

Vocal Contemporary Music

The music of our times often asks much of its performers: technical perfection, rhythmical precision, mastery of new playing techniques are just some of the skills necessary in conveying musical languages that not always are accessible on first listening to the audience. Some singers consequently regard working on contemporary works as too demanding – too time-consuming and too difficult to study these pieces often only for one single performance.

Vocal soloists specialized in the music of our time contradict this prejudice. Rector Ulrike Sych of Vienna's University of Music and Performing Arts advocates contemporary music, 'one has the opportunity to paint much more "colourfully"'. (Read more in this issue's interview.)



W. Holzmaier © Ernest W. Gruber

Baritone Wolfgang Holzmaier, who had already announced the end of his active career, changed his plans: he sang the successful world premières of two new pieces. Rainer Bischof's **Death Fugue** for baritone and four violins was performed in Müzzschlag on 7 April, and on 20 August 2016 Holzmaier premiered Friedrich Cerha's **Song Cycle after texts by poet Ilija Jovanović** at the International Summer Academy of Salzburg.

Soprano Ildikò Raimondi, is also a champion of contemporary music – most recently of Friedrich Cerha's song cycle **Auf der Suche nach meinem Gesicht** on poems by Emil Breisach. But works by Helmut Schmidinger, Thomas Daniel Schlee and Rainer Bischof can also be found frequently in her programmes.

Adrian Eröd, Georg Nigl, Andreas Jankowitsch and Alexander Kaimbacher, to mention but a few, are further names who regularly convince their audience how exciting the music of our times can be.



I. Raimondi © Archiv Raimondi



A. M. Pammer © Reinhard Winkler

So what is the appeal of contemporary music, what is the challenge? We asked these questions Anna Maria Pammer, a singer who has contemporary music as a corner-stone of her repertoire, giving, e. g., several concerts this year at the occasion of Iván Eröd's birthday.

'To Sing' Contemporary Music – Why?

As is well known, the term 'Contemporary Music' – similarly to the almost synonymous term of 'New Music' – is both hazy and misleading. Hazy, because it suggests some kind of unified stylistic category (whatever it may be), and misleading, because it is generally used for labelling music from the last 100 years. It becomes even more confusing when we speak of 'singing' in this context as we immediately see that the vocal utterances have no longer much to do with singing in a conventional sense.

How come, then, that a classically trained singer spends a large proportion of their time with this kind of music? In my case there was a coincidence of my interests and needs with certain constellations and encounters. In general, my musical work and activities came from an at first diffuse need for expression. Singing as such just turned out to be the method for doing so most accessible to me. Ever since, I am occupied with continually expanding my vocal means of expression and fascinated by exploring the individual imaginative gifts and thought-worlds of the composers, some of which I even am fortunate enough to meet in person. Both components I regard as personal and artistic privilege and think that they have a positive effect on my readings of music that essentially defines the repertoire of traditional concert programmes. And if all this has finally also the effect of contributing to the listeners' becoming aware of imaginative realms so far inaccessible to them—then I would have approached the true goal of any stage activity a tiny bit.

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