

KUGELFÖRMIGKEIT

Francesca Gaza

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Il tempo ride senza fretta di morire

Kugelförmigkeit establishes a particular relationship, a sort of counterpoint between a modernist distrust arising from the consciousness of the passage of time, and a romantic yearning for the repose that can be found in unity and stasis. The unusual configuration of instruments is woven into an imaginary spherical space where the proximity of present, past and future is explored. The concept of *Kugelförmigkeit der Zeit*, the spherical shape of time, was firstly used by the German post-modern composer Bernd Alois Zimmermann around the 1950s, who used this image to describe the inexistence of timely distance between historical eras and styles. It gave me the impulse to combine what is perceived to be stylistically afar by proving the actual proximity of it. What is consonant, what is not? What is coherent, what is a pastiche? Might merging contrasts give life to something aware of the past, respectful of the present and impatient for the future?

The music I wrote wanted to reveal a sympathetic connection between seemingly disparate principles, fusing instruments and techniques

from Renaissance, Baroque, jazz and experimental music into a coherent genre-defying musical microcosmos. The individual sound character of each instrument with its historical density is crucial for the body of sound as a whole and the criteria to decide what would influence the music lied in the affect (*affetto*) that the techniques and structures convey. The cohesion and symbiosis that occurs by letting different forms of art be influenced by each other, is mesmerizingly rich and included several artists. Consequently, other artists, apart from Zimmermann, who have addressed the complexities of the form of time in their way, have influenced the body of work, such as T.S. Eliot, O. Messiaen, G. Boccaccio, O. di Lasso, G. de Machaut, L. Carroll, G. Klein, L. Blaga, A. Pärth, C. Gesualdo, and others.

What has led to the musical understanding we have nowadays? Gaining an understanding of the development of harmonic rules, counterpoint and form throughout musical history was a focal point of interest. The question for what is consonant and what is not, and the fight for acceptance of new methods, is an ever-present concern. The more we move away from the Renaissance and early Baroque era towards the more traditionally classical era, the less the form stays malleable and fluid and becomes more structural but also enriched by the other parameters. What is the content and what is the container? Which one stays, which one is replaced? The periodicity with which musicologists and critics were condemning either the abandonment of certain criteria or encouraging the renunciation to the security of the past

for future-loving dynamism is inspiring and still a very contemporary concern. Through the reiteration of historical periods, one earns more solidity in the ocean of variables that one encounters as people and hence as musicians with such strong historical conditioning and baggage of the past that we all carry with us. It is not my intention at all to make a break with the compositional traditions but to observe, as tradition is carried forward to produce something new and assure the continuity of creation.

Kugelförmigkeit was born out of a natural sympathy for the melodic tendencies, the vocal style and the harmonic language in the Renaissance and Baroque period which I came to admire more and more. The music was composed against the background of this year's global pandemic as a meditation on the relationship between time and men. The main themes are the preoccupation and ongoing effort about time and its relation to what is timeless as well as how the individual relates to the past and the future and the impossibilities that arise once one gains consciousness of time. There is a young moment where one literally «lives in time» before gaining an awareness of its passing but despite the moment of disillusion, we are still able to believe in the poetic surprise that lies in the mystery of tomorrow.

How can music hijack our sensation of time? How can I force a sensation of the past upon the listener and/or the performer? The revocation of a motive is to some extent like a bell tolling of memory. It can shift our sensation of time and give us a forced sensation of the past in the present.

2.

D'ORO / CHORALE

(myth)

*D'oro crespi capelli e annodati
 da sé e da verde frondi e bianchi fiori,
 un angelico viso e due splendori
 simili a stelle, e atti non usati
 veder fra noi, vezzosi e riposati,
 e un cantar di più gioiosi amori
 soave e lieto ben tra mille fiori
 del primo tempo, insieme radunati
 in un giardino nato ad un bel fonte,
 pos'Amore in amare alla mia mente
 libera ancora, semplice e leggera.
 Né pria, dal canto desto, alza' la fronte,
 che tutte l'accerchiar subitamente
 e presa a lui la dier, che vicin era.*

Giovanni Boccaccio, *La caccia di Diana e le Rime*, 1334

D'Oro / Chorale was written specifically for those instruments in the ensemble that are from earlier times. The idea was to have a sort of *favola in*

musica. Hence, alternate songful *arias* with instrumental *ritornelli* to carefully shape musical time for expressive and organic purposes. The musical material of the opening section is used and transformed throughout the piece and reappears in a final jubilant *chorale* at the very ending of the piece.

