

Interweaving words and music in art song repertoire: Theory, practice, multidisciplinary

In singing, words and music are produced simultaneously, and by the same apparatus. Thus, already on the physiological level a singer is required to pacify contradicting logics and requirements.

Even more complicated are the parallel mental activities: Music, as well as language, must be *thought* on different levels while they are produced.

In my lecture, I compare theories and essays (Kofi Agawu, Roland Barthes, Wayne Koestenbaum, and others) about the interconnections of language and music in the vocal repertoire and in its interpretation. I will then discuss the impact of these theories on vocal practice and examine their usefulness.

Obviously, in song repertoire - where often complex poetry is set to elaborate music, thus cancelling old armistices of hegemony - these questions are acutely important. In my opinion, they amount to a kind of “interpretation ethics”: Has the composer answered all questions I might have about the poem for me, and is a mere phonetic clarity of the phonemes all I need to provide? Or am I beholden to the poet as well as the composer? Am I allowed (or even required) to develop my own ideas about meaning, prosody, or attitude of the poem, and incorporate them in my interpretation?

In my presentation I will give examples (singing at the piano), raise questions, and try to establish a discourse between verbalized theoretical knowledge and the implicit, non-verbal knowledge of vocal practice, to provide an insight into the singer’s (often intuitive) strategies of “translation” and appropriation.

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I have been working as a composer and a singer since my childhood.

I always thought of this double activity (even if it was often interpreted as indecisiveness) as a potential gift of wealth in which both professions can enrich and fertilize one another.



After having been given the opportunity to do important composition work already in my early 20s (large commission works for Musikverein and Konzerthaus Vienna and others, productions for the radio and on CD), I changed focus, starting a relatively intense activity as a concert and opera singer (Musikverein and Konzerthaus Vienna, the opera houses of Frankfurt and Magdeburg, the Berlin Philharmonie, the Antikenfestspiele Trier, the Chigiana Festival in Siena, the Musiktage Mondsee, and some other leading European venues).

In both fields I have won international prizes and grants, and I expanded my spectrum even further by occupying myself as a teacher, coach, cabaret artist, translator of poetry, and chansonnier.

In 2014, I completed an artistic research doctorate at the University of the Arts in Graz/Austria.

Another important activity is my work as a vocal teacher and coach which I have been performing quite happily for many years. In 2015 I was appointed as a University Professor by the University Mozarteum in Salzburg.

My first book "*Like a desire*". *Words and music in the interpretation of vocal music (not only) of the fin de siècle* has been published by the renowned German publishing house [transcript] in the autumn of 2018.