

Parallax - Accuso Deum. The plank® in dialogue with orchestra (2020/2021)

With his approximately 45-minute composition "Parallax", Heiko Plank presents his fourth opus in symphonic length on CD. After his compositions "Palingenesis" (world premiere in Madrid 2006), "Blautopf" (world premiere at ZKM Karlsruhe 2009, CD 2011) and "Drifting Waves" (CD and world premiere in Valencia 2015), which are entirely tailored to the sound cosmos and technical possibilities of his solo instrument plank in combination with a digital audio workstation, Heiko Plank turns to the connection between the sound of the plank and the orchestra with "Parallax".

In the instrumentation of his work, Heiko Plank weighted the timbres of depth. It begins with low brass. Monumental chords standing in space gradually rise from nowhere - a mighty entree that prepares the beginning of a great narrative. It is told in the voice of plank, whose first solo opens a vast sonic and emotional panorama. A tender, wounded, enraged and vigorously protesting personality presents itself to us in the plank's lament. A nimble, highly virtuosic soloist, full of surprises, also belligerent, in a combination of anger, pain and exuberance. In escalating cascades and chord breaks over a chromatically descending bass line, Heiko Plank unfolds the nuanced tonal repertoire of his exceptional instrument: a brilliant treble that makes the most filigree coloratura nuances transparent, carried by the imposing, voluminous bass that rears up abruptly and angrily: here is someone who has questions to ask and is rebelling.

"Parallax" was written during a period of internalization and creative energy for the composer during the 2020/2021 Corona Lockdown.

The plank was recorded by the composer Heiko Plank himself. All orchestral instruments as well as the other solo instruments oboe and flute were generated by Heiko Plank for this CD. The composer himself is also responsible for the mastering and recording of the entire CD.

A conversation unfolds in Heiko Plank's work "Parallax" in the form of an inner dialogue of the soloist, who speaks to himself, the universe, God or an imaginary counterpart. 80 years after the premiere of the "Concierto de Aranjuez" for guitar and orchestra, composed by Joaquín Rodrigo, in Barcelona, whose 2nd movement, a primordially touching musical narrative about the pain after the death of a loved one, is one of the most important works in the music history of the 20th century, Heiko Plank writes a new dialogical work, which intones a narrative. Both composers refer to the traditional Andalusian chant form of the "Saeta", an originally religious lamentation song, as it is heard during processions for the heightened expression of lamentation.

This is not the first time that Heiko Plank has chosen the medium of musical narration. In retrospect, his work "Blautopf" (2009) seems like a preparation for this development - a representational work describing an imaginary journey through the southern German cave system "Blautopf", depicting the acoustics of the various cave spaces through which spring water gushes from immeasurable depths. One of Heiko Plank's most 'fantastic' works. Subterranean caves are among the most inaccessible places on earth, and Plank's musical narrative of a journey through them becomes a dramatic experience for the listener.

In his work, Heiko Plank leads the listener through his narrative as if on a journey. This is true for "Blautopf" as well as for "Parallax", but in Heiko Plank's new work the narrative is not a geographical journey, but an emotional one that leads through the abysses and most remote chambers of inner space: The confrontation with one's own life, the fateful, the accidental that has occurred and led away from what had actually been the plan, what had been wanted, expected, attempted or desired. Waves

and storms, caused by the worst strokes of fate in the emotional space of experience - without being about a (one's) concrete biography. It is about the sounding out of human despair, the positioning of the self in the middle or at the end of one's own life, about the introspective analysis of one's own state of mind in view of the inner turmoil that life has caused. How much energy can a person muster to go on living after the worst? How can hope arise when everything is destroyed? How happiness in hostile environment? The emotional content of these or other questions that inevitably arise in pure despair is condensed in Heiko Plank's work "Parallax" into a great primordial human lament.

Heiko Plank lets another solo voice take the floor. The plank is given a dialogue partner. In large melodic phrases, the soothing, sweet-sounding voice of an oboe turns to the wailing plank. A dialogue develops in the form of a quodlibet, in which two voices, two melodies speak against each other and then side by side - the plank as the trigger and impulse-giver of the course of the conversation and the oboe as a soothing, slowing and stabilising counterpart, endeavouring to calm the mind. The low strings of the orchestra, stride in the rhythm of the plank, supporting, insisting even, until they dissolve and lose themselves in nothingness, leaving the oboe to float alone in space. The melody without support is joined by the plank, clearly articulating itself, in defiance of all attempts at appeasement. The parties of the plank and the oboe, which continue to escalate their dispute, finally summon a third voice from the depths: the bass drum is heard. Its beats crescendo powerfully until they finally take over the musical space. The bass drum stands for the other side, which, despite all good advice, gives weight to the inevitable. What cannot be ignored, bypassed or prevented must be insisted upon, if necessary with diabolical support, until it is declared law. The beats of the bass drum underline the lament articulated by the plank, and with it the demand for a profound, further-reaching examination of what it has to present. The oboe finally falls silent, and with a sudden fortissimo, the bass drum heralds a powerful, escalating dervish dance, propelled by percussive bow strokes from the strings.

