

TORSTEN RASCH



'...surely one of the major creative forces in Germany's musical life'

Robert Cowan (BBC Radio 3)

FABER  MUSIC

LIST OF WORKS

MEIN HERZ BRENNNT (2002)

orchestra

Duration 55 minutes

bass-baritone voice (amplified) - reciter (amplified) - picc.3(II=picc, III=picc+afl).3(II=heckelphone, III=ca).3(III=E♭cl).bcl(=cbcl).3.cbsn - 6.3.4(IV=btrbn).2 - perc(5) - timp(2) - 2 harp - cel - piano - duduk solo (or ssax) - solo soprano (sung by member of female choir) - 4-part female choir ad lib (can be pre-recorded) - strings (min 16.14.12.10.8)

REDUCED ORCHESTRATION: 3(II+III=picc).3(II=heckelphone, III=ca).3(II=ssax, III=E♭cl).bcl(=cbcl).3(III=cbsn) - 4331 - perc(5) - timp - 2 harps - cel - piano - synth (replacing female chorus) - strings [NB soprano solo & duduk solo are both replaced by soprano saxophone (played by 2nd clarinet)]

FP: October 2002, Dresden Kulturpalast, Dresden, Germany:
René Pape (baritone)/Katharina Thalbach (reciter)/
Dresdner Sinfoniker/John Carewe

Score and parts for hire

PIANO TRIO (2005)

Duration 33 minutes

Commissioned by the BBC for the 2006 Cheltenham International Music Festival

FP: 7.7.06, Cheltenham International Festival, Cheltenham:
Emperor Piano Trio

Score and parts on sale 0-571-53082-6

WOUIVRES (2006)

four pieces for orchestra

Duration 25 minutes

picc.3(II=picc 2, III=afl).3(III=ca).3(II=bcl 2, III=E♭cl).bcl(=cbcl).3.cbsn - 4.3.3.btuba - timp(2) - 8 drums, 2nd player also plays percussion - perc(3)- harp - grand piano(=cel) - strings (16.14.12.10.8)

Commissioned by the London Philharmonic Orchestra

Score and parts for hire

ROTTER (2007)

opera in two acts

Duration 160 minutes

Libretto by Thomas Brasch, adapted by Katharina Thalbach and Christoph Schwandt (Ger)

3(II=alto fl, III=picc).3(III=ca).3(III=E♭cl).bcl(=cbcl).3(III=cbsn) - 4331 - timp - perc(2) - accordion - harmonium - cel - harp - strings

Cast: Rotter (BBar); Fleischer/Kunde/Maschke/Polizist(T); Lackner(T); Stridde/Tetzner/2nd Arbeiter (Bar); Ehm/Kutz/3rd Arbeiter (B); Rotmaler/Der Vorsitzende (B); Elisabeth (M); Frau Rotter (contralto); Fräulein Berthold (colS); Grabow/Kloppenburg/1st Arbeiter (T); Das Radio (S); Die alten kinder/Arbeiter/Die Mitglieder der ökonomischen kommission (SATB chorus)

Commissioned by Oper Köln

FP: 23.2.08, Cologne Opera House, Cologne, Germany: Cologne Opera/Hermann Baumer

Full score, vocal score and parts for hire

MEIN HERZ BRENNNT

This extraordinary work has disturbed and excited me more than any new music I've encountered for some years... The uniqueness is that Rasch has taken the group's lyrics and reset them with the full apparatus of late Romantic expression, plus mod-cons learnt from later music...

The Spectator, Robin Holloway

...by bringing to London the first UK performance of Torsten Rasch's Mein Herz brennt, written in 2002, he [Jurowski] scored a bull's-eye.

The only word that can sum up this piece is "wow"... The music is of the kind that German composers after Mahler and Strauss might have written if Schoenberg had not led them down a dark alley called "Twelve-tone". Here is a super-romantic tidal wave of sound... The words to Rammstein's punk/heavy-metal songs work surprisingly well. There is an epic quality that is just right for Rasch's heightened Wagnerian settings. The LPO glittered with detail, as it rode the tsunami of Rasch's wildly extravagant orchestral writing.

