

Samir Odeh-Tamimi: *Madjnun II* – Work description

for solo recorder and male choir (2010) / Sy. 4047

Madjnun II for solo recorder and male choir, written in 2010, is a companion piece to *Madjnun I* for recorder and string orchestra (2009). The basis of both these works by Samir Odeh-Tamimi is the traditional story of Qaysibn al-Mulawwah, who probably lived in the north of the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century. He falls in love with Layla. She – version 1 – doesn't return his love, or – version 2 – she loves him too, but the parents prevent them from being together. At any rate, Qays pines for Layla and becomes a ‚majnun‘, a ‚madman‘. He writes only love poems, leaves his family, goes into the desert, lives with animals, feeds the way they do, and becomes a mystic, a Sufi. *Layla and Majnun* is one of the greatest, most meaningful stories of the Arab and Persian tradition – even to this day. In the 12th century the Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi (1141-1209) gathered together all the sources he knew of, both secular and mystical about Qays, or Majnun, and wrote the book *Layla and Majnun*, which contributed greatly to popularising the story; it was also Samir Odeh-Tamimi's point of reference. In his Majnun works – which also include the full-length music theatre work *Leila und Madjnun*, premiered at the Ruhr Triennale in 2010 – the recorder embodies the inner voice of the errant poet in the desert, his torment, his disquiet. The virtuoso (spiritual) exercises on a renaissance Ganassi tenor recorder, with its robust sound, and a bass recorder, were evolved in close collaboration with the soloist Jeremias Schwarzer. Alongside this old wind instrument – albeit a new one for present-day music – stands an 18-part male choir. There's no text: it sings vocalises, soft and hard consonants, and grounds what is happening in flexible bands of sound, thus multiplying the solo part. In addition, it plays finger cymbals and seashell chimes, as well as a frame drum filled with rice and peas. The music emanates a restless atmosphere: of air in motion, and breathless thought.

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