



ernst von siemens
musikstiftung

Press Release, April 2016

Ernst von Siemens Music Prize for Per Nørgård

In 2016, for the first time, the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation will award over three million euros in total

On 2 May, the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation will award the international Ernst von Siemens Music Prize to the Danish composer Per Nørgård. Michael Krüger, President of the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts, will present the prize of 250.000 euros at a musical ceremony at the Prinzregententheater in Munich. Freiburg's ensemble recherche will play works by the prize winners.

'The appreciation for my work as a composer that is shown with this prize is truly heartwarming', stated the composer Per Nørgård in advance of this year's award ceremony. Per Nørgård is one of the most original composers of the North, and the unique significance of his work extends far beyond the Scandinavian borders. The advisory board of the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation wishes to honour the Danish composer, born in 1932, for a life's work that encompasses almost all musical genres. Nørgård's music is firmly rooted in the Scandinavian musical tradition, but has never been confined to it. Since earliest childhood, his creative work has been driven by a tireless curiosity: almost every new decade of the composer's life has been characterized by a unique compositional phase. His joy at the new leads Nørgård not simply to reflect on tried and tested means, but constantly to change the paradigms of his compositional approach – without ever being untrue to himself.

Nørgård grew up as the son of a textile merchant in a working-class neighbourhood in Copenhagen, where his parents had a bridal fashion shop. From an early age, Nørgård displayed a dual talent for music and painting. But he chose music and became a student of the Danish composer Vagn Holmboe at the age of 17, going shortly thereafter to study at the Royal Danish Music Academy from 1952-1955. 'Although many people thought I would become a painter, I knew from the start that it wasn't my path. It had to be music, as it contains infinity', says Nørgård as an explanation for this step. Nørgård's musical thought would revolve around the concept of infinity throughout his life. His work *Constellations* for 12 solo strings (1958) already hinted at this; but the full force of Nørgård's ideas first revealed itself in the chamber orchestra work *Voyage Into the Golden Screen* (1968). Here Nørgård developed a compositional technique that he called the 'infinity series', which he describes as 'the only theoretical model I have ever worked with'. This is a method in which the same musical structures are constantly unfolding at different levels, connected to one another and weaving a broad web – a concept that has unmistakable parallels with fractal geometry. This infinity-oriented approach culminated in Nørgård's Third Symphony (1974) – a massive work for large orchestra and two choirs. But the 'infinity series' is equally fundamental to the operas *Gilgamesh* (1972) and *Siddartha* (1974-1979).

This was followed in the early 1980s by a period in which Nørgård occupied himself intensely with Adolf Wölfli, a Swiss artist who spent the majority of his life in a psychiatric hospital after being diagnosed with schizophrenia. The irrational and chaotic now entered Nørgård's work, expressed in a heightened degree of complexity. Wölfli himself appears as a figure in the opera *The Divine Tivoli* (1982), and Nørgård's Fourth Symphony is also based on 'an idea from Wölfli'. Even very recently, this body of work still exerted its hold on Nørgård.

The Fifth Symphony, a single movement composed for the 125th birthdays of Carl Nielsen and Jean Sibelius, heralded another change in Nørgård's work. The pieces of the 1990s are marked by expressivity and almost surreal atmospheres. The listener is confronted with a chaotic, sometimes disturbing sound world. In those years, if not earlier, it also became clear that Nørgård had developed

into one of the greatest symphonists of his time. Each of the subsequent symphonies confirmed this through its uniqueness. A provisional climax was reached with Nørgård's Eighth Symphony (2012); but the unifying theme of his entire musical life is infinity, which gives reason to hope that his work too, which has long since become a life's work, will yet discover many beginnings, because: 'this mobile immobility, which is based on the fact that I can never end something as soon as it has started – you could call that my credo. The end is the beginning and the beginning is the end.'

2016 Composers' Prizes for Milica Djordjević, David Hudry and Gordon Kampe

This year, the three Composers' Prizes of the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation will go to the Berlin-based Serbian composer Milica Djordjević, David Hudry from France and Gordon Kampe from Essen, Germany. Each of these awards for promising young composers is endowed with 35,000 euros. In addition, the young artists will receive individually-produced portrait CDs which will be released in the autumn.

Award Ceremony on 2 May 2016 at the Prinzregententheater in Munich

The Ernst von Siemens Music Prize will be awarded to Per Nørgård on 2 May 2016 during a musical ceremony at the Prinzregententheater in Munich. Michael Krüger, President of the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts, will present this illustrious accolade. The eulogy will be given by the artistic director of the Bergen International Festival, Anders Beyer. The Composers' Prizes will be presented by Thomas Angyan, head of the board of trustees. Freiburg's ensemble recherche will play *Scintillation* (1993) and *Seadrift* (1978) by Per Nørgård, as well as *Intersections* (2014) von David Hudry. With *Hladan ti dah do grla* [Accursed Be Your Breath Down Into Your Throat] von Milica Djordjević and *Sachlicher Bericht* [Factual Account] from *Arien / Zitronen* [Arias / Lemons] by Gordon Kampe, two works composed especially for the award ceremony will also be performed.

This year too, a cooperation between the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation and Bavarian Radio will enable the entire award ceremony to be broadcast live worldwide at www.evs-musikstiftung.ch and www.br-klassik.de.

For the first time, the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation will award over three million euros. In total, the foundation will award a record sum of over 3.2 million euros in prize money and grants. The largest share of the support will once again go towards supporting contemporary music projects worldwide. From New York to St Petersburg, Bergen and Istanbul, roughly 130 projects will be given grants-in-aid for their outstanding commitment to contemporary music. In 2016, for the first time, the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation will provide not only the prizes but also funds for the new series *räsonanz – Stifterkonzerte*. This cooperation with the LUCERNE FESTIVAL and Bavarian Radio's *musica viva* began on 27 February at the Prinzregententheater in Munich, and will continue with one annual concert in Lucerne and Munich.

Note

The Ernst von Siemens Music Prize (EvS Music Prize) has been awarded annually since 1973 by the private Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation, based in Switzerland. It is not awarded by the Siemens company or the associated Siemens Foundation. It is therefore very important to ensure that the names of the foundation and the prize are reproduced correctly.

Contact and visual material:

Imke List and Dr Tanja Probstl | +49/(0)89/636-32947 | proebstl@evs-musikstiftung.ch

The latest pictures from the award ceremony can be downloaded from our homepage following the event: www.evs-musikstiftung.ch/de/presse