

## SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

The PhD thesis *INCIPIT: The search for a new multidisciplinary language at the crossroads of Antiquity and Contemporaneity* focusses on the influence of the methodology of Historically Informed Performance practice on the creation of a Contemporary Music Theatre performance. The framework and creative basis for their connection is the *Divina Commedia* of Dante Alighieri (1265-1321). In music theatre it is not only about music as one of the scenic elements; musical thinking structures the entire theatrical process. It is a genre-between-genre, where various art disciplines interact. Historically Informed Performance practice is a characteristic musical approach of the Early Music movement. It includes study of historical documents and objects in order to obtain a more profound understanding of the music and a performance practice which is based upon this comprehension. In our thesis, Historically Informed Performance practice has been connected with Contemporary Music Theatre through a mise-en-scene of Dante's *Commedia*, principally based upon its sonorous non-musical and musical references. Also references of movement, gesture, colour and light were taken into account for the mise-en-scene, but always in relation to the sonorous references. In this way, the mise-en-scene is a sonorous journey through Dante's Afterworld as he might have imagined it, but also a contemporary visual and dramatical journey.

This research has been done through artistic practice: the creation and performance of a contemporary music theatre work called *Incipit*. It is based upon thorough knowledge of the *Commedia* and, through its methodology of Historically Informed Performance Practice, it has mostly made use of 14<sup>th</sup> century musical sources. An audio file was created as a sonorous element for *Incipit*, based on previously existing sounds and recording of songs and texts. The performance was recorded in video format. The research question was:

How do the work methods taken from Historically Informed Performance practice contribute to the creation of a contemporary music theatre performance in a mise-en-scene of the *Divina Commedia*?

For this practice-based research not only historical-musical knowledge was necessary but also literary knowledge of Dante's *Commedia* and its underlying meanings. Theoretical knowledge thus was an important basis for the practice. However, the practice itself also provided information for the theory. For the composition of three-voice "simple polyphony" according to the rules for polyphonic improvisation around 1300, theoretical knowledge was essential, but their practice led to historical-musical insights of its performance and its rules for intervallic and rhythmic matters. The practice provided a new perspective on Dante's narrative from a sonorous point of view. Finally, the practice combined two disciplines, Early Music and Contemporary Music Theatre,

which are not commonly combined, and it provides us new theoretical insights of creative processes and musical-theatrical languages.

The thesis is subdivided into seven chapters. The first three are the theoretical chapters about the research areas. Chapter 4 is also a theoretical chapter but analyses the musical references of the *Commedia*, essential to the sonorous part of *Incipit*. The remaining three chapters are focussed on the creative process. Chapter 1 is about Early Music and Historically Informed Performance Practice. It first explains the development of the Early Music movement and its journey from the concept of “authenticity” to that of “historically informed performance”. It then discusses a similar but inherently different movement within the Church, which is important for our understanding of the difference between Late-Medieval and 20<sup>th</sup> century chants. It then continues with the historical-musical issues for the sounds in the *Commedia*, such as the secular and ecclesiastical performance practices, the theory of the Harmony of the Spheres, Pythagorean tuning system and its consequences, the Church modes, voice and instruments in the Late Middle Ages, and musical notation and its relationship with Medieval performance practice.

Chapter 2 is about the *Commedia*, as Dante called the work himself, from the perspective of Literature Studies. First, it discusses the context in which it was created. Then, it gives an overview of the structure of Dante's Afterworld according to his chronological journey. Subsequently it discusses the interpretations of his narrative that have been the inspiration for *Incipit*, and finally a section is dedicated to Dante's Metaphysics.

Chapter 3 is about Contemporary Music Theatre. It discusses its predecessors and different forms throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since this type of music theatre is a genre-between-genre, it encompasses an extended field of differentiated artistic initiatives and is open to the combination of various art disciplines, always from a musical point of view. Its borders are not always clearly definable and it overlaps with other multidisciplinary fields such as dance theatre or performance.

Chapter 4 describes the musical references in the *Commedia*. It is a critical survey of their literal and symbolical significance within Dante's narrative. Although Inferno, realm of Anti-Music, apparently only contains noises, there are several parodic referrals to music. Purgatory, where music is a means for purgation, is the canticle which is most specific in its description of actual chants and the way they are sung by the souls. In Paradise reigns superhuman music, therefore it contains numerous musical references, but very few of them are specific and indicate an existing chant: they are above human music.

Chapters 5 and 6 show different aspects of the creative process. Chapter 5 is about the historical musical sources and their transcription, while chapter 6 is about the creative process of composing and recording the soundtrack, and about the rehearsals. Chapter 5 also discusses the choice of chants for Paradise in the music theatre work *Incipit* and the composition of additional voices for the chants in Paradise according to the rules around 1300. Chapter 6 first treats the underlying concepts of *Incipit* and its references in the artistic world. Then it describes the creative process in two steps: the first part of composing, rehearsing and recording the soundtrack, and the second part of the physical rehearsals in the theatre.

Chapter 7 is an overview of the actual mise-en-scene of *Incipit*. It is a technical description of the performance from the beginning until the end, but provides an explanation of the meaning or origin of each theatrical element.