

An orange L-shaped graphic element consisting of a vertical line on the right side and a horizontal line at the bottom, meeting at a right angle. The text is positioned to the left of the vertical line and above the horizontal line.

**Sebastian
Gottschick
Notturmi
ensemble für neue
musik zürich**

Whispers of Heavenly Death / Darest Thou Now O Soul

(Walt Whitman)

(I.) Darest thou now O soul,
Walk out with me toward the unknown region,
Where neither ground is for the feet nor any path to follow?

No map there, nor guide,
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in that land.

I know it not O soul,
Nor dost thou, all is a blank before us,
All waits undream'd of in that region, that inaccessible land.

(II.) Whispers of heavenly death murmur'd I hear,
Labial gossip of night, sibilant chorals,
Footsteps gently ascending, mystical breezes wafted soft
and low,
Ripples of unseen rivers, tides of a current flowing, forever
flowing,
(Or is it the plashing of tears? the measureless waters of human
tears?)

(III.) I see, just see skyward, great cloud-masses,
Mournfully slowly they roll, silently swelling and mixing,
With at times a half-dimm'd sadden'd far-off star,
Appearing and disappearing.

(Some parturition rather, some solemn immortal birth;
On the frontiers to eyes impenetrable,
Some soul is passing over.)

(IV.) Till when the ties loosen,
All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds bounding us.

Then we burst forth, we float,
In Time and Space O soul, prepared for them,
Equal, equipt at last, (O joy! O fruit of all!) them to fulfill
O soul.

In nomine historiae musicae. Sebastian Gottschick's imaginary musical spaces

It is beyond question that most composers are inspired and driven by looking at the history of music. If it weren't for their predecessors, there would probably be no progress and this category, which in the course of Western music history has become as important as it is controversial, would be lost. Independently of that it can be maintained that music history has always been an issue and can be regarded as a continuous imaginary dialogue between composers. According to this, not only would every new composition be the anticipation of a future piece, but it would also change the interpretation of an already existing one: in music, the aesthetic present thus always refers to both the past and the future. The reference to pre-existent music, which began as early as the 11th century with the transcription of Gregorian chant, set this dialectic in motion. This led to medieval polyphony, which emerged in the so-called Notre-Dame school of the late 12th century. Its proponents featured intervals and durations based on the same mathematical proportions – a form of numerical thinking still existing in serialism after 1945.

Early instrumental music also evolved from arranging vocal models, so-called intabulation. This entailed the musical notation of the parts in tablature indicating instrument fingering, an early form of the modern score. Some liturgical melodies have persisted well into the 20th century (and are still being used today!). The sequence "Dies irae, dies illa", for instance, dates from the 13th century and is sung in the Catholic requiem. The fact that it is still quoted in the 20th century by Rachmaninow and Ligeti, among others, demonstrates how much a modern composer is influenced by history in his/her work. In contrast, in spite of (or because of?) a much freer approach to tradition in postmodernism, composers were soon overcome by the paralysing feeling that "everything" had already been said.

Decades ago the American composer Charles Ives had already presented an alternative to both positions by employing complex quotation techniques to combine heterogeneous musical sound worlds into a semiotic universe of overwhelming imaginative power. Sebastian Gottschick,

who as a conductor, arranger and composer has devoted himself to Ives' music for a long time, continues his own version of Ives' idea of a cosmos of signs with the works on this CD. The seven very different compositions are connected by their distinctive sound qualities and a common idea. In keeping with a famous concept by the French writer André Malraux, this album can be perceived as entering the rooms of an imaginary museum of music history. The names Gottschick gives them are music-historically precise, as the titles of his works or movements, "concertino" and "partita" and "sarabande", specifically refer to the Baroque period. The title "In nomine" evokes the intabulation of sacred vocal works in the English Renaissance, and the subtitle "Bachianas Suisas" pays homage to the famous *Bachianas Brasileiras* by the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos, whereas the "nocturni" recall both Mozart's *Serenata notturna* and the Romantic character pieces for piano made popular by Chopin. In fact, in *Notturmo III* Gottschick quotes fragments from Chopin's noc-

