

Concert 3

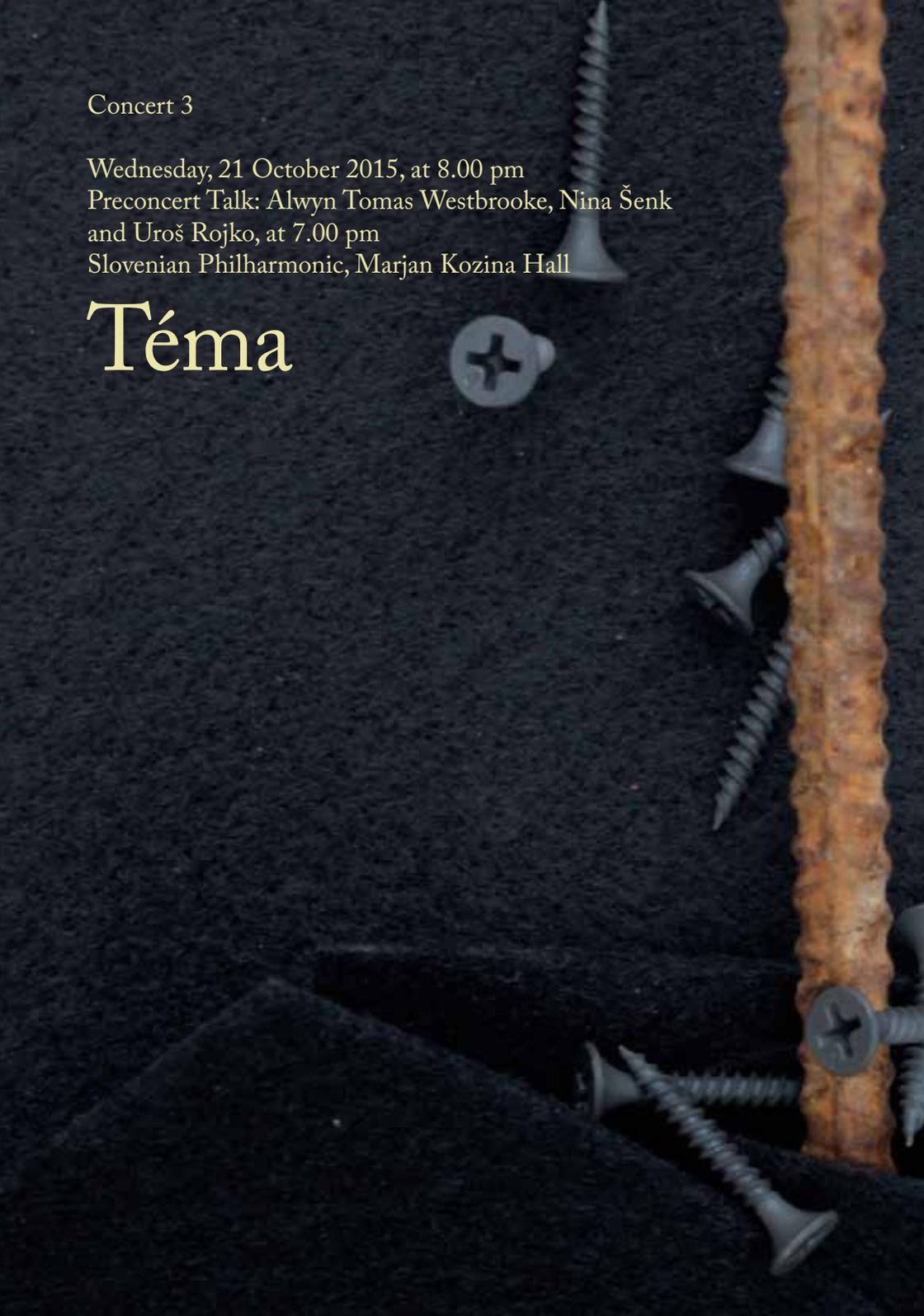
Wednesday, 21 October 2015, at 8.00 pm

Preconcert Talk: Alwyn Tomas Westbrooke, Nina Šenk

and Uroš Rojko, at 7.00 pm

Slovenian Philharmonic, Marjan Kozina Hall

Téma



Alwyn Tomas Westbrooke (b. 1982)

“?” or: Why Gryphons Shouldn't Dance (2011)

for violin, cello and piano

Members of Ensemble Tema

Alwyn Tomas Westbrooke – violin

Marie Schmit – cello

Olga Zheltikova – piano

Helmut Lachenmann (b. 1935)

Sakura-Variationen (2000)

for alto saxophone, percussion and piano

Members of Ensemble Tema

Christoph Heeg – saxophone

Alexander Schröder – percussion

Olga Zheltikova – piano

Nina Šenk (b. 1982)

