

OPERA EN ROUTE

A multimedia art project in four mirrored town buses is ready to travel through Europe.

The concept of an “Opera en Route“ is based on the “Opera for Four Buses - an Imaginary Journey through Europe“, where each of the buses represented one European country with an experimental opera act written by a contemporary composer. By moving from one bus to the other after each presentation the audience experienced an imaginary journey through Europe. The first performance took place during the 2001 Museumsinsel-Festival “Goetterleuchten“ on Museum Island in Berlin, a World Heritage monument. The participating composers came from England, Finland, Germany and Russia, the soloists from Holland, Italy and Switzerland, the costume designer from Lithuania and the lighting designer from Romania.

The operatic plot, in four acts, takes place inside four city buses that have been transformed – inside and outside – into intriguing art objects through ornamental strips of mirror glass and lighting. These vehicles enter into a visual and acoustic dialogue with their surroundings and passers-by while travelling on a defined route and include them as integral part of the performance.

Inside the buses an unreal spatial illusion is created by mirrors on the windows as well as spaces of window glass in between. Reflecting props and costumes, also adorned with mirror ornaments, intensify this effect and the multiple reflections transform the world around them into a constantly changing stage. Mirror strips and patterns may also be applied on store fronts and windows of buildings along the bus route in order to form a new, infinite and disorientating design when they drive by.

The familiar, everyday experience of a trip on a town bus, which normally serves a simple and practical aim, becomes an unfamiliar and artistic journey taking its passengers to unexpected places in this chamber theatre on wheels. Aesthetically transformed commonplace objects and actions thus allow for a broad audience identification and acceptance on the one hand, whilst addressing specialised art lovers with artistic interventions, avantgarde music and libretti based on literature on the other. This fusion of art and everyday life, of the banal and highly stylised, allows people with different cultural backgrounds to enjoy the opera.

Opera en Route

This new, flexible opera - a “work in progress” - is now starting its journey through Europe. It is an open process where the existing structure together with experiences gained in the past years form a basis for a profound investigation into the meaning of European identity in a day and age when people often do not live in the place where they were born. Further, themes like “art in urban spaces”, “border-passing mobility” and “communication between cultures” are addressed. European politics, recent history and exile are also brought to attention. During this journey the musical form will change continuously. In each country where the opera is performed a new composer will integrate her/his musical ideas. This could either be done by writing a new work for one bus, by adding a piece or by changing parts of one of the existing compositions. These partial changes and the different ambience will alter the experience and the dynamics of the original work. New contents are created every time, new questions raised, unexpected combinations invented and contacts established. In this way a dialogue between a large number of artists from different countries creates a new opera in the course of several performances.

Gisela Weimann 2001/2004

I. OPER FÜR VIER BUSSE

2000 Production and workshop presentation in a historic production hall in the Rathenau Centre for Culture and Technology in Berlin

2001 Premiere on Museum Island in Berlin, Festival “Goetterleuchten“

II. OPERA EN ROUTE Work-in-progress

2003 “From Finland via Grimma to Greece”

International ECHO Festival in Grimma-Kaditzsch

2003 ”Exile at the Wilhelminenhof”

Performance for the ‚Day of the Open Monument‘

at the site of the historic Wilhelminenhof factory in Berlin

2004 “European Night at the West Harbour”

Performance for the ‚Long Night of the Museums‘

at the historic West Harbour site in Berlin

Short biographies of the artists and specialists that participated in the different productions

Gisela Weimann studied painting at the “Hochschule der Künste” in Berlin, printmaking and experimental photography at the Royal College of Art in London, and film and photography at the San Francisco Art Institute. She taught drawing and printmaking at various Art Colleges in England and has taught as guest professor in the art departments of the University of Salamanca and the Complutense University in Madrid, Spain, the University of Art and Design in Cluj, Romania and the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico City. Since 1971 she has worked as a professional artist, in recent years with an emphasis on multimedia projects and sound installations in cooperation with composers and musicians such as Mayako Kubo, Witold Szalonek, Keith Gifford, Ellen Hünigen, Krzysztof Knittel, Conrado del Rosario, Franz Martin Olbrisch and the participants in the “Opera for four Buses” and “Opera en Route” projects. She has shown extensively in Germany and on an international level, which includes Mexico, the United States, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Poland, Turkey, Spain and Romania. In 2002 she was awarded the Critics Prize for Visual Art.

