

## Prelude: The Project 'In the Name of Mozart'

In the Fall of 2005, the Concertgebouw Bruges contacted the Lieven Gevaert Research Centre for Photography and Visual Studies at the University of Leuven (LGC), announcing the challenging proposal to work out a collaborative project with the renowned Belgian portrait photographer Malou Swinnen (°1944). As 2006 in Bruges, like in many other places, was conceived as the 'Mozart year', the idea was that Malou Swinnen would portray a fine selection of those musicians who would find their way to the Concertgebouw during the period of its concert series Mozart06, in order to perform the delightful music of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791). The resulting portraits would not only constitute an exhibition at the Concertgebouw, but would also be the fundamentals of a book, produced in close collaboration between both institutions involved and the artist.

This is the book that you are now holding in your hands. Between February and June 2006, Malou Swinnen held seventeen photo shoots at the Concertgebouw of just as many performers, a few hours before they would go on stage. Previously, she had asked them to bring an attribute to the shoot, which they had selected themselves and which would throw some light on their relationship to Mozart. Thus, with the exception of Frans Brüggem, she photographed all of them twice: one time with their self-selected attributes and one time without them. For the portraits without attributes, the artist asked her models, while being photographed, to think about Mozart, his music or the meaning of his music to them.

Both series have been reproduced in this book. The sixteen portraits without attributes have been reproduced full page and in colour. They are also the ones exhibited in the Concertgebouw Bruges from November 2006 until May 2007. The order in which they appear in this publication, is the order in which they were photographed. The choice to present them here one after the other, in their 'sounding silence', has been a deliberate one. This has been explained more in detail in the first essay which follows directly after this introduction, written by Katelijne Schiltz and myself. In that text, we explore the fascinating yet highly problematic relationship between music and the visual arts, especially photography. Key issue of our concerns is first and foremost the question whether it is possible to 'hear an image' or - the other way around - 'to see music', in particular by means of a score.

Besides that, this project has, from the beginning to the end, become particularly involved in matters of memory and remembrance. Conceived to commemorate the extraordinary musical genius of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Mozart06 now in itself has become a fine memory through Malou Swinnen's photographic portraits of some of its most excellent performers. Now, in the Fall of 2006, recovering Mozart's music and making it come to life, is no longer done by the execution of his most exemplary pieces, but by making them resonate again in the minds and memories of those looking at the pictures of its performers, who were thinking of Mozart at the very moment their image was being fixed. All of them had their own story to tell about Mozart and about what he meant to their musical and personal life. This is reflected in the second group of images that is included in this book, and which have

been reproduced in black-and-white, although they were originally in colour. Their commemorative aspect is thus heightened. It is even strengthened by the fact that all performers have agreed to write down a short notice about what Mozart means to them. This has been published underneath their portraits. Malou Swinnen herself has also extensively taken notes after each photo shoot, in order to remember the conversations she had with her models while working with them. For, like every good portrait photographer, Swinnen conceives a photosession as a private and very intense moment between the 'subject' - the photographer - and the 'object' - the photographed person. She rarely or never allows any third person to be present when she is at work and usually follows a strict working pattern.

The second essay in this book, written by Liesbeth Decan, digs into Malou Swinnen's photographic methodology and artistic preoccupations from a historical perspective. Based on an in-depth interview with the artist, this text manages to throw light for the first time on the conditions in which Swinnen's body of work has been established over the years and on the most important points of reference for her career. Using the Hasselblad camera, she can operate quickly in a well-installed studio - which in this case she did in the quiet mezzanine of the musician's lounge at the Concertgebouw. The annotations the artist has made are highly revealing about the way the portrayed models think about Mozart. She has generously put them at my disposal and I therefore rehearse some of them here, but they are best to be read while looking at the pictures from time to time that are included in the last pages of this book. For example, Eric Sleichim explained to Malou Swinnen that he calls his porcelain gnome 'Pim Mozart'. This is meant as a wink at the oeuvre of Mozart, which he feels is full of winks as well. At the same time he sees a nice voltage curve between the choice for this attribute and the performance of that night - the concert *Mozart-Machine* of 28 January 2006 in which he shows the tragic Mozart to the public. Laughs and tears, people hear it all the time in relation to Mozart ...

