

WUNDERHORN

IN THE BEGINNING WAS PARADISE
THEN THERE WAS AN APPLE
THEN IT GOT COLD,
SO THAT LOVE COULD BE INVENTED
WAR CAME, WHICH TOOK LOVE FROM THE PEOPLE
AND THE PEOPLE FROM LOVE
SO THAT THE PEOPLE COULD BE
SENT BACK TO PARADISE

Gustav Mahler / Lieder aus „Des Knaben Wunderhorn“
15 songs in Mahler's original orchestration
9 songs newly orchestrated by Detlev Glanert

THE WUNDERHORN PROJECT

The Wunderhorn poems

At first glance, the Wunderhorn anthology of folk poetry (published by Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano between 1805 and 1808) is a somewhat unusual, incoherent mixture of buoyant and tragic poems.

Transmitted orally from generation to generation since the time of the Thirty Years' War, they reflect the daily life of ordinary people. Nearly a hundred years before Gustav Mahler's „Des Knaben Wunderhorn“ was an attempt to recapture the lost world of yesterday: a world of elementariness and frugality, a world in which idyll and satire, confidence and cynicism, dream and nightmare are juxtaposed. While some of the poems may seem childlike and naïve at first sight, directly below their surface looms a deep and dark significance: whether love songs, war tunes or fairy-tales, all Wunderhorn poems conjure up a universe in which happiness is suspicious and charged, in which war colours and conditions love, and curtails free will.

Gustav Mahler's Lieder aus „Des Knaben Wunderhorn“

The 24 Wunderhorn poems Gustav Mahler set to music revolve around two poles: on the one hand they picture a seemingly unspoilt, ideal world, on the other they portray the horror of war. In his anticipation of the greatest war of all, Mahler was a musical prophet and a visionary, but in the songs he reveals himself as a keen observer of the struggle of each individual against the commands of society. We witness the internecine impact of war on human relations, from the (vividly portrayed) heroics of the battlefield, over the anguish of absence and separation, to the distress of the soldiers and those who stay behind. Through his Wunderhorn-Lieder, Mahler relates of happiness and its destruction, of a pre-war paradise and the war-induced loss of structure and social fabric. He creates a compendium of musical images which draw the portrait of an epoch. In direct opposition of the prevailing spirit in his age, which was decidedly war-prone, Mahler's Wunderhorn-Lieder can be regarded as powerful (albeit implicit) anti-war propaganda.

In spite of the fact that he was the most acclaimed opera conductor of his age, Mahler never wrote an opera himself. In his Wunderhorn-Lieder, however, Mahler blended his sense of musical theatre with the intrinsic drama in the poetry, which is written mostly in form of a dialogue. Mahler creates a soliloquising character by turning the dialogues into inner monologues.

Mahler orchestrated only fifteen of his twenty-four Lieder aus „Des Knaben Wunderhorn“. Detlev Glanert, one of the most distinguished composers of our days, has accepted to set the nine piano songs for a Mahler-sized orchestra.

The story of the film

The feature film which will be projected during the concert takes us to paradise, and starts with our untimely expulsion from it. This expulsion is cyclically repeated on earth, over and over again, progressively killing any glimmer of newly found happiness and hope. It is an evolution without escape, an inexorable spiral which doesn't immediately show whether it is going up or down. We find the main protagonist of the film (who, incidentally, is the vocal soloist in the concert) awaiting his execution in a cell which looks like a promontory of hell. In a sequence of tender and bittersweet reveries, his past revolves before his inner eye - his hopes, his dreams, his love, his fears, his fortunes, his misfortunes. He relives his life from the first beginning - the voyage from paradise - to the upcoming end at the crossroads where a little angel boy is holding a vigil.

The Coproducers

In cooperation with De Doelen, Rotterdam an international consortium of co-producers was established. At present, we have 6 co-producers on board: Théâtre La Monnaie, Bruxelles, Orchestre de Chambre de Genève, Tonhalle Düsseldorf, Orchestre de Picardie, Stavanger Symphoniorkest, BBC Symphony Orchestra London. The coproducers and the Residentie Orkest Den Haag have also been commissioning the orchestration by Detlev Glanert.

Credits

BOOK AND DIRECTION: Clara Pons

WITH: Dietrich Henschel, Vera Streicher, Sébastien Dutrieux, Elias Fret

CAMERA: Didier Minne, Hoang-Son Doan

LIGHTING: Hoang-Son Doan

CHOREOGRAPHY: Cristina Dias

COSTUMES: Cristina Nyffeler / Französische Truppen: „ Sur les pas de la mémoire ETHE VIRTON 2014“ Mady Antoine, Danielle Alomene, Renelle Carrein, Bernadette Capon, Lucie Cornet, Jeanine Fizaine, Nelly Hustin, Annie und Nadine Lambert, Francis Roger, Marc Toulmonde and les Chierothains.