Georg Katzer studied composition with Rudolf Wagner-Regeny and Ruth Zechlin in Berlin and at the Art Academy in Prague. He was a post graduate student in the master class of Hanns Eisler at the “Akademie der Künste” in East Berlin, where he was elected to become a member in 1978. He founded the Studio for Experimental and Electro-acoustic Music at the Academy and was appointed professor of a master class in 1980. He is a member of the present “Akademie der Künste Berlin-Brandenburg” and of the “Freie Akademie Leipzig” and works as composer and soloist in the field of electro-acoustic music, multimedia projects and improvisation.

Patrick Kosk studied from 1976 - 1978 at the University of Helsinki with Jukka Ruohomäki in the department of music theory and in the electronic music studio. He attended master classes and courses with Iannis Xenakis, B. Mailliard at the “Institut National de L'Audiovisuel” with the “Groupe de Recherches Musicales” and with Folkmar Hein at the “Technische Universität” Berlin. As composer he has his roots in 'musique concrète'. Since 1978 he creates electro-acoustic tape music for productions of drama, poetry, dance, performance, radio plays, short films, visual art as well as for ensembles.

Krzysztof Knittel studied sound engineering and composition with Tadeusz Baird, Andrzej Dobrowolski and Włodzimierz Kotoński at the Academy of Music in Warsaw. Since 1973 he has collaborated with the Experimental Studio of the Polish Radio. In 1974-75 he studied computer programming in the Institute of Mathematics of the Polish Academy of Sciences. He took part in the new music courses in Darmstadt (1974, 1976). Knittel is a co-founder of several live electronic and intuitive music groups: KEW Composers' Group (with Elżbieta Sikora and Wojciech Michniewski, 1973-76), Cytula Tyfun da Bamba Orkiester (1981), Independent Electroacoustic Music Studio (1982-84), Light from Poland (1985-87), and the European Improvisation Orchestra (1996). Knittel was also a co-organizer of the new wave ensembles Go-Go Boys and Box Train—performing with poets, artists, film and video producers. In 1989 Knittel, together with Mark Choniewski, founded the CH&K Studio which gave concerts in Europe, the United States and Canada. In 1985 Knittel was awarded the Solidarity Prize for his String Quartet, written in a tribute to Father Jerzy Popiełuszko. His international honors include the 1998 Award of the Foundation for Contemporary Performing Arts in New York.

Piotr Bikont studied film directing at the Lodz film school and English literature and language at Wroclaw University.

From 1975-78 he worked at Jerzy Grotowski's Research Laboratory for Culture and Theatre. 1983-84 he was chairman of the section for young film of the Association of Polish filmmakers. He works as filmmaker, director, journalist and critic and often cooperates with Krzysztof Knittel at music theatre and ballet productions.

Melvyn Poore studied at the University of Birmingham. He works as tubist, composer, sound director and sound designer. Besides his activities as soloist and the direction of the two quartets "ETC..." (tuba quartet) and "The Bustards" (electro-acoustic music) he plays with several chamber ensembles. From 1992 - 1994 he was guest artist at the "Institut für Musik und Akustik" of the "Zentrum für Kunst- und Medientechnologie" in Karlsruhe (ZKM), where he did research into new possibilities of sound modulation in real time. In 1993 and 1995 he taught as guest professor for electro-acoustic music at the Royal College of Music in London.

Friedrich Schenker began his music education in 1961 at the "Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler" in East Berlin where he studied the trombone with Helmut Stachowiak and composition with Günter Kochan. From 1964 - 1982 he was solo trombonist of the Radio Symphony Orchestra in Leipzig. From 1965 - 1968 he continued his studies in composition with Fritz Geißler. From 1973 - 1975 he was a post graduate student in the master class of Paul Dessau at the "Akademie der Künste" of the GRD (now "Akademie der Künste, Berlin-Brandenburg") and became a member in 1986. His oeuvre includes several operas, numerous symphonies, chamber music and works for film, television, theatre and radio.

