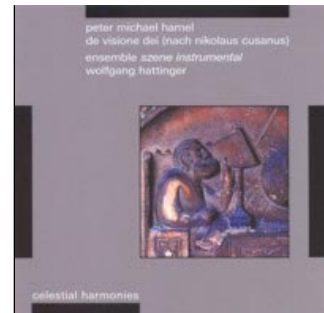


celestial harmonies

de visione dei
in search of god
(inspired by nikolaus cusanus)
composed by peter michael hamel
ensemble *szene instrumental*
conducted by wolfgang hattinger
celestial harmonies 13193-2
cd - 0 1371 13193 2 3
file classification: contemporary/
sacred/catholic/instrumental



the composer

Peter Michael Hamel ranks as one of the best-known and most successful German composers of his generation. He studied music, psychology, and sociology in Munich and Berlin and continued his education abroad, spending three extensive periods in Asia. He has drawn inspiration from Asian philosophies and religions and from his encounter with the works of Jean Gebser and C.G. Jung to present a music that seeks to make itself accessible to the listener through meditative experience and self-exploration. Hamel's oeuvre is diverse and encompasses chamber music, choral works, operas, and music for theatrical productions. Hamel has undertaken commissions for the Berlin Festwochen and the Salzburg Festival, and has performed interpretations of his own works for piano and organ in international concert tours.

the conductor

Wolfgang Hattinger studied composition, conducting and clarinet at the Music University in Graz. As a musicologist he also worked on questions of contemporary aesthetics in the arts. At present he is teaching musical theory (analysis, counterpoint, theory of harmony) at the Music University in Graz and is artistic director and producer of a concert series devoted to contemporary music, called open music. His conducting experience comprise chamber ensembles as well as symphony orchestras; he has been conducting at the Vereinigte Bühnen Wien and at the Stadttheater Klagenfurt, among others.

the music

Peter Michael Hamel calls his latest composition to be issued on CD a *sacred musical theater*; it is – as one might expect from Peter Michael Hamel – a sacred piece on the one side inspired by the writings of the medieval German mystic Nicolaus Cusanus, and yet on the other side a non-denominational piece by a composer who looks at Buddhism and Christianity, indeed at all expressions of Faith, with equal interest and benefit. Scored for 8 brass, 2 percussion and organ, the work really has no parallel in the late 20th century literature, except maybe for a vague resemblance to Olivier Messiaen's 'Couleurs de la cité céleste' (1964) if it weren't for the fact that Hamel uses an organ in the place of Messiaen's piano. And other than Messiaen's strict devotion to Catholicism, Hamel's relationship with religion is less dogmatic, more open to other streams of faith, and more spiritual in an overall sense. Thus the work is not your common avant-garde piece to be performed at a music festival for the critics and soon forgotten. It's a living piece, at times even relating to Hamel's improvisations as a keyboardist in quoting phrases in the score which listeners might identify as having originated some time ago in one of Hamel's many recordings of improvised music. Whilst the work is played from a score, it nevertheless retains an openness more often found in music not written down; it doesn't sound like a composed work but rather as a performed work, showing the extremely close and understanding attitude on the part of the mostly Austrian musicians and their young conductor, Wolfgang Hattinger, the founder and leader of Austria's remarkable ensemble *szene instrumental* which performed the world premiere in 1997.

the ensemble

szene instrumental was founded in 1994 by Wolfgang Hattinger with the aim to co-produce portraits of contemporary composers of the Austrian national radio network (ORF). From the very beginning it was conceived as a chamber orchestra for the realisation of specific projects rather than as an ensemble playing a long list of 20th century repertoire. Since one of the main objectives of *szene instrumental* is to support and promote young Austrian composers it is regularly commissioning works and is also performing them. To date *szene instrumental* has made over 40 first recordings for Austrian national radio broadcast.

