

Antoine Beuger

Whistle while you work

The history of whistling in music is a turbulent one. For every “(Sittin’ On) The Dock Of The Bay”, there is a “Winds Of Change” by The Scorpions. Dutch composer Antoine Beuger’s *Keine Fernen Mehr* might be the first time this simplest form of human expression has found its way into modern composition. It is his seventh release on Wandelweiser, which he has run for almost a decade, and while this is the first to strip his music to such an elemental sound, it follows the label’s calm, quietly poetic aesthetic. “Just a few tones, just a bit of moving air” is his answer to the question, “What do we need to make music?”

The score instructs the performer (in this instance Beuger himself, who plays it through twice) to whistle 17 soft melodies, or rather to “whisper them very softly to oneself”. That number reflects the structure of a haiku, two beautiful examples of which are found in the sleeve notes, each a reference to the favourite flower of the person commemorated in the music.

As a distillation of expression, the haiku mirrors Beuger’s music perfectly. Written in memory of the mother of a close friend, *Keine Fernen Mehr* is a humanistic eulogy not only to its dedicatee, but also to a way of living almost lost to modern society. Its simplicity makes a radical statement at a time when “I feel vanity prevails and humility should be rediscovered,” he says. “Musical depth, as I see it, is not in technical sophistication or in pretended conceptual or compositional complexity. It is in recognising the infinite complexity of each single tone and in giving sounds the possibility to become a place, where worlds might unfold, rather than cluttering them up with stuff, that may have a fascinating appearance at first, but in fact prevent the unfolding of richness and depth.” □ Antoine Beuger’s *Keine Fernen Mehr* is out on Wandelweiser

Richard Pinnell



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