

Michael Hersch

A composer of “uncompromising brilliance” (*The Washington Post*) whose work has been described by *The New York Times* as “viscerally gripping and emotionally transformative music ... claustrophobic and exhilarating at once, with moments of sublime beauty nestled inside thickets of dark virtuosity,” Michael Hersch is widely considered among the most gifted composers of his generation. Composer Georg Friedrich Haas has written that Hersch “is the explorer of an unconditional, radical expressivity that reveals the human abyss without any palliation.” Recent events and premieres include his *Violin Concerto* at the Lucerne Festival in Switzerland and the Avanti Festival in Helsinki; new productions of his monodrama, *On the Threshold of Winter*, in Chicago, Salt Lake City, and Washington D.C., and his elegy *I hope we get a chance to visit soon* at the Ojai and Aldeburgh Festivals, where Mr. Hersch was a featured composer. Other recent premieres include his 10-hour chamber cycle, *sew me into a shroud of leaves*, a work which occupied the composer for fifteen years, at the 2019 Wien Modern Festival. In 2021, the composer’s opera, *Poppaea*, premiered in Vienna and Basel in a co-production with ZeitRäume Basel and Wien Modern. During the 2019/20 season, Mr. Hersch was the Composer-in-Residence with the Camerata Bern, and in early 2020, his new work *Agatha* saw had its premiere performances in both Bern and Geneva. In 2022/23, major projects include those for Ensemble Phoenix Basel and a new theater work for Sarah Maria Sun, Schola Heidelberg and Ensemble Musikfabrik.

Over the past several years, Hersch has written works for the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Ensemble Klang, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Alban Berg Ensemble Wien, Decoda Ensemble, and the Library of Congress. Other notable recent events include European performances by the Kreutzer Quartet of *Images from a Closed Ward* in the U.K. and Sweden, a recording of the work by the acclaimed FLUX Quartet, and a work for unaccompanied violin commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, premiered at the orchestra’s Biennial.

Hersch has worked closely with Patricia Kopatchinskaja, the violinist commissioning several works, including his *Violin Concerto*, which premiered in 2015, his chamber work ... *das Rückgrat berstend*, which premiered at New York City’s Park Avenue Armory during the autumn of 2017, and the song cycle *sapped from me broken*, scheduled for premiere in 2023. She recently recorded the concerto with the International Contemporary Ensemble (I.C.E.), and the duo with cellist Jay Campbell. Most recently, Kopatchinskaja performed one of the solo roles in the premiere presentations of *Agatha*.

Notable past performances include *Night Pieces*, commissioned and premiered by the Cleveland Orchestra, and a song cycle for baritone and piano, *Domicilium*, commissioned and premiered by Thomas Hampson and Wolfgang Rieger on San Francisco Performances. Hersch’s second piano concerto, *along the ravines*, was given performances with the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie and the Seattle Symphony Orchestra, and as part of the George Enescu International Festival in Romania. Mr. Hersch’s *end stages* was commissioned and premiered by the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, his *Zwischen Leben und Tod* recently received it’s European premiere, and *A Forest of Attics*, commissioned for the Network for New Music’s 25th anniversary season, was selected as one of the year’s most important classical music events by *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. The paper said of the work, “*A Forest of Attics* threw a Molotov cocktail into the concert: Everything before it paled in comparison ... Hersch has written some towering works in recent years; this is yet another.”

Also a pianist, noted for his “astounding facility at the keyboard” (*International Piano*), Mr. Hersch has appeared around the world including appearances at the Ojai Festival, Aldeburgh Festival, the Festival Dag in de Branding in the Netherlands, the Warhol Museum, the RomaEuropa Festival, the Phillips Collection in Washington D.C., Cleveland’s Reinberger Chamber Hall, the Festival of Contemporary Music Nuova Consonanza, the Network for New Music Concert Series, the Left Bank Concert Society, Festa Europea della Musica, St. Louis’ Sheldon Concert Hall, and in New York City at Merkin Concert Hall, the 92nd St. Y - Tisch Center for the Performing Arts, and Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall, among others.

Born in Washington D.C., Michael Hersch came to international attention at age twenty-five, when he was awarded First Prize in the Concordia American Composers Awards. The award resulted in a performance of his *Elegy*, conducted by Marin Alsop in New York’s Alice Tully Hall. Later that year he became one of the youngest recipients ever of a Guggenheim Fellowship in Composition. Mr. Hersch has also been the recipient of the Rome Prize, the Berlin Prize, the Goddard Lieberson Fellowship and Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts & Letters, and Johns Hopkins University’s most prestigious internal honor, the President’s Frontier Award, amongst many others.