

speechless

a wordless opera
by Cat Hope




May 3, 2023
8.30 pm

Hochschule für Musik
und Theater Hamburg
Forum



HIAS




Cat Hope
Composer and video

Yalda Zamani
Music Director

Frauke Aulbert
Moxi Beidenegl
Marcia Lemke-Kern
Hêja Netirk
Vocal soloists

The Hamburg Bass
Ensemble
Hamburg Choir for
Ukraine



The Theme

Many of us are concerned about the processes our elected governments apply to asylum seekers seeking protection. These are people who, as a result of being spoken for by others, are left without a voice in the decisions affecting their lives. Music can be a conduit for contemplating difficult subjects, enabling responses that differ from the cold realism of a photograph, or the tired language in a news report. Opera is a historically proven music-based, multimedia format for transmitting the stories of our time in a poignant way relevant to us today.

The springboard for the opera was Hope's witnessing of the politicised response to the 2014 Australian Human Rights Commission's report 'The Forgotten Children: National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention.' A close examination of this document and the damning facts it contained, inspired a radical idea for a libretto about voicelessness. Rather than setting the words in the 315 pages to music, as one may expect for an opera, material was extracted from the report to create a graphic score. Colour schemes, drawings, tables and photographs in the report were copied and manipulated to create the score, leaving the singers without words. In this way, the score provides both the libretto and music score simultaneously. The musicians, and as a consequence, the audience, re-read this report through its adaptation into music.

The Music

Whilst the humanist dilemma sits at the core of opera, and the conventional framework of overture, arias, recitatives, interludes is employed, a more diverse range of musical and performative approaches are featured. The soloists come not just from operatic traditions, but also a range of more experimental, improvisatory and traditional music. Engaging vocalists, musicians and local community singers from different stylistic practices gives the opera a contemporary sound. There are short moments where performers improvise freely, offering them an opportunity to highlight their own musical language within the framework provided by the composer. This is facilitated by the colour graphic notation used — presented in motion to the performers as an ‘animated score’ on a tablet computer. The score software also contains the video, stage cues and electronic parts.

The ensemble of bass instruments play notes exclusively from the low end of the sound spectrum. Low frequency sound is quite unique when isolated from other frequency ranges — it has a warmth and depth that can be felt in the body, creating a physical response to the music, strengthening engagement with the thematic material.

The Presentation

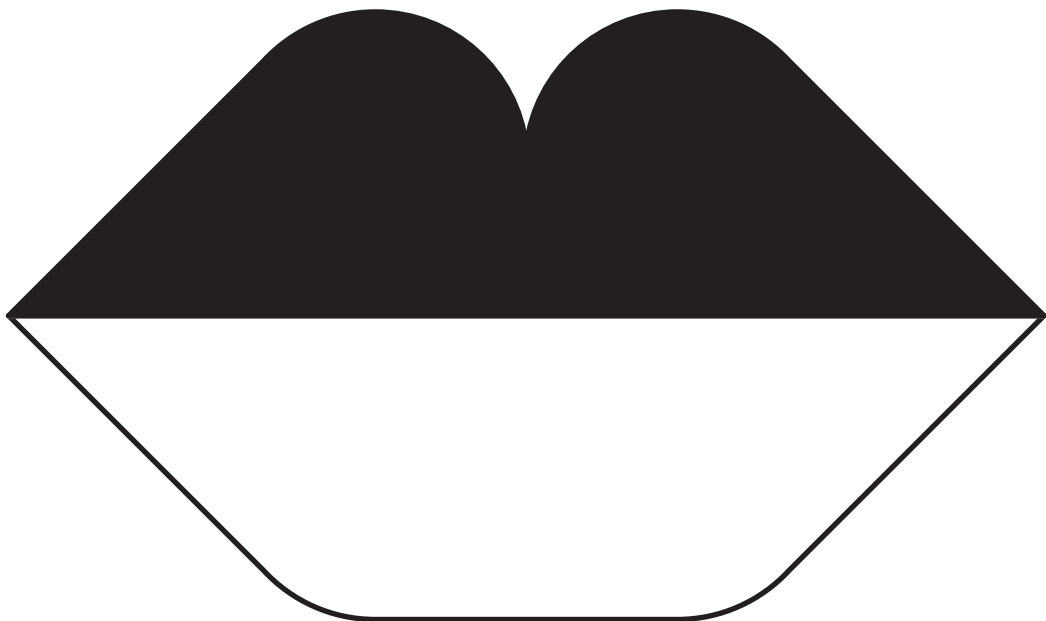
The opera is presented ‘concertante’, and the colours in the score, light, video and costumes are extracted from children’s drawings in ‘The Forgotten Children’ report. The four soloists are dressed with 4 different coloured flags as abstract notions of nationhood, and reference different incidents in recent refugee experience. Music’s power is in the abstract. This opera does not intend to speak on behalf of any group or person — rather, it attempts to describe the composer’s personal response to one of the great humanitarian crises of our time. It is also the composer’s hope that *Speechless* will encourage us both to empathise, and act for change.