playing techniques and highly complex timbres, plus the occasional use of the human voice. This combination gives most of the pieces a particular atmosphere of darkness. They are juxtaposed with exotic and vibrant sounds on the vibraphone or the so-called "Loriphon" – a hybrid of percussion instruments made of metal, membrane and wood. In the piece *Concertino*, even the percussion is consistently used as a melody instrument, paraphrasing in the first movement Bach's *Partita in B minor* for solo violin, BWV 1002, and in the third movement the solo part from *Violin Concerto in E major*, BWV 1042; in the second movement, three bowed Chinese cymbals follow the lines of the sarabande from *Suite in D minor*, BWV 1008, for solo cello. The obvious surrealism of these sounds creates a nocturnal atmosphere, perhaps even that of an imaginary mourning ceremony, as implied by the passages borrowed from Mozart's *Requiem* and Berg's *Violin Concerto* ("To the memory of an angel") in *Notturmo II*. This theme becomes quite concrete in the setting of Walt Whitman's famous poem

turnes, but he also incorporates Brahms' folksong *Sandman* ("The Flowers are Sleeping"), Bach's *Prelude in B flat minor* from the first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, and his own evening song, which he composed as a child.

By using Luther's hymns *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zur Dir* and *Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin* in the partita and choral fantasy, Gottschick makes a reference to well-known sacred vocal and instrumental works by Schein, Schütz, Bach, and Brahms. However, his main concern is not with the continuation of a topos but with the question of how the music of our time can respond to the certainty of faith found in the music of earlier centuries; in that respect Gottschick's compositions are also *pièces de résistance*. The compositions are characterised by an unusual instrumentation, sophisticated microtonal

"Whispers of Heavenly Death", a pivotal text from *Leaves of Grass*. Through Whitman listeners are at the same time pulled back into the world of Charles Ives, whose song *Walt Whitman* is quoted here alongside other relevant musical laments by Bach, Wagner, Bartók, Karl Amadeus Hartmann, and The Doors. In this way Gottschick creates a metacosmos in its own right, which brings together seemingly incompatible aesthetic experiences – from the monuments of a long lost apex of musical culture to their successors in popular culture – in order to enter new spaces in the great house of music history.

Wolfgang Rathert

(translated by Friederike Kulcsar)

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Wolfgang Rathert (translated by Friederike Kulcsar)

Sebastian Gottschick Notturmi

ensemble für neue musik zürich

Niklaus Kost baritone
Jeannine Hirzel soprano

ensemble für neue musik zürich:

Hans-Peter Frehner flute
Manfred Spitaler clarinet
Lorenz Raths horn (1, 2, 12)
Lorenz Haas percussion
Philipp Meier piano (1, 2, 12)
Anne Hinrichsen piano (3–10)
Ariadne Daskalakis violin (1, 12)
Daniela Müller violin (2, 3–10)
Kirsten Harms viola/violin (1, 2)
Nicola Romanò violoncello
Daniel Sailer double bass (1, 2, 12)

Sebastian Gottschick viola (2, 11) conductor

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|---|---|-------|
| 1 | Notturmo II (Recordare) | 7:52 |
| | ISRC CH 132.2020196 | |
| 2 | Notturmo III | 12:02 |
| | (Die Blümelein, sie schlafen) | |
| | for bass clarinet / basset horn and | |
| | ensemble (2011/2018) | |
| | Manfred Spitaler, bass clarinet / basset horn | |
| | ISRC CH 132.2020197 | |

Concertino (Bachianas Suisas)

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|---|-------------------------|------|
| 3 | Presto-Adagio-Presto | 6:28 |
| | ISRC CH 132.2020198 | |
| 4 | II. Sarabande | 5:15 |
| | ISRC CH 132.2020199 | |
| 5 | III. Allegro rubato | 3:44 |
| | Lorenz Haas, percussion | |
| | ISRC CH 132.2020200 | |

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|---|---|------|
| 6 | Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin | 3:38 |
| | Chorale Fantasia for Sextet (2015) | |
| | ISRC CH 132.2020201 | |

Partita sopra „Aus tiefer Not ruf ich zu dir“ for sextet (2008)

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 7 | I. Marmorando | 3:29 |
| | ISRC CH 132.2020202 | |
| 8 | II. Febrile | 3:29 |
| | ISRC CH 132.2020203 | |
| 9 | III. Grave | 2:07 |
| | ISRC CH 132.2020204 | |
| 10 | IV. Corale | 4:21 |
| | ISRC CH 132.2020205 | |
| 11 | IN Nomine for Viola Solo (2017) | 5:41 |
| | S. Gottschick, viola | |
| | ISRC CH 132.2020206 | |

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 12 | Whispers Of Heavenly Death | 10:16 |
| | for baritone, soprano and chamber | |
| | ensemble (2009/18) | |
| | ISRC CH 132.2020207 | |

Total Time DDD ²⁴/_{Bit} 68:27

All compositions by Sebastian Gottschick.

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Honoring producer: Bernhard "Benne" Vischer.

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Sebastian Gottschick · Notturmi · ensemble für neue musik zürich