



Moritzburg Castle

MORITZBURG FESTIVAL

This summer the Moritzburg Festival will take music by British composers as its theme. The chamber music festival, taking place from 7 to 21 August, is located in a small village near Dresden. Under the artistic directorship of cellist Jan Vogler, musicians at the festival will demonstrate the influence that the UK has had on European music, particularly in the 16th, 17th and 20th centuries.

Works by Henry Purcell, Edward Elgar, Benjamin Britten and John Tavener will be performed, while artists performing at the event include Frank Peter Zimmermann, Nicola Benedetti, Colin Jacobsen, Benjamin Schmid, Antoine Tamestit, Alice Sara Ott, Antti Siirala and Andreas Haefliger. Each year the festival has a composer-in-residence; this year the job falls to Dresden-born Torsten Rasch, who has spent the last few years working in London.

'British chamber music is not very well known in this area,' explains Jana Friedrich, co-executive director of the festival with Mandy Jarsumbeck. But is programming little-known music a risky move? Friedrich is confident that it won't be: 'We can already tell that the audience is really looking forward to listening to the music. We always programme classical pieces that are rare or seldom heard and we can see from the last few years that the audience looks forward to discovering new pieces. They are really open to British music or whatever we offer them!'

And the festival has been growing in audience size over the last few years; spectators numbering around 6,000 are expected this summer. Increasing both the volume of concerts and the length of the event itself has meant that 'we usually sell 98 to 99 per cent of tickets!'

One obvious draw for audiences is the wide variety of unusual venues, including the Proschwitz Wine Estate, a Volkswagen car production plant, and the main venue, the Moritzburg Castle. 'This castle doesn't have a music tradition,' Friedrich explains. 'When Jan and his colleagues [Kai Vogler and Peter Bruns] decided to found the festival in 1993, they were looking for a venue which didn't have a strong music tradition, so they could establish something new.'

Certainly all the venues lend themselves well to chamber performances: 'The venues are really intimate so the audience is close to the stage. They can feel and experience the chamber music very closely.'

Now in its sixth year, the Moritzburg Festival Academy forms an important part of the event; this summer it will run from 1 to 15 August. Under the baton of Estonian conductor Anu Tali, 40 music students from across the world will play in the festival orchestra at the opening concert. The musicians may also perform several chamber concerts during the course of the festival. 'In the last few years the number of applicants has increased immensely,' says Friedrich. 'We have around 350 applications for a 40-person orchestra – that's quite a lot!' Students who are selected to learn, practice and perform in the academy are granted full scholarships with travel expenses, accommodation and food paid for. 'Everyone is invited to come regardless of their social status,' asserts Friedrich, 'so everyone can come even if they can't afford to travel to Europe.'

The academy is one way in which the festival could draw younger audiences, but Friedrich admits that most of the audience is over 50. 'We have established a

family concert where we invite younger children from the age of three to come and listen to the concerts,' she adds. 'It's really astonishing that the younger children always listen very carefully.' Most of the festival's audience come from the regional area, western and eastern parts of Germany, but several come from farther a field, including Asia and the US.

Moritzburg works with a budget of around €500,000, less than 20 per cent of which comes from state funding.

www.moritzburgfestival.de
Moritzburg Festival



Photos: © René Gaens

ANIMA DANCE

Rachel Brooker, director of Berlin-based dance theatre company Anima Dance, is currently working on a new piece entitled *Pas*, a French pun on the words for 'step' and 'not'. 'It's a solo work about the aftermath of trauma,' explains Brooker, who founded the group eight years ago. 'I've been reading about the commonalities

between people who have survived a childhood trauma, and soldiers who have post traumatic stress syndrome, and survivors of disasters like the tsunami in Japan.' *Pas* will have its premiere on 8 April at the city's Tanzfabrik venue.

Also premiering in April is *Bolero*. 'The name comes from a joke,' Brooker says. 'It is very much not about being bombastic like the beautiful music that the name come from, so the piece is about creating expectations that are then not fulfilled, or are inverted.'

Anima Dance allows Brooker to choreograph and perform solo works 'because they're easy to tour and I have the freedom of being on stage by myself as a choreographer. I can be somewhere on the line between performer and improvisation in that role.' However larger group work gives her the opportunity to 'relate to the audience compositional elements of the piece'.

Anima Dance is increasing its collaborative work as well; a performance and installation this year was called *Body on the Body*. 'This was a collaboration with a visual artist from Belgium, Kristof Meers,' Brooker states. 'I work with other artists quite often but this was on an equal level collaboration.' *Dancing on Ashes* will see Anima Dance teaming up with Berlin's Real Dance Super Sentai group, for a premiere in

June. 'We're creating a kind of apocalyptic cabaret,' Brooker notes. 'We're calling it a "hard-core Kunst cabaret" – so it's very artsy.'

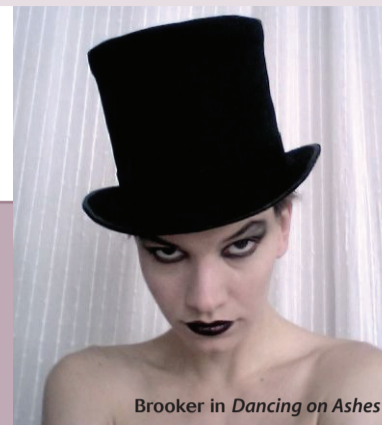
The repertoire of Anima Dance is certainly varied, and incorporates many of Brooker's own influences. 'In the last couple of years I've developed three interactive pieces that have more of an interactive role for the audience – that's been very important recently,' she says. 'I come from a very classical – not classical in the sense of ballet – but a classical modern dance background. I've been moving more in the direction of combining that with other mediums of theatre and sometimes performance art. For me what is really interesting is the staging of evocative states of ideas and personal experiences that can't be expressed with words, and the many different ways of getting at that.'

Brooker's transatlantic lifestyle also influences her work; originally from North Carolina in the US, she now lives in Berlin. 'I feel like there is a real love of raw movement in the US dance scene, especially outside New York, and then Berlin is just this fabulously conceptual place, and I do think I am able to get the best of both.' Two years ago, Brooker performed *My Patriot Act*, in Durham, North Carolina. 'It was a piece about being American in the modern political climate, especially being an American in Europe,' she explains. 'It was important to me to be perform that in North Carolina.'

Anima Dance tours about once a year, but Brooker points out that the location and piece varies from year to year. She has performed with the company across the North East of the US as well as Europe. At home in Berlin, Anima Dance does not have a permanent home, but is developing a relationship with a local art gallery, the Savvy Contemporary. 'This is really exciting for me because it offers opportunities outside of typical staging, because it's not a theatre,' Brooker asserts.

Anima Dance also carries out choreography projects with children in Berlin schools. However, she admits that her own creations aren't 'for a child's attention span'. Anima Dance is largely funded on a project-by-project basis, or through cultural institutions.

www.animadance.org – Anima Dance

Brooker in *Dancing on Ashes*

My Patriot Act