

Wolfgang RIHM – *Dionysos*: a writing on inner spaces

Ivanka Stoianova
Université de Paris 8
istoianova@univ-paris8.fr

(to Georges Bløess)

The “opera fantasy” *Dionysos: scenes and dithyrambs based on texts by Friedrich Nietzsche* for vocal soloists, choir and orchestra (Rihm, 2009-2010)–by the German composer Wolfgang Rihm¹ (1953-) made its world premiere on July 27, 2010 during the Salzburg Festival with Ingo Metzmacher as conductor, Pierre Audi, scenic director, and Jonathan Meese, scenary. A capital piece within Rihm’s enormous catalog of work, *Dionysos* follows Rihm’s two chamber operas *Faust und Yorick* (1976), based on the text by J. Tardieu, and *Jakob Lenz* (1977-78), based on a novella by G. Büchner of the same name; the «dance poem» *Tutuguri* (1980-82), inspired by A. Artaud; and the works for an opera scene in *Oedipus* (1986-87) with texts by Sophocles, Hölderlin, Nietzsche and H. Müller and *Die Eroberung von Mexiko* (1987-91) with texts by A. Artaud, O. Paz and ancient Mexican songs.

A non-narrative

Dionysos is not an opera in the traditional sense as it completely renounces the narrative and the entire directional evolution of scenic events. It is an open non-narrative piece, a music theater multi-fantasy in various dimensions that consists

¹ Wolfgang Rihm was born in 1952 in Karlsruhe where he lives today. He studied composition with K. Stockhausen, Kl. Huber, W. Fortner and H. Searle. An extremely prolific writer, W. Rihm has composed dozens of instrumental and vocal-instrumental works for chamber groups, symphony orchestra, and operas. Since 1985, he is a professor of composition at the University of Music in Karlsruhe. His works are published by Universal Edition (Vienna).

of "scenes and dithyrambs" in "four planes" or "places"²: A sea, On the mountain, 1-3 Inner spaces, A place. They are open musical scenes that refer to important moments of Nietzsche's life, but, above all, to the universal ideas of his philosophy: the relationships of man-woman, masculine-feminine, Apollonian-Dionysian, divine-human, individual-masses, life-death, etc. Hence, there is potential for impact on the entire public interested in contemporary musical theater.

Rihm's composing strategy for *Dionysos* is situated within his *Abgesangszenen* (1979-1981) where we already observe the symphonic interaction between orchestral works and song (as well as on Nietzsche's texts): a type of mixed genre where a symphonic Lied, an opera scene and a piece for symphonic orchestra interact.³ The "scenes" in *Dionysos* correspond to the delimited dramaturgical components of the musical theater show; while the "dithyrambs" are moments of choral reflection with dense orchestral support. In ancient Greece, the dithyramb was a genre of choral music performing hymns that glorified the god Dionysus. Nietzsche's poems entitled *Dionysos-Dithyramben* [Dionysus-Dithyrambs] have little to do with the ancient genre of hymn poetry and only succinctly refer to the Greek god. Only the poem *Die Klage der Ariadne* [Ariadne's Lament] and a few thematic elements--the idea of the labyrinth and the laceration (that Rihm associates with the characters of Apollo and Marsyas)--allude to myths linked to Dionysus. *Dithyramben* in this piece by Rihm are choral commentaries whose function is comparable to that of Nietzsche's poems in his philosophical writings.

The quite long, first scene, or more precisely the first frame -- A sea -- and the short, fourth and final scene -- A place -- rest on explicit, yet very concise, dramaturgical sequences which are organized in frames that are somewhat static and fixed, yet powerfully active musical moments:

In the first episode, Ariadne begs her savior or her executor-god *Dionysus*, alluding to Nietzsche's "struggle" for Cosima (let us remember that in Nietzsche's late letters to Cosima Wagner, with whom he fell in love, he called her "Ariadne" and signed it "Dionysus");

² The word "mansion" was used in the Middle Ages to define a place in the theater where a scene took place.

³ Cf. RIHM, W. "Einige Gedanken zur Karlsruher Uraufführung der Zweiten Abgesangsszene". In RIHM, W. *Ausgesprochen, Schriften und Gespräche*, Band 2, Winterhur: Amadeus, 1997, p. 316-319.

The last frame is the celebrated episode of Nietzsche's life, just before his tragic mental collapse: in Turin in 1889 when he saw a coachman cruelly whipping his horse, Nietzsche, moved, kneels before the animal, tenderly wraps his arms around his neck and kisses him, crying, overcome with untold compassion.

The second scene — On the Mountain — represents the complementary and tormented relationship between N. — Nietzsche (but also Niemand / anyone or no one) and Ein Gast [A guest], his double, who achieves success exactly where N. fails.

