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VOX SOLA

MUSIC FOR SOLO VOICE

FELDMAN · POUSSEUR · DE PABLO · KURTÁG
BUSSOTTI · ANDRIESSEN · KAGEL · MACMILLAN

LORNA WINDSOR

Vox Sola

Music for Solo Voice

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Lorna Windsor *soprano*

Recording: 26-29 September 2017 in the Museum of Santa Croce, Umbertide (Perugia), Italy
Sound engineer and recording producer: Luca Ricci
Sung texts published with kind permission of Andriessen, Bussotti, De Pablo, MacMillan (Boosey&Hawkes),
Kurtág and Lichtenberg. Translations by Lorna Windsor.
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The repertoire for solo voice inevitably takes us back in time to the very roots of music, in its original and ancestral dimension. Music, born as a direct expression of the soul and the body, blossomed from our breath and our hands created rhythms. At the beginning, to sing alone was sufficient, but this was soon forgotten. The voice became polyphonic and collective (with prodigious results), followed by a need to be enveloped and sustained by one or more instruments, hence providing a thousandfold wealth of masterly works whilst losing a part of its original evocative capacity.

During the second half of the twentieth century, the voice became liberated from its enforced chrysalis, in the form of accompaniment, and began to soar once more alone, breaking the dividing barriers between pitched singing and the spoken voice, whispered or cried out. Following the example of the formidable *Sequenza* by Berio, came the realization that the voice is also the body, therefore gesture, stage movement, and in nuce theatre in itself. Thence the solo voice gained the opportunity to experiment with new techniques and sonorous effects, and the potential to evoke and revisit distant estranged worlds and their inherent bygone echoes.

Lorna Windsor possesses three particular virtues: with an extraordinarily flexible timbric palette, she becomes “one, n(o)-one, everyone” in this group of works; secondly as a polyglot to the point of several mother tongues, she is capable of assuming linguistic colour even before pronouncing; and thirdly, and most importantly, through her rare combination of intelligence and culture she has a wide-angle vision of historically recent repertoire for solo voice. The works in this selection are of great beauty, producing a moving and unexpected 360 degrees span in the appreciation of how a composer writes for one voice alone.

Six of the eight composers represented here were born within the same five years, from 1926 (Kurtág and Feldman) to 1931 (Bussotti, Kagel), in 1929 Pousseur, in 1930 De Pablo. Andriessen was born slightly after in 1939 whilst only Macmillan (1959) belongs to the following generation.

Thus we might be led to expect a kind of stylistic uniformity, yet, paradoxically it is this “generational coherence” which underlines how much the different

geographical origins (eight composers and eight nations, in order, the USA, Belgium, Spain, Hungary, Italy, Holland, Argentina, Scotland), and above all the extremely diverse cultural and aesthetic positions of each, are critical in their respective, and surprisingly varied musical choices. And in fact, it is listening to this cd which creates the awareness of how the voice incarnates different expressive forms more than any instrument. Furthermore one has the sense that the voice left naked in its ancestral state, leads each composer to rediscover his very origins, unfettered by cultural obligations or various kinds of being expressively correct, and audaciously entering territories which were previously exorcised or avoided.

Let us look at Lorna Windsor's programme, in order. The first three composers chose great poets (respectively Rilke, Baudelaire and Góngora), and in the case of the first two, no less than the most 'iconic' texts from the respective poetic production: the Sonnets to Orpheus number XXIII, and even more, *Correspondances*, the very emblem of French symbolism.

The juxtaposition of Feldman-Rilke and Pousseur-Baudelaire, intelligently highlights on the one hand, an evidently similar choice by the two composers, yet on the other a strongly contrasted one. Common to both is the syllabicity (one note to one syllable) and rhythmic simplicity, which even give a dance-like feel to Feldman's piece in 3/8, whilst Pousseur remains only slightly asymmetric. However Feldman coherently adds to the simple rhythmic pattern a transparent harmonic world, a sort of ancient modalism in A, the whole piece using practically only the diatonic scale A-B-C-D-E-F-G, (only twice sidestepping by adding an F♯ and a B♭) thus giving it an archaic colour, floating in time and space, yet he continuously returns to B instead of A, rendering the scale asymmetric. The effect is a curious contrast between the rhythmic and melodic lightness and the profundity of Rilke's poem.