MAKE-UP: Marie Brabant, Stephanie Deven

SET: Jennifer Chabaudie, Alice Jeanin

PRODUCTION: Rebekka Hinze, Anne-Lise Cydzik, Matthieu Gaillet

TECHNICIANS: Jérémy Bourgois, Léo Lefèvre, Artur Castro Freire, Julien Chassignon, Thibault Walckiers, Edwin Van den Hove

SPECIAL-EFFECTS: Lucien Keller, Martin De Laveleye, Gautier Minne

CATERING: Adrien Montfleur, Hubert Cydzik

EXTRA: Freddy Besonhe, Jean Brees, Antoine et Jean-Baptiste Deaulmerie, Jean-Paul Decker, Adrien, Karl and Killian Goffinet, Nicolas Stocklet („Sur les pas de la mémoire ETHE VIRTON 2014.“), Dominique Wagnon, Bernard Huk (Les Chiéothains), Matthieu Gaillet, Hubert Cydzik, Jordi Grognard, Clément Bogaerts, Bertrand Pérignon, Hugo Florez, Renaud Dardenne, Nicola Lancerotti, Family Meunier, Duncann Torki, Josef Kliemstein, Stefan Grondelaers, Anne-Cecile Massoni, Mylena Leclercq, Guida Ines Mauricio Oliveira.

SPECIAL THANKS:

FRANCE: Ville de Montmédy - Alain Reuter. Christian Maisières. Jean Chevalier, Pays de Montmédy, Ville de Marville, Association Terres nouvelles - Marville, Les Chiéothains.

BELGIUM: „Sur les pas de la mémoire ETHE VIRTON 2014 „, Abbaye de Grand Pré (Faulx-les-Tombes), Le café des sports (Saint-Léger).

ARRI Luxembourg



CLARA PONS

The Berlin-based Belgian-Catalan author and cineaste Clara Pons studied philosophy at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, and piano (with Boyan Vodenitcharov) at the Royal Conservatory in Brussels before she turned to video art and directing. She was an assistant director in productions at the Brussels Théâtre La Monnaie, the Ruhrtriennale, the Zürcher Oper, the Theater Basel, the Oper Frankfurt, and the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe.

Clara's international breakthrough followed in 2011 with a dramatized version of Schubert's Schwanengesang, which toured along prestigious theatres such as the Brussels Monnaie, the Komische Oper Berlin, the Vienna Theater an der Wien, and at the Norske Opera Oslo.

Building on Hugo Wolf's orchestral Mörike songs she wrote and directed IRRSAL/Forbidden Prayers, her first feature film for performance in live concerts, which was premiered in September 2013 at the Tonhalle Düsseldorf, and since then was performed in Rotterdam (with Rotterdam Philharmonisch Orchestra) and in Chemnitz (Robert-Schumann-Philharmonie)

The great success of IRRSAL enabled Clara Pons to establish an international consortium of co-producers for the current WUNDERHORN project, which includes a full length feature film distilled from Mahler's 24 Wunderhorn-Lieder.



DIETRICH HENSCHEL

In addition to gracing the opera stage with a broad repertoire extending from Monteverdi to contemporary music, German baritone Dietrich Henschel has been experimenting, this last decade, with innovative visualizations of the literary and emotional content of the Lieder he performs.

His first demarche in this light was a production (with the great Irwin Gage on piano) of Schubert's *Winterreise*, in collaboration with the French director Pierre Strosser. This was followed by a theatrical adaptation of Schönberg's and George's *Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten* with the German director Corinna von Rad.

Henschel's intensive collaboration with the Belgian-Catalan video artist and stage director Clara Pons has spawned a series of multi-media projects, the first of which was a dramatized version of Schubert's *Schwanengesang*.

Recently, the two artists took Hugo Wolf's *Mörrike-Lieder* as an inspiration for a first film project: *IRRISAL* (English title *Forbidden Prayers*, triptych of illicit love) is an experimental feature film for three screens, projected during the live performance of Wolf's orchestral songs. (www.irrsal.com)

The *WUNDERHORN* film project is the even more ambitious sequel to the concert-film confrontation pioneered in *IRRISAL*: this time, the movie which will be synchronized with the live performance of the lieder is a full-length feature film based on an invented story which frames the complete Lieder aus „*Des Knaben Wunderhorn*“ in a dramaturgy which brings out their hidden meanings.