



Vito Žuraj, composer

Vito Žuraj's work is characterized by powerful and meticulously crafted compositions, tailor-made for the performers and often incorporating scenic elements and spatial sound concepts. Born in Maribor in 1979, his works have quickly gained recognition at major concert halls and festivals, interpreted among others by the New York Philharmonic, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble Modern and the RIAS Kammerchor.

Vito Žuraj kicked off the 2020/2021 season to great acclaim with *Begehren – zersplittert*, a concerto for harp and strings for which the twelve highest strings of the concert harp are retuned microtonally. Its world premiere at the Kölner Philharmonie was performed by soloist Marion Ravot and the Münchener Kammerorchester. The work was subsequently heard under the title *Désir – éclaté* at the Festival Nouveaux horizons in Aix-en-Provence, where it was conducted by the composer himself. In March 2021, Jean-Guihen Queyras and the Konzerthausorchester Berlin under Juraj Valčuha will premiere Žuraj's new cello concerto.

Vito Žuraj studied composition with Marko Mihevc in Ljubljana and then continued his studies with Lothar Voigtländer in Dresden and Wolfgang Rihm in Karlsruhe. His experience with the technology and aesthetics of electronic sound generation – gained during a master's programme in music technology with Thomas A. Troge and at the ZKM Karlsruhe, and consolidated through co-operations with the Experimentalstudio of the SWR and IRCAM – serves him not only for his own compositional work: as a professor of composition and music theory at the Music Academy of the University of Ljubljana since 2015, he initiated the establishment of an electronic music studio, parallel to his lectureship in Karlsruhe.

An avid tennis player, Vito Žuraj uses this experience as inspiration for a now-extensive series of works, including 2011's *Changeover* for instrumental groups and orchestra, premiered with the Ensemble Modern and the hr-symphony orchestra under Johannes Kalitzke. He has long been closely associated with the Ensemble Modern, which has since premiered several other of his works, including *The Voice of Battaros* (2020), *Runaround* (2014), *Überall* (2013), *Restrung* (2012), *Warm-up* (2012) und *Top Spin* (2011). The Ensemble Modern also featured a retrospective program of his work in 2017 – one of two concerts showcasing his work at the Elbphilharmonie in spring 2017, as the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester also gave the world premiere of his composition *Stand up!*.

Numerous other ensembles and orchestras regularly perform works by Vito Žuraj. The Klangforum Wien took his 2013 composition *Fired-up* on tour to Milan, Paris, and Vienna. The partially staged composition *Insideout* was premiered by the Scharoun Ensemble directed by Matthias Pintscher at the Salzburg Festival in 2013 and reprised by the New York Philharmonic in 2014 and Ensemble intercontemporain in 2016. Vito Žuraj's first opera, *Orlando. The Castle*, was premiered 2013 in the Theater Bielefeld, in cooperation with "Academy Opera Today", an initiative by the Deutsche Bank Foundation. *i-Formation*, a work for two orchestras and two conductors written for the 30th anniversary of the Kölner Philharmonie, premiered in 2016 with the WDR Symphony Orchestra under Jukka-Pekka Saraste and the Gürzenich-Orchester Köln under François Xavier-Roth.

Premieres in recent seasons include *Drive* for trio percussion and instrumental groups, as well as the ensemble composition *Tension*, performed at the Wittener Tage für Neue Kammermusik with the Klangforum Wien under Emilio Pomárico and reprised in Vienna under Peter Rundel. In addition, the Philharmonia Orchestra premiered the English version of his farce *Ubuquity* for soprano and ensemble, as a part of Vito Žuraj's composer's portrait in the Royal Festival Hall London in 2018. For the SWR Vokalensemble and the SWR Symphony Orchestra, he wrote the piece *Der Verwandler*, inspired by the alchemist Johann Friedrich

Böttger, inventor of the European porcelain. *Hors d'oeuvre* for chef-performer and chamber orchestra deals with rituals in cuisine and composition, and was premiered in June 2019 by the WDR Symphony Orchestra under Peter Rundel, together with star chef Daniel Gottschlich.

In 2016 Vito Žuraj was awarded the Claudio Abbado Composition Prize by the Berliner Philharmoniker's Karajan Academy. The prize included a commission for his composition *Alavó*, which was performed in Berlin, Paris and Lucerne. Vito Žuraj has also been honoured with the city of Stuttgart's composition award (2012) and the Prešeren Advancement Award, the highest decoration for artists in Slovenia (2015). In 2014 he was a recipient of fellowships from the German Academy Villa Massimo in Rome, Academy of Arts in Berlin and ZKM Karlsruhe. At the start of 2019 he was appointed by the German federal government for a three-year term to the jury that selects fellows for the German Academy Villa Massimo in Rome, Casa Baldi in Olevano, Deutsches Studienzentrum in Venice and Cité des Arts in Paris. As of 2020/2021, Vito Žuraj is artist in residence at The International House of Artists Villa Concordia in Bamberg, Germany.

Recordings of Vito Žuraj's works have been published on labels Capriccio and Neos, among others. A CD showcasing his work was also released by Wergo as part of the contemporary music edition of the German Music Council.

2020/2021 season

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