Vice-versa however in Pousseur, the rhythmic simplicity is opposed to the complex musical materials, which appear diatonic whilst really are strictly dodecaphonic: *Pousseur*, perhaps playing with the ambiguity of the word ‘*correspondances*’ (‘*correspondences*’) divides the fourteen verses into seven couplets, each formed by a

serial syllabic diction with its contrary motion. In the following couplets, each serial undergoes a transformation which recalls the Stockhauseniano Kreuzspiel: each time just two notes gradually exchange positions, to find themselves in the initial order in the last couplet.

The musical choice made by De Pablo is a different one: the levity of Góngora's text, which evokes a flight of storks creating patterns in the sky, suggests an extremely melismatic use of the voice, with arpeggios and filigree in an almost instrumental notation, and in his use of arabesque-like writing, we recognize distant Arabic hues of flamenco. György Kurtág chose the caustic aphorisms of Lichtenberg, the German eighteenth century physicist and writer, which accentuate further his customary predilection for extremely short forms: many last for twenty seconds or barely more, only a few last for more than one minute. Here we are dealing with highly characterized, lightening flashes, vocal arches, deliberately devoid of any melodic sweetening: Kurtág chooses wide intervals, strongly predominant fifths, tritones, major sevenths, thus avoiding any obvious melodic concatenation, and offering us an atmosphere which is caustic and acrimonious.

Sylvano Bussotti was the enfant terrible of Italian music in the late 1960's, having a natural fondness for the theatrical, in his life and in his works. Each of his instrumental pieces contains a strong dimension of gestuality, and the use of the voice enhances this tendency even further. *Lettura di Braibanti*, written in 1963, dedicated to Henri Pousseur, and performed here in the version for Lorna Windsor by Marcello Panni, combines in fragmentary form, an infinity of vocal modalities, sung, but also whispered, intoned *bocca chiusa*, guttural, rhythmic sounds, spoken voice and so on, all dispersed between multiple pauses, as though the voice were a sonorous interface representing the miriads of overlapping thoughts.

Louis Andriessen is entirely different: his singer holds a doll on her lap, as she sings a story, tragic and melancholic such as fables frequently are, in a simple and haunting melodic folk-like song, obviously tonal: the voice alone permits us to

awake from our fears, in an old and lost world of the past.

Mauricio Kagel is as usual genial and smiling : here God himself speaks, condemning those who built the Tower of Babel to using many incomprehensible tongues. The exhilarating consequence is that in each movement, repeating the text in a different language, Kagel adds to the vocal line the stylistic components relative to the respective populace: God assumes the characteristic of the different musical cultures!

Finally, the ample and profound composition by James MacMillan: a fragment of Job's Lament, dispersed into various languages, (similar to Kagel), but with a distinct difference in its final outcome: the eternal, grief- stricken image of humanity as a whole raising to God its universal lament, using a multitude of vocal means: new and ancient emission techniques mix to create a timeless power of expression, the timelessness of the human voice which extends into song.

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Lorna Windsor

The selective and multi-faceted career of soprano Lorna Windsor through opposed worlds of various musical languages and forms, is a journey into the endless possibilities of the voice as expression. Originally a pianist and violist, she sang from early childhood in major works, then after her Guildhall School of Music and Drama training and major Lieder prizes, she made her opera début as Euridice (TMPChâtelet), Donna Anna (Glyndebourne), Despina (Piccolo Teatro di Milano), M.Laurencin in *The Banquet* (San Carlo di Napoli), *The Merry Widow* (Marseille), and others, whilst also pursuing a baroque and classical career with G.Leonhardt, F.Bruggen, C.Abbado, A.Davies, a busy schedule of song recitals, including a full and fascinating exploration of works by contemporary composers.

Lorna performs regularly with numerous formations, ensembles and theatres, works from *Pierrot Lunaire* (Linbury Studio, Covent Garden) to the creative working ‘hands on’ with composers, electronics, and new forms of interactive performing. ‘Vox Sola’ forms part of a study of the voice, gesture, space and multi-interactive visual elements presented in conventional and non-abitual locations. Recent other recordings by Lorna Windsor include *Four Walls* (John Cage), *Debussy Méloides* (double album), *Satie Méloides and Chansons*, *Works by Iranian composers*, *Casella-The Paris Years*.