The narrative has reached new levels of fierceness and rage reaching aggression. From the depths of her powerful bass, the voice of the plank rises again in filigree coloured capers to a detailed narrative, accompanied by the strings in pizzicato, and joined by the oboe. In chordal refractions whose sounds overlap and refract like crests and troughs on the surface of a lake, the plank, orchestra and oboe move together in harmonic unison, its captivating beauty heightened by long harmonics hovering above it, coalescing into a macro-melody. The desire to lose oneself in the beguiling harmony of this sequence is abruptly interrupted by a discordant wedge inserted by the high string layers. In spiralling upward movements, the plank plays itself to the highest heights, whipped up by syncopated impulses from the orchestra. The oboe again brings calm to this fiery hustle and bustle, with overriding notes from which the plank now calms down in conjunction with the cellos, so that a trio finds itself anew and continues together in harmony.

The trialogue continues in an extremely dramatic and changeful way in ever new chapters and phases of changing sound constellations, string and wind movements. A wide variety of modules are used, each with new themes and instrumentation, whose sequence, connections and combinations give the work "Parallax" a transformative shape. In accordance with the etymological meaning of the title "Parallax", the basic theme of introspective stocktaking and analysis of the self after the catastrophe is viewed, illuminated and explored from the most diverse perspectives. Again and again the moment comes from which protest forms, loudly makes itself heard and thus ensures that the music changes, generates anew and starts anew.

The flute makes the final incision with a furious solo full of strikingly wild coloratura and fluttering tonguing trills. Afterwards, the listeners witness a successive dissolution and rebirth of the music. A first signal of the impending change is given by recordings of long, high, extremely slowed-down tones

of the plank, which, as if from nowhere, gradually increase in volume parallel to the tappings of the plank played in real time and finally stand alone monumentally in space. A mighty advance gradually forms from the sub-basses of the low strings, underlined by the horns and long phrases of the oboe. The plank enters with a new rhythmic emphasis on a triplet melody, which, building up, prepares the foundation and increases the expectation for the onset of a new sound: finally it can be heard, and at first it seems somewhat strange. A kind of jingling, a mixture of piano sound and glockenspiel, which sounds tenderly and high, clear but shyly into the room, accompanied by a rhythm of miniaturized bubbling and beeping sounds, which draw a kind of rhythm - at first a stark contrast to the rich orchestral and instrumental sounds of the opening phase of the composition, built up from the depths, almost funny to listen to. The plank adds its triplets, and stern chords from the orchestra, spiralling chromatically upwards, give the development something compelling, giving birth to a new gravity to the situation. After a moment of silence, the transition of the music can be heard. Noisy glissandi, produced on the strings of the plank, not only take away from the harmony, but also from the previous listening habits of tonal unambiguity in the identity of specific instrumental sounds. The bass drum beats to the sounds of the plank, a louder crawling, drop-like noises, sounds played backwards, trills, echoes: the music dissolves into noises and a different music emerges from the elementary components of the sound production.

When it finally unfolds, it sounds as if it had already been expected for a long time, as if one had heard it before and knew it from somewhere: a simple melody of plank, in which the good feeling of having arrived is found again. One of the side motifs from one of the composition's previous modules is now the main motif: unmistakable as the musical embodiment of innocence, freedom and light-heartedness. A captivatingly pretty motif, which Heiko Plank positioned in the front part of "Parallax" in a harmonics over the orchestral sound, from where it developed to the highest heights until it seemed to fly away. Now this motif is in the centre, in the middle register of the plank, which in turn dabs harmonics as accompaniment. The flute, which had complained so much before, now joins in the melody and everything feels as right and good as an eternally valid "artless song" (quotation from: Friedrich Hölderlin, Ode "Heidelberg", 1798). A good ending, which after a few more flageolet dabs of the plank then leads into the ensuing silence after the composition.

The work "Drifting Waves" (Live 2015) by Heiko Plank was included on this CD because the composer sees this improvisation as the origin of his work "Parallax". Heiko Plank worked a passage from "Drifting Waves", in a new instrumentation and thus in a different sound colour, into his work "Parallax".

„Drifting Waves“ is a solo performance that moves through the keys of music and emotion. After a free introduction, the soloist arrives at a specific sound from which the music develops. This infinite modulation is controlled by the voice leading. As the music moves from chord to chord, specific functions are assigned to each voice. The use of the echo effect changes the sense of time. Repetition extends the duration of certain periods of time. In the present we hear simultaneously what sounded in the past and in which direction the future will develop. The result is a harmony of transitions.

Andrea Edel

The electro-acoustic musical instrument plank was invented by Heiko Plank in 2006 as a further development of the musical instrument guitar and has been continuously refined to this day. The sound and resonance body of the plank is the fingerboard made of aluminum, on which the 8 strings of the plucked instrument are strung.

The instrument was patented in 2016.

Current information (concerts, seminars, instruments) can be found on the homepage of Heiko Plank:

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