



Bonn, March 2010

World premiere of Jan Müller-Wieland's melodrama „Der Knacks“ based on a novel by Roger Willemsens

Jan Müller-Wieland on „Der Knacks“: A zest for life and understanding of human nature

„Willemsen's book „Der Knacks“ is many things. It is personal, journalistic, literary; it has something of the essay about it; it is political, it delves into cultural studies. I was fascinated by this book. The honest, authentic style. The zest for life it contained. The understanding of human nature.

At the same time there was a kind of compositional exclusion or »zero-ing in« process: I couldn't put „one-sentences“- to music, nor „we-sentences“ or quotes. This had nothing to do with quality, but subjectively with compositional instincts, in the sense of: can I get „in“ there? Could a sound hold its own and enrich something in each of the verbal structures? There was still a lot of material, all the same! Willemsen talks about his childhood, about the early loss of his father, about nights in unfamiliar towns and regions, about Afghanistan, about the guards of Guantánamo and not least about doubts in a „first“ world presenting itself as „omnipotent“. His love of music and his extensive knowledge of music quickly gave me faith in our future work together. What I want to say is: I feel understood by him and I think that feeling is mutual.

We already conducted the try-out rehearsals with the Resonanz ensemble in September 2009 to check when we wander off into tautology and „kitsch traps“. The whole-evening melodrama is thus only ready now, but still on time. Willemsen's spoken word, his famous reading voice, will come together with an instrumentation for intimate musical structures, performed by 18 strings and one piano. Daydreams and nightmares, truth and fiction thus converge. The genre of the melodrama forms the archaic bowl for the declamatory and story-telling step out on to new ground via a panorama of old-age symptoms, perceptions of transience, injuries and manners of death.”

The premiere of Jan Müller-Wieland's „Der Knacks“, a melodrama based on a libretto by Roger Willemsen, will take place in the Kammerspielen Bad Godesberg on 29 September. The composer will be conducting the Ensemble Resonanz, while the librettist will be reciting. „Der Knacks“ is a work jointly commissioned by the Ensemble Resonanz, the Beethovenfest Bonn and NDR.

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Together with Peter Ruzicka, Jan Müller-Wieland will discuss “Into the Open – Inside Views of Two Composers” with Dr Ulrich Mosch at the symposium of the Beethovenfest Bonn on 17 September, where the festival motto “Utopia and Freedom in Music” will come under the spotlight.

Jan Müller-Wieland, Composer and Conductor

Jan Müller-Wieland (b. 1966 in Hamburg) studied composition, the double bass and conducting in Lübeck as well as composition under Hans Werner Henze and Oliver Knussen. Müller-Wieland has received numerous prizes and grants. Since 1993 he has been living in Berlin as a free-lance composer; since 2003 he has been a member of the Freie Akademie der Künste in Hamburg. Since 2007, he has been professor of composition at Munich's Academy of Music and Drama. Müller-Wieland has composed more than 120 works, including nine works for musical theatre (2005: world premiere of the opera „Die Irre” at the Beethovenfest Bonn) and four symphonies as well as chamber music and vocal works.

Roger Willemsen, Journalist and Author

Roger Willemsen (b. 1955 in Bonn) studied German, philosophy and art history in Bonn, Florence, Munich and Vienna and initially worked as a translator, university professor and correspondent from London. In 1991 he came to television, where he mainly presented interviews and cultural programmes and produced documentaries. His literary bestsellers include „Der Knacks”, „Deutschlandreise”, „Gute Tage” and „Kleine Lichter”, as well as „Afghanische Reise” which has been translated into English as „An Afghan Journey”. The publication date for Roger Willemsen’s literary travelogue “Die Enden der Welt” is 8 September 2010. Willemsen has received numerous literary prizes and awards.

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