

Søren Nils Eichberg: Symphony no. 3

Danish National Symphony Orchestra and choir

Conductor: Robert Spano

Recorded at the premiere 10th of april 2015 in Danish Radio Concert Hall

Composer in residence

Søren Nils Eichberg is the first composer-in-residence in the history of the Danish National Symphony Orchestra. For three years he put his mark on one of the leading orchestras in Scandinavia.

Eichberg was born in 1973 in Stuttgart, Germany, grew up in Denmark and today lives and works in Berlin. His break-through as a composer came in 2001 when he was awarded the Grand Prize of the Queen Elisabeth Competition of Belgium. Since then, he has risen to become one of the most distinctive composers of his generation. His works have been performed in most European countries as well as in Japan, China, Korea, Australia and the US and have been radio broadcast in the US and europe-wide.

Eichberg has been commissioned works by Ensemble Modern, Hilary Hahn, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, The Brodsky Quartet, Radio Symphony Orchestra Saarbrücken, the Opera House of Münster and the Theatre of Stendal, Odense Symphony Orchestra, Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie, the International Festival in Bergen in Norway, the International Piano Competition Ferruccio Busoni, the International ARD Music Competition and the Japanese Viva Hall Cello Competition.

His output since 2001 includes more than 30 works, among others two symphonies; cello-, double cello-, piano- and violin concertos; an opera as well as solo-, chamber- and ensemble music.

As a conductor he has worked with: Südwestfälische Philharmonie, Junge Münchner Philharmonie, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble Kaleidoskop Berlin, Österreichisches Ensemble für Neue Musik and soloists from the Munich and Berlin Philharmonic.

Søren Nils Eichberg on his 3rd symphony

Symphony No. 3 was written 2014 and 2015 as my last work as composer-in-residence for the Danish National Symphony Orchestra ending a collaboration which began in 2010.

While gathering ideas for the symphony, my working title was 'Point of Archimedes'. Archimedes supposedly said that, if he were given only one fixed point, he could move the earth off its foundation.

He used this as an image to explain principles from theoretical physics. But the fascinating idea that anything should be possible if only one single thing were absolutely firm and unalterable, has since found its way into philosophy. Here it is used as an allegory for an irrevocable truth, upon which all other knowledge can be built – and where the quest for such a truth can be used as a liberation from the void of arbitrariness.

This seeking and questioning, the sense of farewell and departure from the present towards something new but yet unknown, this all felt like a description of my own point as an artist at that very moment and it became the main idea behind my 3rd Symphony. It may have made it my most personal work until now – certainly a lot less extrovert than some of my previous orchestra works.

The music is built up upon diverse elements which all on different semantic levels are related to searching, questioning, departure and loss:

- Sounds recorded by NASA's Voyager probe on its way into space.
- Algorithms which repeat themselves and yet are never the same.
- Excerpts from Qu Yuan's Chinese poem 'The Heavenly Questions' from around 300 b.c. with 170 questions at not one single answer.
- A Hebrew poem about the loss of childhood by David Vogel, who was murdered in Auschwitz.
- A Danish lullaby 'Look how red the sun, Mother', but only ever instrumental, never sung and only in variations, only as a memory. Towards the end the chorus sings completely without text, and at the very end even with closed mouth.

It may be typical for an artist to constantly question the own standpoint and to challenge what he or she has already established. For else the art will die and everything will become repetition and routine. But essentially, the seeking and the persistently revising of the own achievements of the past are ultimately human. The searching for something firm to hold on to and to define oneself by. And the knowledge that once found, it will again not be enough. That there must be more around the next corner. That the one truly firm answer may not exist. But that the searching and the asking and the questioning may be answer in itself.