

ANNELIES VAN PARYS

COMPOSER

Listen to 'Meditation' (2005) by Annelies Van Parys and you will hear a distant bell sound in the opening bars hidden behind woodwinds and horns echoing a profoundly personal and human sound. In this work, she takes her first steps towards spectralism. This is a musical voice learnt from her teacher at the Royal Conservatory of Ghent, Luc Brewaeyts. Other important sources of inspiration for her musical voice and whom she met during her further studies are: Jonathan Harvey, Thierry De Mey, Luca Francesconi, Judith Weir...

VAN PARYS

For Van Parys it is not so much the exploration of sound 'as such' that is important, although it obviously plays a role, but rather the sensation that creates the sound effects. Therein lies a fundamental difference: a shift from object to subject. The sensation of her scores is the result of an empirical process, based on meticulous observations of acoustic phenomena. There are the almost mathematical structures, the strict structures in which all aspects (from great shape to the smallest detail) meet the same proportions. She is always looking for a unit within micro- and macro- structures - within which she does not shun the traditional forms, instead embracing these in an unique musical voice.

(Joep Christenhusz)

SYMPHONIES

In a sense, Van Parys's two symphonies are the sound-board for this compositional quest. Her first symphony 'Carillon' (2006), premiered by the Royal Flemish Philharmonic under Sian Edwards, is based on the tonal spectrum of the Ghent Belfry. The second symphony 'Les Ponts' (2008) hangs more with the traditional symphonic form; it was premiered by the Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen with Otto Tausk. In 2012, this symphony opened the ISCM World Music Days in Brussels with Brussels Philharmonic.

"...the perception is of a work that extraordinarily pervades all the senses, where you have the impression that, tonally, the ground is pulled from under your feet..."

Drifting Sand (Ensemble Recherche, Freiburg)
- Alexander Dick, Badische Zeitung, 22 October 2012

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL

In 2006, Annelies was a guest for the first time at the World Music Days with her chamber work 'Phrases V' (2001): the piece, that winning the Flandres-Quebec prize, swept her to victory a few years earlier. Her chamber works have been much loved by many musicians ever since. Most Belgian ensembles regularly perform her work, and increasingly her music is also becoming a regular feature in the concert programmes of foreign ensembles. The New York New Music Ensemble premiered 'Fragrances' (2008) in Leuven and is now in their NY repertory; 'Drifting Sand' (2011) was premiered by Ensemble Recherche and is now regularly on its programmes, as are other works with ensembles such as Asko|Schoenberg and VocaalLAB Netherlands.

She wrote in the framework of MusMA for the Klara (radio) Festival 'Via Crucis' (2016) for cello quartet, this was premiered by the Polish Cello Quartet. Performances followed in Poland, Turkey and Italy. Annelies wrote in 2016 a string quartet for the world famous Diotima Quartet. In 2017 she writes 'Chacun(e) sa Chaconne', an obligatory work for the half finals of the first session of the prestigious Queen Elisabeth Competition dedicated to cello.

COMPOSING FOR VOICE

In addition to chamber music and orchestral works Annelies shows a special talent for composing for voice. This is reflected in the voice solo 'Poiëma' (2006), with Els Mondelaers performing this solo successfully in Amsterdam, Rome, Antwerp and next in 2014 at the Musikfestspiele Sanssouci. 'Ruhe' (2007), commissioned by Collegium Vocale Ghent, for the music-theatre work that bears the same name, and performed globally by them more than a hundred times, is perhaps her most successful vocal work to date - Joyce McMillan in The Scotsman wrote: "... until the end, when Schubert's rhythms give way to a magnificently deconstructed, questioning coda by contemporary Flemish composer Annelies Van Parys." In 2018 she is commissioned a piece for the commemoration of the 100 years armistice by the famous French choir Accentus. Shell Shock is premièreed on 10 November 2018 in Rouen by Accentus, conducted by Marcus Creed.

The music feels like an overwhelming encyclopedia of colours that drag you into a whirlpool of sliding tones, perturbing rustling, tender inter-punctuation and banging hysteria...

Under all these colours you feel a beautifully thought-out structure which doesn't give up its secrets easily: actually, you'd like to hear this a second time. Maybe preferably with your eyes closed ..."

