

PRESS RELEASE

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Prague Offspring artist in residence is Georg Friedrich Haas

For the second year, the Prague Spring Festival develops a platform for the creation, presentation and education in contemporary music Prague Offspring. In addition to two evening concerts by the Klangforum Wien ensemble with conductor Peter Rundel, on Friday 26 and Saturday 27 May the DOX Centre for Contemporary Art in Holešovice will be the venue for discussions, master classes with members of the Viennese ensemble, performances of works by art college students and a screening of the film Hyena. After last year's participation of Olga Neuwirth, the intersection of most of these activities will be another Austrian composer - Georg Friedrich Haas, who has become the artist in residence at this year's Prague Offspring Contemporary Music Weekend.

"First of all, I would like to say that I am extremely happy and honoured to be invited to the Prague Spring Festival. I feel a really strong connection to Prague. It is mainly thanks to Alois Hába, who is one of my favourite composers. I love to play him and I love to listen to him," says Georg Friedrich Haas. *"Back in 1987 I went to Prague to explore quarter-tone music. It didn't work out in the end; it just wasn't possible under communism. But Prague has always been an important cultural centre. I remind my students that Czechoslovakia was the seventh most advanced country in the world in the 1920s. Prague was more culturally significant than Vienna and perhaps even Berlin at that time. I'm really curious how Prague, as the cultural centre of Europe and in a sense the world, stands today!"* He adds.

He came to Prague with his wife, author, performer and BDSM coach Mollena Williams-Haas. She will be introduced to Prague Offspring audience as the protagonist of the musical film Hyena, a personal story of breaking free from alcohol addiction accompanied by the music of her husband.

"Composer-in-residence Georg Friedrich Haas and his wife Mollena Williams-Haas openly describe their sexuality, share their experiences of overcoming alcohol addiction and describe their journey to freedom from their Nazi family history. All of this leads to questions about where the boundaries between the intimate and the public lie and how their blurring translates into artistic creation," says festival Programme Director Josef Třeštík.

Two works by Haas will be performed at Prague Offspring. On the first night it will be *Who, if I shouted, who would hear me...* for drums and ensemble. The title is taken from a collection of poems by Rainer Maria Rilke, a Prague native who spent his early childhood here. *"I have always considered myself a politically conscious composer. But when the war in Kosovo started in 1998, I couldn't take this clear position,"* says Haas, explaining, *"What happened to the Albanians was undoubtedly genocide. On the other hand, the action of the North Atlantic Alliance against the Serbs was also a crime. I could not understand how these things happen. I could not even decide on a position. I couldn't even cry. I was disappointed."*

The Saturday concert on 27 May features Haas' composition *in vain*, the title of which means vainly or in vain. Here too there is a clear political and social line - it is a reaction to the rise of the far right in Austria, where after the 1999 elections the Party of the Free, led by the now-deceased nationalist Jörg Haider, entered the federal government. *"The over an hour-long composition composed for Klangforum Wien has not only a Brucknerian length, but also a sublime and transcendental dimension. The nervous movement of the micropolyphonic components gives way to fluctuating drones, even-tempered quarter and sixth notes clash with a harp tuned to a series of higher harmonics,"* music theorist Boris Klepal characterises the work in his text for the festival catalogue.

"All those who belong to the contemporary music scene consider in vain to be one of the few already recognised masterpieces for the 21st century," said conductor Simon Rattle, adding: *"As soon as people hear a minute of it, they long for a sequel."* The work *in vain* was premiered in 2000 by Klangfora Wien with conductor Sylvain Cambreling, to whom the work was dedicated. The piece will also be performed in Prague according to the instructions in the score, with lighting changes in the hall in some passages.

Kontakt pro novináře:

Juraj Gerbery, gerbery@festival.cz, +420 774 574 130

Fotografie ke koncertům Pražského jara 2023 jsou k dispozici zde:
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