



NICOLAI WORSAAE

Wesentlich ab Wesentlich

Signe Asmussen
FIGURA Ensemble

NICOLAI WORSAAE (b. 1980)

Wesenheit ab Wesenheit

Signe Asmussen, soprano

Jörg Meyer, voice 9-13

FIGURA Ensemble

To texts by Jörg Meyer: *Isolationsdigte* (Isolation Poems, 1979)

Wesenheit ab Wesenheit (2011)

for voice, percussion, clarinet and double bass

1	Min mund (My mouth)	0:56	12:45
2	Isolation II (Isolation II)	2:20	
3	Kys (Kiss)	0:20	
4	Mørket (The dark)	1:33	
5	I sengen (In bed)	2:37	
6	Vestre (Vestre)	1:36	
7	Længsel (Longing)	3:23	

WaWV (2014; rev. 2017)

for soprano, (bass) clarinet, percussion, double bass & electronics

8	Kom (Come)	1:58	22:48
9	Regn bag ved tremmer (Rain behind bars)	2:59	
10	Mandschauvinisme (Male chauvinism)	1:18	
11	Samtaler (Conversations)	4:04	
12	Isolationssygdom (Isolation disease)	1:59	
13	Griets træ (Griet's tree)	10:30	

Total 35:35

World premiere recording

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ON THE COMPOSER

Nicolai Worsaae's (b. 1980) works bear adjectives such as direct and expressive. A search for a violent and perhaps even grotesque musical language. Isolation is a term that very well depicts the ideas on several of his pieces. Either visually dividing musicians on stage or in the music as a sort of principle of composition. In particular, Worsaae works with circular forms of movement in which repetitions of small sections serve to freeze musical moments. In this way time, structure and space become clearly apparent in the work. The larger part of Worsaae's works unfolds through a play between developmental and static principles. Stylistically his music contains elements of what could be called "concrete instrumental music". These are not direct imitations but musical suggestions of concrete sounds. "It is liberating to work with something concrete when working with sound otherwise is so abstract. When I move through the city I listen a lot to all kinds of sounds. Many people that listen to abstract music often have an experience similar to listening to concrete sounds – that the music sounds like something specific. If one can work with the suggestion of real sounds the music becomes richer."

Nicolai Worsaae studied composition at the Royal Danish Conservatory with Bent Sørensen, Niels Rosing-Schow, Hans Abrahamsen and Hans-Peter Stubbe Teglbjærg as well as at Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Graz with Beat Furrer.

THE MUSIC OF ISOLATION *by Henrik Friis*

We have our own world
the radiator
the lamp
the window
and I.

(From *Conversations*, WaWV. Sounds: reading aloud, woman's scream, blows on metal, glissando strings, radio crackling, trills on wind instruments, short sharp puffs, frail clarinet note, the sound of stroked glass).



Nicolai Worsaae

The precise description of a scene in a very small world is that of the author Jörg Meyer and the composer Nicolai Worsaae in the piece *Samtaler* (Conversations) from the work *WaWV* (Wesenheit ab Wesenheit Vollendet). Meyer, a young, East German prisoner in *Vestre Fængsel* in Copenhagen, convicted for spying for the German Democratic Republic, wrote during a solitary confinement lasting nine months in 1979 a series of poems that were published under the title *Isolationsdigte* (Isolation Poems). The poems functioned as a kind of self-therapy for the violent

mental strain he experienced in his cell – only person Meyer conversed with was the prison chaplain Jørgen Worsaae, the composer's father.

It is this story the chaplain's son, Nicolai, had with him when, just over 30 years later, he started to compose the first work *Wesenheit ab Wesenheit* from 2011 for soprano, voice and chamber ensemble as well as the later sister work *WaWV* from 2014, in which Meyer's own recitation is mixed with instruments, concrete electronic sounds, and a song voice. In total, Worsaae uses 13 short poems and not such a great many different sounds to create a musical universe able to express what it is like to be in solitary confinement, as he himself has formulated it.

Bubbles with repetitions

Nicolai Worsaae's music is characterised by his fascination with concrete sounds and alternative playing techniques. On the album, one will hear some metallic sounds out of which the music develops – plus some sounds from everyday life. We hear, for example, an egg-timer, a cycle wheel and the sound of a radiator, as a direct reference to Jørg Meyer's life in his cell, where in loneliness and the beginnings of insanity he starts to talk to precisely a radiator. The sound mixes with instrumental sounds and a song voice in strict sequences of repetitive figures that create what Worsaae calls bubbles in the music:

"The musical relation to the isolation Jørg Meyer experienced in Vestre Fængsel is that I like to use isolated bubbles in the music, where time stops, and where we can experience the repetitions. The bubble gives us an opportunity to think about something definite."

