

Some Perspectives on „Kontra-Gewalt“ for Clarinet and large Orchestra

-What does the title mean?

Any musician who is familiar with Stockhausen's "Kontra-Punkte" or Lachenmann's "Kontrakadenz" would understand the double meaning implied in "Kontra-Gewalt". From the one hand "Kontra-Gewalt" means indeed counter-violence/against violence; no doubt as human being and as music composer, I stand against all forms of physical or psychological violence. From the other hand one must pay attention to the meaning of "Kontra" when used, for instance, in a word such as "Kontrabass" (double bass). There is no contradiction: As suggested by many philosophers, one must not forget that violence has always a context! Though Gandhi, for example, has preached non-violence, he was violent in his own context. He rejected the use of military force, yet by doing so he emphasized the force of spirit instead. Similarly he rejected the concept of European civilization (which expanded then through the use of military and colonization), and by doing so he emphasized violently the concept of ethnic nationalism. Indeed our life is filled with forms of violence which we would not recognize as such. I would even argue that there is no human activity which does not imply a form of violence somehow. For instance isn't the magic of music a form of violence which intoxicates our spirits and forces us to submit to its mysteries and ephemeral power? Isn't a simple question in a context of an interview a form of violence which imposes itself and forces us to reply? As much "Kontra-Gewalt" stands as my rejection of all physical forms of violence, as much it tries to amplify the ephemeral unrecognized forms of (positive) violence with the hope to make them more perceptible to us.

-Does "Kontra-Gewalt" have any relationship to politics?

I have no interest in politics. Composing "Kontra-Gewalt" ended in late November 2010. Ironically speaking, the Arabic Spring began a few weeks later.

-Why clarinet as the soloist?

From the one hand I have always been grateful to the musical virtuosity and human kindness of the clarinetist Nina Janßen having worked together through Ensemble Modern since 2006. From the other hand the clarinet represents the instrument of feministic seduction in the repertoire (for example in Bartok's "The Miraculous Mandarin", Ravel's "Daphnis and Chloe", Berlioz, Wagner etc.): I have seen in "Kontra-Gewalt" the possibility of incorporating the clarinet into a different context, namely that of violence. However, isn't feministic seduction a form of violence after all?