Dreamcatcher (2014)

for flute, clarinet, percussion, piano, violin, two cellos and double bass

Aleš Kacjan – flute

Jurij Jenko – clarinet

Jože Bogolin – percussion

Marija Skender – piano

Janez Podlesek – violin

Jaka Stadler, Nika Brnič – cello

Miha Firšt – double bass

Matej Šarc – conductor

intermission

Bruno Mantovani (b. 1974)

L'incandescence de la bruine (1997)

for saxophone and piano

Members of Ensemble Tema

Christoph Heeg – saxophone

Olga Zheltikova – piano

Georg Katzer (b. 1935)

Schlagmusik 1 (1986)

for one percussionist

Jože Bogolin – percussion

Uroš Rojko (b. 1954)

Stone Wind I (1997)

for flute and clarinet

Members of Ensemble Tema

Delphine Roche – flute

Evgeni Orkin – clarinet

Pierre Boulez (b. 1925)

Dérive I (1984)

for flute, clarinet, vibraphone, piano, violin and cello

Ensemble Tema

Delphine Roche – flute

Evgeni Orkin – clarinet

Alexander Schröder – vibraphone

Olga Zheltikova – piano

Alwyn Tomas Westbrooke – violin

Marie Schmit – violoncello

Mindaugas Piečaitis – conductor

Alwyn Tomas Westbrooke (b. 1982)

“?” , or: Why Gryphons Shouldn't Dance (2011)

for violin, cello and piano

“?” , or: *Why Gryphons Shouldn't Dance* derives its central material from a small number of very simple Latin dance-rhythms. For the most part, however, these are presented in such a heavily modified manner as to be virtually unrecognizable – either in slow motion, sped up to extremes, proportionally distorted or presented in multiple layers simultaneously. Only in very brief moments approaching and leaving the work's climax are they stated clearly. Despite this, they provide the work with a particular – yet paradoxically undancelike – flavour.

The work begins with an extended duet between violin and violoncello, as if improvising, by turns scurrying and reposed, on the scale which forms the work's main melodic and harmonic basis. The entry of the piano is somewhat problematic, since most of the notes in said scale are not available on that instrument. The initial overtures of the piano to the other instruments are thus necessarily awkward; now overly sparse, now in sweeping arpeggiando over multiple octaves, as if to compensate for the instrument's comparative melodic impotence. Over the course of the work, the piano grows in confidence (and breaks most of the work's rules, but the composer forgives it), eventually drowning out the strings and supplanting them entirely. In the concluding bars, the strings join in again discreetly, with all three instruments softly colouring the fading resonance of the cadenza's final chord.

Alwyn Tomas Westbrooke

Helmut Lachenmann (b. 1935)

Sakura-Variationen (2000)

for alto saxophone, percussion and piano

The *Sakura Variations* are rooted in a world of sounds that is very familiar to us. They do not represent a step backwards, but a look backwards, and are to be understood as both cheerful and serious – just as I take children seriously, along with their need to be taken seriously within their horizon. The exotic inflections of the 'sadly cheerful' Japanese folk and children's song which conjures up the connection of pure beauty and inevitable transitoriness in the symbol of the cherry blossoms, is embedded into the functional-harmonic practice of the European musical tradition. My variations escalate – albeit slightly in jest – into the pseudo-dramatic: towards the end, the music remains bound to the three beginning notes of the melody; the piano injects broad clusters, and the saxophone breaks out into an almost ecstatic improvisation – a situation that sends the music scurrying back to orderliness.

Helmut Lachenmann

Nina Šenk (b. 1982)

Dreamcatcher (2014)

for flute, clarinet, percussion, piano, violin, two cellos and double bass

Dreamcatcher is a very short portrait of our life. Although the title isn't clear in that way, the words in the “dreamcatcher” lead me to this idea (to dream, to catch, to chase the dreams...). This could be understood as a portrait of life, but also as just one lesson we've learned or can learn.

To put it in a short, (badly written) story,

in combination with my piece:

As a child, life seems much more simple, the emotions, feelings, happiness... everything seems easier to reach: the solo flute in the beginning of the piece – childhood.

Later, through the knowledge, experience and also due to the environment and the information we receive, our focus gets a bit lost, blurry, the search for those simple moments or feelings gets more difficult or we just forget they existed. In the piece this is shown through more movement in the ensemble, the “environment” is getting more metrical and limited with shorter, faster, even more aggressive phrases. We try to find that moment and we also succeed occasionally to find it and show our voice (soloists in the ensemble).

The solo violin in the middle of the piece is a reminiscence of the childhood (solo flute from the beginning). Also the “soundscape” gets immediately different in that sections in comparison to the middle section (similar to the beginning with the solo flute, fragments of this “soundscape” are present through the whole piece, but not always obvious, many times hidden in the layers).