The 13 poems deal with longing, loneliness, nightmares, pain, and insanity, and if one did not know better, the texts might well seem to be old-fashioned, rather banal romantic poems with an I and a you with a distance between them. But the poems also name a long list of concrete objects that acquire a strange sort of life together with the poet, because he is completely alone. And the objects also appear in the music with their own concrete sounds.

Metal and poetic song

It might sound amusing, but actually, it is not. Worsaae has often cultivated irony and the humorously staged as a way of dealing with the extremely self-important aura that often surrounds avant-garde music. For example, in his work in the DYGONG group of composers, which had

its last concert shortly after Worsaae had his debut on leaving the Royal Danish Academy of Music Copenhagen in 2010, and in the orchestral work *Eight and a Half Pint* from 2013. But there is no irony on this album. Instead, he cultivates his fascination with the dark, the brutal and the metallic when combined with the poetic. With a boyhood and youth in close consonance with classical music as a member of the Copenhagen Royal Chapel Choir, the poetic and the melodious belong to using one's singing voice in music. So that is also the case here: poetry, brutality, concrete sounds, and noise.

As in many of Nicolai Worsaae's other works, the music on the album also revolves around something political. Clearly, the works are a criticism of solitary confinement and the fact that 'one doesn't have to sit very long in solitary confinement before one loses oneself', as he expresses it. But more covertly he uses, for example, excerpts from *The Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels at the end of *WaWV*, i.e. passages which he still finds relevant today – the dictatorship of the proletariat and the development of the means of production "where it is still true that the workers are disregarded when the means of production are developed", as he puts it.

All-enclosing loneliness

*Night's dreams
gleam
in innocent green
I long.*

(From *Griet's tree*, *WaWV*. Sounds: pulsating deep noises, high-pitched and frail notes from strings and clarinet, high soprano voice, creakings, shoves and puffs, a humming pure chord)

The four lines end the last poem on the album, *Griet's tree*, in which madness in its pure green shade of sound has become total. Here a C major chord flows in and out of the sound-picture, while it alternates between being in and out of tune: "The chord is like a state. After having been in isolation for a long while, one goes mad," as Worsaae formulates it.

Henrik Friis, 2018

Since graduating from the Royal Academy of Music in Copenhagen with reviews that named her "the voice of possibilities", "a natural interpreter", and "an intimate vocal-seducer", Danish soprano **Signe Asmussen** (b. 1970) has been a preferred soloist with all of the national orchestras, ensembles and choirs. Her curiosity and sharp musicality, along with her passion for the contemporary repertoire, and chamber music, has made Asmussen a preferred collaborator with national ensembles such as Figura, The Scenate, and Theatre of Voices, with whom she has premiered several new works and operas. In 2014, she was awarded the Danish Composers' Society's Award for Musicians.

FIGURA Ensemble consists of Helene Gjerris (mezzo-soprano), Anna Klett (clarinet), Jesper Egelund (double bass), Frans Hansen (percussion), Peter Bruun (composer), Filippa Berglund (architect and set designer) Ursula Andkjær Olsen (poet) and Stine Marie Mortensen (producer).

They have spent a quarter of a century in a continuous and dedicated process of development, exploring music and the opportunities it provides to enrich or change the lives of audiences of all ages. The members understand that artistic practice exists in the interaction between the inspiration you take on board and the experience you pass on. Its many initiatives transcend genres and art forms and reflect a high level of ambition. FIGURA is a well-established institution on the Danish music scene, and yet it has managed to maintain its open-mindedness, vitality and extremely high quality over many, many years.

In 2017 FIGURA Ensemble was nominated for the Nordic Council Music Prize and received among others in 2018 the Danish Broadcasting Corporation's P2 Award – Innovation of the Year for the GrowOP! Festival.

