



canti d'inizio e fine

“ Rend your clothes, you all,
sprinkle your head with ashes,
run through the streets
and dance in madness. ”

Rabbi Jakub Szulman
in a letter, January 1942

CANTI D'INIZIO E FINE
by MAXIM SHALYGIN

for a solo performer who can feel, play,
sing, scream, moan, swear, breathe,
squeal, whisper, bleat, hiss, dream...

dedicated to MAYA FRIDMAN



CANTI D'INIZIO E FINE

“ I never thought I would address the Holocaust as a topic in my work, let alone in such a deep and painful way. This cycle wasn't meant to develop in that direction in the first place. However, as soon as I had made up my mind to write the final song on the text of Paul Celan's poem, *Todesfuge*, the concept radically changed. The parts wrote themselves neither in their eventual order nor in their entirety. For more than a year I felt like assembling some peculiar mosaic, and I finished about five parts with no clue whatsoever how to name them.

But then I watched Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* — one of the most powerful documents of that unfathomable tragedy of humanity, shedding light on a plethora of momentous details. At some point in this film a woman recalls how a naked crowd was driven through the dark from the train to the chambers, with dogs barking and wardens yelling at them and beating them up... She then heard screams from the crowd and suddenly realized: those people were pronouncing the names of the Angels of Death.

This is how the Angels of Death came to entitle six parts, concluded by the epilogue of the *Todesfuge*, which Maya sings and plays at the same time.

The most horrendous Angel of these six is Abaddon, who annihilates all around. For a long time I was trying to imagine how this might sound, how one could express such an image in music at all. I got the idea of an uninterrupted, aggressive, a-periodic glissando, beginning from an ultra-high register and gradually descending into the lowest. A slow discharge of blood... On top of this, layers of screams: from the crowd, from the wardens? This remains unclear. Here I appealed to a dictionary of swearwords that were used for Jews in the camps; mostly German, partly Polish and Ukrainian. This body of text got mixed with made-up syllables, moans, bleating, and other stuff. And with the sound of blows — what sort of blows, I'm not sure myself — that cut through the texture irregularly.

The *Todesfuge* turned out to be a real piece of composer's luck, and, although very hard to write, unputdownable in the process. The structure of the poem itself suggested certain compositional solutions. Whenever a composer has such a tight energetic bond with a piece of poetry, he or she can't imagine its existence without music. That's why there was nothing left for me to do, but to write it as it has to sound.

Still, I must acknowledge that I don't understand completely what's the function of this music and why I wrote it. But I feel that, however naive it may seem, it formulates something unsteady, fragile, and nevertheless important and ponderable.

I let this ship sail, hoping it may turn into a haven for someone at least. ”

— Maxim Shalygin

LINER NOTES

“ Maxim Shalygin and I met each other in 2016. After I listened to his *Suite — Homage to Alfred Schnittke* I immediately wanted to write him that I would like to work together on a new piece for cello. At the same time, he listened to my recordings of Pēteris Vasks’ *The Book* and wrote to me with the very same idea. I remember how eager I was to start learning the first song of what came to be a seven-movement cycle, as soon as Maxim sent me the first sketch.

When Maxim told me that his initial conception of the composition, the universal cycle of life and death, changed to the theme of the Holocaust, I had mixed feelings. At first I tried to remain oblivious to the subject and focus solely on studying the music, because, as I started to notice, it felt more than just extremely disturbing and dark. It felt as if my chest was full with heavy stones, and the process of practicing the *Todesfuge* and other songs induced almost physical pain, as if the memory of the Holocaust was still alive in my body. Yet, this process felt extremely close and urgent to me, and it was definitely more than just perfecting the technical and musical aspect of the piece.

It has been challenging on many different levels and, in the end, the *Canti* feel like a part of me, as though I will never be able to leave this piece behind. I am deeply grateful to Maxim for working together as intensely as we did, and, even though it wasn’t always easy, we always found the solution.

