

Frank Martin: Triptychon

Polyptyque, Maria-Triptychon, Passacaille

Muriel Cantoreggi, violin; Juliane Banse, soprano; German Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Christoph Poppen

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“For me, Frank Martin – quite in the same way as Karl Amadeus Hartmann – is one of these composers from the 20th century who really deserve much more attention, as there is so much to discover in their music even for broader audiences. I’m most fascinated by Martin’s particular blend of a deeply religious attitude, an abstract religiosity that speaks to non-believing listeners with no less intensity, and a wonderful vocal, singing quality.”

Christoph Poppen

“Triptychon” as a disc, in fact, is a triptych in several respects: an outstanding yet unjustly neglected 20th century composer, the Swiss Frank Martin (1890–1974) can be discovered here in three important compositions from his late period. Martin was born the son of a Calvinist minister in Geneva in 1890 and grew up under the double influence of German and French musical traditions before developing his own distinctive “free tonal” style. In Martin’s mature works twelve-tone structures and chromaticism are reconciled with a basically tonal writing which Martin regarded as an essential component of all true and meaningful music. His scores are thoroughly constructed but very accessible in their linear beauty. A particular masterpiece is “Maria Triptychon”, originally written for Irmgard Seefried and Wolfgang Schneiderhahn, which is composed of an Ave Maria, a Magnificat and a Stabat Mater. Here, Muriel Cantoreggi’s solo violin serves as an intermediary between the soprano of Juliane Banse and the transparent orchestra directed by Christoph Poppen.

Three well-known ECM artists can be heard in modified constellations on this disc: Muriel Cantoreggi, a former pupil of Poppen’s and concertmaster with the Munich Chamber Orchestra now devoting more of her time to chamber music and solo work plays the highly demanding and expressive solo part in “Polyptyque”. The work was inspired by the large altarpiece “La Maestà” by Duccio di Buoninsegna (around 1300) in the dome of Siena. Martin selected six images from the passion of Christ and created a deeply-felt musical equivalent for the impressions conveyed by the paintings. “With some people, this music will be able to help to recreate within themselves these pictures of the Passion; for others they will be pieces, more or less interesting”, Martin wrote about “Polyptyque” while leaving it to the listener to decode the religious meanings or not.

Juliane Banse – who was last heard on ECM alongside Hungarian violinist András Keller with a multiple prize-winning rendering of György Kurtág’s “Kafka Fragmente” – is in constantly growing demand as an opera singer. Her most recent success was the Zurich “Genoveva” (Schumann) with Nikolaus Harnoncourt conducting and Martin Kušej directing. Christoph Poppen on the other hand, the former director of the Munich Chamber orchestra, for the first time leads his “new” orchestra, the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken / Kaiserslautern. The ensemble resulted from the merger between two well-respected radio orchestras in the West of Germany in summer 2007: Rundfunkorchester Kaiserslautern from the Palatia region, specializing on beyond-the-genres projects, and the Rundfunksymphonieorchester des Saarländischen Rundfunks, based in Saarbrücken, which

has won itself a considerable international reputation with exemplary performances of contemporary music under its former artistic director Hans Zender and with acclaimed cycles of Bruckner and Berlioz, under Stanislaw Skrowaczewski's baton.

Leader of an internationally renowned string quartet, artistic director with a particularly adventurous chamber orchestra, eventually the same position with a full symphony orchestra: Poppen considers his expanding career as a natural process. "You certainly have to 'direct' more with a symphony orchestra but, on the other hand, a group of this size and history has a stronger identity that has developed over the years independently of conductors coming and leaving. Our main preoccupation with the new merged orchestra is to offer a most varied repertoire reaching from contemporary music to the entertaining segment. There is no single note from our concerts that isn't broadcast and distributed via radio, TV or the internet. I'm convinced that you can win broad audiences for contemporary music if you are prepared to offer an open concept that isn't confined just to the avant-garde in its strictest sense".

The cooperation between Poppen, the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie and ECM will be pursued with a record of recent works by German composer Jörg Widmann (born 1973), scheduled for recording in July 2008.

CD-package includes essays by Michael Stegemann (German) and Paul Griffiths (English) and full biographies.