

COLLECTION
BBVA FOUNDATION - NEOS**Klaus Huber****Erniedrigt – Geknechtet – Verlassen – Verachtet ...****Klaus Huber (*1924)****CD CONTENT:****A LIBERATED UTOPIA AND THE PROMISE OF SALVATION**

Klaus Huber's extensive output is riddled with many a knot, each of which would seem to mark the end of a prolonged period of creative activity and the start of a new one. Such caesurae are typically inhabited by a large vocal and instrumental work. The landmarks include – at the beginning of the 1960s – the Augustinus oratorio Soliloquia, and in 2001, Schwarzerde (Black Earth) a work for the stage. At the exact midpoint, around 1980, lies the political oratorio Erniedrigt – Geknechtet – Verlassen – Verachtet... (Abased – Fettered – Abandoned – Despised). In this work Huber brings his attention to a new kind of politically relevant music, his art reaching for the moment both a highpoint and a close. His textual models are authentic sketches from the world of work, the slum, and prison, these sources enhanced by passages from the writings of the Nicaraguan priest and politician Ernesto Cardenal, at the time one of the leading figures in Latin America's 'Liberation Theology' movement. Cardenal's texts form the central point of the piece in terms of intellectual thought.

Religious and political ideas are bound up one with another in this oratorio and form an artistic vision of what we recognise as mankind, struggling as it does to break free from its bonds and be responsible for its own fate; empathy for the oppressed, a call to political activism, and a promise of transcending the present, form a heady mix, one which may be seen as a kind of Christian-socialist utopia exactly as Cardenal and his cohort of believers would have wanted. In Huber's work this message is not just formulated as a verbal call to arms, but saturates the music, reaching its innermost fibres. Meaning and content, along with the sound of language itself, are transformed into characteristic structures that allow the music to speak. What emerges is a chamber resonating to a revolutionary and eschatological message.

The composition process stretches over several years. The oldest section of this seven-part work is the chamber music piece Senfkorn (Mustard Seed), which was premiered in 1975, Huber taking it over lock, stock and barrel in the oratorio. The rest of the piece was completed between 1978 and 1982, with some additions being made in 1983. In a preliminary version, the work first saw the light of day on 11th June 1981 in Amsterdam under Ernest Bour; the third part, Gefangen, gefoltert... (Imprisoned, tortured), existed at the time only in a Particell, which was rendered by the narrator and singer Theophil Maier as a kind of phonemic composition accompanied by percussion. In its final form, the work was premiered on 14th October 1983 in Donaueschingen under Matthias Bamert.

The seven parts, as different as they are in terms of instrumentation and construction, dovetail into

each other in a wonderful way, forming a substantial architectural form with many a cleft. In terms of its thought processes, the piece moves from the representation of the absolute negation of freedom to the struggle against repression and the mystical and transfigured apotheosis of freedom itself.

The beginning, *Um der Unterdrückten willen* (On the will of the oppressed), is a moment of great complexity and simultaneously one of greatest estrangement. The text used here is a realistic description of the production process from the viewpoint of the foundry worker Florian Knobloch. In compositional terms, the actual words are fed, as it were, into a chaffcutter; the serially composed instrumental part is divided into seven groups, which progress in different tempi and must be coordinated by three conductors. In this complex organisation, the work process becomes a monstrous machine that grinds up the individual. At the close, some lines from Psalm 21 comment in chorale form on the inferno.

Part II, *Armut, Hunger, Hunger...* (Poverty, hunger, hunger), brings a description of life in another milieu: a Brazilian slum, also told from the perspective of the afflicted. The lines taken from the diary of Carolina María de Jesús are combined with passages from a political poem, *Oráculo sobre Managua* (Oracle on Managua), by Ernesto Cardenal. The drab day to day existence is engendered by a 'musica povera' that calls up associations of emptiness, poverty, deadlock and detritus among other things.

The text to Part III, *Gefangen, gefoltert...* (Imprisoned, tortured), is taken from *Prison Letters* by the black American George Jackson. His was a vehement protest directed at prison conditions, his writings incorporating influences from Afro-American culture: fragments of work songs and prison songs from the southern states are joined together to form a mosaic.

After these three protocols of repression passively born, there follows in Part IV, *Steht alle auf, auch die Toten!* (Rise up all, the dead too!), the call to action. The struggle between two potential forms of violence – between the anarchic anger of the people and the military machinery of repression – reach their peak in a series of waves, until the repressive structures finally emerge as a musical vision of freedom.

Part V, *Senfkorn*, represents the introverted calm after the storm, one in which the weaker forces of hope are given free articulation. Motivic material from the bass aria "Es ist vollbracht" in Bach's Cantata no. 159 is gradually pieced together into the tonal original; against this, a treble solo recites the vision of peace from Isaiah 11 and a verse from a psalm by Cardenal: "The new leaders will be pacifists and will create peace..."

Part VI, based on Cardenal's poem *Amanecer* (Daybreak), evokes – according to Huber – the "realm of peace that glows in the far distance". Vertical agglomerations emerge only gradually in this soundscape; vocal and instrumental sounds melt into each other, and signal sounds of human activity and birdsong inhabit the surface.

Part VII, to words by Ernesto Cardenal "The people never dies / smiling, they leave the morgue", presents a profane version of the resurrection. Four lines of music are presented as a chorale, derived from Bach's *Christ lag in Todesbanden*. The music is gradually condensed by the use of overlaid sounds and tape playback; and as the sounds becomes ever more diffuse, a space opens up that appears infinite. The music moves off before sinking countless leagues away.

Max Nyffeler
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