Private View - Annemarie Peeters,
De Standaard, 16 mei 2015

MUSICTHEATRE

'Ruhe' was Annelies's first step toward the world of music-theatre. Once the interest in writing for the stage was aroused, she has focussed much on this field with opera, music theatre and installation works, with the drama of these complementing her chamber and orchestral writing. Notably works to date are: 'An Index of Memories' (2009), 'Parcours' (2011), and 'An Oresteia' (2010).

"At the end, Schubert gives way to a new composition by Annelies van Parys and an astonishingly simple but effective piece of cinematography. Rarely do artforms come together so eloquently."

Ruhe - Keith Bruce, Herald Tribune, 22 August 2010

In 2012, Annelies Van Parys was asked by Muziektheater Transparant, with whom she has had a close collaboration for many years, to arrange an abridged version of Pelléas et Mélisande by Debussy for ensemble Oxalys. This was an instant hit and internationally acclaimed. In 2015 the arrangement was used for the production of the English Touring Opera in the UK. In 2018 the Wiener Kammer Oper choses her arrangement for a new production at the Wiener Kammeroper directed by Thomas Guggeis.

For the Klara (radio) Festival 2016, she is asked to write an introduction and finale for Bach's Saint Johns Passion that is performed by B'Rock in a semi-staged version. The production with images from Myrjam Devriendt and staged by Pierre Audi is very well acclaimed.

RECENT WORK

In 2017 Annelies Van Parys was invited to write a chamber opera for Staatsoper Unter den Linden and Folkoperan Stockholm. Her idea to start from the unfinished opera Usher by Debussy was welcomed with enthusiasm by both opera houses. The libretto (Debussy/Poe) is edited by Gaea Schoeters and the direction is in the hands of Philippe Quesne. Usher is conducted by Marit Strindlund.

The première in October 2018 at Staatsoper unter den Linden received enthusiastic press reviews. The Financial Times even claims this opera deserves

its plays in the repertoire of the 21st century. The performance is also presented at Folkoperan Stockholm and is very well reviewed as well in Sweden. USHER is revived in January 2020 Staatsoper Unter den Linden and is performed in May at Opera Vlaanderen in Antwerp & Ghent and at Operadagen Rotterdam 2020.

Together with the famous German Playwright Dea Loher, she made A War Requiem for the Belgian National Orchestra and Collegium Vocale Gent with soloists Sophie Karthäuser and Thomas Bauer. This production, one of the official happenings at the commemoration of the Armistice, is première in November 2018 in a direction of chief conductor Hugh Wolff. Press as well as public are equally impressed.

During Covid, some small - scale works were created. Such as the atmospheric music theatre piece Holle Haven and Medea a small monodrama for soprano, clarinet and string quartet, a project of Wonderfeel Festival and Festival van Vlaanderen Mechelen.

2022 was a busy year. Eco... del vuoto the commission of Royal Concertgebouworkchestra Amsterdam was premiered and very well acclaimed. The piece will feature in the Horizon Recording series of the RCO. In May her Concerto for piano and orchestra for Jan Michiels and Antwerp Symphony with conductor Martyn Brabbyns was successfully premiered and in September her Notwehr, a Music theatre production and direct commission of the Biennale Musica di Venezia was applauded by public and critics. November 2022, Séverine Ballon performed the world première of Shades of Light for cello and electronics on Transit and Huddersfield Festival.

RECOGNITIONS & AWARDS

Annelies Van Parys has won many awards for her work, such as Flandres-Québec, Jeunesses Musicales, Tactus, and Frere Darce and was awarded the prestigious Rolf Liebermann Prize for Opera (for the opera Private View). USHER was selected for the International Opera Awards 2018 in the category World Premières. In 2019 Annelies van Parys receives Klara Prizes for Composition and Music Personality of the year 2018 (Classical Music Awards).

Since 2008, Annelies Van Parys teaches orchestration, analysis and composition at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels. She is also Honorary Ambassador of the Royal Conservatory of Ghent.

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Info@anneliesvanparys.be - www.anneliesvanparys.be



TALLIEU
ART OFFICE

ISCHA TALLIEU
ischa@artoffice.be
www.artoffice.be