

Performance Programme

Painted in Words

Concert-sound installation based on the aesthetics of surreal sound art

"Painted with Words" is a concert-sound installation based on Jewish Lithuanian-American painter and writer Samuel Bak. Born in Vilna (now Vilnius) in 1933, he survived the Holocaust in the Vilna Ghetto alongside his mother while losing his father and most of his family. This composition is inspired by Bak's memoir of the same name, published in 2002, as well as the imagination, memories and surrealist paintings of this unique artist. The composition is "painted in a surreal soundscape" and, to paraphrasing Bak's words in the book's introduction, is created as a stream of his memories and associations. The creative process raises questions - are the memories real? How do memories change our present state? These questions are answered from an artistic and psychoanalytical perspective. A great deal of attention is paid to Bak's subconsciousness - after more than half a century, his thoughts return to his childhood experiences and he travels through the traumatic experience of the Nazi occupation of Germany in photographic memory. The tragic fate of the Jewish people and their experiences in the ghettos became the central theme of the artist's work.

The creative process of this work becomes an important part of the artistic research in order to crystallise the essential features of the aesthetics of surreal sound art. "Painted in Words" becomes a work that combines three artistic researches, curated by the members of this creative team: the work raises questions about the materiality of musical instruments, objects and their influence on the artistic expression of the performer. The difference between the anticipated sound and its dream-like expression is highlighted. In this way, compositional, technical, choreographic, scenographic and other creative decisions are made with a conscious reflection on the aesthetics of surreal sound art (which would be presented in more detail in the introduction of the performance). A strong emphasis is placed on psychoanalytic theories, whose perceptual interpretations are applied throughout the process and projected into the Bak's subconsciousness. The creative team of the work includes pianist Julija Bagdonavičiūtė, actress-singer-painter Paulina Simutytė and composer Andrius Šiurys.

In this performance pianist Julija Bagdonavičiūtė plays MIDI keyboard and contrabass *kanklės* (Lithuanian folk instrument). This combination extends the timbral possibilities of the traditional piano and enhances the dream-like mood of the performance. Actress and singer Paulina Simutytė plays a mystical character from the distant past who communicates with us through associative language, symbolic movements and various singing techniques.

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Andrius Šiurys

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Andrius Šiurys (b. 1991) is a composer of electronic, academic instrumental and applied music, a performer in the music band “lazy diamond’s underground” (together with the singer of this project Paulina Simutyté), a member of the Lithuanian Composers' Union, and a doctoral student in Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre. His work combines musicality with surrealism, expression of the absurd, and various images. There is a pervasive presence of the theme of insomnia-night-mysticism, and a language of metaphors and symbols. In his academic compositions instrumental expression is usually combined with electronics, and the phonetic sound of language (simulation of an existing language) permeates. Drawings by Paulina Simutyté acting like prompts for the performers are scattered throughout the aleatoric fragments and improvisational sections of the scores. In 2023, Andrius wrote a composition “The silence? No, I haven't heard.” for “Meta Piano Trio” (the pianist of this project, Julija Bagdonavičiūtė, is a member of this trio).