During his conversation with the photographer Sigiswald Kuijken calls Mozart 'profound'. He considers him to be a complete artist, frivolous and terrified at the same time, scabrous and religious. Marcel Ponsoe as well as Ton Koopman attach great importance to the field of tension between Mozart as a child prodigy and what kind of traces this has left behind in his later life and in his compositions. Also Olga Pasichnyk has chosen a score of a children's song - the first one she sang as a child - and of a lullaby she sings for her two-year-old son. Claire Chevallier with a smile and twinkling eyes very convincingly shows Malou Swinnen that Mozart is 'the essence' for her. To enforce that enigma, she brought her tuning fork with her.

Erik Vermeulen opted for a small cd, as a symbol for the heavenly transference of sound of which Mozart is capable. Alexei Lubimov is holding the score which he needed for his performance of that evening. He cherishes it like a child would do with its most precious toy, this is the way he explains his choice. The same goes for Melvyn Tan, for whom Mozart corresponds with life itself and the deepest human emotions. Ronald Brautigam, for comparable reasons, brings volume 20 with him from the collected works of Mozart. Midori Seiler shows us a plastic bottle with multivitamins. To her, he is a complete nourishment which 'recharges' her spiritually, physically and emotionally, she tells Malou Swinnen. Jos van Immerseel very suitably chose a key from his pianoforte. The beautiful, graphic object symbolises the three authentic instruments with which he lets Mozart resound to the current public: the pianoforte, the harpsichord and the clavichord.

Jan Michiels is holding a wooden miniature theatre, with three detached little figures in it. He bought it in a shop in Brussels as a gift for his wife and got her permission to bring it with him. He chose it because it symbolises what he sees is the most important element of Mozart's oeuvre: the operas. In these plays all the elements characteristic of Mozart's compositions come together, to him they are a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Claron McFadden is acting very playfully and tender as if she is taking a bite of a chocolate *Mozartkugel*. To her Mozart is light, childlike, deceptively simple and sometimes a little kitsch. Enchanting delicacies to be consumed, like chocolate.

Roel Dieltiens opts for a special attribute: his wife. He chose her because he, as a result of the pieces he will play that evening, got convinced of the fact that Mozart must have deeply loved his wife. You notice this from the way he wrote the music – namely the *String quintet in c KV 406*, the *Duo for violin and viola in G KV 423* and the *String quintet in D KV 593*, says Dieltiens. Because of this, in the photographic image of man and woman Malou Swinnen chooses to depict the heads intimately close to each other. Very special about this image is the fact her head finds itself just under his, while he puts his hands around her neck. As a result the head receives a disembodied effect like the one of Saint John the Baptist on the plate of Salomé. With this image Malou Swinnen very brightly spots Mozart's relation to women and at the same time represents a striking, more universal image of the man-woman relationship.

Michel Portal brought his clarinet with him, his most precious jewel. He was going to improvise Mozart virtuoso that night. During the recordings he emphasizes the level of difficulty of this, but it is almost as if the instrument he is carrying with him, gives him the strength and self-confidence he needs. Frans Brügger did not have himself photographed with an attribute. For this reason, his portrait falls 'outside of category' in a certain way. With his glazed eyes he is looking right through us as a 'mother image'. Malou Swinnen's picture of this company's Nestor therefore is an ideal point of departure for the sensitive story that develops through this series of images. Mozart was a master at portraying man in all his facets. This series of photographic portraits made 'in the name of', are a subtle and penetrating homage to his genius and to what he gave the world.

A project of this dimension could not have been realized without the commitment of many people. I especially would like to thank Bart Demuyt, artistic director of the Concertgebouw, for his excellent initiative, for the pleasant, fascinating collaboration and for the confidence he had in us. Without the infinite commitment of Riet Jaeken, Koen Jambon and Yves De Bruyckere of the Concertgebouw Bruges *In the Name of Mozart* would not have become what it is now. Many thanks for this. In the Lieven Gevaert Centre Rein and Fran Deslé meticulously and creatively took care of the logistics and layout of the book respectively. Rebecca Nuyts took excellent care as always of the necessary translations. I thank the co-authors of this book, Katelijne Schiltz and Liesbeth Decan for their interesting contributions. Finally, giving credit where credit is due, this project is dedicated to the artistic work of one exceptional artist, Malou Swinnen. To her goes my deepest gratitude for the nice collaboration, the punctuality and collegiality.

Hilde Van Gelder  
Guestcurator *In the Name of Mozart*