

BlueGreen for Saxophone Quartet und Orchestra (2004)

Duration: ca. 18'

Commission for the Philharmonisches Orchester der Landeshauptstadt Kiel

Première: 26./27.9.2004, Kiel, Philharmonisches Orchester der Landeshauptstadt Kiel,

Conductor: Georg Fritsch

Publisher: C. F. Peters Frankfurt

Introductory Text to the Composition:

A fictional conversation with the composer concerning the composition:

? How did you hit upon this unusual title, why this colloquial English?

B. F.: For many composers titles are important and are signposts, others are indifferent to the title which is only something necessary. For me the idea of a signpost is rather appropriate. Many of my titles have an English influence. The causes vary: the weighty and striking influences of Pop Music and Jazz during my early experiences of music (in the 1950s my father directed a Big Band performing such music as that of Glenn Miller), then also sometimes I need a necessary distance from my own language and culture through the medium of a foreign layering, and of course my own private and personal eccentricity! Blue and Green - these are simply my favourite colours. By association they free something in my unconscious, they stand for different situations, atmospheres, moods, they lead my compositional preparation, my initial outlines in which two polar and contrary elements appear :

The pulse/the energy/the eruptive structures and the lines/the embellishments/the song of the instruments - the two essential parts of my own musical world.

? Do you like the saxophone, how did you light upon the idea of a composition for Saxophone Quartet and Orchestra?

B. F.: Naturally I like this instrument, used either classically or for Jazz. The express cause was the request by Bruce Weinberger of the well-known Raschèr-Saxophonquartett for a new Concerto as well as the direct and definite Commission from GMD Georg Fritsch in Kiel.

As already mentioned, my father was a Jazz musician and had studied trombone in Würzburg in the 1950s and, in addition to his Jazz bands, had for many years conducted several Wind Orchestras. Coupled with this my grandfather had played classical violin, viola and clarinet.

I can well remember my first encounter with records in that phase of my childhood when I garnered my early musical experiences, when I tried my first instruments (a mouth organ, then the piano and later the flute). In our collection next to Beethoven's Egmont Overture stood a record with music by Glenn Miller and I listened countless times to "In the mood" alternating with Beethoven (I was then 6 or 7 years old). Some decades later, completed in November 2002, came a piece for 12 saxophones, the **Raschèr Fanfare** for the Raschèr Saxophonorchester (the circle closes...).

? You mentioned the pulse and the line; how can one as a listener get closer to how you worked with the material?

B. F.: I should have mentioned two other important elements: Homophony/Heterophony und Modality.

For some years I have travelled to Asia, especially Indonesia and India to get to know their culture. Through the many and varied impressions I have received during these travels I have reflected intensively on, among other things, my own musical past: my own European Tradition, my consciousness of its own musical values then dominated by the 19th century and by the Symphony Orchestra, the familiarity and use of the material, the Tonality and systems of tuning and temperament, the musicians' own understanding of themselves, and the almost forgotten tradition of Modes and of Improvisation. All this led me ineluctably to two pillars of musical comprehension: the pulse and the line, the rhythmic energy and the instrumental song.

? Have you used a special compositional form?

B. F.: BlueGreen is in seven parts, five Movements with a Prologue and an Epilogue. The Prologue and the Epilogue are played by a Solo Cello and a Harp, both of these fragile and sensitive instruments not being in the Orchestra but positioned by the audience - quasi at a distance to the European Orchestra, a distanced alternative world to the piece, to the orchestra, to the audience, yet also a building a bridge from the beginning to the end. The Solo Cello is also provocative, giving energetic thrusts (in the literal as well as the acoustic sense), bringing things "into motion".

The Movements 1,3 and 5 are given over to the tempo, to the pulse, to the rhythmic energy.

The in-between Movements 2 and 4 are rather still, introvert, songlike, linear, heterophone.

There is also an internal exchange between the Solo Cello and the Harp and the Orchestra; here already heard and recognised material appears again in the second movement and is transformed.

? How do you treat the Saxophone Quartet, do the parts require very virtuoso playing?

B. F.: The parts are not easy, but I knew I was composing for one of the best Quartets!

Sometimes the Soloists split apart, sometimes they play quasi homophone and in unison like a single strong voice (in order to "defend" themselves against the orchestra?), in the second Movement there is a duet between the soprano and the tenor saxophone, at the beginning of the fourth Movement a completely different joint "game" between the alto and the baritone saxophone.

Sometimes fields of energy between the individual solo saxophones as well as between the quartet and the orchestra should also occur bringing "new wind", provocation and exchange.

? What do you like listening to most at the moment?

B. F.: At the moment I play almost continuously a CD by the Lebanese musician and composer Mahmoud Turkmani: zakira.

A most interesting mixture of European and Arab Music!

? What are your next projects?

B. F.: After my Première of **BlueGreen** in Kiel in September 2004 comes a new Double Concerto for Flute, Oboe and Orchestra with its Première on the 31. October 2004 in Darmstadt; after that I am going to write Chamber Music: for Violin and Piano for Tokyo 2004, for the Züricher Kammerchor and a new piece for the Raschèr Saxophonquartett and Choir for the Dresdner Musikfestspiele.

In 2006/07 there are other large works: an orchestral piece in connection to Johann Sebastian Bach for Riccardo Chailly and the Gewandhausorchester and a vocal symphonic work for the Berliner Philharmonischen Chor – and "in-between" some exciting journeys....

Bernd Franke, August 2004