

Concept Note International Peace Composition

*This is our world we've made from stories –
our house is a home of invention, where anyone at all can come.
(A Child of Books, Oliver Jeffers)*

Peace is an immense theme. And yet, it immediately prompts thoughts of its antipole: violence. To connect with the world of all performers, predominantly envisioning children, I do not want to explore the big antithesis Peace-War/War-Peace, but I want to look for a more intimate and universal place where peace and violence can dwell. This place can be found in language.

Via a participative and inclusive process, which will actively involve some hundred school children (aside experienced children's and youth choirs), and with the professional support of Winny Ang (child psychiatrist and author of children's books), the personal experiences and the diverse backgrounds of these children will be woven into the International Peace Composition. Central to this process are the experiences of these children with terrific language on the one hand, but with violent language on the other. Such linguistic violence has to do with bullying, hate speech, stigmatization, discrimination, censure, ... Literature can function as a shield against these linguistic monsters, with a language that can appeal to the imagination, and that can build bridges and introduce nuance.

In the gigantic spectrum between silence and noise, light and darkness, in that particular space where music emerges from a sea of buzzing and humming, the music for the International Peace Composition will be shaped, thereby inspired by the unmatched *A Child of Books* by Oliver Jeffers and Sam Winston. Where words leave behind empty spaces, music will trickle in, forming a true labyrinth of sound. The organ will add a rainbow of unexpected colors to this plurality of voices, with air being the element that binds them together, evolving from whispers to a mighty unisono.

To sing together is an act of connectivity that grows from a desire to bloom into a sounding community: a column of sound to build upon. However, this new community equally needs to offer room for individuality. The individual doesn't disappear in the group, but comes home in their own, unique place.

When this can be achieved for each participating child, and for each listening ear, this project will not only speak about peace, it will also make peace (or at least, sow the seed of peace).

*Bart Verheyen
February 2022*