3.
ISORITMO / ALICE'S FALL
(grief)

The rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way, and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down a very deep well. Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her and to wonder about what was going to happen next.

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865

The action in itself is rapid but the way it is depicted is so slow, it resembles the texture of honey which makes movement decelerate.

The possibly very dramatic fall is portrayed with surrealism; hence

the anxiety of the danger is calmed and far away from the reader's perception. The double title suggests one of the influences on the piece: Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass*, which is one of the evergreen books for kids and adults and known for his absurdity and riddle-like mathematical approach in the plot. At the beginning of the piece, I wanted to depict Alice's endless fall through the Rabbit hole, in which the reader is catapulted together with her into a world that stands between reality, dream, illusion and mythology – Alice possibly being any character including myself. On the other hand, one can feel a general sensation of rapidity as well. There seems to be a prominent sensation of haste and rush within the action of the characters.

The second influence is the *isorhythm*, a medieval technique that plays with the sensation of time. It is a compositional technique developed in the 13th century, extensively used in French polyphony and developed until the 16th century, where a rhythmic pattern or number of attacks (*talea*) are overlapped with a different number of pitches (*color*). Guillaume de Machaut took great use of these techniques that resulted in one of his greatest works called *La Messe de Notre-Dame*.

The two-voice counterpoint between flute and voice, which is based on a counterpoint technique (*bicinium*), extensively used by Orlando di Lasso in the 16th century, suggests the entanglement of the duality of thought.

*You're all I think of in this vast delusion of the
constitution of silence, and I want to get by.*

4.

CARATTERE

(stillness of the dancer)

Juxtaposing the mechanical time with a more human time, a time that fluctuates and is not regulated by the clock beat. Creating a sensation of duality and feeling torn and undecided between which of the two to follow with the ear and to lose the mechanical aspect of time without making the music fall apart. It becomes a matter of timing:

- * *Chronos* (clock-time): «What time did I crash the car?»
- * *Kairos* (timing/right time): «You crashed the car at 4:01 but what time is the best time to tell your mother that you have crashed it?»

Kairos asks the question of «what is it time for?» and requires the cognitive ability to understand the quality of time or the timing of an action. It enables us to abandon machine time and to lock onto a more human rhythm. It resembles a still point where we can forget for a second about how big the luggage is, which we carry with us in the present and future when thinking of the linear clock/timeline. It opens up

the question: «Do we control time? Or does time control us?»

People reclaim time through *kairos* and connect with a more natural, biological or social rhythm. Abandonment of the collective sensation of pulse, for the sake of handing it over to a more fluid and malleable time sensation, which is dictated by the gestures of the conductor. It is therefore very human, imperfect and not mechanical.

On the other side, the alarm of theorbo, guitar and piano keeps moving forward steadily and reflects time as fragmented and disconnected from past and future, hence its ticking of the clock is a «Now! Now! Now!».

5.

INNO AL TEMPO / MISERERE

(hymn)

What is time? Why does time change the way we would like things to go? Do we lose things in time, or do they stay within us? *Inno al Tempo / Miserere* is a very personal hymn to time. This little creature that in the lyrics is depicted as a character and that makes things go in certain directions and sometimes it goes terribly wrong.

The flute melody of the introduction recalls the soprano melody of the *Miserere* by Carlo Gesualdo (Penitence Psalm 51). Gesualdo's *Miserere* is a madrigal for six voices filled with chromaticism based on a one-page composition, then repeated and slightly mutated for 7

minutes. The melody has a historical density that captures the essence of the psalm. In the piece, it is hearable in the introduction and reappears fragmented and manipulated as the piece progresses. The lyrics are replaced by a personal text dedicated to someone who was and who hopefully will continue to be, but in another form:

*Ride, il tempo ride
senza fretta di morire
Ride,
per amare ciò
che accade quando scorre e
vuole osservare
per capire se va male da morire*

*Il tempo ci accompagnerà
alla soglia della verità
Ci abbandonerà*

*Ride,
il tempo ride*

6.

ROTATION SUGGESTING PERMANENCE

(endurance, but my blanket of comfort is thin)

I have lost something, and I search for a certain unity of movement where beginning and end are confused because identical, hence naively ignore the fading of the past.

*I lost a song in the bill
I lost words but not my will
I lost heaven but now I'm in hell and I like it very well*

*I lost a role in the plot
I lost him but I went abroad
What a stupid screenwriter I am, I hope people can't tell*

*Slow rotation suggesting permanence
My equation drowning innocence*

*What makes my lost role content
is technique and not sentiment
In the stillness the dancer's aware of the need to overshadow*

*What's youth, what's loss, what is spring?
My blanket of comfort is thin*

*Slow rotation suggesting permanence
My equation drowning innocence*

7.