OM KOMPONISTEN

Nicolai Worsaae (f. 1980) værker bærer adjektiver som direkte og ekspressive. En sågen efter et råt og til tider grotesk udtryk. Et gennemgående tema i hans værker er isolation, der på den ene eller anden måde påvirker musikken. Enten ved fysisk adskillelse af musikere eller som et gennemtænkt kompositorisk princip. I særdeleshed arbejder Worsaae med cirkulære bevægelsesformer, hvor gentagelser af små afsnit tjener til at fryse musikalske øjeblikke. På den måde bliver tid, struktur og rum tydeligt i værkerne. Hovedparten af Worsaaes værker udfolder sig gennem et spil mellem udviklingsmæssige og statiske principper. Stilistisk indeholder hans musik elementer af, hvad der kunne kaldes "konkret instrumental musik". Ikke som direkte efterligninger, men som musikalske forslag til konkrete lyde. "Det er befriende at arbejde med noget konkret, når man arbejder med lyd, der ellers er så abstrakt. Når jeg bevæger mig gennem byen, lytter jeg meget til alle slags lyde. Mange mennesker, der lytter til abstrakt musik, har ofte en oplevelse svarende til at lytte til konkrete lyde – at musikken lyder som noget specifikt. Hvis man kan arbejde med forslaget om rigtige lyde, gør det musikken rigere."

Nicolai Worsaae er uddannet fra Det Kongelige Musikkonservatorium under Bent Sørensen, Niels Rosing-Schow, Hans Abrahamsen og Hans-Peter Stubbe Teglbjærg og fra Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Graz under Beat Furrer.

ISOLATIONENS MUSIK *af Henrik Friis*

*Vi har vores egen verden
radiatoren
lampen
vinduet
og mig.*

(Fra *Samtaler, WaWV*. Lydsiden: oplæsning, kvindeskrig, slag på metal, glidende strygerlyd, radioknas, blæsertrille, små stødende pust, spinkel klarinettone, lyden af strøget glas).

Den præcise beskrivelse af en scene i en meget lille verden er forfatteren Jörg Meyers og komponisten Nicolai Worsaaes i satsen *Samtaler fra værket WaWV* (Wesenheit ab Wesenheit Vollendet). Meyer, en ung, østtysk, spiondømt fange i Vestre Fængsel, skrev under sin isolationsfængsling gennem ni måneder i 1979 en række digte, der blev udgivet under titlen *Isolationsdigte*. Digtene fungerede som en slags selvterapi over for den voldsomme psykiske påvirkning, han oplevede i cellen. For den eneste person, Meyer havde samtaler med, var fængselspræsten Jørgen Worsaae – komponistens far.

Det er den historie, præstens søn Nicolai havde med, da han godt 30 år senere begyndte at komponere først værket *Wesenheit ab Wesenheit* fra 2011 for sopran, stemme og kammerensemble og senere østerværket *WaWV* fra 2014, hvor Meyers egen oplæsning blander sig med instrumenter, konkrete elektroniske lyde og en sangstemme. I alt bruger Worsaae 13 små digte og ikke så forfærdelig mange forskellige lyde til at skabe det musikalske univers, der skal udtrykke, hvordan det er at være isoleret, som han selv har formuleret det.

Bobler af gentagelser

Nicolai Worsaaes musik er præget af hans fascination af konkrete lyde og alternative spilleteknikker. På albummet vil man opleve nogle metalliske lyde, som musikken folder sig ud fra – plus en del lyde fra dagligdagen. Vi hører fx et æggeur, et cykelhjul og lyden af en radiator, som en direkte reference til Jörg Meyers liv i cellen, hvor han i ensomhed og begyndende galskab begyndte at tale med netop en radiator. Lydene blander sig med instrumentale lyde og en sangstemme i stramme forløb af repetitive figurer, som skaber det, Worsaae kalder bobler i musikken:

"Den musikalske relation til den isolation, Jörg Meyer oplevede i Vestre Fængsel er, at jeg godt kan lide at bruge isolerede bobler i musikken, hvor tiden stopper, og hvor vi kan opleve gentagelserne. Boblerne kan give os mulighed for at reflektere over noget bestemt."

De 13 digte handler om længsel, ensomhed, mareridt, smerte og galskab, og vidste man ikke bedre, kunne teksterne godt være gammeldags, lidt banale romantiske digte med et jeg og et du med en afstand imellem. Men digitene nævner også en lang række konkrete genstande, der får et underligt liv med digteren, fordi han er helt alene. Og de genstande optræder så også i musikken med deres helt konkrete lyde.

Metal og poetisk sang

Det kan lyde morsomt, men det er det egentlig ikke. Worsaae har ofte dyrket ironien og det humoristisk iscenesatte, som en måde at håndtere det meget selvhøjtidelige, der ofte omgiver avantgarde-musik. Fx i arbejdet i komponistgruppen DYGONG, der havde sin sidste koncert kort efter Worsaaes debut fra konservatoriet i København i 2010, og i orkesterværket *Eight and a Half Pint* fra 2013. Men ironi er der ikke noget af på dette album. I stedet dyrker han sin fascination af det mørke, det brutale og det metalliske i samklang med det poetiske. Med en opvækst i tæt samklang med klassisk musik som medlem af Københavns Drengekor hører det poetiske og det melodiske sammen med det at bruge sangstemmen i musik. Så sådan er det også her: poesi, brutalitet, konkrete lyde og støj.