The Financial Times (Richard Fairman), 3 June 2009

PIANO TRIO

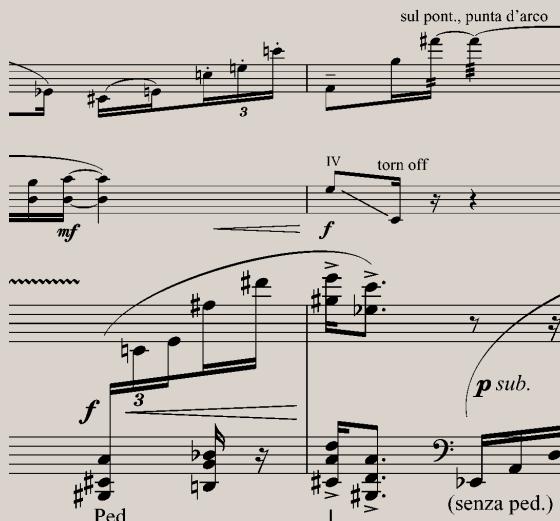
Amid the high emotional energy and dramatic undertow, the music was at its most arresting when the dense textures collapsed into utterances altogether more terse and austere.

The Guardian (Rian Evans), 11 July 2006

ROTTER

He is never afraid to hark back to tonal expressiveness, and his music is often attractive and easy to listen to.

Opera Magazine (Thomas Luys), July 2008



THE DUCHESS OF MALFI

...but suddenly there was music and dancing and a cardinal. And then I was in a kind of church with pews and groups of mellifluous woodwinds accompanying singing characters I could not identify and words I could not make out. In another room a beautiful threnody for strings was deeply redolent of Alban Berg, the composer Torsten Rasch's self-confessed idol. As anyone who knows his thrilling orchestral song-cycle Mein herz brennt will know, this man writes most beautifully for both voice and orchestra... the final scene was jaw-droppingly operatic.

The Independent (Edward Seckerson), 14 July 2010

...Torsten Rasch's score is at one with the environment: the collision of worlds old and new, the fractured narrative, the haphazard whole. His style seems predictable at first - Berg-inflected modern music of the old school – but its true colours emerge layer by layer, shards from an aural prism, culminating in an orchestral climax of depth and opulence during director Felix Barrett's grand finale, whose ultimate flourish 'twould be a sin to disclose.

Whatsonstage.com (Mark Valencia), 14 July 2010

Rasch, best known for his song-cycle *Mein Herz brennt*, based on the work of the German industrial metal band Rammstein, supplies a wide-ranging and highly atmospheric score that uses spare modernist gestures as well as some recycled late-Romanticism. It's an integral part of a show that employs familiar operatic devices to underscore a vivid and regularly unnerving experience.

The Stage, 14 July 2010

A musical score page for 'Die träumenden Knaben' (2009). The top staff is for the piano, with dynamics 'sempre stacc.' and 'mf'. The bottom staff is for the orchestra, with dynamics 'poco a poco crescendo' and 'und vor dir flüch-te - te ich'. The score includes lyrics in German. The page number '327' is at the top left, and 'simile stacc.' is at the bottom right.

EXCANTARE FRUGES (2008)

orchestra

Duration 10 minutes

3(II+III=picc).2.ca.3(II=E♭cl, III=bcl).2.cbsn - 4331 - timp - perc(2): xyl/vib/tgl/2 susp.cym/4 tom-t/SD/BD/tam-t - cel - harp - strings
Commissioned by the Dresden Sinfoniker and the Osnabrücker Symphonieorchester

FP: 6.9.08, Kulturpalast Dresden, Dresden, Germany:

Dresden Sinfoniker/Olari Elts

Score and parts for hire

LE SERPENT ROUGE (2008)

song cycle for soprano and orchestra

Duration 48 minutes, or 38 minutes reduced version (with narration)

2(I+II=picc).2(II=ca).2(II=E♭cl).bcl.3(III=cbsn) - 4231 - timp - perc(3): xyl/glsp/t.bells/2 susp.cym/crash.cym/ tgl/BD/tam-t/8 tuned gongs - pno(=cel) - harp - strings (14.12.19.8.6)

FP: 17.11.10, BBC Maida Vale Studios, London: BBC SO/

André de Ridder

Commissioned by the BBC Text - Anonymous (French)

Full score, vocal score and parts for hire

DIE TRÄUMENDEN KNABEN (2009)

a melodrama based on the text by Oskar Kokoschka

Duration 35 minutes

Text: *Die träumenden Knaben* by Oskar Kokoschka (Ger)
speaker - fl(=picc).cl(=acl+bcl) - pno(=cel) - vln.vlc

FP: 16.10.09, The Two Moors Festival, Milverton, Somerset, UK:
Andreas Haefliger/Collier Blacher/Marina Piccinini/Paul Meyer/
Anssi Karttunen/Heinz Marecek

Commissioned by Andreas Haefliger

Score and parts for hire

STRING QUARTET (2009)

string quartet

Duration 16 minutes

FP: 8.10.09, The Two Moors Festival, Ashburton, Devon: Kuss Quartet

Commissioned by Andreas Haefliger

Score and parts for hire

THE DUCHESS OF MALFI (2010)

opera

Libretto by Ian Burton (English), original work by John Webster

Duration 72 minutes (sub-plots duration c. 50 mins)

