

On the Dignity of Man

For Mixed Choir and Saxophone Quartet

After a Text by

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola

Commission for the Sächsisches Vocalensemble

Première: 22.5.2005, Dresdner Musikfestspiele, Glashütte,
Sächsisches Vocalensemble, Raschèr Saxophonquartett

Duration: ca. 17'

Material: C. F. Peters Frankfurt

Further Information from www.BerndFranke.de

Introduction:

On the Dignity of Man is one of the key philosophical documents of the Renaissance, a speech by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, never given and only retained in written form.

Looking for a suitable text for my project for the Sächsischen Vocalensemble and the Raschèr Saxophonquartett I was pointed in the direction of this work because of its central theme by my friend, the writer David Bengree-Jones.

This corresponding short passage portrays the address which Pico has God give to the first man. It is to be found at the beginning of the *Oratio*.

I have not used the original Latin text but have rather set an English translation which I have divided into five short extracts.

The Choir and Saxophone Quartet hardly appear together; the five choral extracts are dovetailed and interlinked with the five short Movements for the Saxophone Quartet.

Both groups inhabit their own musical world. The choir is often used aleatorically and in a declamatory fashion; by way of minimal rhythmic shifts an, in-part, up to 20 voice polyphonic-modal picture is brought about giving an intended distance and timelessness.

The Saxophone Quartet is "more earthy", more energetic, more bound within its rhythmic and melodic structure, more concentrated in its handling of tone, - dirtier! Dovetailing and overlapping are produced by the use of a few central intervals such as the Fourth and the Fifth, sometimes "pushed aside" by Tritoni or "towers of fifths". Only in the closing part does the choir break out of its behavioural pattern and begins to shout, then to speak, finally reducing to a whisper. Up to this part really everything has already been said; and here begins the Reprise of certain extracts from the Text.

Bernd Franke 4.3.05