

BELLONE, THE SLOPE OF WAR

hOPE-RAt

for an ancient office building in Den Haag (Nederland), the city of the International Tribunal

Second draft: October 2011

Thanks to the composer Xavier van Wersch, and the artist Arno Scheper located in Den Haag, I started an enthusiastic next idea of music creation in September 2011: here is the first draft.

Objective

To create an opera in an ancient business office building, or in an abandoned big company building, in the city of the international court that judges international criminals is a unique opportunity to show the implications of art in politics - is it a celebration of the end of the liberalism system? This does not matter. This particular situation obliges one to choose a subject that sticks with justice in human society. In the opera theme there is a question: who considers who is criminal for whom? This interesting point will show the ambiguity of what is considered as being good for our society and what it is considered as bad. The opera will not position itself as a scream against political repression, but will instead try to bring the audience to understand the contradictions of living together in peace. It would be too easy to make an activist opera. The point is to understand that there is no enemy but a political disposition to create enemies - governed by fear. And everyone cultivates the fear with the purpose of obeying irrational orders of any dictatorship. This is what we are: lost in our humanity.

From another perspective, creating an opera not in an opera house questions its musical form: its function. The function of an opera house is to entertain people and project the image of richness: the glory. The means invested in opera, compared to other musical forms, go beyond its necessity: this to serve the glory.

Further, to create an opera with other than a classical orchestra, asks the question: Why opera stays stuck in XIX century musical form? The purpose of a living composer is to compose with contemporary possibilities to create another music of its time. Today there are so many ways of making music that it is not possible to ignore them. It means that music evolves, but not institutions. Today, to create a contemporary opera outside the structure of opera house is simply "impossible". I hope that our musical project will open the minds of several people to question that incredible situation: dead composers are more played than living composers, why?

Starts

What inspires me to want to create an opera in an ancient office building? For 30 years I played my music in different spaces. Visiting an old office building, I was very excited to meet different acoustics of each room and places of the building. The acoustic of concrete stairs, the acoustic of rest rooms, the acoustic of different offices, etc. My purpose in music since the beginning is to create a communication where it does not exist (for example, see my Trans-Cultural Syn-Phône Orchestra which assembles different musicians from different genres and cultures to play together in a single symphonic orchestra started in 1996). Music is not a universal language, it's just that Western music invades other musical cultures: musical theories do not communicate (they are just translated in Western musical language by ethnomusicologists. See the works of John Blacking against that ideology). To create music with this challenge, is to open the mind of other humans. To understand and resolve musical problems, is the start of music creation.

The first idea is to make a communication of the acoustic of each room to other rooms: to listen to the acoustic of the room A into the room B with the room B acoustic, etc. To provoke the acoustic of the room, is needed a musician, and in the continuation of the communication thought, each musician of the orchestra will be isolated physically from others in a unique architectural acoustic to communicate with others with music (not sound). The Dutch composer Xavier van Wersch suggests building a special audio communication matrix. In this

case the orchestra will be dispersed throughout the building: a sonic building where the number of rooms will decide the number of musicians in the orchestra. Each performance of a musician will excite a different acoustic with her or his music. The next problem to resolve is: how to make isolated musicians playing alone in a room play together as a coherent organization to support the singers? At this time it is not yet resolved, but it will be according to the ideology of the music.

The singers

With an isolated communicating orchestra, how and where will be the singers in the building? The answer is: everywhere (like the audience). The singers will move from room to room, as messengers to make possible understanding what musicians from different genres and cultures can play above the sensation of sound communication - the style. Singers are also characters with their own story that will interact with other singers. This is why the singers will not be opera singers (also too expensive), but singers from the "real world". Using different techniques of singing mixed together. I will "write" duo, trio, quartet, quintet, etc. to tutti of foreign singers. Chinese technique plus Indonesian technique plus Bulgarian technique plus Arabic technique plus Indian technique plus Carpathian technique plus exceptional techniques such as Demitrio Stratos or Olga Swajgier or Diamanda Gallas could do during their time. An international choir of singers of voices outside the Western world will be necessary. The libretto will be sung in Dutch, the country and culture that invites the opera project. I have already had some experiences with phonetic translations for singers. I will create with the collaboration of singers a specific singing technique issuing from all local singing techniques.