POEMS AND TRANSLATIONS

Morton Feldman Only

(from ‘Sonnette an Orpheus’ XIII, translated by J.B.Leishman)

Only when flight shall soar not for its own sake only
up into Heaven’s lonely silence, and be no more
merely the lightly profiling, proudly successful tool,
playmate of winds beguiling time there, careless and cool:
only when some pure wither outweighs boyish insistence
on the achieved machine with who, has journeyed thither
be, in that fading distance, all that his flight has been.

Henri Pousseur Pour Baudelaire

(from *Les Fleurs du Mal*, by Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867)
dedicated to his friend, the organist Jacques Fourgon

La Nature est un temple où de vivants
piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles,
L’homme y passé à travers des forêts de
symboles qui l’observant avec des regards
familiers.
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
semblant de longs échos qui de loin se
confondent, les parfums, les couleurs et les
sons se répondent.

Nature is a temple from whose living
pillars
at times, confused words do escape;
Man passes through forestlands of
symbols, which observe him with
familiar glances.
As long echoes blurred with the distance
into a dark profound unison,
Vast as the night, and bright dawn,
perfumes, hues and sounds respond to each
other.

Mais vous êtes si loin, paradis parfumés, où
notre esprit se meut avec agilité
Où tout ce que l'on aime est digne d'être
aimé,
Bleu, clair, profound, ainsi que la virginité.
Ici, la vaste mer console nos labeurs,
Qu'accompagne l' immense orgue des vents
grondeurs.

Luis de Pablo Surcar vemos
from 'Tarde de Poetas'

Surcar vemos
Los pielagos del aire libre algunas
Volantes no galeras
Sino grullas veleras,
Tal vez creciendo, tal mengaundo lunas
Sus distantes extremos,
Caracteres tal vez formando alados
En el papel diafano del cielo
Las plumas de su vuelo.

György Kurtág 18 selected songs
from Einige Sätze aus den Sudelbüchern Georg Christoph Lichtenberg

Touropa
Als es den Goten und Vandalen einfiel die
große Tour durch Europa in Gesellschaft
zu machen, so wurden die Wirtshäuser

But you are so far, scented paradises,
where our souls float so freely,
where all that which we love is worthy of
being loved,
blue, radiant and deep, and virgin-pure.
Here the vast ocean consoles our labours,
accompanied by the immense organ of
scolding gales.

We see furrowing
Through oceans of open air
Not flights of galley ships
But flocks of swift-sailing cranes,
Moons perhaps waxing, perhaps waning
Their most distant extremes,
Perhaps forming letters on the diaphane
Paper of the skies with
The quill feathers of their flight.

Touropa
When the Goths and Vandals came to
celebrate the grand tour of Europe, the
innkeepers in Italy were so busy that it was

in Italien so besetzt, daß fast gar nicht
unterzukommen gewesen sein soll.
Zuweilen klingelten drei, vier auf einmal.

...auf die angehende Sonne
Was hilft aller Sonnenaufgang, wenn wir
nicht aufstehn.

Ein Gourmand
Er konnte das Wort "succulent" so
aussprechen, daß, wenn man es hörte, man
bisse in einen reifen Pfrsich.

Koan
Ordnung führet zu allen Tugenden! Aber
was führet zu Ordnung?

Ein merkwürdiger Gedanke
Das Ausserordentlichste bei diesem
Gedanken ist unstreitig dieses, daß, wenn
er ihn eine Minute später gehabt hätte, so
hätte er ihn nach seinem Tode gehabt.

Dank
Man stattete ihm sehr heissen, etwas
verbrannte Dank ab.

Geständnis
Es ist nicht der Geist, sondern das Fleisch,
was mich zum Nichtkonformisten macht.

impossible to accommodate them, even
though at times they rang three or four
times.

...on the rising sun
What use are all the sunrises, when we
don't rise.

A glutton
He could pronounce the word "succulent"
in such a way that when you heard it you
thought you were biting into a ripe peach.

Riddle
Order leads to all virtues.
But what leads to order?

An honest thought
The extraordinary aspect of the thanking
was undoubtedly that by waiting just a
minute later, it could have been expressed
by his death.

Thanks
Overwhelming thanks, but too overdone to
be believed.

Confession
It is not the soul but the flesh which makes
me a non-conformist.

Eine wichtige Bemerkung

Wer in sich selbst verliebt ist, hat wenigstens bei seiner Liebe den Vorteil, daß er nicht viele Nebenbuhler erhalten wird.

Franklin, der Erfinder des Disharmonika zwischen England und der neuen Welt.

Gebet

Lieber Gott ich bitte dich um tausend Gotteswillen.

