

# Peter Adriaansz

## No. 58 Comfortzone (2015)

For string quartet, ceramic percussion, narrator & sinewaves

Commissioned by: Ragazze String Quartet, Via Berlin & Orkater, with financial support from the Netherlands Fund for the Performing Arts

### Info/Program Note:

Comfortzone is my first piece written specifically for music theater, having avoided it up to this point on the premise that my work is intrinsically unsuited for anything but abstract concert-type situations. In 2014 the Ragazze Quartet approached me however with the request to make something for them and the theater companies Via Berlin and Orkater. After some soul-searching I eventually agreed and spent most of 2015 dealing with the matter. In September 2015 Comfortzone was eventually premiered.

A prominent part of the piece deals with the relationship between the spoken word and music. Contrary to most composers I actually demanded as much text as possible, feeling the need to deal with this aspect once and for all. Although I had my reservations about the theatricality of my own work I had noticed in other music theater works that the element 'spoken text' was often the one most shrewdly avoided by composers. There had to be a reason for that. Warning signs about 'never try to notate the spoken words of the actors or try to compose them contrapuntally into the musical texture' quickly popped up and so I immediately decided to do exactly that; the phrasing of Language being an interest anyway and the compositional challenge seeming worthy enough to put my chops in to.

Hence a very difficult piece for all resulted, based to a large degree on speech imitation. The text, basically dealing with the clash of cultures - represented by a philosophizing Trendwatcher (the 'Guru'), her Followers (four society ladies) and a mute 'Outsider' (a kind of refugee, modeled loosely on Hesse's Steppenwolf) - is followed to the T, with every aspect of the Guru's ideology translated into reality. Where the text calls for 'only natural, earth-bound materials' a large table is littered with all kind of ceramics to be played on; where 'no mixing' is preached no mixing occurs and everything is 'white'; where poetic 'richness' is expressed 'richness' is translated into the instrumentation etc. Hence the String Quartet also plays tricky ensemble percussion and the part for the Guru is filled to the brim with detailed metric notation. For myself, the aspect of finding a good way to notate speech so that it could be used in a musical way was by far the hardest job.

The work is set up in three Acts, dealing consecutively with Ideology, Confrontation and Fate. Not wanting to debase a difficult topic (namely that any finger pointed at an 'outsider' immediately points back at the

pointer), the work plays out as a sequence of visual, sometimes ritualized tableaux, in which symbols, images and metaphors are intended to do the talking instead of a clear story-like narrative.

Eventually the confrontation of the two worlds can of course never be resolved, the ideology of the beautiful can't withstand reality and fate unfolds as it must: a kind of 'gruesome beauty' results, as one critic pointed out.

**instrumentation:**

2 violins

viola

cello

ceramic percussion

narrator

sinewaves

**duration:**

80'

**first performance:**

Ragazze Quartet, Via Berlin & Orkater, September 19 2015, Toneelschuur, Haarlem

**special features:**

Performance requires all instruments amplified throughout, uses click tracks.