I believe that music lives far beyond any attached meaning and symbolical interpretation. I can very well imagine that it would appear differently in the perception of the listener, perhaps completely disengaged from the subject of the Holocaust and associated with something more essential to themselves.

As a tragedy is believed to bring relief through the purification of the human soul, so tries this music serve as a psychological journey, in which the cello is like a pathway through the states of extreme emotional exaltation, into the deepest humility. I have found a different face of myself through the journey *Canti d’inizio e fine* took me on, and which I proudly show here, in this recording. ”

— Maya Fridman



canto primo

GABRIEL

“ According to Jewish mythology, there is a tree of life or tree of souls, that blossoms and produces new souls, which fall into the *Guf*, the *Treasury of Souls*. This tree produces all the souls that have ever existed or will ever exist. When the last soul descends, the world will come to an end. Gabriel reaches into the treasure and takes out the first soul that comes into his hand. Canto Primo symbolizes the possibility of being born, as well as anticipates the struggle one has to endure through life. ”

canto secundo

SAMAE L

“ There was another angel in the seventh heaven, different in appearance from all the others, and of frightful mien. His height was so great, it would have taken five hundred years to cover a distance equal to it, and from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet he was studded with glaring eyes at the sight of which the beholder fell prostrate in awe. *This one*, said Metatron, addressing Moses, *is Samael, who takes the soul away from man*. Canto Secundo reminds me how one learns to speak: there are sounds without words, yet the intention is clear. It explores the ricochet technique, which gives the feeling of something never resolving and relentlessly carrying on. ”

canto terzo

KAPZIEL

“ Archangel Kapziel is known as the angel of time, even though his main responsibility is to rule over the death of kings, rulers and leaders. I perceive Canto Terzo as an endless chant that is full of wisdom and understanding of time, as well as of a never-ending suffering. ”

canto quarto

A Z R A E L

“ In some descriptions, Azrael has four faces and four thousand wings, and his whole body consists of a number of eyes and tongues corresponding to the number of people inhabiting the Earth. As he constantly records and erases in a large book the names of men at birth and death, so the pizzicato sounds of this Canto Quarto appear out of and disappear into nothingness. ”

canto quinto

A B B A D O N

“ Abbadon has been identified as the most terrible angel of death, who demolishes all life in its path, and it also refers to a bottomless pit, the abyss. Since Canto Quinto represents the torture that transforms a human into an animal, it is interesting to notice that this angel's task is to torture, but never to kill. ”

canto sesto

M I C H A E L

“ Michael is said to descend at the hour of death and to give each soul the chance to contemplate on one's life before passing. The character of this movement could not be depicted better than with the BACH.Bow. This bow is able to touch all four strings simultaneously, thus bringing on a bigger depth and contrast necessary for this canto. It ends with the sound of winds (or of the last breath) transitioning into the *Todesfuge*. ”

epilogo

TODESFUGE by PAUL CELAN

Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken sie abends
wir trinken sie mittags und morgens wir trinken sie nachts
wir trinken und trinken
wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng
Ein Mann wohnt im Haus der spielt mit den Schlangen der schreibt
der schreibt wenn es dunkelt nach Deutschland
den goldenes Haar Margarete

er schreibt es und tritt vor das Haus und es blitzen die Sterne
er pfeift seine Rüden herbei
er pfeift seine Juden hervor läßt schaufeln ein Grab in der Erde
er befiehlt uns spielt auf nun zum Tanz

Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken dich nachts
wir trinken dich morgens und mittags wir trinken dich abends
wir trinken und trinken
Ein Mann wohnt im Haus der spielt mit den Schlangen der schreibt
der schreibt wenn es dunkelt nach Deutschland
dein goldenes Haar Margarete
Dein aschenes Haar Sulamith

wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng

Er ruft stecht tiefer ins Erdreich ihr einen ihr andern singet und spielt
er greift nach dem Eisen im Gurt er schwingts seine Augen sind blau
stecht tiefer die Spaten ihr einen ihr anderen spielt weiter zum Tanz auf

Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken dich nachts
wir trinken dich mittags und morgens wir trinken dich abends
wir trinken und trinken

ein Mann wohnt im Haus dein goldenes Haar Margarete
dein aschenes Haar Sulamith er spielt mit den Schlangen

Er ruft spielt süßer den Tod der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland
er ruft streicht dunkler die Geigen dann steigt ihr als Rauch in die Luft
dann habt ihr ein Grab in den Wolken da liegt man nicht eng

Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken dich nachts
wir trinken dich mittags der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland
wir trinken dich abends und morgens wir trinken und trinken
der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland sein Auge ist blau
er trifft dich mit bleierner Kugel er trifft dich genau
ein Mann wohnt im Haus dein goldenes Haar Margarete
er herzt seine Rüden auf uns er schenkt uns ein Grab in der Luft
er spielt mit den Schlangen und träumet der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland

dein goldenes Haar Margarete
dein aschenes Haar Sulamith







SPECIAL THANKS

This album was recorded at Willem Twee Toonzaal ('s-Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands) from January 2nd to 5th in 2019.

Special thanks to Rob van der Broek & Stichting QEM for supporting this project. Stichting QEM, based in Zeewolde, The Netherlands, has the primary goal to support, develop, perform and stimulate activities in the arts and culture sector. Two of the most important activities for the foundation are the designing of artistic musical instruments, and the (financial) support of other arts projects with a cultural goal. Artistic leader Rob van den Broek, instrument builder and visual artist, is a passionate music lover. Out of this passion, he has set up many artistic and personal contacts with composers, venues and musicians in the Netherlands and abroad, for the past 20 years. In 2018, a collection of nine of his remarkable artistic musical instruments were exhibited at Museum Belvédère during the Oranjewoud Festival, in the Odeon Theater Zwolle, Muziekgebouw Eindhoven, the Zuiderstrandtheater and Muziekgebouw Aan 't IJ during the Cello Biënnale 2018. Especially for his collection of instruments, compositions were written by Gross and Marinissen, Giovanni Sollima, and Anne-Maartje Lemereis. A number of these artistic musical instruments are performed on or bought by, among others, Gross and Marinissen, Giovanni Sollima, the Ragazze Quartet and of course Maya Fridman. Stichting QEM and Rob van den Broek were concerned with the amazing and congenial cellist Maya Fridman and support this extraordinary composition and recording whole-heartedly.

This project was made possible by Gaudeamus. Gaudeamus presents, stimulates and supports the latest music by young music pioneers. The concerts and activities of Gaudeamus, such as the annual Gaudeamus Muziekweek festival, international co-productions and the Gaudeamus Award, are leading the way in contemporary music.

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CREDITS

Recording & mastering	Brendon Heinst
Liner notes	Maxim Shalygin Maya Fridman
Photography & artwork	Brendon Heinst

EQUIPMENT

Microphones	Sonodore RCM-402
AD/DA conversion	Merging Technologies HAPI
Monitoring	KEF Blade Two <i>loudspeakers</i> Hegel H30 <i>amplifiers</i> Sennheiser HD800s <i>headphones</i>
Cabling	Furutech custom microphone cables Furutech LineFlux XLR <i>interlinks</i> Furutech NanoFlux NCF <i>power cables</i> Furutech FS-a36 <i>loudspeaker cables</i>
Misc.	JCAT M12 Switch Gold JCAT NET Card FEMTO Furutech NCF Boosters

TRPTK proudly uses Sonodore microphones, KEF loudspeakers, Hegel amplification, Merging Technologies AD/DA conversion, Furutech cabling and power conditioning, and JCAT network equipment at their recording and mastering facilities, carefully optimized by Acoustic Matters.

All recordings are done in DXD (352.8 kHz 32 bits) in immersive 5.1-channel surround sound, and all masters are generated from the original DXD Studio Master, without any dynamic compression or limiting of the signal. In both stereo and surround sound, our aim is to truly create an immersive experience.





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