

Stefan Heucke

„Die alte Weise sehnsuchtsvoll“

Kontrapunktische Variationen über die Hirtenmelodie „Tristan und Isolde“ von Richard Wagner

Contrapuntal variations on the Old Shepherd's Song from Richard Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde"

Variations contrapuntiques sur la mélodie « Tristan et Isolde » de Richard Wagner

op. 70
(2013)

für zwei Klaviere
for two pianos

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Vorwort

Im Sommer 2013 entstand als Auftragswerk des GrauSchumacher Piano Duo ein etwa 25minütiges Variationswerk für zwei Klaviere (basierend auf einer im Jahr zuvor entstandenen Fassung für Orchester) über eine der eindringlichsten melodischen Eingebungen Richard Wagners, die „alte Hirtenweise“, das große Englischhorn-Solo zu Beginn des dritten Aktes von „Tristan und Isolde“. Diese scheinbar so schlichte und eingängige, dabei höchst kompliziert und verwickelt gebaute Melodie – klangliches Symbol für Tristans namenlos vergeblichen und unstillbaren Sehnsucht nach dem Tod, bedingt durch den frühen Verlust seiner Braut – wird hier als Ausgangspunkt genommen für eine Klavier-Fantasie, die die einzelnen Bausteine der Melodie auf ihre Möglichkeiten der entwickelnden Variabilität hin untersucht. Es handelt sich also nicht um „Thema mit Variationen“ im herkömmlichen Sinn, sondern die einzelnen Motive des Themas zu großen, polyphon gestalteten Variationen, die nahtlos ineinander übergehen, dabei aber immer wieder vom Erkennen des Themas unterbrochen werden.

Aus einer düsteren, trauer-marschartigen Einleitung führt das Werk über acht weitgespannten und sehr kontrastreichen Variationen zu einer gleichsam ermatteten Coda wieder zu verankern, weit entfernt von der ursprünglichen

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In response to a commission from the Grauschumacher piano duo, I composed a set of variations for two pianos in 2013. The work is based on one of Richard Wagner's most beautiful melodies, the "Old Shepherd's Song", the extended cor anglais solo at the beginning of Act III of "Tristan und Isolde" (based on a version composed by the previous year's winner of the competition). This seemingly simple but in fact highly complex and intricate melody, which symbolizes the hero's nameless and insatiable yearning for death originating from his unrequited love for Isolde – formed the starting point for a piano fantasy which explores the possibilities for variational development of this melodic element. Instead of the traditional sense of the term: instead the individual motives of the theme are transformed into extended polyphonic movements which however are repeatedly interrupted by the appearance of the original theme. The theme itself develops out of a bleak introduction in the style of a funeral march, which is subsequently spun into eight extensive and highly contrasting variations, ultimately leading to a languishing coda, far away from redemption and love-death.

Stefan Heucke

(translated by Lindsay Chalmers-Gerbracht)

Avant-propos

Une variation pour deux pianos, d'environ 25 minutes, a été créée au cours de l'été 2013 – une œuvre commanditée par le GrauSchumacher Piano Duo (à partir d'une version symphonique écrite un an auparavant) – sur l'une des inspirations mélodiques les plus émouvantes de Richard Wagner, *die alte Hirtenweise* (*l'ancienne mélodie du berger*), le grand solo du cor anglais au début du troisième acte de *Tristan et Isolde*. J'ai utilisé cette mélodie apparemment très sobre et simple dont la construction est pourtant particulièrement complexe et enchevêtrée, le symbole sonore évoquant la solitude anonyme de Tristan et son aspiration insatiable à l'union avec sa perte précoce de ses parents – comme le fondement d'une fantaisie pour piano. J'ai développé chaque élément musical constitutif de la mélodie sur ses possibilités à développer. Il ne s'agit donc pas d'un « Thème avec variations » au sens traditionnel du terme, mais les différents motifs du thème sont transformés en de vastes motifs mélodiques et rythmiques qui se fondent l'un dans l'autre sans transition marquée, et sont en outre repris régulièrement par le son du thème original. Le thème se développe à partir d'une introduction simple qui pose le ton et le rythme. Puis, il évolue au sein de huit variations très sobres et très rythmiques, qui se concluent de nouveau dans une coda en quelque sorte extatique, qui évoque la *Lieder* de Schubert (*mort par amour*).

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„Die alte Weise sehnsuchtsbang“

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* 1959

Introduktion. Mäßig langsam (♩ = 72) /

Moderately slow (♩ = 72)

Klavier I

Klavier II

fff mit höchster Kraft /
with maximum force

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6

7

Musical score for measures 6 and 7. The score is written for piano and includes a large watermark reading "PREVIEW Low Resolution". The notation consists of four staves: two bass staves and two treble staves. The first two staves (bass) contain a melodic line with notes and rests, and a bass line with chords and single notes. The last two staves (treble) contain a melodic line with notes and rests, and a bass line with chords and single notes. The dynamic marking *mf* is present in both systems.

9

Musical score for measures 8 and 9. The score is written for piano and includes a large watermark reading "PREVIEW Low Resolution". The notation consists of four staves: two bass staves and two treble staves. The first two staves (bass) contain a melodic line with notes and rests, and a bass line with chords and single notes. The last two staves (treble) contain a melodic line with notes and rests, and a bass line with chords and single notes. The dynamic marking *p* is present in both systems, and *pp* appears at the end of measure 9.

Musical score for measures 10 and 11. The score is written for piano and includes a large watermark reading "PREVIEW Low Resolution". The notation consists of four staves: two bass staves and two treble staves. The first two staves (bass) contain a melodic line with notes and rests, and a bass line with chords and single notes. The last two staves (treble) contain a melodic line with notes and rests, and a bass line with chords and single notes.

13

pp

pp

1 H

This system contains measures 13 and 14. The upper staff (treble clef) features a melodic line with a fermata over measure 13 and a first ending bracket labeled '1 H' spanning measures 13 and 14. The lower staff (bass clef) provides harmonic accompaniment with chords and some melodic fragments. Dynamics are marked 'pp' in both staves.

15

mf

mp

This system contains measures 15 and 16. The upper staff (treble clef) has a melodic line with a fermata over measure 15. The lower staff (bass clef) continues the accompaniment with chords and melodic lines. Dynamics are marked 'mf' in the upper staff and 'mp' in the lower staff.

pp

mf

This system contains measures 17 and 18. The upper staff (treble clef) features a melodic line with a fermata over measure 17. The lower staff (bass clef) has a rhythmic accompaniment consisting of repeated eighth-note chords. Dynamics are marked 'pp' in the upper staff and 'mf' in the lower staff.

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19

Musical score for measures 19-20. The top system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The right hand (RH) plays a complex chordal texture with many accidentals, while the left hand (LH) plays a simple bass line. The dynamic marking is *mp*. The bottom system shows the continuation of the LH part, which is a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with a bass line of dotted eighth notes. The dynamic marking is *pp*. A performance instruction in German is present: "(Dynamik L. H. wie Klavier I bis Takt 27) / (L.H. dynamics as in Piano I up to b...".

21

Musical score for measures 21-22. The top system shows the RH part with a dynamic marking of *pp*. The bottom system shows the LH part with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The LH part continues with the same rhythmic pattern as in the previous measures.

Musical score for measures 23-24. The top system shows the RH part with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The bottom system shows the LH part with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The LH part continues with the same rhythmic pattern as in the previous measures.