INTRODUCTION

meer, teich, schwefelquelle

In Spring 2008, I received a commission by the Austrian Ensemble Wiener Collage to create a small ensemble piece which was to relate in some way to August Strindberg. While reading the book Der Andere Strindberg, I came across a passage where Strindberg describes his improvisational method of painting during his leisure time: he chooses a rather small canvas or cardboard so that he can finish the painting in two or three hours (or as long as the inspiration lasts). He begins painting with a vague idea, which then changes in the course of the painting process. Finally, his wife comments enthusiastically on the painting, perceiving the painting in a very different way than Strindberg himself.

The title of my composition – ***meer, teich, schwefelquelle*** ("sea, pond, sulphur spring") – alludes to the three fundamental steps of creation which are described in the passage mentioned above: idea (=meer/sea), realization of the idea (=teich/pond), reception by a third person (=schwefelquelle/sulphur spring).

Reading this passage by Strindberg made a strong impact on my work as a composer. ***meer, teich, schwefelquelle*** was created in a manner similar to that which Strindberg applied in his painting. At the beginning of the compositional process, I began writing – without sketches – with only a vague idea what I would write in the next measure or the next day. Each day, I concentrated on one or a very few bars; I created one small canvas after another. When I realised that the piece began flowing in a certain direction, I abandoned this compositional approach. Like Strindberg, I gave up numerous ideas or modified them when I realised that they didn't turn out to be what I had expected; each day, the sea turned into a pond.

Since composing meer, teich, schwefelquelle, I differentiate between compositions which are more or less exactly planned before the actual process of composition and compositions where I plunge in at the deep end. Needless to say, the latter compositions require an extremely high concentration level.