

## YORK HÖLLER - BIOGRAPHY

Born in Leverkusen in 1944, Höller studied composition in Cologne with B. A. Zimmermann and Herbert Eimert, and piano with Alfons Kontarsky, as well as music education and musicology. He received important impulses from Karlheinz Stockhausen and Pierre Boulez, having frequently worked at Boulez's IRCAM institute in Paris. His oeuvre encompasses an opera (THE MASTER AND MARGARITA, premiered in 1989 in Paris), orchestral works, chamber and piano music, as well as electronic and live-electronic compositions. From 1990 to 1999 he was artistic director of the Studio for Electronic Music of the West German Radio (WDR), and is currently Professor of Composition at the Cologne College of Music.

York Höller attained international fame as a result of numerous performances throughout Europe and in the USA and a number of CD releases of his works, and not least with his orchestral work AUFBRUCH (departure), which was composed as a commission from the German parliament on the occasion of its departure from Bonn.

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From 1963–70 Höller studied composition (with Bernd Alois Zimmermann and Herbert Eimert), piano (with Alfons Kontarsky) and orchestral conducting at the Cologne College of Music, as well as musicology and philosophy at Cologne University, earning his teaching certificate in 1967. He also owes important impulses to the Darmstadt Summer Courses, particularly Pierre Boulez's analysis seminars. In 1971, after a short time as solo répétiteur at Bonn's Stadttheater, he for the first time received an opportunity, at the invitation of Karlheinz Stockhausen, to realize several of his own works in the Electronic Studio of the West German Radio (WDR) in Cologne. During the following years he quickly attained international renown with compositions that presented instrumental-vocal and electronic or computer-generated sounds in lively, imaginative syntheses. Starting in the mid 1960s, Höller realized several of these works at the Parisian research institute IRCAM, at the invitation of Pierre Boulez.

Paris became the second home to the "border crosser" between Germany and France, who increasingly also adopted elements of French musical aesthetics, and it was in Paris, at the Grand Opéra, that his opera THE MASTER AND MARGARITA (after Michail Bulgakow) was premiered to great acclaim in 1989. After teaching for fourteen years as instructor of analysis and music theory at the Cologne College of Music, in 1991 he assumed the artistic direction of the newly established WDR Studio for Electronic Music, a position he held until 1999. In 1993 he was appointed Professor of Composition at the "Hanns Eisler" College of Music in Berlin, assuming the same position at the Cologne College of Music in 1995 as successor to Hans Werner Henze. Höller has received numerous international commissions, scholarships (to the Cité des Arts in Paris and the Villa Massimo in Rome), and awards (the Bernd Alois Zimmermann Prize of the City of Cologne, the Promotion Prize of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, the Prize of the International Composers' Forum of the UNESCO, and the Rolf Liebermann Prize for Opera Composers), and has been invited to lecture and give composition courses at universities and colleges in Europe and America. In 1986 the French Minister of Culture named him Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres de la République Française, since 1991 he has been a member of the Berlin Academy of the Arts, and since 2006 a member of the Free Academy of

the Arts in Hamburg.

Among the composers of the middle generation in Europe, Höller is one of the most original and unconventional – an artist who has never let himself be appropriated by schools and aesthetic dogmas. Already early on he critically explored serial music and aleatoric and stochastic models of composition, took up impulses from the philosophical and scientific approaches to information and Gestalt theory, and developed from them his concept of "Gestalt composition," which also owes important aspects of inspiration to the Indian raga and the Arabian maqam techniques, and above all to medieval isorhythmics. It serves as the syntactic basis of a highly personal musical language that attempts to combine subjective impulse and rational control, construction and sensuousness of sound. His Bulgakow opera as well as his large orchestral and ensemble works display a subtle balance of meticulously exact, rationalized structure and highly expressive diction that does not eschew the rapture of color, dramatic gestures, or emotional emphasis. "For me," Höller has said, "the quest for beauty, in the broadest sense of the word, is not a response to an ideology, but rather to an immense challenge (if one does not want to content oneself with the clichés of postmodern neotonality) – a utopia that takes an exceptional effort to work on in a time like ours."

*Monika Lichtenfeld, music journalist*

"He is the most talented composer of his generation in Germany."

*Karlheinz Stockhausen*

"He is one of the few composers who enjoy my highest esteem."

*Pierre Boulez*

"York Höller numbers among the very few German composers who have something convincing to offer in the combination of instrumental and electronic sounds: intelligence, tonal fantasy, and constant, critical searching. An independent artistic personality."

*Fono Forum 12/93*

"...six compositeurs — les plus grands d'aujourd'hui — de Boulez à York Höller..."

*France Soir, Paris*

"... the most consistently impressive of German modernists".

*The Independent, London*