOMBRE – In the Shadows of our Time

10. Press reviews (see appendix for more)

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Feuilleton



Uraufführungsglück: Jonathan Stockhammer dirigiert die Dresdner Philharmoniker, Antigone Papoulkas und Robert Koller singen dazu.

Foto Oliver Kiliß

Produktivität der Verzweiflung

Weich eine ungeheuerliche Musik! Im ersten Satz von Christfried Schmidts 2. Sinfonie ringen und quillen sich die Klänge, knirschend oder eruptiv aufrühlend, wie unter Bleigewichten und zählenden Magmatosen erstickt: brutale Ballungen schwarzer Energie, Bilder einer in sich selbst verbissenen und verklammerten, zum Rand der Unerträglichkeit hin potenzierten Verzweiflung.

Was so beginnt, ist das feibrige, freibewusstliche und in seiner Gewalttätigkeit jedes konventionelle Maß verlassende Zeit-Nacherleben eines Mitteldrillers im Jahre 1968: erschüttert von der Ermordung Martin Luther Kings, dem das Werk gewidmet ist, Zeuge aber auch der Endrosetzung des Prager Frühlings im gleichen Jahr, der Regressionen in Ost wie West. Das Stück wäre damals in jeder Musikkategorie ein scharf schneidender und aufreißender Fremdkörper gewesen; doch da, wo es real geschrieben wurde – Quedlinburg am Harz, selbst für DDR-Verhältnisse tiefe Provinz abseits fast aller Entwicklungsoberflächen – genutzte seine Entzerrung am Abscheu.

Und damit aus Wunderbare, weil ja auch jedes wirkliche Wunder eine Absurdität ist. Nun, mehr als ein halbes Jahrhundert später, zeigte sich bei der späten Uraufführung, dass nichts vom Gemeinen verloren ist. Wie sich eine wütend widerständige Energie gegen den Würgegriff unüberwindlich scheinender, versteinert Verhältnisse stemmt, wird hier zu einem Fanal des Nichtaufgebens: weder der eigenen Integrität noch der Welt. Der Weg dahin ist lang. Das zentrale Lamento (unter Einbeziehung zweier in elegisch klagenden Vokallinien ausgebreiteter Gesangsstimmen) bringt Trauer und Ver-

Die Uraufführung von Christfried Schmidts 2. Sinfonie durch die Dresdner Philharmonie ist eine Großtat. Werden ihr weitere folgen?

lorenheit – eine Verinnerlichung, die zwar nicht in ihrer emotionalen Tiefe, wohl aber, nach dem bis zur Kernschmelze komprimierten Eröffnungssatz, hörpsychologisch einen gewissen Spannungsfall darstellt, ehe dann die letzten Minuten der Sinfonie die energetische Wucht des Werkanfangs zurückholen, nun in einer grell gleißenden und wiederum bis an den Rand des physischen Zerreißen geführten Ausbruchsvision, einer Art auskomponierter Supernova.

Der als Kirchenmusiker ausgebildete Schmidt, der sich damals und danach noch zwölf Jahre mit Klavierstunden und Chorleitungen im Künstlerprekariat durchschlug, schrieb die mit einer annähernden Mahler-Besetzung orchestrierte Sinfonie ohne Auftrag und ohne die Chance einer Aufführung. Dass er sie jetzt, 53 Jahre später und inzwischen achtundachtzigjährig, im Dresdner Kulturpalast noch miterleben durfte, ist dem Erlebnis einer anderen engagierten Entdeckung aus dem Konvolut damals liegen gebliebener Stücke zu danken: der seiner Markus-Passion vor zweieinhalb Jahren in Berlin (F.A.Z. vom 25. April 2019). Jens Schuppe, Dramaturg der Dresdner Philharmonie, fand damals in Schmidts wild ausfahrender Emotionalität den Kristallisationskeim zur Idee eines konzentrierten Exkurses in das deutsche Komponieren auf beiden Seiten der Mauer. Coronabedingt um ein Jahr verschoben, fand er nun, verteilt auf drei Konzerte und zwei Filmveranstaltungen, am Wochenende des Tages der Einheit statt – ein str- und aufregendes Panorama. Von Paul Dessau bis zu Wolfgang Rihm und Steffen Schleiermacher reichte die Spannweite – Letzterer war, im temperament- und geistvollen Klavier- und Poesieduo mit dem Schauspieler Erik Brünner, auch selbst vor Ort.

