

HANS THOMALLA

LIST OF WORKS (SELECTION)

SOLO

EJKo741 Cello Counterpart	violoncello	15'
EJKo742 Piano Counterpart	piano	13'
EJKo743 Percussion Counterpart	percussion	8'

CHAMBER MUSIC

EJKo744 wild.thing	amplified piano, 2 percussion	21'
EJKo746 Momentsmusicaux	flute, clarinet, piano, viola, violoncello	17'
EJKo747 Stücke Charakter	oboe, clarinet, piano, violin, viola, violoncello	16'
EJKo748 Lied	saxophone, piano, vibraphone	12'
EJKo749 Albumblatt	string quartet	13'
EJKo751 Albumblatt II	saxophone quartett	5'
EJKo750 Three Desert Songs	soprano, piano	5'
EJKo753 Wonderblock	trumpet, trombone, electric guitar, piano, 2 percussion, violoncello	16'
EJKo752 Fracking	saxophone, string trio	14'

ENSEMBLE/ORCHESTRA

EJKo754 The Brightest Form of Absence	soprano, ensemble (0-1-1-0, 1-1-1-1, piano, percussion, strings: 1-1-1-1), live-electronics (with 2 sound directors), video	29'30"
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EJKo756 Ausruff	chamber orchestra (or large ensemble): 1-1-2-0, 0-2-1-0, harp, piano, guitar, percussion, strings: 6-5-4-4-1, live- electronics (with sound director)	17'
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EJKo755 Flüchtig	intermezzo for orchestra (2 percus- sionists, , electric guitar, strings: 10-8-8-6-3)	9'
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MUSIK THEATRE

EJKo757 Fremd	dramatic soprano, choir (8 alt, 16 tenor, 16 bass), orchestra (2-2-2-2, 4-2-2-1, 2 percussionists, piano, guitar, strings: 10-8-8-6-3), stage- instruments, mar- ching band, live- electronics (ad. lib.)	90'
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Hans Thomalla

HANS THOMALLA

BIOGRAPHY

- 1975 born in Bonn
1994-99 Studies in Composition at the Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Frankfurt a.M.
1999-2002 Assistant Dramaturg at Staatsoper Stuttgart (produktion dramaturg for "Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern", "Die Gezeichneten", "Les Contes d'Hoffmann" et al.)
2002-07 Graduate Studies at Stanford University
since 07 Associate Professor of Composition at Northwestern University (where he also directs the Institute for New Music)

HONORS AND AWARDS

- 1996-99 Scholarship by the Studienstiftung des dt. Volkes
2002-04 Scolarship by the DAAD for studies at Stanford University
2002-07 Alice Wilbur Chapman Fellowship at Stanford University
2004 Kranichsteiner Musikpreis
2006 Christoph Delz Preis
2006-07 Fellow at the Stanford Humanities Center
2009 CIRA Grant (Collaborative Initiatives for Research in the Arts) at Northwestern University
2011 Award by the Ernst v. Siemens Musikstiftung
2013 Faculty Research Grant at Northwestern University
2014-15 Fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin

PERFORMANCES, ENSEMBLES AND MUSICIANS

Donaueschinger Musiktage, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, ECLAT Festival Stuttgart, Wittener Tage für neue Kammermusik, Ultraschall-Festival Berlin, Darmstädter Ferienkurse, Staatsoper Stuttgart, Ensemble Recherche, Ensemble Ascolta, Ensemble musikFabrik, Arditti Quartett, Spektral Quartett, Ensemble Talea, Ensemble Modern, Münchner Philharmoniker, Trio Accanto, Nicolas Hodges, Lucas Fels

PORTRAIT

What does Jimi Hendrix have to do with Frédéric Chopin? Not much at all, until they met in a piece by Hans Thomalla in 2004. You might think Chopin's serene salon elegance would have no chance against Hendrix's rock excesses. But in the course of his piece *wild.thing*, Thomalla performs and disassembles the originals, until the manic drums and the melancholy piano voice permeate each other. The uninhibited, but then completely solitary drum beat and the aimless piano suddenly become part of a common gesture.

wild.thing is typical in many ways for the aesthetic horizon which forms the background to Thomalla's compositions. On the one hand, the composer, who was born in Bonn in 1975, alludes to his generation's aesthetic openness: where Thomalla brings together different, historically disparate sounds, he does not exclude popular culture. And on the other hand, the material Thomalla chooses usually comes from a particular meaningful context, giving his work a semantic framework. When, in *Momentsmusicaux*, he juxtaposes a passage from Brahms's clarinet quintet with several figures from a study by Theobald Böhm, the intimacy of chamber music meets up with the rationalised acoustic idea of the virtuoso flautist, internalisation meets up with externalization. Thomalla makes this contradiction the departure point for a musical movement, it becomes the beginning of a "semantic drift" during which the "conceptualisation of sound gradually slips away" (Thomalla) and something new and individual comes into being.

When he quotes Brahms or Chopin, Thomalla enriches his works with a certain historical aura. Even a tonal chord is enough to explode the avant-garde soundscape. For Thomalla, history is never historicism, but rather a way of ascertaining his own position. He refuses to adopt traditional stylistic elements uncritically – be it a certain sound or rhetorical flourishes – and works against the "sell-off of semantic clichés" (Thomalla). The historic reference becomes tangible in the figure of Bebung [trembling], which serves not only as a baroque ornament, but also as an emotional category of the musical subject in the string trio of the same name; or in *Ausruff* – a dispositif, with which

he fathoms the acoustics of sforzando, the rhetoric of shock, and the sheer emotion of the scream to discover what they have in common.

Acoustic phenomena such as Rauschen [noise] can become objects of interest in the same way as musical forms such as the character piece in *Stücke Charakter* and the *Albumblatt* in the string quartet of the same name. In the series of compositions *Counterparts* on the other hand, the abstract musical figure is confronted with the materiality of the instrument: the bow of the cello seems to rebel against the melody; the uncontrolled hopping movement of the superball attached to the top of a mallet makes a well-formed rhythmic scheme impossible. In addition, Thomalla's musical questions tie up with social, sometimes positively existential questions. When he determines foreignness in his opera *Fremd* as an aesthetic and political position, it is in the knowledge that he too experiences his material as "something foreign".



szene photo of „Fremd“, Staatsoper Stuttgart 2011

Thomalla once described himself as a speechless rhetorician. That is correct, in so far as he is at first an observer of his chosen historic material and therefore speechless. It is not until the analytic act of composition that he perceives language, his own and others. And then Thomalla is of course, not a "speechless rhetorician" – not only because he is capable of speaking so eloquently and intelligently about music, but also because he gives his works a personal signature, just as if thinking about music had its own specific sound.

(by Björn Gottstein)