

Roche Commissions

Address by Michael Haefliger, Buonas, 30 August 2008

(The spoken version is definitive.)

Dr Humer, Toshio, ladies and gentlemen:

First let me express my thanks to you, Dr Humer, for your apposite comments on our most gratifying cooperation on Roche Commissions and for the hospitality you have again extended to us at this delightful location in Buonas on the occasion of the announcement of the fifth Roche Commissions composer.

I should like to add my assurances that this collaboration with Roche, the Cleveland Orchestra under its Music Director Franz Welser-Möst, and the Carnegie Hall, New York, is particularly close to my heart. Not restricted to a single institution or a single country, it transcends boundaries, and as such I find it deeply satisfying. For me, Roche Commissions is an ideal paradigm of cooperation between cultural and commercial institutions. Together, we have transformed this ideal of cooperation into reality and are achieving wonderful results. For this, my thanks are due to all our partners.

We meet here this Saturday morning to celebrate the inauguration of Roche Commissions 2010 with the award of a composition commission to Toshio Hosokawa. At tonight's concert we shall hear the world première of the work we commissioned here two years ago from George Benjamin. Both occasions are extremely special to us.

Today we also celebrate a minor anniversary, for Toshio Hosokawa is the fifth composer to have received a Roche Commission. As Chairman of the Roche Commissions artistic committee, I should like to tell you why he has been selected for this prestigious award.

First let me briefly remind you of the previous recipients of a Roche Commission. They were: Harrison Birtwistle of Great Britain in 2004; Chen Yi of China and the US in 2005; Hanspeter Kyburz of Switzerland and Germany in 2006; and George Benjamin of Great Britain in 2008. The equivalent information for Toshio Hosokawa would be Japan in 2010.

But where they come from is not important, even though we endeavour to maintain an international approach and avoid giving any one country a monopoly. To persuade us to make such a major award, the composer we select must have an individual, expressive personal style. The work and its creator must exhibit a particular quality, a potential for which the Roche Commissions partners offer them this wonderful platform.

The Roche Commissions partners – in other words the Roche company itself, the Cleveland Orchestra under its Music Director Franz Welser-Möst, the Carnegie Hall in New York and the Lucerne Festival – act as both progenitor and midwife, if you will excuse a somewhat graphic metaphor. In the beginning there is Roche, which awards the commission. Roche invites the composer to visit the company several times in order to get to know all facets of its activities. All the previous composers were both overwhelmed and inspired by Roche's hospitality. It's just as it was in Mozart's time, when composers knew their patrons and were linked to them by bonds that were not just commercial, but also artistic and personal. And it was precisely this respect and mutual empathy that gave rise to so many important, successful works.

Once this initial spark has been struck, the composer goes away and writes his work. When it is complete, he entrusts it to his interpreters – in our case the Cleveland Orchestra under Franz Welser-Möst.

There's a perennial question about music: does it exist once the work has been written down, or does it not really exist until it is performed in

concert? I don't want to get involved in a hair-splitting discussion about that. We shall have to ask the composers whether their works actually come into the world twice, as it were – once when they first let somebody else see it, again when they hear it in concert. This is how I see it: there's an internal, private disclosure that takes place away from prying eyes, and an external, public unveiling when the work is performed before an audience in the concert hall.

Carnegie Hall and the Lucerne Festival attend the work's second birth, so to speak, by providing the formal, distinguished setting for its first performance.

This may remind those of you who work for Roche of a drug's production chain. If I understand this correctly, a long period of research leads to a formula, to the drug's precise "composition". But it doesn't reach the market until it has undergone protracted experimental and trial phases.

Mark: Dieser Dank steht schon am Beginn der Rede – kann man weglassen.

I now turn to our composer, Toshio Hosokawa.

In research and in business, there are standardised measurements and indicators by which quality can be assessed. Not so in art. That makes it all the more important in our case for all the partners to be satisfied that the composer has the potential we are looking for. This is not an appropriate forum for a detailed discussion of quality criteria in art. Generally, though, subjective factors have an important part to play. Our appreciation of art is intellectual, emotional and carnal. Subjective states are therefore a legitimate area for enquiry! Does a work of art reach me, does it touch a nerve, do I sense an empathic association?

At this point, therefore, I am going to allow myself a digression into the personal. For several years now I have felt an empathic affinity with

Toshio Hosokawa's music. His opera *Lear*, which premiered at the Munich Biennial for new musical theatre in 1998, made such an impression on me that I invited him to Lucerne as one of my first composers in residence. That was in the summer of 2000, and we played more of his works in the years that followed.

Although I don't want to trespass on the territory of Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, who will present the encomium, perhaps I might explain my fascination with Hosokawa's music by repeating an observation that he once made: "Hosokawa is a European avant-garde composer, the equal of his most significant European colleagues. But at the same time he is a Japanese composer, keenly aware of the debt he owes to the spiritual and musical traditions of his native land." End of quotation.

Glance at Toshio Hosokawa's résumé, and you are struck by the following progression. Having grown up in Japan, he studied in Europe and embarked on his career here. Now Toshio's back in Japan again. As composer in residence with the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra since 1998, Musical Director of the Takefu International Music Festival since 2001 and permanent visiting professor at the Tokyo College of Music since 2004, he's intimately involved in the musical life of the nation. He says it was only abroad, in Europe, that he became aware of his Japanese roots, and that since then he has been a dedicated student of traditional Japanese culture.

This phenomenon interests me from the viewpoint of globalisation. In the cultural field, the threats posed by globalisation – for example that individual national characteristics will become blurred – are the subject of frequent discussion. Toshio Hosokawa embodies precisely the opposite. Far from being blurred, national characteristics are profoundly absorbed and placed in sharper focus. His music uses the methods and languages of European classical and modern music. In it we encounter the core of the Japanese concept of music, while at the same time feeling in familiar territory as Europeans. This is really

Toshio Hosokawa's great achievement: he goes straight to the core – *Into the Depth of Time*, as one of his works is most appropriately entitled. Toshio Hosokawa once wrote: “If music is a tree, I don't want to emphasise the roles played by its individual branches and leaves – the differences between music as it emerged from the two cultural spheres of East and West. Rather I look for what they have in common, for the roots that they share.”

Well, Toshio, you have done just that. We thank you for giving us that sensitivity, and we look forward to your Roche Commission 2010.

Thank you for your attention. I now invite Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus to deliver the encomium. Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus is a Scientific Coordinator at the *Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin* Institute for Advanced Study and an Extraordinary Professor at the University of Potsdam. His fields of research are literature and music, and he authors publications in both areas. He has recently published treatises on the composers Helmut Lachenmann, György Ligeti and Toshio Hosokawa. Mr Meyer-Kalkus had an opportunity to study Toshio Hosokawa's music in depth when the latter was a guest for a year at the *Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin*. Mr Meyer-Kalkus, we look forward to your encomium and to hearing what you have to say about our composer.