

Donau- eschingen Memories

1

I confess. Until that evening in October 2009, when I went to the Donaueschinger Musiktage for the very first time, I thought it was »just another festival« of new music in Germany. I had traveled to Freiburg to participate in a series of workshops on live-electronics, organised by Orm Finnendahl at the Hochschule für Musik. After one of the workshop days, Orm took us to the opening night of this apparently very important festival that was running in the picturesque town of Donaueschingen. During the one-hour car drive along winding roads and dark, mythical forests, he promised us that »it will be quite something«.

Then Orm suddenly hit the breaks. We arrived. At. A. Sports. Hall. Outside there was a long line of people waiting to cross the threshold into this most sacred of buildings. Scanning the line, I was surprised by how age-diverse these people were. I noticed many (!) people of my age, going all the way up to 80-plus year-old new music die-hards, handsomely dressed and coiffed.

Something was definitely »up«. The air was crackling with expectation and I felt a pleasant warmth run through my spine. Once inside the sports hall, the SWR Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden und Freiburg was premiering Mathias Spahlinger's three-hour »orchestral installation« *doppelt bejaht*. Later that evening, the same orchestra would offer us a completely different, though not less radical experience with Manos Tsangaris' *Batsheba. Eat The History!*, a music theatre in different stations and rooms.

It wasn't a particularly gentle »first time« at Donaueschingen, but definitely a memorable one. By the time we drove home, I was rife with thoughts and feelings, many of them conflicting and as winding as the road. It was indeed »quite something«.

2

August 30, 2010

Email from Armin Köhler to Nadar Ensemble:

Dear friends,

I would like to invite you to Donaueschingen 2012

--- take place October, 19–21.

Please be so kind to contact me.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Armin Köhler

3

October 16, 2012

The continuous laughter that had filled the Nadar van in the last stretch of our drive from Antwerp to Donaueschingen, was still ringing in my ears while stepping into the empty, gigantic Bartóksaal of the Donauhalle. People of the SWR were running in and out with cables and call sheets. Pieter and I looked at each other, giggling nervously. »Holy shit! This hall is enormous!«, we uttered unisono. »I hope it won't be only half-way full, that always brings such a bad vibe to a concert«, Pieter added, reading my mind.

