

DisOrders: Part IV – Opera

Title: 'Balerina, Balerina' (working title)

Libretto based on the book 'Balerina, Balerina' by Slovenian writer Marko Sosič
Project with Ensemble Modelo62



Disorder, The Haag 2018, Photographer Jürgen Fritz-4394-Bearbeitet

– *Beauty of Timelessness*

- **Concept and composition:**
Petra Strahovnik
- **Stage Director:**
Rocc
- **Music Director:**
Ezequiel Menalled
- **Co-producer:**
Katja Konvalinka,
Slovenian Chamber Music
Theater
- **Premiere:**
October 2020
Linhart Hall,
Cankar Ljubljana,
Slovenia

This opera is the culmination of DisOrders, a two-year collaboration project between Ensemble Modelo62 and Slovenian/Dutch composer Petra Strahovnik. During this period, they have created new works combining performance art, video, and electronics, to raise questions on the place and importance of mental health in our society. 'Balerina, Balerina' (working title) deals with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

On the opera

The heroine in Marco Sosič's novel 'Balerina, Balerina', is a little girl with a limited horizon, pushed into a passive position by her mental condition: her autism spectrum disorder. She lives on the border between sky and earth, and the vital earthly categories of life, suffering, passing of time, and death, lose sharpness for her and the reader. The events in the novel are tragic for the little girl Balerina, because while her mother is dying, Balerina thinks her mother is only asleep.

In Petra Strahovnik's opera, there is no narrative in the traditional sense, since everything is told from the perspective of the autistic girl. The story line is shaped in the same manner as her perception of time and her awareness of what happens around her are. There are characters and objects on stage, but they are – or can be, brought to life intermittently by the various performers: the singers, the dancer, the musicians, or even the conductor. Balerina's mother becomes a vase while another performer becomes her persona or her deep frustration. This is answered by gestures or sounds of overwhelming sadness, expressed by another performer. Actions happen, reactions interweave, emotions pour, and the normally closed inner world of the heroine is brought to life so that the audience can plunge into it and deeply connect with her.



Disorder, The Haag 2018, Photographer Jürgen Fritz-2401-Bearbeitet
Disorder, The Haag 2018, Photographer Jürgen Fritz-2880-Bearbeitet

The flexibility in the use of materials and representations of dramatic elements in this production is possible thanks to the unusual simultaneous use and combination of music and performance art. The opera is conceived for two sopranos, a performance artist, a dancer, and ten Ensemble Modelo62 musicians on stage. The musicians have undergone an intensive training in performance art by artist Jürgen Fritz.

Extended artistic collaboration.

As mentioned above Ensemble Modelo62 and Petra Strahovnik have created new works combining performance art, video, and electronics during this two-year collaboration project. An overview of these works includes:

1. Five installations for solo performers, performed simultaneously in five galleries in The Hague. Each installation is based on a different mental condition: Depression, ADHD, Bipolar Disorder, Anxiety Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder.
2. Three works for soloist plus ensemble. To be presented in Korzo Theater, The Hague, and during Gaudeamus Muziekweek. The works are based on three different mental conditions: Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, and Schizophrenia.

'I am interested in how each individual perceives their own life and the world we live in. Especially the individuals who may have a quite different view based on different levels of neurotransmitters and chemicals in their brains, which is what the so-called mental health conditions are all about. Furthermore, my personal story makes me want to break the taboo of mental conditions to prevent suffering and spread awareness in society. I sincerely hope that this project will help to do this.'

- Petra Strahovnik

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www.modelo62.com

www.petrastrahovnik.eu

www.rocc.cc

www.culture.si/en/Slovenian_Chamber_Music_Theatre