Alpenspitzen näher der Sonne, aber kalt und unfruchtbar.

Im Dunkel rot werden

Der gute Ton liegt dort um eine Oktave niedriger.

Das Mädchen hatte ein Paar sündlich schöne Hände.

Kirchtürme, umgekehrte Trichter, das Gebet in den Himmel zu leiten

Als unsere selige Kuh (uh) noch lebte, sagte einmal eine Frau (uu) in Göttingen.

Ein einschläfriger Kirchstuhl.

Ein Mädchen kaum zwölf Moden alt.

An important observation

He who is enamoured of himself will at least have the advantage of being inconvenienced by few rivals.

Franklin, the discoverer of the Disharmonika between England and the new world.

Prayer

Dear God, I pray thee for a thousand wills of God.

The peaks of the Alps near the sun, yet cold and unyielding.

Turning red in the darkness

Good tone lies there below, an octave deeper.

The girl had a pair of sinfully lovely hands

Church steeples, upturned funnels taking our prayers up to Heaven.

As our happy old cow (OO)was still living, said a wo(OO)man in Göttingen.

A church pew falling asleep.

A girl hardly twelve fashions of age.

Sylvano Bussotti Lettura di Braibanti

from Sette Fogli, dedicated to Henri Pousseur

La chitarra, se scherza, che importa, un poco?

Sempre il dito scherza, e la chitarra, se, se, se scherza,

Un ritornello ...sempre

A mezzanotte, un ritornello sempre

La chitarra dice : Vattene, dice,

Resta là!

La chitarra, se scherza, che importa ..un poco? Un ritornello.

The guitar, if it is playful, does it matter a little..?

always a witty finger and again the guitar, a little playful

a ritornello, you can hear it again,

at midnight, the ritornello again,

the guitar saying : oh go now, go!

Stay there..!

the guitar, if playful, does it matter .. a little..? a ritornello.

Louis Andriessen A Song of the Sea

original title: 'Een Lied van de Zee', by Hélène Swarth, English words by Nicoline Gatehouse

The lamp flickers dim in the fisherman's hut,
the old woman sits by the fire, her eyes shut.
As shadows their dark reflection let fall,
ghosts appear along the wall.

The waves sing their melancholy lullaby
for those who under the billows lie.

The waves sing their melancholy lyke-wake dirge,
the old woman slumbers deaf to their urge.

“Ah! no man is safe against the storm,
the bodies washed up on the sand still warm.
Your child is dead and his boat sunken down,
pale shines the boy in the light of the moon.”

Sinking to the ground with a piercing shriek,
she strokes his wet curls, scarcely able to speak.
She cries out: “Child, how come you here?”
plucking the dank seaweed from his hair.
Closing his eyes she holds him tight,
kissing his mouth and his cheek, so white.

“My child, you are gripped by an icy chill,
your breath is gone out, your heart is still.”
Seagulls fly around her circling wild
as she stands alone with the body of her child.
Kneeling by the boy, her head sunken deep,
she sings as if rocking a baby to sleep.

“My man and my son - God grant them rest -
they both have sunk down ‘neath the inky crest.”
The waves sing their melancholy lullaby,
for those who under the billows lie.

Mauricio Kagel Der Turm zu Babel
The Tower of Babel

All the melodies have a common textual
basis from the Old Testament, First book
of Moses, Chapter 11, v.5,6,7. (Genesis :
The Tower of Babel).

verse 5

And the Lord came down to see the city
and the tower, which the children of men
buidled.

verse 6

And the Lord said: “Behold, the people is
one, and they have all one language; and
this they began to do; and now nothing will
be restrained from them, which they have
imagined to do.”

verse 7

“Go to, let us go down, and there
confound their language, that they may not
understand one another’s speech.”

James Macmillan “in angustiis II...”

Text by the composer, compiled from
various ancient and medieval, English,
L’Homme Armé, Dutch and Latin sources,
both sacred and secular

Oh..mm..Ohb..clamavi, aah, teh
Sir job gave away se triestige patroon
van al de musikanten
De profundis
my lyre is turned to mourning
Nos han robado hasta la primavera
doibt on doubter
My lyre is turned to mourning
and my voice to the sound of those who
weep.
Job, sad saint of all musicians, omma, ah..
meh..mm
the Spring stolen from us, is turned to
mourning
Se triestige patroon of those who weep,
van al de musikanten
ohb clamavi aah tehn.