The third scene is the most active and dense, providing a true, three-part theatrical development of events which are:

The first, entitled *Innenraum 1* [Inner Space 1] shows the meeting of two characters — N. and A Guest -- wandering among men, both looking for love;

The second part — *Innenraum 2* [Inner Space 2] — develops in a brothel: the two men — N. and A Guest – clash in search of their own truth. At this point we hear the Lied of the *Wanderer* [Wanderer], he that wanders over the world without ever finding peace. N. ends up being tied to Ariadne, while A Guest is dilacerated by the women, all called Esmeralda;

The third part — *Innenraum 3* [Inner Space 3] — presents N. who withdraws more and more into his inner life to the point that the god Apollo rips off his skin as he had done on another occasion, according to legend, with his rival Marsyas, the flutist who is far superior to him in the art of sound. Bruised and skinned alive, N. knows he is the victim of envy and persists in his search for love.

Despite the fact that the first and last scenes explicitly refer to elements known to Nietzsche's biography, all scenes — even the second, that "exposes" the two main characters N. and Ein Gast, and, of course, the third scene with its three sections — are first and foremost the sound and scenic representation of the inner spaces of Nietzsche's universe where everyone can be reunited. It is a musical-theater representation in the form of frames or static moments, like in the first, fourth and last scene; or a more theatrical scenic representation, in dialogue, like scene two or even in the three "inner spaces" as in scene three. It seems evident that the composer attributes much more importance not to

exterior scenic events, but to emotional states and the movements of affection of inner spaces that are transmuted into expressive musical theater⁴.

Rihm's opera fantasy is actually a dense scenic-musical transcription of the composer's personal experience with Nietzsche's philosophical and poetic works and exceptional personality through key moments of his biography⁵. In his *Dionysos*, Rihm composes his own walk with Nietzsche, his own journey to the inner spaces awakened by his contact with the philosopher's universe. Rihm's scenic development ignores all traditional narrative of opera libretto and linear development in benefit of dreamed situations that are subject only to relatively free dramaturgical logic of "opera fantasy"⁶.

The non-narrative or anti-narrative is constituted therefore by different "inner spaces" that ignore typical opera teleology. These spaces emerge as areas of free, pluridirectional association, subject only to dream logic, or, put another way, to the erratic logic of the aimless Wanderer, that evolve into increasingly expressive and captivating acoustic appearances. It is an avalanche of relatively free or casual musical ideas of sonorous and scenic moments inspired by *Dionysos-Dithyramben*, a collection of nine poems by Nietzsche written shortly before his mental collapse. For over thirty years Rihm lived with the *Dionysos* project, Greek mythology and Nietzsche's philosophical and poetic work before coming to his "opera fantasy" that brings to light the actual movement of his thinking on Nietzsche without beginning or end. The composer himself is the "thinker on the stage"⁷, wandering around Nietzsche's universe. The compositional process — Rihm simultaneously writes the music, text and scenic frames -- is a continuous invention of musical language that ignores conventional boundaries. It is not, therefore, a text set to music, or music to accompany a

⁴ We remember that as early as Rihm's first string quartet entitled "Im Innersten" / "In the most profound, inner, intimate" (1976).

⁵ Nietzsche is one of Rihm's favorite authors. Many of his works lie on Nietzsche's texts, among which his *Third Symphony* (1976) for soprano, baritone, mixed choir and orchestra, his second *Abgesangsszene* (1979) for voice and orchestra, his *Fourth Abgesangsszene* (1979-80) for mezzo-soprano and orchestra, his *Fifth Abgesangsszene* (1979-83) for mezzo-soprano, baritone, and orchestra, *Klangbeschreibung 2* (1986-87) for 4 voices, 5 brass and 6 percussions.

⁶ The notion of fantasy in instrumental music during the classical and romantic periods always refers to formal freedom -- remember Mozart's *Fantasies for Piano*. The notion of "opera fantasy" for Rihm is a neologism that seeks to define the specificity of the musical and scenic dramaturgy of this work of "music theater".

⁷ Cf. SLOTERDIJK, P. *Der Denker auf der Bühne / Nietzsches Materialismus*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1353, Neue Folge, Band 353, 1986.

scenic drama, but a permanent invention of multiple and multivalent languages unfolding in space and time, validating, we could say, Freud's definition "Under the word language, one should not only understand the expression of thought in words but also body language and all other types of expression of psychic activity, such as script"⁸ -- musical writing in itself and more specifically that of Rihm with his "inner spaces".

