biography

HK GRUBER

Composer, conductor and chansonnier HK Gruber is one of the most well-known and well-loved figures in contemporary music and one of the major talents of post-war music. Composing in his own highly individual style, he has been labelled 'new-Romantic', 'neo-tonal', 'neo-expressionistic' and 'neo-Viennese'; however, his music remains refreshingly non-doctrinaire - a deceptively simple and darkly ironic idiom, often drawing on Berg, Stravinsky, cabaret and pop music as influences, and often with a heavy dose of black humour. Gruber was awarded Austria's most prestigious cultural prize, the 2002 Greater Austria State Prize (Groβer Österreichischer Staatspreis) and in 2009 was announced as an Honorary Member of the Wiener Konzerthaus, following a great tradition of musicians to also receive this accolade, including Igor Stravinsky, Pierre Boulez, Leonard Bernstein and Claudio Abbado.

Born in Vienna in 1943, Gruber sang with the Vienna Boys Choir as a child and then studied at the Vienna Hochschule für Musik. In 1961 he began playing double bass with ensemble *die reihe* and from 1969 to 1998 he played in the Radio Symphonieorchester Wien. Gruber first began performing as a singer/actor with the 'MOB art and tone ART' ensemble, a group he co-founded in 1968 with fellow Viennese composers Kurt Schwertsik and Otto Zykan. Since then he has appeared extensively in this role, most notably in his own work *Frankenstein!!*, arguably Gruber's most popular work which received its premiere performance from Sir Simon Rattle and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic in 1978. He has also performed in this chansonnier role in Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* and Maxwell Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, as well as in the works of Kurt Weill and Hanns Eisler.

Gruber's compositions have been written for and performed by artists and orchestras at the highest level, including Yo-Yo Ma, Hakan Hardenberger, the Vienna Philharmonic, Lucerne Festival, BBC Proms, Zurich Opera and the Grafenegg Festival. This season, Gruber conducts the world premiere performance of his latest work *Into the Open…* for percussion and orchestra with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Martin Grubinger. Gruber is currently writing a major new opera for the Bregenz Festival, *Geschichten aus dem Wienerwald,* which will be premiered in 2014, conducted by Gruber.

An active conductor with many major international orchestras, highlights of Gruber's conducting career include the Vienna Philharmonic, Bayerischer Rundfunk Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Cleveland Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony and Los Angeles Philharmonic. He has appeared at festivals such as the BBC Proms, Gstaad, Lucerne (as Composer-in-Residence in 2006) and Grafenegg (as Composer-in-Residence in 2011).

Gruber is currently Composer/Conductor with the BBC Philharmonic, with whom he conducts several concerts each season. In the 12/13 season these include two concerts at the Wiener Konzerthaus, including a staged version of Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* as well as Gruber's *Northwind Pictures* and *Dancing in the Dark.* Other highlights of 2012/13 include the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, Vienna Symphony, Asko-Schoenberg Ensemble and the Seattle Symphony Orchestra with a programme of Antheil, Bernstein and Stravinsky alongside Gruber's own *Rough Music*.

Gruber's latest CD release sees him conduct music by fellow Austrian composer Kurt Schwersik with the BBC Philharmonic for Chandos, and other highlights include a BIS release of music by Brett Dean with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra. He has also recorded a number of his own works for Chandos and BIS.

The works of HK Gruber are published by Boosey & Hawkes.

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