

Spice Melange

for Zeitkratzer (cl./b-cl., cb-cl. or tuba, trp., pno., perc., sampler, vln., vcl., cb.)

program text (in German):

Der Walzer, Symbol für das Wien des 19. Jahrhunderts. Drei Viertelschläge, die ganz Europa in Extase versetzten. Injiziert man jedoch eine weitere Achtel in dieses Dreieck, springt der Charakter des Metrums mit einem Satz mehrere hundert Kilometer in Richtung Osten, in den Orient, für den ungerade Taktarten so typisch sind.

Doch was hat diese nach vorne gezogene zweite Viertel im Walzer überhaupt zu suchen? Findet sich da schon die Idee der etwas zu kurzen oder zu langen Schläge? Der Wankelmut, der der Musik die treibende Kraft gibt?

1529 und 1683 hatte sich die Grenze des türkisch beherrschten Bereichs bis vor die Stadtmauern Wiens vorangeschoben. Zur Zeit haben gerade die Verhandlungen für den Beitritt der Türkei zur Europäischen Union begonnen. Ein historischer Schritt, der aber sehr erhitzte Debatten mit sich bringt.

“Spice Melange” — der Titel stammt von Frank Herberts Science Fiction Klassiker “Dune”, in dem die Melange eine begehrte Droge ist, die einen veränderten Bewusstseinszustand und eine verlängerte Lebenserwartung gibt – fluktuiert im Assoziationsraum zwischen Walzer und Orient. Ein stummes Lied und ein Comic begleiten die Musik.

Form

Spice Melange consists of three parts that have to follow each other seamlessly. They are called:

1. Bazar
2. Stimulus Progression
3. Melange

The total duration of the piece depends on the interpretation of the musicians.
It is estimated to last around 25 minutes (6+6+13).

The visual aspect

While the musicians are coming on stage the following text is displayed on a A1 sized carboard at the front middle of the stage:

“Seeking partner for a long-term relationship leading to marriage.
I am young, educated, healthy, attractive and well mannered,
an honest and kind-hearted person
with eastern and western cultural values.
I am looking for a partner who is a loving parent,
who can cope with the challenges that come along
with partnership and family,
who is liberal, conscientious, faithful,
and of good moral values,
who is working and financially stable.”

This text is a translation from the political into the private realm of the Copenhagen regulations of the EU, that are displayed in the second part.

If “Spice Melange” is the first piece of a concert’s program half, the text should be displayed while the audience is coming in. In any case it has to be removed before the musicians start to play.

During the second part the musicians are holding up A4 sized cardboards with single words that form the following text from the Copenhagen regulations of the EU:

“Membership requires that the candidate country has achieved
stable democracy, the rule of law, human rights
and the protection of minorities,
the existence of a
functioning market economy and the capacity to
cope with competitive pressure and market forces
within the European Union.
Membership presupposes the candidate's
adherence to the aims
of political, economic, monetary union.”

In the third part a cartoon is shown by the musicians by displaying A2 sized cardboards with drawings. The drawings have been made by Sasa Rokanovic.
5 drawings are shown at a time by placing them in music stands that are facing the audience. The musicians who are changing the cardboards are the violinist, the double-bassist, the percussionist, the tuba player, alerternating with the clarinettist, and the trumpet player.

The following fable by Aesop is being told:

The Laborer and the Snake

"A Snake had made his hole close to the porch of a cottage. It inflicted a mortal bite on the Cottager's infant son, while he was playing. Grieving over his loss, the Father resolved to kill the Snake. The next day, when it came out of its hole for food, he took up his axe, but by swinging too hastily, missed its head and cut off only the end of its tail.

The snake in return bit and killen the Father's horse.

After some time the Cottager endeavored to make peace, and placed some bread and salt in the hole. The Snake said: "There can henceforth be no peace between us; for whenever I see you I shall remember the loss of my tail, and whenever you see me you will be thinking of the death of your son."

Injuries can be forgiven but not forgotten."

The changes of cardboards in the 2nd and 3rd part are indicated in the score.

Amplification

All instruments are amplified. The sound engineer should adjust the balance between the instruments and the various textures during the course of the piece. In detail this will depend a lot on the instrumental choices that the musicians have to make themselves in the piece. Therefore there are no further instructions regarding the audio design in the score.

The sampler has to be capable to reach a high volume that potentially surpasses that of the rest of the ensemble. Accordingly the sound system should be capable to produce approximately 100dB of well balanced and undistorted sound (40Hz-20kHz).

Light

The texts in the beginning, part 2, and especially the cartoon in part 3 have to be well lit out. If necessary, add front lights to make them well visible.

If there is the possibility to use colors in the general lighting, please use only green and purple.

The score

All musicians are reading from the score to give a perfect overview over the chamber-musical situation. No parts are used.

Instrumentation and idiomatic choices

Generally speaking, playing techniques are to a wide extend left to the musicians. The sounds to be produced are often verbally described.

X-shaped noteheads are describing percussive sounds. How they are produced depends on the context, the overall instrumental balance and the players taste.

A fine distinction is made between low and high sounds, represented as x-shaped notes under or over a middle line. These indications should be followed carefully.

The verbal descriptions of sounds are often assoziative, like "screaming" or the "emulation of a diesel engine" (in fact, these 2 sound descriptions are pervading the third part). At other times associative terms are used, most notably "pseudo-oriental".

Certain parts are written out in notes. Of not indicated otherwise, they have to be played in a rather classical fashion. The written out parts are either a persiflage of MUZAK (part 2) and/or edited quotations of waltzes by Schubert, Chopin and J.Strauss (part 2 and 3).

Percussion

No percussion instruments are indicated (except for a tamburin in the third part), the ultimate choice is left to the percussionist. The instruments should be chosen according to the east-west association, that this piece plays with. Oriental instruments can be used and also such instruments that have been imported into the standard western instrumentary. Purely western instruments are welcome, too. Basically anything can be used, as long as it is carefully chosen, depending on the context. The following instruments are suggested:

Tamburin;

Cymbals (for screaming sounds);

Gran Cassa (for the low sounds);

Drums with natural skins.

Sampler

Except for the sections A-E in part 3, the sounds for the sampler will be provided. Short sounds should be triggered directly while longer sounds (soundscapes) can be run from a computer. The sounds will be delivered on a CD-Rom with a folder for the long sounds (computer) and a folder for the short ones (directly triggerable samples).