The relationship to the text

For his "Musik-Theater" works⁹, Rihm always composes "A musical piece composed of words, actions, sounds, images, melodies, noises, and lights. Everything that appears in this development is music" (Rihm, 2002, p.194). The initial impulse that generally follows one or more texts is particularly important. In *Dionysos*, Rihm uses fragments from Nietzsche's *Dionysos Dithyramben* (1888-89) (Nietzsche, 2010, p. 58-87) that he freely recomposes and organizes: "My base is Nietzsche's *Dionysos Dithyramben*, inside of which I read, as it were, a text – from which I infer a text. I express it as follows: the libretto is mine, but every word is Nietzsche's" (Rihm, 2010a). "Every word sung is Nietzsche's, and yet the text is mine" (Rihm, 2010b, p. 20).

The nine poems Nietzsche prepared for publication at the end of 1888, which would not be published by him because of the sudden worsening of his mental illness, are made up of text fragments: some, already published in *Also sprach Zarathustra* [Thus Spake Zarathustra] (1883-85), are transplanted here. New texts are added. It is well known that Nietzsche had written poems since his youth: poetic art is an essential aspect of his literary production and a constitutive part of his philosophical writings. He included poems in his writings *The Gay Science*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *Nietzsche against Wagner*. His best known work, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, explicitly abolishes the boundaries between philosophical language and poetic language. Nietzsche's close bond and organic fusion of poetry and philosophy exert an unsuspected influence on Rihm's thinking as a composer. A convincing example of this is the organic interaction of the Lied for voice and piano *Der Wanderer*, written by Rihm a few

⁸ Cf. FREUD, S. "Das Interesse an der Psychoanalyse", *Gesammelte Werke*, Band VIII, S. 390.

⁹ Rihm's notion of "Musik-Theater" is not the same as "musical theater", which was not very precise within the context of compositional research after the 1960s, that led to the instrumental theater, *happening*, multimedia spectacles of all kinds, opera. Rihm's idea insists on the multiplicity of materials, released from all directional narration and all becoming music-theater.

years later on the eponymous poem by Nietzsche, with the contextual framework of the music-theater work *Dionysos* (3rd frame, *Innenraum 2*) (Rihm, 2009-2010, p. 234-241) and its complex orchestral texture.¹⁰

"His text (*Dionysos-Dithyramben* - IS) is a compilation and I use it as a base, as background."¹¹ (Rihm, 2010b, p. 20-21) Indeed, we can understand the opera fantasy *Dionysos* as a multiple rewriting, like a musical and scenic *Übermalung*¹² of Nietzsche's poetic fragments. Although at times the great poetic art of *Dithyrambs of Dionysos* (like *Nur Narr! Nur Dichter!* [Nothing but a buffoon! Nothing but a poet!] or *Zwischen Raubvögeln* [Among the birds of prey] or *Klage der Ariadne* [Ariadne's Lament]¹³, are dubious in taste, they are considered by Rihm as "perfectly appropriate for music-theater" (Rihm, 2010b, p. 21). Because the fragmented text is by nature, open and invites one to play with the pieces. The interaction of text fragments allows for a densening or on the contrary, a rarefaction of levels of understanding that complements each other¹⁴ (Rihm). And this game that remains open, but never abandoned to its fate, called music, requires intervention with its specific capacity to produce meaning.

The composer uses relatively little text, particularly dense in general, and loaded with meaning, which he repeats like in the first scene: "Mich willst Du?" [Am I the one you want?] or "Ich bin dein Labyrinth" [I am your labyrinth]; or in the fourth scene: "Gott als Schaff" [God as sheep], "lachen" [laugh], "Ich bin deine ... Wahrheit Wahrheit Wahrheit ..." [I'm your truth ... truth ... truth].

It is known that the *immediate repetition* of a word or fragment of a text is the most widely used method of setting a text to music: it musically unveils the sonority and meaning of the word, the aura of the text, but also a precise situation with the sensitivity and emotion that goes beyond the precise linguistic

¹⁰ Let us remember that the same poem - *Der Wanderer* - at the time of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, is used in the last piece of a cycle by Schoenberg *Acht Lieder für Gesang und Klavier Op. 6* [*Eight Lieder for Voice and Piano Op. 6*] (1903-05). In 2001, Rihm writes his *Sechs Gedichte von Fr. Nietzsche* [Six poems by Mr. Nietzsche for baritone and piano]: *Der Einsamste, Der Herbst, Der Wanderer (I), Der Wanderer (II), Der Wanderer und sein Schatten, and Venedig*.

¹¹ *Grundierung* - a layer of painting.

¹² *Übermalung* - is a painting over another painting. Remember that the master of *Übermalung*, the Austrian painter Arnulf Rainer, is one of W. Rihm's favorite artists.

¹³ The text of *Klage der Ariadne* was already used by Rihm in his work *Drei Frauen* (2001-2009), a music-theater piece in three monodramas and two interludes.