During our life, we change and the perception also changes – the transition from solo flute to solo piano (soft – aggressive)

But later... when we are being aware of the end (unisono pulse in the whole ensemble), we find the connection with our childhood again (solo flute) and then maybe we are brave enough to chase even crazier dreams, the ones we only believed in when we were daydreaming as a child...

Nina Šenk

Bruno Mantovani (b. 1974)

L'incandescence de la bruine (1997)
for saxophone and piano

The listener is greeted in Bruno Mantovani's *L'Incandescence de la bruine* by a shimmering, fluctuating texture that recalls the glacial harmonic aggregates of the French spectralists (or, more distantly, the fluttering chordal textures typical of that country's music since Debussy). The musical substance is rather different, however, with a relatively minimal and static set of central pitches, centred around the F above middle C, dominating the texture in myriad repetitions of varying timbre and intensity. The central F advances and recedes, but is omnipresent until it dwindles and vanishes rapidly shortly after the work's half-way point. The sudden and considerably delayed effect of marked contrast is counterweighted by the persistence of the selfsame shimmering textures repetitions that pervade the rest of the piece. Towards the end, the central F returns, providing a quasi-classical impression of symmetry, despite the brevity of this callback to the work's extended opening.

Alwyn Tomas Westbrook

Georg Katzer (b. 1935)

Schlagmusik 1 (Herz) (1986)
for one percussionist

While compositions for percussion are often written for an extensive collection of instruments, in my work *Schlagmusik 1 (Herz)* (*Music for Percussion 1 (Heart)*) thirteen instruments are prescribed in

addition to the tam-tam: wooden and skin idiophones, ranging from a low tom-tom to the wood block. One of these instruments, the conga drum, is assigned the central structural and conceptual role. With its steady and unwavering beat – much like a heartbeat – this central instrument is always present. Although sometimes disrupted and dissolved as it is concealed behind virtuosic and aggressive cascades, the beat always returns to the foreground.

Georg Katzer

Uroš Rojko (b. 1954)

Stone Wind I (1997)

for flute and clarinet

In 1997, *Stone Wind* for flute and clarinet was written on the initiative of the Association of Slovenian Music Artists. After an excellent premiere in Ljubljana (with flutist Irena Grafenauer and clarinetist Mate Bekavac) there followed several repeat performances of the revised version by various musicians in the Netherlands, Austria and Germany, as well as in Seattle in 2013 (Seattle Chamber Players), in Darmstadt (Ensemble Phorminx) and, with the same ensemble, in Tübingen in 2014. In August this year, the piece was performed brilliantly by Anja Brezavšček and Valentina Štrucelj in RTV Slovenia's Studio 14 in Ljubljana.

Compositionally, it is a relatively dense texture of musical tissue that gradually stretches and dilutes through metric changes, like the wake a ship leaves behind itself. The process of *thinning* or stretching alludes to the form of

a falling water droplet projected into the temporal horizontal. I found the formal structure and the energy charge of the musical material in this piece sufficiently convincing to write as many as five versions – at the request of various musicians – for different ensembles, including three trio ensembles, a sextet and, in 2015, a piece for seven or eight musicians.

As a commentary to *Stone Wind* I noted down an idea stemming from my life situation and world view at the time, which has not changed significantly to this day: “*The wind, which takes millennia to decompose stone, is like a pure thought that requires (under normal circumstances) almost a century to destroy human weaknesses.*”

Uroš Rojko

Pierre Boulez (b. 1925)

Dérive I (1984)

for flute, clarinet, vibraphone, piano, violin and cello

“*The different pieces that I write are nothing more, in fact, than different aspects of one and the same central composition with a core concept,*” Boulez once said. The idea of one piece often grows into a new composition. Boulez is constantly developing, expanding, strengthening and eventually reshaping his work. “*Until they have exhausted all of the possibilities for development, my ideas remain in me,*” he says, which is, in actual fact, contrary to the prevailing belief that Boulez is a revolutionary in the field of music.

Dérive I (Deviation I) is a short sextet composed a year after the superb *Triple*

Duo was written by Elliott Carter, with the same instrumentation for three pairs of instruments. The title refers to *deviation*, *departure*, as well as derivation, in this case from Boulez's own *Messagesquise*, which we heard in the first concert of this year's Slowind Festival, and from *Réponse* (1981). Drawing on the musical material from a cryptogram made up of the letters from the surname Sacher, *Dérive I* is one in a series of compositions by many distinguished composers who used this surname with much gratitude and devotion in their music. Throughout *Dérive I*, the pianist holds silently pressed the keys in the lower octave using the middle pedal, thus allowing the sensitive and subtle sonic events in the other instruments to resonate.