Som i mange af Nicolai Worsaaes øvrige værker kredser musikken på albummet også om noget politisk. Helt oplagt er værkerne en kritik af isolationsfængsling og det faktum, at "man ikke skal sidde særlig længe i isolation, før man mister sig selv," som han udtrykker det. Men mere skjult bruger han fx også brudstykker fra *Det Kommunistiske Manifest* af Marx og Engels i slutningen af *WaWV*. Det vil sige, en del af skriften, som han stadig mener er aktuelt i dag. Fx om proletariatets diktatur og produktionsmidernes udvikling, "hvor det fortsat er sådan, at arbejderne bliver tilsidesat, når produktionsmidlerne udvikles", som han siger.

Altomsluttende ensomhed

*Nattens drømme
lyser
i uskyldigt grøn
jeg længes.*

(Fra *Griets træ*, *WaWV*. Lydsiden: pulserende dyb støjlyd, skinre og skræbelige toner fra stryger og klarinet, høj soprantone, knirk, stød og pust, en snurrende ren akkord)

De fire linjer afslutter det sidste digt på albummet, *Griets træ*, hvor sindssygen i sin rene grønne klangfarve er blevet total. Her flyder en C-dur-akkord ud og ind af lydbilledet, mens den veksler mellem at være falsk og ren: "Akkorden er som en tilstand. Efter at have været isoleret i lang tid, bliver man skør", som Worsaae formulerer det.

Henrik Friis, 2018

Siden debutkonerten fra Det Kongelige Danske Musikkonservatorium i 2001, med anmeldelser, der udråbte hende til "en sanger med ekstraordinære muligheder" og en "vokal intimforerer", har **Signe Asmussen** (f. 1970) – med et gennemsnit på mellem 90-110 koncerter og forestillinger om året – slættet sit navn fast som en af sin generations mest alsidige og karismatiske sangerinder. Udstyret med sund nysgerrighed, et skarpt gehør og en stor forkærlighed for den ny kompositionsmusik, har Asmussen gennem et mangeårigt, fast samarbejde med ensembler som bl.a. Figura, Scenatet og Theatre of Voices været med til at uropføre adskillige nye værker og musikdramatiske produktioner; et arbejde og engagement, som i 2014 blev belønnet med Dansk Komponistforenings Musikerpris.

FIGURA Ensemble består af Helene Gjerris (mezzosopran), Anna Klett (klarinet), Jesper Egelund (kontrabas), Frans Hansen (slagtøj), Peter Bruun (komponist), Filippa Berglund (arkitekt og scenograf), Ursula Andkjær Olsen (poet) og Stine Marie Mortensen (producent).

I 25 år har de i stadig og stædig udvikling udforsket musikken og musikkens muligheder for at berige eller give livsændrende oplevelser til et publikum i alle aldre. De har forståelse for en kunstnerisk praksis, der lever af en vekselvirkning mellem den inspiration, man tager ind, og den erfaring, man giver videre. Listen over initiativer på tværs af genrer og kunstarter er lang og udstråler et højt ambitionsniveau. FIGURA er en institution i dansk musikliv, der har formået at bibeholde både nysgerrighed og puls i samtiden igennem en imponerende årrække på allerhøjeste hylde.

I 2017 blev FIGURA Ensemble nomineret til Nordisk Råds Musikpris og var blandt modtagerne af P2 Prisen 2018 – Årets Nyskabelse for GrowOP! – Danmarks første operafestival for børn.

Wesenheit ab Wesenheit (2011)
til tekst af Jörg Meyer: *Isolationsdigte* (1979)

Min mund

1 Min mund
kan ikke
flyve
regndråber
dækker
den til

Isolation II

2 Hvad nytter
levende lys
i en ørken
uden mennesker
deres skær er blindt
men jeg skal danse
måned efter måned
alene med mig selv
mens tremmerne
skærer mine øjne
i stykker
og
snart
er
jeg
også
blind!

Kys

3 Fire arme
bliver

Wesenheit Ab Wesenheit (2011)
to texts by Jörg Meyer: *Isolation Poems* (1979)

My mouth

My mouth
cannot
fly
raindrops
cover
it

Isolation II

What's the use of
candles
in a desert
without people
their gleam is blind
but I will dance
month after month
alone with myself
while the bars
cut my eyes
to ribbons
and
soon
I
too
am
blind!