¹⁴ "It's obvious I play with the texts that, as we say, complement themselves beautifully. It's as if I have thought about it."

meaning. This is the case in the first scene where Ariadne repeats several times to N. "Sprich endlich! Sprich! Sprich!" [Speak finally! Speak! Speak!], but each time using a different musical formula and type of expression: (*flehend* [suppliant], *kehlig* [guttural], *dolce* [sweet], *furioso* [furious] (Rihm, 2009-2010, p. 13). Also in the first scene, repeating the textual fragments "*Heisse Hände! Hände! Hände!*" [Warm hands! Hands! Hands!] creates a continuous, highly expressive melodic line for Ariadne's part (Rihm, p. 20) that partially originates from a melody in N.'s part -- "Ich bin dein Labyrinth" [I am your labyrinth] (Rihm, p. 44) but a downward version¹⁵. In Ein Gast's part in the second scene the repetition of the text "*Sechs Einsamkeiten kennt er schon, Einsamkeiten*" [Six solitudes he already knows, solitudes ...] generates at first a quasi-*Recitative*, then syllabic melodic figure. Repeating the text "*Meine Seele*" [My soul] through different melodic figures in the parts of N. and Ein Gast in the third scene (*Innenraum 2*) musically expresses the diverse nuances of affection (Rihm, 2009-2010, p. 213-214 / 216-217). An amplified, immediate repetition may be used as a musical commentary constituting a body of resonance and expansion in time that amplifies a situation or emotion. This is the case of the music for the three dolphins (three female voices) in the first scene: they initially sing vowels without words then continue with "lá - lá - lá" "*beschwörend hin zu Ariadne*" [imploring Ariadne] to reach a word charged with meaning "Labyrinth" that is repeated several times in expressive melodic forms (Rihm, p. 52-54). A hoquetus-type¹⁶ repetition with *crescendo* and acceleration is used as a means to increase tension, as in the confrontation between Ein Gast and N. in the second scene with the text "*Jetzt, jetzt, Selbstkenner, Selbsthenker*" [Now, now, self-knower, self-murderer], "*Sie sich geraten ausser - ein Höhenrausch?*" [They are beside themselves - the height of drunkenness] as Rihm writes in the markings of the scene. The hoquetus-type repetition evolves into a song in *ostinato* / obstinate figures where two measures are repeated several times increasingly faster containing the same text "*Selbstkenner, Selbsthenker*" from *Die Klage der Ariadne*.

¹⁵ The procedure resembles *Die glückliche Hand* [The Hand of Luck] by Schoenberg, where the man's leitmotiv is a rising melodic figure (cellos), while the woman's leitmotiv is a descendent melody (solo violin).

¹⁶ Hoquetus is a rhythmic procedure of dividing among many voices the individual units of sound of a single melodic line.

Amplified repetition by temporal distance is an effective method of directing the musical-scenic development of an emotional *crescendo* with a strong impact. Thus: "*Sprich!*", "*Sprich endlich!*" [Speak! Speak at Last] in Ariadne's part in the first scene appears several times in temporally distant events, in very different musical versions - almost screaming, sung syllable by syllable, speaking, sung with large interval jumps etc. - which conveys to the scene growing tension and expectation.

Amplified repetition by great temporal distance creates considerable semantic consequences, organizing the work as a whole. At the end of the third scene (*Innenraum 3*), we hear N. in a musical-scenic context that is completely different from Ariadne's words in the first scene: "Mein Unbekannter, mein Henker, Gott" [My unknown, my murderer, god] "Schamloser Unbekannter du Henker Gott" [Unknown shameless, thou, god murderer], "Wer warmt mich, wer liebt mich?" [Who warms me, who love me?] in N.'s part, scene three and "Wer mich warmt, wer liebt mich?" "Oh kommt zurück, mein Gott Unbekannter, mein Schmerz, mein letztes Glück!" [Oh come back, my unknown god, my pain, my ultimate joy!] in Ariadne's part, scene one¹⁷.

The composer can also completely renounce words. Thus, in the first scene, nonverbal vocalizations are sung in Ariadne's part: "She desperately sings towards N." [*Sie singt N. verzweifelt an*], whereas "she continues to row and remains 'absent', deep inside herself" [*hält er im rudern inne und bleibt 'abwesend' in sich zusammengesunken*]. N. remains silent for a long time, then babbling painfully, makes several attempts to finally pronounce a statement by Dionysus from the poem *Klage der Ariadne*, "Ich bin dein Labyrinth" [I am your labyrinth].

Vocal music without words is often used as a musical commentary or a spatial unfolding of linguistic meaning: remember the nonverbal song of the three dolphins (three female voices) addressed to Ariadne in the first scene. In the third scene (*Innenraum 3*) where N. is mistreated by Apollo, we heard the wordless plaintive singing of a chorus of nymphs or maenads (Rihm, 2009-2010, p. 332-337). Finally, in the last six measures of the opera fantasy, we once again

¹⁷ Cf. RIHM, 2009-2010, Third scene – p. 324, 340-343 and First scene – p. 18-23, 58-59.

hear nonverbal vocals of the two coloratura *soprani* as a distant, reminiscence of the feminine.