Michael Wertmüller works as percussionist and composer. He studied at the Swiss Jazz School and the Conservatory in Bern, attended a master-class at the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam, took composition lessons with Misha Mengelberg and was a student of Dieter Schnebel at the University of the Arts in Berlin in 1996. He has played at many international festivals with the Swiss Youth Orchestra, the Swiss Philharmonic Workshop the Bern Symphony Orchestra and the Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam, but also with bands like "So Nicht" and "Alboth!" and with musicians from the jazz- and improvisation-scene (Werner Lüdi, Peter Brötzmann, Stephan Wittwer, and others). Recent compositions are "die zeit. eine gebrauchsanweisung", premiered in Donaueschingen and "metal martyr", premiered at the Akademie der Künste Berlin.

Jaap Blonk is self taught as voice artist, sound poet and musician. Parallel to his artistic career he pursues unfinished studies in mathematics, physics and music theory. Short jobs in offices and similar 'well-organized systems' awakened in him a taste for dadaist actions. He began to play the saxophone and to compose, discovered the directness, flexibility and expressivity of the voice and

became a specialist in the performance of sound poetry with an unrestrained freedom to improvise. His visually designed scores have been shown in several exhibitions.

Anna Clementi studied the German flute at the conservatory of Perugia and continued her education in the actor's school "Centro Sperimentale del Teatro" in Rome. She participated in courses for experimental vocal music and experimental music theatre with Dieter Schnebel at the Hochschule der Künste in Berlin and since then cooperates closely with the composer and his group "Die Maulwerker". Her special interest is the integrated use of language, singing, theatre and movement in combination with experimental and electro-acoustic music as well as improvisation, performance art, jazz and cabaret.

Aleksi Haapaniemi studied percussion at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. Besides being a student he plays in clubs, bands and with orchestras, here mainly with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra.

Robin Hayward studied music at Manchester University and tuba at the Royal Northern College of Music. He has since worked mainly in the field of experimental and contemporary music, whereby he developed a number of new playing techniques for the tuba and the serpent, that are often surprisingly close to the sounds of electronic music. Presently he works as composer, improviser and soloist with the quartett 'Roanax', the trio 'Das Kreisen', the 'English Tuba Quartet', the 'Ensemble Zwischentöne' and as soloist in the ensemble "MusikFabrik".

Philippe Micol plays the soprano saxophone, bass clarinet, clarinet and the tenor saxophone. After his studies of the classical clarinet his special interest for new and experimental music and new tendencies in jazz inspired him to learn the saxophone and to improvise. In 1982 he initiated the "Werkstatt für Improvisierte Musik - WIM" in Bern. From 1985 on he developed his own conceptual projects and began to compose. Since 1987 he performed widely as interpreter of experimental music and began to cooperate with performance artists and the video artist Ruth Bamberger in 1991.

Dorota Calek studied singing with Halina Slonicka at the Warsaw Music Academy and philology at the university there; final exam 1994. She participated in master classes for singing with Edith Mathis, Elly Ameling and Ryszard Karczykowski. After finishing her studies she was employed as soloist by the Warsaw Chamber Opera, where she sang leading roles in operas W.A. Mozart, C. Monteverdi, G. Rossini and others. She also performs in various other genres and was part of productions of French, Spanish and Polish music with the Polish National Philharmonic Orchestra (works by K. Szymanowski, W. Lutoslawski, H.M. Gorecki and others).

Dariusz Wiktorowicz is actor and performer. He studied at the Lodz film school, is a member of the Teatr Nowy Ensemble in Lodz and also cooperates with Teatr Studyjny and the Arlekin puppet theatre there. He participated in theatre festivals in Germany, Holland, Hungary and Austria and received numerous prizes, among them the special prize of the puppet theatre festival in Szcz.

Mitch Heinrich is sound poet, performer/writer and discoverer of babble alphabets. Studies and assistance at the School for Poetry in Vienna. Cooperation among others with: Allen Ginsburg, Sainkho Namtchylak, Blixa Bargeld, Henri Chopin, Jaap Blonk. 1996 research and performances in Medellin (Columbia). In the summer of 1998 he took part in the Peace Caravan through parts of Germany. In May 2000 he participated in the literature project "Poesia Momentale" in Osnabrueck.

Tatu Ferchen studied percussion with his father Timo Ferchen. He works as inventive interpreter in all genres, composes and makes films.

Aleksi Haapaniemi studied percussion at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. Besides studying he plays in clubs, bands and orchestras, mainly the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra.