In addition, a running, questioning choir of children will move throughout the building singing unusual harmonies out of 12 tone classical scale. I have been working for a long time with non octave scales to refine the sensation of sound by understanding unknown divisions of time. The choir will work as sonorities links to hawk the harmonic mood of isolated musicians. A summation of different tones played by isolated musicians. For the running children choir, we will need a choreographer to "synchronize" running with singing.

The orchestra

As I said, the orchestra will be not classical, as it currently is for a living composer. I will emphasize invented musical instruments played by self-taught musicians; in order to create something never was created in large scale – a mixed culture symphonic orchestra. As I said, the number of musicians depends of the number of rooms (by being attached to the concept of one musician per acoustic room). "Do it yourself (DIY)" will be encouraged. After knowing the exact number of musicians and what sensation of sound they produce, I will propose a global "score" to unite individual performances in order to support the singing. The work will be the singers and the orchestra: a two-way writing.

The libretto

As a linguistic aspect of the "sound" of an opera, the libretto will be written first. Mixing action, vocalization, story, and ideas; where the subject will be the sense of our society. In my last opera (2008) I joined three French authors: Gherasim Luca, Charles Pennequin and myself to sing "The Survivors of Cultural Hegemony" with singing robots, and actresses. For the opera proposed, I do not know yet how it will be formed – I have to work on it. The final libretto will be sung in Dutch by singers native to the country which invites the creation of the opera.

Musical score

With my transclass and transcultural music, I have experienced that classical Western notation does not work to create this music. Many talented musicians ignore classical Western score. I always considered a music score as a guide, rather than a suite of orders to execute. Consequently, is important to have well organized rehearsals. Musical ideas and developments (not structure) will be written according to the specifics of each original musical instrument, knowing that we encourage DIY musical instruments. This same is true with writing for voices. I have to develop, and have all musicians and singers agree to work with, written symbols that remind

performers how to play and sing, and when during the story of the opera. The musical writing will be in the exploration mode.

Stage design and costumes

As the audience will be walking around in the office building, the first thought is to collaborate with street artists. Costumes will fit each character, but the characters are not yet defined. It is too early to plan at this time.

Lights

The first idea is to simulate with lights the building as a living creature; with one potentiometer to control all lights in the building: a light sculpture visible from outside.

Video

One of the video system in the opera will be to prevent the audience at any time about any fact that could happened. As a network for news with robots speaking to us.

We can repeat what I did in my last opera: a big artificial face in the entrance-waiting room that explain and guide the audience in this opera game.

Winds

We are living in houses because we do not like being cold, being under the rain and feeling in a "perpetual" strong wind that push us to madness. I know some windy regions where people commit suicide because of wind. Wind moves also air molecules. This means that wind perturbs straight listening. This is why I attach wind to music. Music of winds in the building with fans is one more layer of music.

How is the procedure of creation?

First we need Dutch, French people and international organizations to help us make this opera happen. A certain budget (I don't know the amount) and possibilities to communicate for auditioning musicians, artists, and collaborators. This opera will take almost one year of preparation.

Second (or at the same time), as composer, I initially need a precise map of the building even in 3D to work on localization of everything: musicians, singers and choir paths, sound and video installation, links, the sense of the story, etc. I will define how many rooms will be visited and instrumented, the path the audience will be free to walk, the organization of the sound matrix, etc.

Second bis: auditioning artists

Third I will compose the libretto.

Fourth I will compose the music.

Fifth, make the music working in the building

Then, when everything is ready: a world premiere

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Mathius Shadow-Sky,

Toulouse the October 13, 2011

Who is Myster Shadow-Sky?

<http://centrebombe.org>