



Heinz Holliger – Swiss Music Prize 2015

How to present such an exceptional personality?

To put it in simple terms, for me it is like having to write about Friedrich Dürrenmatt for a Swiss literary award during his lifetime. Both Holliger and Dürrenmatt have exerted a huge influence; above all, their work is now absolutely essential. So behind the pragmatic conformism of a Switzerland that is, sadly, more concerned about its frontiers than its imagination, two of the most powerful and visionary creative individuals of our time have been fighting their battles.

I recall a discussion at Royaumont with the British composer Brian Ferneyhough. We were introduced, he learnt that I was from Switzerland and immediately started talking about Heinz Holliger, vigorously assuring me that the Scardanelli-Zyklus is unquestionably the most significant vocal work of the 20th century.

It is particularly difficult to suggest a single gateway to the vast world of this brilliant creator and musician; but it is important to keep in mind that someone who could have lived his life as a star of the classical music market chose to complement his extraordinary talent as an oboist with a constant and particularly exacting artistic quest. His music is inhabited by the presence of artists who lived life to the extreme, both poetically and personally (Walser, Schumann, Hölderlin, Soutter, Lenau . . .). The composer's motto is "all good music works on the limits". From his first oboe award at the international competition in Geneva in 1959 to the *Inceschantüm* (2014) based on poems by Luisa Famos, the progression is striking, the creative intensity overwhelming.

Today, then, Switzerland has decided to recognise its Dürrenmatt of music. I offer my heartfelt congratulations to the Swiss Music Prize 2015 jury for its excellent choice. Yet both this acknowledgment and our words pale into insignificance compared with his music and its prodigious capacity to drive towards the unfathomable and, above all, never give way to the illusion of spurious veracity. Today, more than ever, we need creative voices that are capable of crushing and eliminating all forms of univocal and simplistic thought. In his opera *Schneewittchen* from the text by Robert Walser, Snow White sings: "Even the sky has no greater purity" ["Mehr Reinheit hat der Himmel nicht"].

Xavier Dayer