It is precisely because of the fragmented text that a multidimensional musical, scenic development becomes necessary. "These texts call for music. They are not high poetry. The human traits of trade with its material are inherent. And there, the music can once again come into play"¹⁸ (Rihm, 1997, p.319). What is more, it is there a music theater work for opera fantasy can naturally come into play.

The characters

The characters of Rihm's work bear little resemblance to the usual opera characters. If the scenes or frames are "recipients" (Rihm) of multiple musical-scenic developments, the characters are flexible spaces, moving, varying, and performing multiple roles in constant transformation. The boundaries between the characters become permeable and yet we still easily recognize the key roles that preserve their integrity in all circumstances.

N. is obviously Nietzsche, but also Dionysus, the dionysian in Nietzsche and, in general, the dionysian philosopher, artist, wanderer, Marsyas, the skin, Nescitur, nobody and everybody, that is, you and me too.

Ein Gast, is N.'s double, his Apollonian side, Apollo himself, but also the man who mistreats the horse.

N. and Ein Gast are actually two simultaneously opposite and complementary aspects of the main character N. It is a musical-scenic double disclosure - "Doppel-Belichtung" (Rihm, 2010c, p. 39) - of the role that has been dramatized multiplied, spatialized, and translated into a work of music theater. The internal monologue -- that is, the movement of thought, the course of the mental process, although internalized, is always a matter of the body, as Nietzsche always sought to prove in his philosophy -- is presented in the form of a dialogue and thereby externalized, made audible and visible, put into play in the character's actions.

Ariadne -- the abandoned beloved -- is impossible love, unattainable to N., the eternal feminine, the woman, the mother. She also appears in *Innenraum 2* in

¹⁸ "Diese Texte lassen Musik zu. Sie sind nicht bereits Musik gewordene Lyrik. Die menschlichen Spuren der Auseinandersetzung mit ihrem Stoff haften ihnen an. Daran kann wiederum Musik ansetzen."

the brothel of the third scene, and again at the end of opera fantasy, after the scenic picture of a very Christian Pietà where N. (or The Skin) falls into the arms of Ariadne -- Mary, always seeking love.

The nymphs of the first scene transform into dolphins, then courtesans, all with the same name Esmeralda, and finally into maenads -- mythic forms in the third scene. They form a fluid, elusive, varying and unattainable character of a woman, of femininity, of the feminine desperately in search of N. and Ein Gast.

Rihm's perfectly depersonalized iconic characters act as protean spaces¹⁹ or resonance bodies for multiple semantic content. The unfolding and multiplication of characters create spatial, multidimensional and varying figures that are more adapted to the associative flow of thought or dream than to individualized opera roles of traditional opera with its teleological development. It is known that in the euphoria of his mental illness, Nietzsche often changed masks, like his Dionysus model: he saw him at times as Caesar, or Shakespeare, the King of Italy or Richard Wagner. In his philosophical writings, the metamorphoses, changes, and developments are not rare: let us remember *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, where we observe the metamorphosis of the spirit as a camel, lion and child. Each of Rihm's scenes and every facet of his scenic figures belong simultaneously to several levels of the multiple musical-scenic enunciation in *Dionysos*, this "imaginary drama around N. who is a man, who is Dionysus, who is the Crucified, who is Marsyas, who is the Artist, who is ..." as Rihm explains.

As an open aggregate of many semantic contents, each character, indeed every scenic figure in Rihm is made according to the fundamental principles of the temporal arts, "the principle of multiple and concentrated action" and the principle of "interaction of functions"²⁰: as to the first, an aesthetic goal is achieved through multiple and varied means; and to the second, the same medium is used to serve several purposes. The two principles contribute to building a unified and coherent work, despite the diversity of its components.

¹⁹ Proteus is the god of the sea who inherits from his father Poseidon the gift of prophecy and was capable of assuming different forms according to his will.

²⁰ The aesthetic theory that developed during 1940-70 these essential principles of theoretical musicology, on the basis of the Western symphonic tradition and in the wake of cinematographic theory of S. Eisenstein belong to the musicologist Lev. A. Mazel' - Cf. MAZEL', L. A. "Estetika i analizy" / "Aesthetics and analysis" in *Stat'i pó teorii i analizu muzyki / Essays in musical theory and analysis*, Moscou: Sovetskij kompozitor, 1982, p. 3-54.