Das direkte Gegenstück zu Christfried Schmidts monumentalem Ausbruch indes war die noch ausgewogener tragische und illusionlose „Ekklesiastische Aktion“ Bernd Alois Zimmermanns von 1970, jener ultimative künstlerische Schlusspunkt des verzweifelten Künstlers, dem fünf Tage nach seiner Vollendung die existenzielle, suizidale Konsequenz folgte. Nicht nur die beiden Großwerke liegen zeitlich nahe beieinander; auch die Geburtsjahre der Komponisten (Zimmermann 1918, Schmidt 1932) sind sich recht nahe. Doch dieser geringe „Vorsprung“ des kriegstraumatisierten Rheinländers vor dem Niederschlesier bedingte, dass der eine schon ausgeleert war, als der Jüngere sich erst, mit fortan unerbittlichem Eigenwillen, seinen freilich ungeheuer mühsamen Weg zu bahnen begann. Die Sentenz „Weh dem, der allein ist“ – Kernsatz der Zimmermann'schen „Aktion“ – trifft dennoch, in unterschiedlichen Ausformungen, beide Lebensläufe wie beide an diesem Abend zusammen erklingende Wer-

ke. Im fremdendenden Adaptieren amerikanischer Spiritual-Intonationen konnte man überdies sogar eine formelle Gemeinsamkeit finden. Nur gelte Zimmermann, der Erfahrene und gleichsam Zeiteinde-Komponierte, ungleich ökonomischer an seine bittere Bilanz.

Jonathan Stockhammer aber, der die Dresdner Philharmonie mit einer geradezu kristallinen Durchsicht führte, hatte für diese Töne scharf unerbittlicher, eisig illusionloser Klarheit das gleiche intellektuelle Sensorium wie für die düster rotschwarzen oder versöhrend überhellen Klang-Feuerzungen Schmidts. Er leitete an diesem Wochenende zudem noch eine weitere Komposition, die man fast als Abschiedswerk hören konnte, denn auch Friedrich Goldmann überlebte sein 2007 geschriebenes, mit einem Motiv der Bach'schen Matthäus-Passion arbeitendes „Ensemblekonzert III“ nur um knapp zwei Jahre.

Eine wieder andere Art des Abgehens, wenn sich da fragil elegante Gesten in eine große Ermüdung hin auflösen – auch das mit glaubwürdigem Nachdruck und einem ausgeprägten Gefühl für die kompositorischen Individualitäten vermittelt und in allen Fäden getragen von einem Musikerkollektiv, dem man die Freude ansah, sich in solchen nicht alltäglichen Räumen zu tummeln und zu engagieren. Der emphatische Bariton Robert Koller, bei Schmidt wie Zimmermann zugange, bei Letzterem außerdem die beiden prägnanten Bibel- und Dostojewski-Sprecher Peter Schweiger und Heimito Vogel: Sie mögen hier für die weiteren Mitwirkenden eines herausfordernden Wochenendes stehen, das eine große Tat war – und hoffentlich nicht die letzte. Es gibt noch genügend zu entdecken an verdrängten Kompositionen.

GERALD FELBER

SOMBRE – In the Shadows of our Time

Musik im Kopf

Die Komponistin Cécile Marti ist auch Bildhauerin - und ein Beispiel dafür, wie man aus einer ausweglosen Situation einen Ausweg findet. Am Montag wird in Zürich ein Stück von ihr uraufgeführt.

Susanne Kübler

Es gab eine Zeit, da hatte Cécile Marti die Musik aus ihrem Leben verbannt. Zwanzig war sie damals, hatte soeben am Zürcher Konservatorium das Vordiplom als Violinistin erhalten und einen Vertrag als Geigenlehrerin in der Tasche. Aber dann hat ein Hirnschlag alles verändert; sie hat sich zwar rasch erholt, aber ein kleines motorisches Problem in der rechten Hand blieb. Die Zukunft als Geigerin konnte sie vergessen.

Sie verlor damit weit mehr als nur ein Instrument: einen Beruf. Eine Identität. Freunde (weil das Treffen mit Musikern zu schwierig wurde). Und die Musik selbst, für die sie seit ihrer Kindheit gebrannt hatte. «Fünf Jahre lang habe ich keinen Ton mehr gehört», sagt die mittlerweile 43-jährige Cécile Marti - bis ihr Kopf noch einmal für sie entschieden hat. «In meinem Innern begann Musik zu klingen, irgendwann habe ich sie aufgeschrieben.» Das war der Anfang ihrer Laufbahn als Komponistin.