The opera was premiered at the Perth Festival in 2019, was awarded the AMC APRA AMCOS Art Music Award in 2020 for Best New Dramatic Work, and was nominated for a Helpmann Award for music direction in 2020. This is the European premiere of the chamber concert edition.

Speechless is part of the ‘Ligeti Festival’ — the launch of the „LIGETI-Zentrum — Laboratorien für Innovationen und Gesellschaftliche Entwicklung durch den Transfer von Ideen“.

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animated
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Ligeti Week

Cat Hope — composer, video, director is an award winning Australian composer who focuses on the extremes of sound – from extreme noise to barely audible delicacy. Her works have been performed world wide by ensembles such as Yarn Wire (US), Hanatsu Miror (Fr), the BBC Scottish Symphony (UK), KNM (DE) and Norbotten Neo (Sweden). Recordings of her works are published internationally on labels such as Hat (Hut) Art, with her monograph CD Ephemeral Rivers winning the German Critics Prize in 2017. Her music has been discussed in books such as Score Writing (Thor Magnusson, 2019) and Hidden Alliances (Schimmana, 2019), as well as periodicals such as The Wire (UK), Revue & Corrégée (FR), Neu Zeitschrift für Musik (DE) and Gramophone (UK), who named her “one of Australia’s most exciting and individual creative voices.” She is a Professor at Monash University, Melbourne and currently a Fellow at the Hamburg Institute for Advanced Study. — cathope.com

Yalda Zamani — Music Director Apart from her wide-ranging knowledge of symphonic and choral repertoire, as an advocate for modern and contemporary music, the Hamburg-based Iranian conductor Yalda Zamani has given world premiere performances at renowned venues and festivals around the world, and has performed with orchestras and ensembles such as ORF Radio Symphony Orchestra Vienna, Klangforum Wien, Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra, Musikfabrik, Ensemble Modern Academy, Bratislava Symphony Orchestra amongst others. — yaldazamani.com

Frauke Aulbert — soloist is acclaimed as one of the most active and multi-talented vocalists in the field of contemporary music today. Her almost infinite, impressive vocal sound palette enfolds a nearly four octave range next to classical singing, over- and undertone-singing, multiphonics, Bulgarian folklore, Korean gugak, gamelan, noh theatre, jazz, dhrupad, and beatboxing. Aulbert performs in both small off-spaces and big theatre stages internationally, and has been awarded various prestigious prizes, grants and residencies worldwide. She has curated the Festival für Immaterielle Kunst in Hamburg since 2002. — stimmkuenstlerin.de

Moxi Beideneagl — soloist is an Argentine singer, musician and composer. She studied voice and sociology in Buenos Aires and multimedia composition in Hamburg. Her work processes and distills the most diverse influences, ranging from archaic to the most contemporary, as well as the music of her hometown, the tango. As a soloist she has collaborated with ensembles such as TonArt (Hamburg) and Tangente (Bremen) and is a member of the composers’ collective and ensemble Nelly Boyd, specialising in experimental and minimalist music. — moxibeideneagl.com

