

Petr Eben
Bittere Erde
Johannes Landgren

opus
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FOOTPRINT



Petr Eben
Bitterer Erde
OP 9301

Bittere Erde

1. Das Lied der Frauen und Männer 4'47
2. Das Lied vom Heimatland 5'16
3. Das Land der Armen 6'35
Musica Vocalis
Magnus Kjellson, organ
Johannes Landgren, conductor
Magnus Gilljam, assistant
Lars-Ove Eriksson, assistant

Two Invocations

4. Part 1. 5'21
5. Part 2. 6'03
Lars-Göran Carlsson, trombone
Johannes Landgren, organ
Elisabeth Arkstedt Siljebo, assistant
Helene Mossberg, assistant

Due preludi festivi

6. Festivo I 1'48
7. Festivo II 2'07
Patrik Wirefeldt, recitation
Johannes Landgren, organ
Elisabeth Arkstedt Siljebo, assistant
Per Högberg, assistant

Landscapes of Patmos

8. Landscape with Eagle 3'39
9. Landscape with the Eldest 4'03
10. Landscape with Temple 6'31
11. Landscape with Rainbow 2'52
12. Landscape with Horses 7'15
Per Karlsson, percussion
Johannes Landgren, organ
Helene Mossberg, assistant
Per Högberg, assistant

Total: 56'18



Comments

Bittere Erde

Eben comments: "Bittere Erde was composed in 1960 and was originally intended as a work for mixed choir and organ. It turned out, though, that the organ as an instrument caused some performance difficulties, and therefore, it was suggested that I should transcribe the organ score for the piano in the published version. The lyrics are taken from Jaroslav Seifert's collection of poems *Verlöscht die Lichter*, which the poet wrote when his country was threatened at the beginning of the Second World War. Its genuine patriotism expressed the feelings caused by the situation in a very direct way and raised it to an acclaimed expression of love for the nation. The structure of the cantata is inspired by the title of the first poem *Das Lied der Frauen und Männer*. In the first movement, the male and female sections perform independently of each other until the middle of the movement when the contraltos and tenors join in a lullaby. At the end of the movement, the whole choir unites in a coda full of strength and power. The central legato lullaby should sharply contrast the accented staccato and the aggressive rhythms of the rest. The second movement is sung by the women's voices. The only contribution from

the men is a baritone solo (which can alternatively be sung by a group of men). This structure indicates the intimate character of the words, which should sound like a peaceful and humble confession. Formally, the movement can be considered as a prelude to the ostinato rhythm (alternating between quarter notes and half notes) of the saraband. In the middle of this section, the rhythm sung by the mezzo-soprani should ring out like a bell. The real message of the movement comes out in the last four bars when the waltz goes over from the minor to the major from 'so schwer' to 'so schön' while the soloist (or group of men) sings a humble confession. Even the third movement is built on a contrast between the male and female choirs. This time the men have a longer section, which in the first three phrases expresses anger and dissatisfaction with the prevalent destitution. The women are first introduced in the fourth phrase when the men are singing a long rising melism, extolling patriotism. They start with simple, short, soft invocations, which prepare for the final chorus where the whole choir unites in a powerful fortissimo."

Words

1. Das Lied der Frauen und Männer

Worte, voll Schärfe und Klarheit halten die Wacht, Worte, und wenn sie euch fragen: "Wer seid ihr?" Dann sollt ihr sagen: "Nehmt euch in Acht!" Es fliesse niemals wieder Blut, nie wieder Blut.

Die Mütter ziehen die Söhne für anderes auf, für and're schönere Dinge pflegen sie ihr Kind und wiegen auf ihrem Schoß.

Und fragt euch jemand: "Wer seid ihr?" Antwortet ihm, und fragt jemand: "Wer seid ihr?" saget mit Schärfe und Klarheit: "Wir stehen hier."

2. Das Lied vom Heimatland

So schön, wie die Blumen auf dem buntbemalten Krug ist die Erde, die dir Heimat soll sein. So schön, wie die Blumen auf dem buntbemalten Krug, so süß, wie ein Brotlaib, den die Schneide deines Messers zerteilt.

Oftmals ratlos, oft verzweifelt hast du Rat nicht gewusst. Immer

wieder suchtest du die Heimat, deine Heimat, deine reiche Erde voll Schönheit, wie der Frühling arm im kahlen Steinbruch.

So schön, wie die Blumen auf dem buntbemalten Krug, so schwer, wie die eigene Schuld, die so unaufhörlich auf uns lastet. Zuletzt im Grab berührt sie deine Schläfen, fallend dröhnend ihre Schollen nieder, schöne Heimat.

3. Das Land der Armen

Süsse Trauben pflückt' ich nie, der Wein gehörte nicht mir, aus stillen Gärten strömte fremder Blüten Duft. Und hat man mich gefragt, wovon wir Armen träumen, nur bitt'res Lachen schallt' als Antwort mir entgegen. Süsse Trauben pflückt' ich nie, der Wein gehörte nicht mir, nie war er mein.

Korn hab ich nie gesäht, klaubte auch keine Ähren, wenn auf dem Feld erdröhnte der Maschinen Lärm. Ich sog den Duft nur ein, wenn sie an mir vorbei für die And'ren trugen Brot. Und aus des Flusses Sand kein Gold ich siebte heraus und keinen Edelstein fand ich vor meinem Haus. Du, Erde, gabst mir nichts, wofür ich sagen könnte: was

ich gewollt, ich fand, und dafür habe Dank, denn aus des Flusses Sand
kein Gold ich siebte heraus.

