

Für Dich—For You (2005)

For 8 (or 2)–channel Audio

By Hildegard Westerkamp

Poetry by Rainer Maria Rilke
English Translation by Norbert Ruebsaat

Für Dich – For You is based on the poem *Liebes-Lied* by Rainer Maria Rilke and its newest translation into English, *Love Song*, by Canadian poet and writer Norbert Ruebsaat.

The compositional process of *Für Dich – For You* was an intense encounter with Rilke's words, not unlike an encounter with the experience of love itself and all its unsettling, complex emotional states. Love, like birth or death, tears us out of the routine of daily life, wakes us up, alerts us to what is, creates moments of truth, often stirs us to make changes, to take new risks. The poem speaks of one person's love to another, but also and perhaps more importantly about love as an inner state towards life and the world as a whole. In the face of ecological disasters and global economic imbalances, as well as widespread practices of terror, war, and hate, it suddenly seemed to me to be a matter of survival to learn more about love and about how to act from the heart. Composing this piece was part of this process of learning.

On another level the composition explores a sense of place and belonging, of home and love. To underscore this context, the sound sources for the piece consist of specific sounds from two places that have created a sense of belonging in me: North Germany where I was born and grew up and Vancouver and the West Coast of Canada where I have lived for over thirty years as an immigrant. These sounds form the sonic/musical language of the piece together with the recorded voices (male and female) of people close to me, speaking the poem, both in German and English. To open oneself to one's original language and culture again, after having lived as an immigrant in the country of one's choice for a long time, is like opening oneself to an almost forgotten deep love and connection to that past place. At the same time, one has lived and functioned in the country of one's choice for many years, one has established one's very own home, one's family, one feels at home here, it is the right place to be. It also is a place of belonging and love. Thus, the piece is an exploration of the heart, an exploration of where the heart is located in connection to culture, language and people. In a globalized world where millions of us are on the move, whether as refugees, immigrants or just as travelers, this has emerged as a wide spread and relevant theme, as we are all in some way searching for home and connectedness.

All sounds and voices were recorded by myself. Many thanks to all who spent valuable hours with me exploring and reading the poem. Readers of the poem are: Wendelyn Bartley, Susan Benson, Anne Bourne, Louie Ettling, Peter Grant, Andra McCartney, Norbert Ruebsaat, Sonja Ruebsaat, Susanna Ruebsaat, R. Murray Schafer, Agnes Westerkamp and Hildegard Westerkamp. *Für Dich – For You* was commissioned by the ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany. The composition was started during a residency at the ZKM, and was continued and completed in the Sonic Studio at Simon Fraser University and in the composer's own studio in Vancouver.

LIEBES-LIED*

Rainer Maria Rilke

Wie soll ich meine Seele halten, daß
sie nicht an deine rührt? Wie soll ich sie
hinheben über dich zu andern Dingen?
Ach gerne möcht ich sie bei irgendwas
Verlorenem im Dunkel unterbringen
an einer fremden stillen Stelle, die
nicht weiterschwingt, wenn deine Tiefen schwingen.
Doch alles, was uns anrührt, dich und mich,
nimmt uns zusammen wie ein Bogenstrich,
der aus zwei Saiten eine Stimme zieht.
Auf welches Instrument sind wir gespannt?
Und welcher Geiger hat uns in der Hand?
O süßes Lied.

LOVE SONG**

Rainer Maria Rilke

Translated by Norbert Ruebsaat

How shall I hold my soul so that it
does not touch yours? How shall I lift it
up over you so it reaches other things?
Oh, how I long to store my soul
with something dark and lost
in a foreign becalmed place that does not
vibrate when your depths vibrate.
But all that touches you and touches me
contracts us like a bow
that from two strings draws forth a single voice.
Upon which instrument are we two strung?
And who, pray, is the fiddler who holds us in his hand?
Oh sweetful song.

*Source:

Rainer Maria Rilke

Der ausgewählten Gedichte erster Teil

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