

# SPECTRA

## CD: a tension

### Four Flemish composers of international stature

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Wynold Verweij for Klassiek Centraal



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**SPECTRA, ensemble for new music, focuses with its new CD *a tension* on four Flemish composers who got their inspiration from abroad.**

Karel Goeyvaerts (1923-1993), born and raised in Antwerp, went to Paris to learn from Olivier Messiaen that rhythm and timbre, as well as pitch, are equally important musical parameters. He later developed this in multiple series, i.e. serialism. Frederik Neyrinck (b. 1985) studied in Brussels, Stuttgart, Graz and worked in Vienna. Filip Rathé (b. 1966), conductor of SPECTRA since 1993, takes Spanish and Portuguese poetry as the point of departure for most of his compositions. Luc Brewaeys (1959-2015), finally, has collaborated extensively with Iannis Xenakis, Brian Ferneyhough and Franco Donatoni.



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The CD opens with Goeyvaerts' *Zum Wassermann* for 14 musicians, a preliminary study of the opera *Aquarius*, or more precisely: a shortened and simplified version of the first four scenes of the first act. This is the first time that *Zum Wassermann* is released on CD. The *Vorspiel* depicts man's futile attempt to escape the demands of society and his failure to achieve a minimum of individuality. A dance in the second movement (*Erwachen*) briefly gives the impression that man is awakening, but the percussion makes it clear that freedom is not up for grabs. The lyrical third movement (*Gesang*) shows a glimmer of hope thanks to its melodic beginnings, reinforced by the harmonic weaves in this movement. The femininity of this third movement gives way to hardened masculinity in the final section (*Zum Wassermann*). The many repetitive movements refer to a rational approach that silences the creative elements in society.

### Psychology

Frederik Neyrinck performs *Gestalt VIII* for mixed ensemble with "viola as quasi-soloist", written for SPECTRA in 2013. The piece is indeed based on Gestalt psychology, a school of thought that states that the whole is bigger and more important than the individual parts. *Gestalt VIII* is part of a ten-part series in which a similar musical content is illuminated from different perspectives each time. In this movement, the viola begins with a solo that is then increasingly maneuvered away by duos of winds, strings and percussion. The duos sometimes base themselves on parts of the solo, but skillfully strip away any tendency to individualism. The piece ends in a mysterious haze of distant sounds.

In *El agua y la muerte*, for small ensemble and voice, Filip Rathé declares his love for two poems by Federico Garcia Lorca. The first part, *La muchacha dorada*, depicts the lovely murderousness of a body of water, where the piano blends innocent tinkling of the surface with the dark and deadly undercurrents. Dragonflies and swallows complete the dance of death for a drowned girl. Clever resonances of the soundboard underline a sense of displacement. In *Un arcángel de frío*, the second poem, piano, voice and violin, among others, tell the story of a boy who freezes to become an archangel on the banks of a river. The instrumentation varies from mumbling and sighing of the (male) voice, via melodic piano fragments to hesitant violin passages that seem to want to have little to do with each other. Everyone seems to want to process the event in their own way.



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## Sound colour

The icing on the cake is the final piece *Fêtes à tensions: (les) eaux marchent* for 20 musicians by Luc Brewaeyts, which is also released on CD for the first time. If you read the title aloud without using the article, you will hear a typical Brewaeyan play on words: watch out for the marches! Or for the stairs, of course. The piece is richly furnished with quotations from Tchaikovsky, Ives, Berg, Varèse, Beethoven and even Goeyvaerts and Debussy. The composition is dedicated to Brewaeyts' contemporary Philippe Hurel, a French composer of so-called spectral works. This is a musical style of writing that focuses on timbre as a structuring element. This technique is mainly used in the first movement, and therefore comes across as slightly nervous. The basis for the second movement is the funeral march from Beethoven's 3rd Symphony, a meditative adagio that slowly slides into a coda based on repeated percussion. The piece ends very abruptly, as if the power went out.

The end result of *a tension* is a balanced and subtle selection of sparkling contemporary classical work. Curious, bright, restless, and above all open-minded.



**WHAT:** *a tension*

**WHO:** SPECTRA Ensemble

**COMPOSERS:** Goeyvaerts, Neyrinck, Rathé, Brewaeyts

**SLEEVE TEXT:** Mark Delaere

**LABEL:** Explicit! Records, KTC 1759