In dieser schweren Zeit bist du trotz alledem mein eigen Heimatland
und bist mir mehr, als den Anderen und bleibst mein Schicksal. Ich
weiss, du riefst nach mir, du warst mir stets vor Augen. Zur Waffe
griff ich schnell, denn du warst in Gefahr, in dieser schweren Zeit du
schönes Land, du bist ganz mein.

Für deiner Kiesel Glanz, für deiner Blumen Flammen, für Schierling
und für Mohn, der blüht am Wegesrand, wir geh'n und schützen dich.
Doch wenn der Atem stillsteht, dann spende uns den Saft, der alle
Schmerzen heilt, dazu der Kiesel Glanz und deiner Blumen Schönheit.

(Jaroslav Seifert, German interpretation: Adolf Langer)

Two Invocations

Petr Eben's "Two Invocations" for organ and trombone was composed in 1988. The two movements have a common musical theme. In the first, the sequence A-B-C-D-C-B-A is used; but, in the second, the C and D are raised a semitone. The thematic material is based on

a hymn, Svaty Václavé, which describes Saint Wenceslas and his martyrdom for the people, a martyrdom that has a deep symbolic value for the Czech people, partly because of its associations with the Crucifixion and self-sacrificing love, and partly because of the death of the student Jan Palach in St. Wenceslas' Square in Prague. (This latter has also inspired Eben's "Second Chorale Phantasy" for organ along with other works.) Eben has two other compositions for the combination of brass and organ, "Okna" for trumpet and organ and "Three Jubilations" for two trumpets, two trombones and organ. There is also a brass quintet, "Fantasia Vespertina" for trumpet and piano, "Duetti per due Trombe" for two trumpets and "Vox Clamantis" for three solo trumpets and symphony orchestra. In several other works including his "Te Deum," "Missa cum Populo," "Proprium Festivum" and the oratorio "Sacred Symbols" (also called "Saint Signs"), the brass section is prominent.

Due preludi festivi

These were originally improvisations honouring Pope Paul's visit to Prague in 1990. The thematic material in both of the preludes is taken from plainsong. The first is based on "Ecce sacerdos magnus" and

the second on “Ideo jure jurando.” The two movements are both dedicated to Kamila Klugarová.

Landscapes of Patmos

Eben writes: “The combination of organ and percussion is one of the ensembles in which the organ can display the whole richness of its sound with no restriction to the softer stops. A duo for this combination has long tempted me, and I am grateful and honoured by the commission from the ‘Heidelberger Bachverein’ which allowed me to undertake such a work.

On imagining the sound effect of this combination, an atmosphere both festive and dramatic came to mind. This in turn led me to the Book of Revelation, but I soon became aware of the difficulties of expressing all the richness of its contents in a few movements for two players. Therefore, I narrowed my horizon to some single images from the Apocalypse – hence the title ‘Landscapes.’

These events and symbols, which are inspired by the abstract and expressed pictorially are diffused by the music into an analogical representation rather than pictorial.

The main, solemn movement, ‘The Temple’ is placed centrally –

the third of five movements. Two shorter movements frame it, both sharing the same thematic material and having as their subjects symbols that are close to the throne, i.e. ‘The Elders’ and ‘The Rainbow.’ The outer ‘animal’ movements – ‘The Eagle’ and ‘The Horses’ – provide the dramatic elements to the work. Only in the last movement have I used two plainsong quotations: the fateful Horses are characterised by the descending ‘Dies Irae’ motif which eventually gives way to the redeeming ‘Victimae Paschali’ at the end of the Finale, which, with its ascending melody, appears almost as an inversion of the falling ‘Dies Irae’ melody.

As for the percussion instruments, my choice has been determined by my appreciation of the difficulties, all too often encountered, of finding suitably spacious organ galleries – often approached by narrow winding staircases – therefore, I refrained from using bulky instruments such as the timpani, vibraphone and marimba.

The three main movements concentrate on three contrasting timbres: the first, the drum head with tom-toms and drums; the third on metallic sounds with the tam-tam, cymbals, bells and glockenspiel; and the last on wooden sounds with temple-blocks and the xylophone. In the other movements the color-range is mixed.”

JOHANNES LANDGREN was born in Arjeplog, Lapponia, in 1961. In 1980 he began his studies at the School of Music and Musicology (now “The Academy of Music and Drama”) at the Gothenburg University. There he took his exam in Church Music, received his soloist diploma in organ repertoire and organ improvisation, and got his choir conductor’s exam. In 1997 he presented his dissertation on Petr Eben’s organ music.

Since the end of the 80’s Landgren has been teaching and conducting research at the Academy of Music and Drama at the University of Gothenburg.

As a conductor and organist Johannes has toured in most countries in Europe as well as USA and Russia. He has, as conductor and organist, made recordings for radio and television in Sweden, Belgium, Ireland, Czech Republic, Germany, Russia, Denmark, Finland and Estonia. He has made more than thirty CD recordings, including renaissance, baroque and contemporary music.

At present Johannes Landgren is Pro-Dean at the Faculty of Fine, Applied, and Performing arts, at the University of Gothenburg, Professor of Organ and Improvisation at the Academy of Music and

Drama at the same university and guest professor at the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm.

Read Johannes Landgren’s Thesis *Music – Moment – Message*, on Petr Eben’s organ works. The document is available [here](#).

For more information on the artists in this recording, see footprintrecords.com/artists

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