FOUR QUARTETS

(reflection on the pandemic during a time of stasis)

Four Quartets is T. S. Eliot's last and probably greatest work which he composed, against a background of imminent and actual world war, as meditations on the relationship between time and humanity. When I read *Four Quartets*, I felt that it was giving elucidation to my thoughts and questions, especially in the period of February until May 2020 during the lockdown caused by the global pandemic. The sensation of crisis, uncertainty and often intangible passing of time felt similar to the scenery depicted in *Four Quartets* and made me want to translate it into music, in both structural and emotional ways.

Eliot's work, as the title suggests, has recurrent motives like in a music piece. The themes are stitched continuously through the poem in a sort of exposition, recapitulation and development.

By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving.
Erhebung without motion, concentration
Without elimination, both a new world
And the old made explicit, understood
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,
The resolution of its partial horror.
Yet the enchainment of past and future
Woven in the weakness of the changing body,
Protects mankind from heaven and damnation
Which flesh cannot endure.

Time past and time future
Allow but little consciousness.
To be conscious is not to be in time
But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
[...]
Be remembered; involved with past and future.
Only through time, time is conquered.

It is a poem that reflects on the process of composition and is quite laboured in thinking about the efficiency of language. Where do you find timeless moments through time, that bring you to that revelation?

Time present and time past are both perhaps present
in time future and time future contained in time past.

Movements:

I. BURNT NORTON	0:00
II. EAST COKER	2:04
III. THE DRY SALVAGES	5:06
IV. LITTLE GIDDING	7:44

8.

FLOWERS, EYES, LIPS, TOMBS

(mysteries)

Taken from the Romanian poet Lucian Blaga (1895-1961), these four words describe everything that is eternally present and eternally dying. Blaga's poems explore love, spirituality and nature yet question their subject with mortality and isolation. This reduced version of *Flowers, Eyes, Lips, Tombs* represents the centrepiece of the song being held by a little ornamented but simple frame: a portrait of a silhouette yet to be shaped in a more complete and orchestral version next year.

*So I too enrich the dark horizon
with vibrant tremors of sacred secrets,
and everything that is uncertain
changes to even greater uncertainties.*

Francesca Gaza
Kira Linn
Eleonora Bišćević
Adrian King
Giulio Tanasini
Ignacio Laguna
Martín Theurillat
Iannis Obiols
Nadav Erlich
Mattia Galeotti

VOICE AND COMPOSITION
BASS CLARINET
BAROQUE FLUTE AND RECORDER
TROMBONE
VIOLA DA GAMBA
THEORBO
GUITAR
HARPSICHORD AND PIANO
DOUBLE BASS
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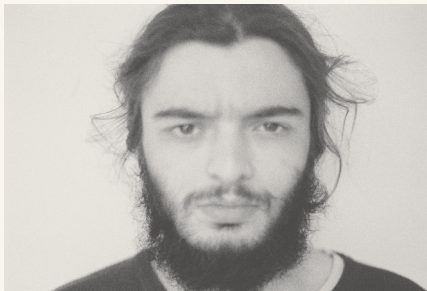
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HARPSICHORD AND PIANO. *Iannis Obiols*



DOUBLE BASS. *Nadav Erlich*



DRUMS. *Mattia Galeotti*

All music and lyrics by Francesca Gaza, except:

(1) lyrics by Giovanni Boccaccio

(6) lyrics by T. S. Eliot

(7) lyrics by Lucian Blaga

Track (4) features Sam Barnett on alto saxophone

Harpichord on track (7) played by Francesca Gaza

Recorded and mixed by Daniel Somaroo, June 19th – 21st 2020

Produced by Daniel Somaroo

Mastered by Alexander Vatagin

Artwork and design by Vieri Cervelli Montel

Photographs taken by Nadav Erlich

Album cover based on Raffaello Sanzio, *Le Tre Grazie*

c. 1503–1505, Chantilly, Musée Condé

Published in June 2021 by Whales Records, France

Thank you to Guillermo Klein, Uli Rennert, Lisette Spinnler,
Florian Vogt, Johannes Menke, Jazzcampus,
Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, Patrik Zosso,
Nadav, Marieflo, Martín.

Special thanks to the musicians who have artistically and
humanly contributed to making the music come alive:
Eleonora, Kira, Adrian, Giulio, Nacho,
Martín, Iannis, Nadav, Mattia, Sam.

Thank you Daniel Somaroo for putting
so much care and time in the sound.