Peter Köszeghy studied from 1985-89 at the “Bela Bartók“ Music Highschool in Miskolc and from 1989-92 the German flute at the “Franz Liszt“ Music Academy in Győr / Hungary. In 1992 he made his exam as music teacher and flutist. From 1989-92 he took private lessons in composition with A. Reményi and E. Olsvay. In 1992 he became a member of F.Z.C.S. in Budapest, a group of young composers. 1993-99 he began to study composition at the Music Academy Hanns Eisler in Berlin with Prof. P.-H. Dittrich; electronic music with A. Bartetzki. He received his diploma for composition in 1999 and is since free lance composer in Berlin. 2002 he was lecturer of a special course for young composers at the Music Academy in Rheinsberg. He received numerous awards for his compositions.

Friedemann Werzlau received private lessons for piano, percussion and singing. He studied at the Music Academy Hanns Eisler in Berlin and performs in the fields of jazz, rock, improvisation and contemporary chamber music. He is a member of B.I.C.E. (Berlin Improvising Composers Ensemble), Balan-X-Schlagwerke and the Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin and participates in theatre-, radio-, orchestra and independent productions. He is vice solo drummer of the Brandenburg Philharmonic Orchestra in Potsdam and artistic director of the night studio for experimental music there. Since 1987 he created several conceptual compositions for ensemble and theatre.

Ricarda Schuh studied: theory of theatre/cultural communication at Humboldt-University in Berlin. At the Technical University education in contemporary dance, Butoh and acting (Grotowski school). Since 1991 lecturer for dancing and performance in various educational and cultural centres in Berlin. Between 1989 and 2002 she created solo-choreographies, dance theatre productions and performances.

Olaf Rupp began to play the guitar at the age of 12. He is self-taught, and next to the repertoire for the classical guitar he is interested in rock, but mostly in computer-based real-time-music. In the 90's he played mainly with bands like EMAK BAKIA, BEASTIESHOPBEACH (GROB) or STOL (Kitty-Yo). But he also performed with other musicians, among them Lol Coxhill, Tony Buck, John Zorn, Joe Williamson, Rudi Mahall, Sainkho Namtchylak, Paul Lovens or Butch Morris. Recently he has concentrated on solo performances with the acoustic guitar and has published two solo CD's with FMP and GROB.

Gintare Liesmann was born in Lithuania. From 1977 - 1984 she studied at the Art Academy in Vilnius and finished with a diploma in fashion design. From 1984 - 1990 she was lecturer and chief fashion designer at the fashion theatre “Ramunė” in Vilnius. In 1990 she moved to Cologne, where she opened her own studio in 1995.

Arndt von Diepenbroick studied interior design and architecture at the “Folkwang Schule” in Essen. He then learned pantomime and mask-making and worked for several years with the Bread and Puppet Theatre. He has developed a personal technique for making paper sculptures, creates fantastic environments as an independent artist and takes on commissions for masks and props for theatres.

Günter Ries studied painting at the University of the Arts in Berlin. He specialised in artistic slide projection, light installations and lighting design for stage and music theatre. He has worked as lighting designer for several of Gisela Weimann's projects.

Carlos Bustamante is a Mexican citizen living in Germany. He studied at the “Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie” in Berlin (1967-1970); then worked as free-lance cameraman for several years and was appointed professor for AV Design Theory and AV Production in the course of studies: Social and Economic Communication at the Design Faculty of the “Universität der Künste” in Berlin in 1989.

Martin Supper directs the “Studio für Elektroakustische Musik“ at the “Universität der Künste“ in Berlin since 1985. He is trained as musicologist and composer and studied theoretical informatics, linguistics and music theory at the “Technische Universität” in Berlin. Since 1998 he is also artistic adviser in the department of sound education.

Manfred Fox studied electrical engineering at the “Technische Universität” in Berlin. Since 1985 he has worked as independent engineer, with the emphasis on co-operation with visual artists, composers and musicians in multimedia projects.

Carola Tillein was trained with artistic glass design as her main subject from 1981 - 83. In 1987 she completed her master craftsman’s diploma. Since 1990 she has worked in various projects with national and international artists.

Eckhard Roth studied engineering in Romania and founded a firm in Berlin specialising in artistic lighting design.

At the different performances a number of young actors and students participated as security guides and assistants.