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Review of Wesselin Karaatanassov's engraving of Chaya Czernowin's *Unforeseen Dusk: Bones into Wings* (2023)

Composition is an art form which travels through many layers of communication before it ever becomes audible. One of the most critical steps in this process, which remains separate from but interlinked with the composing itself, is the creation of a performance score and parts. In truth, engraving work is often overlooked because of the invisible labor behind it. Yet, in the context of high-pressure performance situations, well-prepared materials are vital in order to convey the composer's ideas, save rehearsal time and convince the musicians to fully believe in the music.

Wesselin Karaatanassov, one of the leading engravers working in the music publishing world today, has been the primary engraver of Chaya Czernowin's music at Schott Music Mainz since 2009. His contributions include dozens of major works from her oeuvre, including chamber music, pieces for sinfonietta and orchestra, as well as her full-length operas *Infinite Now* (2016) and *Heart Chamber* (2019). In Karaatanassov's eyes, engraving is an extension of the musical act, and one which demands the highest levels of precision, creativity and dedication. His total commitment to producing the most direct and aesthetic scores possible is both the continuation of a longer publishing tradition, and one which requires constant innovation to clearly communicate the experimental concert music of our time.

Unforeseen Dusk: Bones into Wings (2023) is one of the large-scale symphonic works produced by Chaya Czernowin in recent years. Over approximately half an hour, the work explores a huge span of emotions and timbral possibilities over a vast single-movement form. The piece combines Czernowin's research on extended vocal expression within a sea of shifting instrumental materials which amplify, extend, and challenge the voices. The work also includes a major fixed electronic component.

The piece was a co-commission of the New York Philharmonic, the Donaueschinger Musiktage and the Ernst von Siemens Musikstiftung for the Neue Vocalsolisten. The first performance, for which I was present, took place in Donaueschingen in Fall 2024, with Vimbayi Kaziboni conducting the SWR Symphonieorchester and the Neue Vocalsolisten. This was followed by a further co-premiere in a revised version by Brad Lubman conducting students from the Juilliard Orchestra alongside the New York Philharmonic with the Neue Vocalsolisten in Fall 2025.

To communicate many details of the work, meticulous engraving and editing were required. Indeed, Czernowin's works present notational challenges which require creative engraving solutions. Many of these are at (or even past) the limits of what current notation software can easily produce, making it necessary to find work-arounds in the software, or to design complex graphic symbols which complement the more standard notational elements. In this sense, Wesselin Karaatanassov is likely one of the few engravers capable of maintaining visual integrity to the original manuscript, due to his technical skillset and visual imagination. Mr. Karaatanassov brings to his engraving not only a detail-oriented eye and decades of experience, but his own custom-designed fonts, glyphs, and hand-drawn graphic elements. He uses these exclusively in Czernowin's scores for Schott.

In addition to the main score and parts, *Unforeseen Dusk: Bones into Wings* required a piano reduction of ninety-five pages, which presented considerable logistical challenges. For instance, this work's metaphoric and abstract sound world includes various sounds and playing techniques (i.e. massive string glissandi) which are not reproducible in a one-to-one fashion. Mr. Karaatanassov's background in composition helped him to reorient the original rehearsal material in an inventive way for the pianist, while maintaining the rehearsal functionality for the vocalists. Another unique challenge of this project was the necessity to create multiple versions of the score: versions formatted for iPad, as well as for print edition, something which is

uncommon within a single project. The countless graphic elements in the piece had to be constantly reformatted across each individual part and score, demanding hours of extremely detailed adjustments.

In my capacity as an Associate Editor of the works for Chaya Czernowin since 2021, I have worked in close conjunction with Mr. Karaatanassov on twenty scores of Chaya's over the past five years. While my role is primarily focused on text editing, notational corrections and creating legends/performance materials, I am also actively involved in discussions with him regarding notational solutions and proposals. It is a constant learning experience to work by Mr. Karaatanassov's side, and to find solutions which honor the possibilities of the music.

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