According to the first principle, different characters, looks, details, and facets respond to the same unifying goal: thus N., Ein Gast, der Gott-Henker [God-murderer], Dionysus, Marsyas, and The Skin are all present and brought together in the figure, particularly important to Rihm, of the Wanderer who has the advantage of being, for any spectator, a character more familiar than the philosopher Nietzsche.

Pursuant to the second principle, specific expressive means are used to answer a variety of artistic objectives: therefore, feminine voicing, women's voices, and, more precisely, the coloratura *soprani* characterize Ariadne, nymphs, dolphins, the courtesans, the Esmeraldas, and the archaic mothers.

In the interaction of these two principles the work is built as a concentrated "living organism" (Mazel, 1982, p. 24), charged with corporal, intellectual and emotional energy. Rihm's artistic discovery of *Dionysos* is precisely this particularly effective interaction of these two lines of force of his compositional strategy that give the work — it could be said, according to Nietzsche's precepts -- more energy, more movement, more life. They govern the make up of every scene, as well as the development of all characters in this flux which is relatively free of "thematization of the imagination"²¹ (Rihm, 2002b, p. 53) resulting in a work of music theater.

A "vegetative" composition

Rihm often speaks of "vegetative composing" (Rihm, p. 57) and compares his work of drafting musical material to the growth of ivy, plants, tangled foliage (*Gewächsen, Gewirr, Geweben*)²². Regarding Nietzsche's *Ditirambos of Dionysus*, he explains: "After almost 40 years, these poems seem to accompany me, a kind of grandiose and fathomless plant that emerge from obscurity of an anamnesis sea." (Rihm, 2010c, p. 39).

Associations of organic or botanical nature in philosophy and aesthetics are not new of course: let us remember "*Urpflanze*" [primordial plant] in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe²³, or "*der vollkommene Organismus*" [the perfect

²¹ "Thematisieren von Imagination".

²² Plants, excrescences, tangles, tissues

²³ Cf. GOETHE, J. W. v. *Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen* (1790) und *Objekt und Methode der Morphologie* (1807).

organism] in Arnold Schoenberg (Schoenberg, 1965, p. 74).²⁴ Or, more near to us, the rhizome in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (Deleuze et Guattari, 1980, p. 9-37) and the ivy in Rihm. We can take this metaphor further with the aerial roots of the banyan fig tree, whose branches seem to live in direct and permanent reciprocity with its roots. And this metaphor allows us to stress the possibility of variability or interchangeability of functions of different parts of the living organism. Rihm writes, "In art, multiplicity must be the first condition of unification and new multiplications /.../ Art grows /.../ from the crown to the trunk and from there to the roots. It evolves far from concreteness in laborious depth." (Rihm, 2002b, p. 58).

The imagistic metaphors from the botanical domain that Rihm often employs confirm his affiliation to the great Western tradition; always in search of organic unity of the entire work. But his preferred metaphor of ivy in fact dissimulates the essence of his formal discovery: multiplicity, precisely the materials used in the musical-scenic enunciation and the novelty in formal procedures, allow you to obtain, in conditions of open multiplicity, an ever organic composition in its entirety. A child of the twentieth century, Rihm searches for the theoretically unlimited multiplicity of music material, along with his references to Wagner, Strauss, Bach, Schubert, to himself and the waltz, but always striving for coherence and continuity of the musical-scenic events in a fully unified work. It is not static citational references playing with stylistic contrasts, but the metabolic interaction of the materials used, evoking more the fig tree, with its reversible, interchangeable vital functions. The ivy metaphor, on the other hand, the plant that uniformly propagates on all sides, completely undoes the multiplicity and disparity of musical elements, essential to Rihm in *Dionysos*. In his "opera fantasy", it is, above all, a continuous metabolism, a permanent reciprocity of disparate materials, which defines the very nature of his musical thinking founded on free associations. -- Let us also remember the Lied with piano accompaniment *Der Wanderer* and the orchestral texture of *Dionysos* that "graft themselves", also integrating the flute solo characterizing Marsyas (third scene, *Innenraum 2*) (Rihm, 2009 -2010, pp 236-241.); or the waltz in scene 3, *Innenraum 2*, where the four Esmeraldas dance with the doll -- Ein Gast (Rihm, p

²⁴ We remember that *Herzgewächse* [Foliage of the heart], by Schoenberg was published for the first time in the same almanac.

248-254..); or the choir for mixed choir – *Misterioso (in tempo di corale)* -- with Nietzsche's text "Die Wüste wächst! Weh dem, der Wüsten birgt!" [The desert grows: woe to him who harbors deserts!] at the end of *Innenraum 2*, scene 3 (Rihm, p. 281-287).