Kiss

Four arms
become

til
en krop

Mørket

4

Nå
er du her igen
jeg vil helst ikke ha'
at du kommer
selv om
jeg elsker dig
men
jeg er bange
du ved
det er mørkt her
og
din gennemsigtige krop
gør mig usikker
og
så er du så tavs

I sengen

5

Udenfor
suser vinden
natten er kommet
latteren dør bort
frygten sniger sig under dynen
som en ræv –
endelig alene med fjenden
vi har tid
vi sidder og venter
over for hinanden
ingen siger et ord –
om morgenens

one
body

The dark

Now
you are here again
I'd rather
you didn't come
even though
I love you
but
I'm afraid
you know
it is dark here
and
your transparent body
makes me uncertain
and
then you are so silent

In bed

Outside
the wind is blowing
night has come
the laughter dies away
fear creeps in under the duvet
like a fox –
at last alone with the enemy
we have time
we sit and wait
opposite each other
neither of us says a word –
in the morning

går hver sin vej
alligevel styrket
for at vende tilbage
nat efter nat
endnu
har kampen ikke fundet sted
jeg håber
tiden forfølger
frygten

Vestre

6 Jeg så månen
lyse
i et hav af jern
og myrer
krybe frem.
Glæden var død,
druknet i sten.
I cellens ensomhed
hængte sig
den sidste latter.
Natten
faldt ned.

Længsel

7 På mørke bølger
flyder dit hår
ingen fugl synger
fire store øjne
ser spørgende
efter solen –
vandet suger
alt lys

we go our separate ways
strengthened even so
so as to return
night after night
as yet
the fight has not taken place
I hope
time pursues
fear

Vestre

I saw the moon
shine
in a sea of iron
and ants
creep out.
Joy was dead,
drowned in stone.
In the loneliness of the cell
the last laugh
hanged itself.
Night
fell down.

Longing

On dark waves
your hair floats
no bird sings
four large eyes
look questioningly
for the sun –
water sucks
all light

til sig
hænderne
kan ikke tage fat
i kroppen
der findes ingen faste konturer

WaWV (2014: rev. 2017)
til tekster af Jörg Meyer: *Isolationsdigte* (1979)

Kom

8 Jeg skreg
da lyset
vågnede
nu
lukker mennesker
munden

Regn bag ved tremmer

9 Skovtrolde
jeg kalder på dig
fjern
de stinkende biler
det regner i byen
flyt
idiotiske tremmer –
o dejlige vanvid
glædelige rus
jeg danser på stengulv
luften er varm

to itself
the hands
cannot catch hold
of the body
there are no firm contours

WaWV (2014: rev. 2017)
to texts by Jörg Meyer: *Isolation Poems* (1979)

Come

I screamed
when the light
woke up
now
people shut
their mouths

Rain behind bars

Forest troll
I call on you
remove
the stinking cars
it's raining in the town
move
idiotic bars –
oh lovely madness
ecstatic rush
I dance on a stone floor
the air is warm

Mandschauvinisme

10 Når
du tisser
i vasken
opdager du urinens farve
og duft

Samtaler

11 To lamper lyser
cellevinduet
hilser på kighullet
radiatoren og mig
konverserer
vi har det godt
sammen
af og til
kommer der mennesker
så lukker vi af
og venter
indtil de er gået
igen
vi håber de ved
at de kun
er gæst
fordi
vi har vores egen verden
radiatoren
lampen
vinduet
og mig

Male chauvinism

When
you pee
in the washbasin
you discover the colour and scent
of urine

Conversations

Two lamps gleam
the cell window
greets the peephole
the radiator and I
converse
we get on well
together
now and then
people come
and we take a break
and wait
until they are gone
once more
we hope they know
they are
only guests
because
we have our own world
the radiator
the lamp
the window
and I

12

Isolationssygdom
Mit hjerte slår
og gør ondt
jeg er blevet bange
ikke for fængslet
de mange betjente
men
for dig og dig
dem
der kommer på besøg

13

Griets træ
Dine arme
fanger forsigtigt
mine tanker.
Nattens drømme
lyser
i uskyldigt grøn
jeg længes.

Isolation disease
My heart thuds
and hurts
I've grown afraid
not of the prison
the many wardens
but
of you and you
those
who come visiting

Griet's tree
Your arms
carefully capture
my thoughts.
Night's dreams
gleam
in innocent green
I long.

DDD

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af 1921



FIGURA ENSEMBLE

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MUSIKANTOLOGI

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