

Gilead Mishory

“Lider-Togbuch” (Song-Diary) (1998)

In memoriam Michael Hofmann (1960–1997)

After poems in Yiddish by Abraham Sutzkever

From the huge oeuvre of the great Yiddish poet Abraham Sutzkever (born in Vilnius 1913, lives in Tel-Aviv) Gilead Mishory chose thirteen poems, which suggest, as a form, a journey through a day in the poet's life: it begins with the sun (1) and another kind of waking up (2) and ends with nightly visions (11, 12) and with the question what remains from all of it (13). In between is the day, with its questions about creation (of art, parallel to the creation of the world through God), about love, death, time. Holocaust and memory, as always by Sutzkever, play normally a hidden, but a major role. Nevertheless, the poems are full with sensuality and positive look at life.

“Lider-Togbuch” was composed as a commission of the city of Munich and was premiered there within the Book-Week of 1998. The composer at the piano is playing, reciting, singing, and the audience can follow the text and its translation. The whole cycle is about 60 minutes in length, not including the introduction.

Since its first performance, “Lider-Togbuch” came on many other stages in Germany, Italy, France, Switzerland and the United States, including the “Yiddish Summit” in Strasbourg, 2001, the opening of the German “Week of Brotherhood” 2003, and as the opening-event of the conference in the Heidelberg University about “Forms of artistic memory in Eastern Europe”. In 2004 it was performed in Vilnius, Sutzkever's hometown, at an invitation of “Goethe-Institut”.

Reactions:

“Mishory has put poems ... by Sutzkever into one cycle. He translated the expressiveness, the surrealism, with which Sutzkever reflects about the Holocaust, into a bizarre, troubled musical language. A climax of this most interesting music-week”

(R. Jungwirth, Bavarian Radio, about the Music-Week in Elmau, July 1998)

"Mishory is forcing himself without any mercy in his "Lider-Togbuch"... playing the piano, singing, reciting the word-music, into a "wounded region" (as he called it in his introduction): His music burns itself ... into memory"

(E. Kohlhaas, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)

"The Cycle lives from the exciting dialogue between a text reciting, which at times turns into singing, and a harmonically concentrated, almost atonal musical language, which does not only "hammer" the chords, but also develops a rich, creative "musikant"-style. The message of the text is very often translated directly into music.

A Finale-Evening, a first-rate creation, unusual in its style, which has given the outstanding programme of this week a new perspective"
(EG, Ruhr Nachrichten, about the conclusion of the "Mommenta 2001" in Dortmund)

„The songs have a tremendous dramatic power... It was moving and sad, profound and shaking“.

(The Lantern, Columbus, Ohio. April 2007)