

HUMAN

Helge Burggrabe



with:
Deutsches
Kammerorchester Berlin
Duncan Ward
Elbtone Percussion
& John Kameel Farah



HUMAN Suite for orchestra and percussion by Helge Burggrabe

recorded by the German Chamber Orchestra, with Elbtone Percussion and John Kameel Farah (piano), released worldwide by EDEL Kultur/Neue Meister (released world-wide, summer 2021).

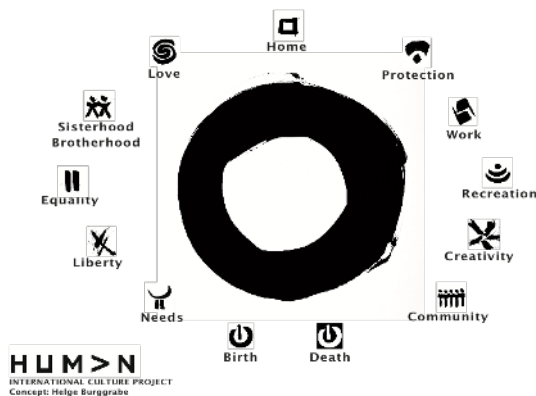
HUMAN Suite: CD-Booklet (Texts: Helge Burggrabe)

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood.
(Article 01 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

Philosophy, religion, and social or cultural upbringing aside, every human being belongs to live their lives as they see fit. In response to this, the “HUMAN Culture Project” addresses essential basic needs such as freedom, equality, and the right to live free from fear, all ultimately inalienable rights for a dignified existence “in the midst of life that wants to live” (Albert Schweitzer).

Something that sounds so obvious and is even codified in the UN’s declaration of human rights, however, is increasingly being

imperilled by selfishness, thoughtlessness, and oppression. This despite the fact that the future of humanity and our planet depends on us committing to human rights and treating each other with respect and as equals. The newly composed HUMAN orchestral suite, presented here in its first recording, is, so to speak, the underlying musical “theme” of the “HUMAN Culture Project” and aims to instil in listeners a greater sense of humanity. One aspect of it sees the music transformed into dance performances.



The work’s structure corresponds to the natural circle of life with eleven themes of human existence, framed by birth and death, which open and close the circle. Calligraphic symbols were created as a playful introduction to the major themes, and also served as inspiration for the composition itself.

Birth (5:12)

Similar to an overture, this piece is about preparation, guidance, and beginnings: a veil of sound in the strings, sinking from a high to ever lower registers, announces the start of new life before the heart of the unborn child begins to beat. The moment of birth approaches in waves of ever-increasing intensity, before dying away in a brief postlude.

Needs (4:37)

Air, food, and water are essential needs that new-born children demand loudly and relentlessly. This piece “narrates” the immense

power of these basic needs, which accompany us throughout our lives. The middle section presents a calmer sense of desire, of longing, before the restatement of the initial theme ushers in a sense of return.

Liberty (4:41)

This piece begins in a state of “unfreedom” and helplessness, from which the desire for freedom will ultimately break through and tear down the walls of restriction. Here, the trumpet plays a striking melody, like a song of freedom, which is gradually joined by more and more other instruments. Freedom always depends

on the courage of individuals to do something, before growing numbers of others join in, thus creating a powerful movement for freedom.

Equality (4:29)

The struggle for equality and equal rights is interpreted as a game of balance in this piece. The vibraphone and piano encircle one another, but in the course of the piece lose their measured balance three times. The use of several keys and the piece's fragility symbolizes the fact that equality is not a one-time promise but must repeatedly be balanced out and won anew.

Sisterhood /Brotherhood (4:07)

A strong sisterhood or brotherhood means accepting and respecting our sisters and brothers, no matter how different we are. The piece therefore opens with a dialogue between the horn and the winds and strings in a kind of call-and-response pattern. The middle section sees increasing interaction between the instruments, before many of them take up and embellish the horn theme heard at the beginning.

Love (4:04)

The piece opens by heralding the appearance of love with an intimate, almost tender theme in the piano and clarinet. Full of hope, it blossoms, is challenged, and increasingly wears itself out. With the drama intensifying, the love theme confidently reappears and is played forte by the strings. To end, the piece returns to the intimacy of its opening.

Home (5:42)

The notion of home is inseparable from its opposite, homelessness, especially if we remember that there are 80 million people around the world who have had to flee their homes. "Home" is therefore a piece of contrasts: a clearly identifiable melody represents home at the beginning. The effect is intensified by the glockenspiel, which recalls the sound of music boxes that give young children a sense of security. This calming harmoniousness, symbolizing safety, is, however, repeatedly lost, torn apart or superimposed musically, and returns in the minor or as fragments. At many points, all that can be sensed is the longing for home.

Protection (4:02)

This piece begins with a sense of defencelessness. Capricious interjections in the high flutes and sudden percussive entrances produce an atmosphere of helplessness. It is not until the middle section that piece begins to relax, with the violin rising to a melody in 11/8 time – like a solitary plant slowly beginning to grow in a safe space. But this safe space is fragile.

Repeated atonal outbursts are heard, while the shaker, with its steady pulse every second bar, provides a distracting off-beat.

Work (4:29)

This piece begins like a machine containing a large number of well-oiled parts: at first, everything runs like clockwork, but twice the processes escalate out of control, then return to order, and the third time drift off into chaos. This metaphor for a purely functional, exploitative economic system that follows only its own brutal logic aims to illustrate the point that man should have the right to meaningful work based on the actual needs of society and his own abilities and skills.

Recreation (5:16)

This piece not only addresses the right to recreation but is also something of a "composed-out" pause within the dramaturgy of the orchestral suite as a whole: a time to stop and unwind. In our increasingly hectic and fast-moving times, all of us urgently need to slow down and relax.

Creativity (4:27)

Every human being is a source of creative potential just waiting to flourish. This firm belief is expressed by a jazz theme that at times gives way to improvisation, allowing first the pianist and then, in the second half, the percussionist to unleash their creativity. Creativity is always open to new and remarkable impulses, suggested here by the sudden appearance of a striking theme in 7/8 time.

Community (6:17)

A sense of community is possible if we learn to respect human rights and other people in all their diversity. This piece therefore resembles a vision of what might be possible when people come together. It opens with the oboe calling the other instruments; a community begins to prosper and celebrate life ever more exuberantly, like a festival of humanity.

Death (4:35)

Death interrupts life, sometimes more suddenly than others; every human being is taken from the community and the festival of life. This piece gives them one more chance to look back on the highs and lows of their own lives. Groups of winds and strings increasingly alternate, this and the other world, between ourselves and the beyond. At some point – just like in "Birth" – we again hear a heartbeat. Here it is slowing down and will ultimately stop, enveloped in an ever-rising veil of sound in the strings.