The Wanderer

The emblematic figure hidden behind N. and his double is undoubtedly that of the Wanderer. Certainly, it is no coincidence that Rihm returns, in the context of *Dionysos*, to his Lied *Der Wanderer* previously written on the eponymous poem by Nietzsche from the time of Zarathustra (1883-1885). It is not by chance that in 1997 he also writes a text under the programmatic title "Eine Wanderer-Phantasie"²⁵. In the same year, Rihm transcribed for voice and orchestra the renowned Lied by Fr. Schubert *Der Wanderer* (Op. 4/1, D 489, 1816) on the text by Georg Philipp Schmidt von Lübeck. To him, the wandering traveler is the personification of the inner journey, the "inner divagation"²⁶ (Rihm, 2002c, p. 87), the behavior of the thinker/composer in regards to the scene of his work of music theater. The opera fantasy is in fact made up of scenes and dithyrambs thought of as musical-scenic representations of the inner spaces of these internal ramblings, where we follow the associative movements of thought. The Wanderer, as all the characters in *Dionysos*, is not a historical or psychological character. He is "presence, incorporated movement of thought"²⁷ (Rihm, p. 88), "man of here and now. Totally non-teleological. In fact, he is intrinsically aimless."²⁸ (Rihm, p. 87) He is "the representative of the fantasy in his journey"²⁹ (Rihm, p. 90). And the music - especially Rihm's - is always a path, flux, the free flowing of events of the often impulsive movements of thought. The Wanderer, like the philosopher, poet, madman and/or composer -- is "exposed defenselessly to reality"³⁰ (Rihm, p. 91). "The head of the wanderer is leaned forward. He lets himself penetrate the image of the path; he eats the path with

²⁵ This text is published in *Offene Enden*, 2002, pp. 87-91.

²⁶ "Inneres Schweifen".

²⁷ "Gegenwart, inkorporierte Bewegung des Denkens".

²⁸ "Mensch des Hier und Jetzt. Gänzlich unteleologisch. Eigentlich ist er der genuin ziellose."

²⁹ "Er ist der Stellvertreter der Phantasie auf dem Weg." "Weg, fluss, vergehendes Ereignis."

³⁰ "Ungeschützt der Wirklichkeit ausgesetzt".

his eyes."³¹ At the end of Rihm's opera fantasy, all of the participants who took N.'s path lean "very quietly toward" the public³² (Rihm, 2009-2010, p 369): they are wandering travelers having already taken the path, as have we spectators in the concert hall. The modest gesture of the body leaning forward is an emblem of wandering and simultaneously, an invitation to new journeys: into the inner spaces already presented in the opera fantasy that make rhizome, grafted with ours.

*

Rihm's *Dionysos* is a strong work that demonstrates the movement of thought by means of music theater. A child of his time, inventing music after 12-tone music and the vanguard serialism of the 50's and 60's of the twentieth century and a contemporary of the spectral movement of 1970's and 80's and thereon, Rihm always composed without a rigid system, using a single method – his own intuition and will as a composer. "It's a La Palisse truth"³³, but with many consequences, if we think how much precious time was spent in the madness to invent a method, nothing more than a method, and to compose through it!" – Rihm declares indignantly (Rihm, 2002d, p. 97). In this sense, he is also Nietzschean: remember Nietzsche: "I mistrust all systematizers and avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity." (Nietzsche, 1980, v. 4, p. 376; 1974, p. 15).³⁴

Can we doubt that Nietzsche would have appreciated the assimilation of Dionysus to the Crucified and the explicit reference to Christianity in the scenic image of the Pietà in the fourth scene of *Dionysos*. True, The Skin (of Marsyas,

³¹ "Der Kopf des Wanderers bleibt geneigt. Er Lässt das Bild des Weges in sich ein, er isst den Weg durch seinen Blick."

³² The last stage marking on the score of *Dionysos*, reads: "Im rasch einbrechenden Dunkel sieht man gerade noch, dass sich alle auf der Bühne versammelten Figuren und Gestalten sehr ruhig zum Publikum hin verneigen."

³³ Translator's note: "A La Palisse truth", "de la Palice", or "lapalissade" is something that is so obvious it becomes ridiculous (a truism). Jacques de la Palisse (1470-1525) was one of France's most brilliant marshals of all times. A popular song sung in his honor read: "Un quart d'heure avant sa mort il était encore en vie". This extremely naive truth, was then unjustly attributed to La Palisse himself, giving origin to the expression. ("La Palisse", *Dictionnaire universel des noms propres Le Petit Robert 2*, Paris, 1990).

³⁴ Translator's note: The reader may find the public domain Friedrich Nietzsche's texts at <http://www.lexido.com/>.

