

Burkhardt Söll

Burkhardt Söll (1944, Marienberg Westerwald, Germany) is composer and painter. In his native country he studied music, composition, conducting, pedagogics and visual arts. Since 1977 he lives and works in Leyden, the Netherlands. Also, he is a teacher at the Utrecht Academy of Arts.

Söll has written a great diversity of works: children's songs, chamber music, operas and music for film and theater. For a long time his works were inspired by paintings. Thus he composed Victory Boogie-Woogie in the late eighties, after Mondriaan's painting with the same name. In this piece, written for the orchestra De Volharding, Söll has also elaborated a little tableau by Jan Steen.

During the last nine years Söll composes according to a self-invented system which has the natural growth of plants as a basis. "Plant growth can be expressed in numbers: those numbers I use to attain structure in my works. Additionally, I try to describe in my pieces what the beauty of a plant does to me."

Listeners will not hear anything of those complicated numbers, but this way the beauty of plants is expressed even better. Examples of "plant art" are Gouden regen (1989) for bass clarinet, Judaspenning (1992) for alto saxophone and vibraphone, and Amorphophallus(1993). The last work, written for the Selmer Saxophone Quartet, is about the so-called penis plant, that blossoms once every thirty year in an ultimately spectacular manner.

Söll has a special favour for dark sounds. Especially bass clarinet, cello, viola and trombone appeal to him. In his piece for two pianos, Schwarz und Weiß sind alle Farben zugleich, dark sounds play an important role. "The piece starts with high tones in the right hand. Those are light colours. Then a percussive part follows in which low and dark tones are introduced. The work is very rythmical: I use the piano as a percussion instrument."

Burkhardt Söll's work is published by Tonos Musikverlags GmbH in Darmstadt, Germany.