Sie ging bald steil aufwärts. Der Abschluss des Studiums in Luzern bei Dieter Ammann, die ersten Preise, die erste Uraufführung am Lucerne Festival - das alles kam Schlag auf Schlag. Und jetzt liegt auf dem Cafétisch die Dissertation, mit der sie soeben an der renommierten Londoner Guildhall School abgeschlossen hat. Es ist ein zweiteiliges Werk, bestehend aus dem abendfüllenden Orchesterzyklus «Seven Towers» und der Reflexion darüber.

Skulpturen aus Tönen

Redet man mit Cécile Marti über ihre Musik, ist man bald bei anderen Künsten. Denn sie arbeitet nicht nur mit Tönen, sondern auch mit Stein - mit Sandstein, Speckstein, Marmor, derzeit träumt sie von Granit. Sie ist als Tochter einer Keramikerin und eines Grafikers in Bubikon aufgewachsen, das bildnerische Gestalten hat für sie schon immer dazugehört. Nun helfen ihr die Steine, ihren Formsinne zu verfeinern, über Linien und Flächen nachzudenken, über das Verhältnis von Vordergrund und Hintergrund. Nicht, dass sie ihre Skulpturen dann eins zu eins in Musik übersetzen würde. «Aber ich spüre bei der Bildhauerei die Form im ganzen Körper - und dieses Gefühl überträgt sich auf die Musik.»

Es überträgt sich auch auf die Hörer. Zum Beispiel im Violinkonzert «Adoration» (2010), in dem das Orchester zu Beginn weite, geschwungene Klangflächen aufbaut. Die Violine bewegt sich sozusagen auf dem Grat zwischen diesen Flächen: wahrnehmbar als Soloinstrument und doch nur ein Aspekt des Ganzen.

Auch das Stück selbst ist nur ein Teil eines Ganzen. Cécile Marti schrieb es, nachdem sie eine Aufführung ihres Orchesterwerks «Bubble Trip» gehört hatte



Stillstand und Verwandlung: In ihren Werken spielt Cécile Marti gern mit verschiedenen Ebenen. Foto: Dominique Meienberg

- und den Schluss zu kurz fand. Seither interessiert sie sich für längere Zyklen, und damit auch für die Frage der Zeitgestaltung. Ihre Dissertation handelt davon, und die Teile der «Seven Towers» könnte man als sieben Möglichkeiten von Zeitverläufen analysieren: Zielgerichtete Entwicklungen gibt es da oder auskomponierten Stillstand, ständige Verwandlung oder das überraschende Aufeinanderfolgen von Einzelmomenten. Auch ihr neues Bläserwerk, das am Montag von einem Quintett um die Opernhaus-Flötistin Andrea Köllé uraufgeführt wird, spielt mit diesen Ebenen.

Aber man braucht die Analyse nicht, um die Musik zu verstehen. «Ich arbeite sehr intuitiv», sagt Cécile Marti. Was sie an Strukturen einbaut, hilft ihr nur bei der Formgestaltung: «Wenn es gar keine Leitfäden gibt, ermüdet man beim Hö-

ren.» Wie im Theater sei das, «man lernt gewisse Charaktere kennen, die einen dann durch das Stück begleiten».

Der Traum vom eigenen Ballett

Da ist es nur folgerichtig, dass Marti tatsächlich vom Theater träumt, genauer von einem abendfüllenden Ballett. Vielleicht als Postdoc-Projekt, vielleicht wieder in London; das ist alles noch offen. Aber was sie will, das weiss sie: eine Geigerin, eine Sängerin, ein Orchester. Eine Choreografie, die sie sich skulptural vorstellt. Und auch eine Geschichte hat sie schon - ihre eigene Geschichte.

Es klingt dennoch nicht nach persönlicher Traumaverarbeitung, wenn sie von diesem Projekt erzählt. Dafür hat sie zu viel Energie, auch zu wenig Selbstmitleid. Verlust, Zeit, Entwicklungen: Das sind Themen, die sie nicht nur auto-

biografisch, sondern künstlerisch interessieren. So radikal sie einst die Kontakte zur Musikwelt kappen musste, sie ist längst wieder ganz drin.

Eigentlich, so sagt sie einmal nebenbei, würde sie gern mal wieder etwas mit Philippe Jordan machen, dem Zürcher Chefdirigenten der Pariser Oper: «Im Studium haben wir zusammen Streichquartett gespielt.» Schaut man, wie es für sie gelaufen ist in den letzten Jahren, klingt das keineswegs unwahrscheinlich.

Uraufführung von Cécile Martis «Five Times» bei den Zürcher Bläserenaden: Montag, 26. Juni, 19 Uhr, Aula Schulhaus Hirschengraben. Dazu Werke von Mussorgsky, Glinka und Paul Juon.

www.cecilemarti.ch