N.) falls from the knees of the Virgin (in Pietà position) to the ground)³⁵ (Rihm, 2009-2010, p. 368). It is true that several times we heard at the end of the third scene: "God as sheep ... tear to pieces god in man and laugh, laugh ..." ³⁶ (Rihm, p 352-354). But the image of the Pietà is too strong and full of meaning to be called into question. Rihm remains Christian. Recall that Nietzsche ended *Ecce Homo* with the phrases: "Did they understand me? – Dionysus against the Crucified..."³⁷ (Nietzsche, 1977/2012, p. 358-369; 1980, v. 1, p 196). Yet again:

The blindness of Christianity is the crime *par excellence* - the crime alive (...) The Christ has been the "moral being", an unparalleled *Curiosum* - and, as a "moral being" the most absurd, mendacious, vain, frivolous, harmful to himself than even the greatest despiser of humanity could have allowed himself to dream³⁸ (Nietzsche, 1977/2012, p. 348-351; 1980, v. 1, p. 194).

Blindness in regard to Christianity is the supreme crime—for it is the crime against life. (...) Hitherto the Christian has been the "moral being" a curiosity without equal and — as "a moral being", more absurd, more vain, more thoughtless and of a greater harm to himself; than the greatest despiser of humanity could have deemed possible.

The Crucified, according to Nietzsche, generates grief and melancholy, tears and suffering, while Dionysus brings an explosion of joy, dance and laughter. "The unmasking of Christian morality is an event which is unequalled in history, it is a real catastrophe",³⁹ wrote Nietzsche (1977/2012, p 354-355; 1980, v.1, p. 195). After more than two millennia of Christianity, Rihm strives to reconcile Dionysus and Christ, and has neither the intention nor the possibility in his art to continue discussions on Christian morality. Rihm seems to forget Nietzsche's purpose "Dionysus against the Crucified", but he certainly appropriated many important ideas from the philosopher: the idea of freedom, spontaneous corporal creativity without the paralyzing power of organizing systems, the idea of movements of unlimited thought in constant affirmation. Nietzsche wanted a free man,

...a man to whom nothing is forbidden. Such a *freed* spirit stands in the center of the universe with a cheerful and confident fatalism, with the

³⁵ In the end "fällt Die Haut aus der Pietà-Position herab auf den Boden".

³⁶ "Gott als Schaff... den Gott zerreißen im Menschen und lachen, lachen...".

³⁷ "Hat man mich verstanden? – Dionysos gegen den Gekreuzigten...".

³⁸ "Die Blindheit vor dem Christentum ist das Verbrechen *par excellence* – das Verbrechen am Leben... / Der Christ war bisher das "moralische Wesen", ein *Curiosum* ohne gleichen – und, als "moralisches Wesen", absurder, verlogner, eitler, leichtfertiger, sich selber nachteiliger, als auch der grösste Verächter der Menschheit es sich träumen lassen könnte."

³⁹ "Die Entdeckung der christlichen Moral ist ein Ereignis, das nicht seinesgleichen hat, eine wirkliche Katastrophe."

profound *belief*, that only what is individual is reprehensible, that in the whole everything is redeemed and affirmed — *he no longer negates* (...) But such a belief is the highest of all possible beliefs: I have baptized it in the name of Dionysus ⁴⁰ (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 94; 1980, v. 4, p. 424).

Herein lies also the title of Rihm's opera fantasy.

The multiple language in Rihm's work reflects the behavior of the human psyche that people can explore individually, according to their own sensibility and culture. The spectator finds himself located in the artist's brain, the "thinker on the stage"⁴¹ / the "thinker in music theater" within the meanders of their fantasy, their varying internal spaces, that are all, we reiterate, a language of the body. Rihm's work in scenes and dithyrambs demand of the spectator a new, attentive listening: it rests on complete openness to the wanderings of thought and on the constant active reflection of varying characters and fluctuating situations. "I think the understanding of music is an infinite openness", writes Rihm. "We understand music as we open more and more, even to the possibility of disappearance"⁴² (Rihm, 2010b, p. 20). Rihm's opera fantasy *Dionysos* invites us to this new experience with the work of art: the experience of the wanderer in multiple, fickle inner spaces in search of his/her and our truth.

⁴⁰ "...ein Mensch, für den es nichts verbotenes mehr gibt. Ein solcher freigewordener Geist steht mit einem freudigen und vertrauenden Fatalismus mitten im All, im Glauben, dass nur das einzelne verwerflich ist, dass im ganzen sich alles erlöst und bejaht – er verneint nicht mehr. /.../ Ein solcher Glaube ist der höchste aller möglichen Glauben: ich habe ihn auf den Namen des Dionysos getauft."

⁴¹ Cf. SLOTERDIJK, P. *Der Denker auf der Bühne / Nietzsches Materialismus*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986.

⁴² "Ich glaube, dass das Verstehen von Musik ein unabschliessbares Öffnen ist. Wir verstehen Musik, indem wir uns immer weiter öffnen, bis zur Möglichkeit des Verschwindens."

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