

ENSEMBLE NOBILES

CONCEPT PROGRAMME »DIETRICH B.«

Patroness: Dr. Margot Käßmann

Preamble

2020 marks the 75th anniversary of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's death. The Lutheran theologian and high-profile representative of the „Bekennende Kirche“ (the Confessing Church) was one of the best-known spiritual leaders in the resistance against the Nazi regime. In 1940 he was banned from public speaking, and a year later from writing and publishing. He was imprisoned on the 5th of April 1943, and as one of the last opponents of the Hitler regime, was executed on the 9th of April 1945 at the Flossenbürg concentration camp.

In the letters written during his imprisonment, Bonhoeffer developed his influential ideas for the future direction of the Lutheran church: standing in solidarity with the needy, and moving towards a non-religious interpretation of the Bible, ecclesiastical traditions and church services - ideas which to this day are still the foundation for theological education and for the dialogue on confessions and religions, both within the borders of Germany and far beyond.

Project idea

Throughout the world, the work and life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is honoured. He is commemorated annually on April 9th as an outstanding theologian in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the Church of England, the Church of Wales and the Episcopal church. Many schools, rectories and churches are named after him. On the west wall of Westminster Abbey in London, a Bonhoeffer statue is one of ten martyrs of the 20th century.

His words have been set to music by many composers. One outstanding example is the »Bonhoeffer-Motette« by the Berlin-based composer Manfred Schlenker: a moving setting of the poem »Von guten Mächten wunderbar geborgen«, which Bonhoeffer wrote in his last Christmas letter. It is the illuminating brilliance of his spiritual thought which has inspired us to initiate a project with an international dimension to honour Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

This international dimension will be in terms of both its creation and performance. Composers from Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand will take part, and Ensemble Nobiles will work in collaboration with local choirs around the world to perform the new works.

About the programm

The composers David Hamilton, Matthew Harris, Sandra Milliken, Alec Roth and Manfred Schlenker will be commissioned to write a motet, setting a text by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (mostly taken from the prayers for captives from 1943). They may choose to set the words in English, German or other language (a version in Maori is planned, for example).

Paul Heller will compose a setting of the ordinary of the mass, and in performance, the motets will be sung between the movements of the mass, to form a continuous sequence. Although conceived as a whole for Dietrich Bonhoeffer Project, the mass and the individual motets will be performable as separate works.

Composers for the motets

Alec Roth (Great Britain)

Manfred Schlenker (Germany)

David Hamilton (New Zealand)

Sandra Milliken (Australia)

Matthew Harris (USA)

Composer for the mass

Paul Heller (Germany)