3(II+III=picc).2.ca.2.bcl.2.cbsn - 4331 - timp - perc(3): glsp/vib/xyl/crot/t.bells/tgl/claves/ratchet/sleighbells/tamb/wdbl/4 okedoh/hyoshigi/kotzumi/5 tom-t/5 log drums/small Chinese cym/2 susp.cym/gongs/2 tam-t/SD/BD - harp - cel - strings (min 12.10.8.6.5) - sampler (or SATB chorus)

Sub-plot instrumentation: 1111 - 2221 - 0000

Duchess (M), Ferdinand (CT), Cardinal (hB), Bosola (Bar), Julia (hS)

Commissioned by the English National Opera

FP: 13.7.10, Royal Albert Basin, London, UK, Co-production between ENO and Punchdrunk. Felix Barrett (Artistic Director)/Maxine Doyle (Associate Director)/Stephen Higgins (Conductor)

Score and parts for hire

TORSTEN RASCH AN APPRECIATION

The unique expressive make-up of Torsten Rasch's music seems to have been determined by an equally unique double displacement. Born in Dresden in 1965, where he was a boy chorister in the renowned Dresdner Kreuzchor before studying composition and piano at the town's university, Rasch left Germany just a year after reunification ('My country [East Germany] doesn't exist any more', he told an interviewer as recently as 2010). Still in his mid-twenties, he moved to Japan, and built his early career at both a geographical and an aesthetic remove from the West as a composer of music for television and film soundtracks - he has completed more than 40 such scores to date.

The pressure valve of that remove burst in 2003, when his massive orchestral song-cycle *Mein Herz brennt*, written the previous year to a commission from the newly-founded Dresdner Sinfoniker, stormed on to the German classical stage with performances in Dresden and Berlin and an award-winning Deutsche Grammophon recording. And if the years of patient success behind the screen mean that Rasch had achieved proficiency before acclaim to a degree unusual for a classical composer, then they may also explain some of the qualities that were most striking when his work did begin to reach out to concert audiences - his fluency, his assurance on the largest scale (many of his works last upward of half an hour in duration), his uncanny ability to spin a

vivid and personal sound-world around the ghosts of others.

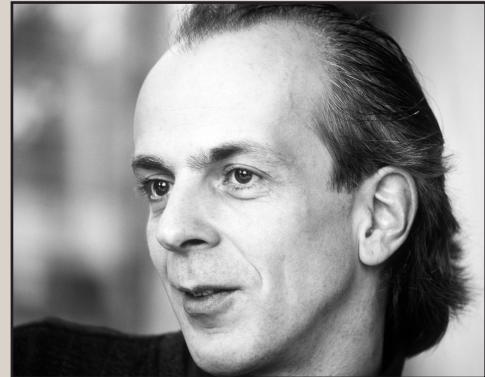
The other voices which inhabit *Mein Herz brennt* are many, and widely various. There are the lyrics of the German metal band Rammstein, which Rasch transplants into a late Romantic orchestral language of convulsive expressivity. There are the echoes of Mahler, Strauss and others which provide that language with its points of stylistic reference and yet combine with the German actress Katharina Thalbach's macabre narration in a new blend which is both terrifying and astonishingly original. Collaboration - a familiar concept to any film composer - is still the central impulse, but the collaborators now are absent or long dead and Rasch is the master of ceremonies who brings them back to life.

The more familiar forms of collaboration have remained a thread in his work, too: he assisted the Pet Shop Boys on their soundtrack for Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, screened live in Trafalgar Square in 2006, and worked again with Thalbach on adapting a play by her late partner, the East German dissident writer Thomas Brasch, into Rasch's first opera, *Rotter*, in 2007. A second operatic venture, commissioned by English National Opera and premiered in the darkened spaces of a large disused office building in London's Docklands in July 2010, saw Rasch working together with the theatre company Punchdrunk to bring together

the worlds of opera and radical theatre in an 'immersive' adaptation of John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*.

Meanwhile, two chamber works for purely instrumental forces content themselves with the straightforward generic titles of *Piano Trio* and *String Quartet No 1* - the past re-voiced in a different, less theatrical way. But even in the realm of chamber music the crowding in of other voices, ghostly echoes, continues: *Die träumenden Knaben*, premiered in autumn 2009, presents a text by Oskar Kokoschka in the form of a melodrama for reciter and the instrumental line-up of Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*, while at the same time taking on the formal outlines of a Baroque suite. Rasch's characteristic dialogue of past and present, self and other, again makes something new out of a journey into several histories, and at the same time shows the past too in a different light, talking back to its ghosts with bristling confidence.

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MEIN HERZ

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