Marcia Lemke-Kern — soloist is one of Germany’s most versatile sopranos. Her repertoire ranges from medieval music through to contemporary opera. Marcia has worked with a range of new music ensembles in Hamburg as a soloist, including her own ensemble for medieval and renaissance music, Trobar e Cantar. She jointly won the first prize of the Gaudemaus European Promoters of New Music competition with her husband, Sascha Lino Lemke. Many composers have dedicated new works to her and to her ensembles, and her voice is featured in experimental film, radio plays and CD. — marcialemkekern.com

Hêja Netirk — soloist is a Kurdish singer, actress, writer and filmmaker from Kurdistan. Awarded a Fulbright scholarship for the Master’s programme in Comparative Literature at Columbia University, she was unable to begin due to imprisonment in Turkey. In 2018, she produced the feature film Momê directed by Rodi Guven Yalcinkaya. In 2019, she founded BAN Theatre, the Kurdish theatre initiative in Hamburg, with Alan Ciwan and Hüseyin Umaysiz. She records music as a soloist and in the duo Birds of Babylon with Yassin Ismail. Her experience as a woman in exile is present in her singing, acting and film.



Frauke Aulbert



Moxi Beidenegl



Hêja Netirk



Marcia Lemke-Kern

Special thank you to

Georg Hajdu, Charles MacInnes,
Lisa MacKinney, Karl Ockelford,
HIAS staff and fellows.

Hamburg Bass Ensemble

piano

Aigerim Seilova

double bass

Tair Turganov

cello

Aleksandr Bukin

percussion

Vitalia Agrba

percussion

Hu Yanting

electric bass

Lesley Branagan

bass clarinet

Vlatko Kučan

contrabass clarinet

Pawel Kuterbach

harp

Hannah Rabe

bass trombone

Charles MacInnes

tuba

Feliz Konradt

live electronics

Jaslyn Robertson

Hamburg Choir for Ukraine

Marine Arutiunian

Anna Chudakova

Solomiia Dyshliuk

Tetiana Golovko

Zoia Hrihorian

Anna Krug

Angelina Melikhova

Halyna Moroz

Olena Popadiuk

Olga Tkachenko

Marina Zarubina

Kateryna Zhuk

Technical Director and electronics
collaborator

Jacob Sello

Producers

Benjamin Helmer and Xiao Fu

Costumes

Pia Preuss and Malaika Patoine
(with some original designs by
Alex McQuire and Rakini Devi)

Stage Manager

Dimitra-Maria Pavlou

Assistant to Professor Hope

Ulrich Böhner

Choir Manager

Oksana Koshulko

Technical Assistants

Jaslyn Robertson, Lucas Xerxes.

Lighting Design

Birger Von Leesen (with some
original design concepts from
Beijz Studio)

Video

Cat Hope

Sound Design

Katharina Raspe, Jacob Sello,
Cat Hope



Speechless is part of research examining digital scores for music, undertaken by the European research Council's »Digi Score« project. We would love you to fill in this survey after this evening's performance, You can do it using this QR code, which takes you to a short survey



If you would like to donate to support Ukrainian refugees in Hamburg, please consider donating to the Association of German-Ukrainian Cooperation. The aim of the association's work is to support Ukrainian migrants in Hamburg, bring together Ukrainian and German-speaking people in Hamburg and provide direct integration assistance. You can donate using the QR code here. feineukraine.de



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Together we can fight for human rights everywhere. We can stop torture, demand equality for women and girls, and give hope to those facing attacks or imprisonment just because of who they are. Your donation can transform the lives of millions. Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 10 million people in over 150 countries and territories who campaign to end abuses of human rights.

amnesty.org

speechless
for 4 soloists, bass
ensemble, choir, video
and electronics (2019)

European Premiere

May 3, 2023

8.30 pm

Hochschule für Musik
und Theater Hamburg
(HfMT)

Forum

Harvestehuder Weg 12
20148 Hamburg

Details: hias-hamburg.de

Tickets: eventim.de

speechless is a wordless,
animated notation opera
intended as a personal
response to the experiences
of refugees around the
world.

“Inescapably
captivating and
virtuosic.”

SeeSaw Magazine, 2019

“A deeply moving,
almost spiritual
experience.”

Limelight Magazine, 2019

