

**NAXOS**

# MARCO PÜTZ

(b. 1958)

## Moods

Chapters of Life · Elegia

Euphonia's Voice

Strömungen

Karl Berkel, Tuba

Philippe Schwartz, Euphonium

Cottbus State Theatre

Philharmonic Orchestra

Alexander Merzyn



## Marco Pütz (b. 1958)

### Moods • Chapters of Life • Elegia • Euphonia's Voice • Strömungen

Marco Pütz was born in Luxembourg in 1958. He studied music (saxophone, chamber music, harmony, counterpoint, composition and conducting) in Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg City, Brussels and Liège. To date he has composed around 100 works in various genres, including for symphonic/chamber orchestra, symphonic wind band, brass band and string quartet as well as an important number of chamber music and educational pieces.

International acclaim came in 1995 when he was awarded First Prize at the International Clarinet Association Composition Contest (Atlanta, US) for his *Quatuor pour clarinettes*. In 2012 he was twice a finalist in the International Tuba and Euphonium Association (ITEA) Composition Contest with *Five Open-ended Pieces* and the tuba concerto *Chapters of Life*. In June 2017 he was awarded the Plaque d'Honneur of the Union Grand-Duc Adolphe (UGDA), Luxembourg for his international achievements in composition, and in October 2017 he received the prestigious BUMA International Brass Award in acknowledgment of his work, especially for wind and fanfare orchestra.

His pieces are published internationally by Bronsheim Music, De Haske/Hal Leonard, Maecenas Music, Edition Tonger, Editions Henry Lemoine, Sempre più Editions and Windmusic. Since 2015 his compositions for symphonic orchestra have been published by Edition Kunzelmann and distributed worldwide by Edition Peters.

Pütz's discography comprises over 65 albums and audio-visual titles dating from 1995, and has been released internationally on labels such as Bella Musica/Antes Edition, Bronsheim, Amos, Mirasound, Mark Records, GIA Records, Albany Records, Doyen Recordings and Naxos.

Pütz's music has been performed in most European countries, as well as in Russia, the US, Canada, Australia, and across Asia in China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan. Many of his compositions have been performed at prestigious festivals and events, including the World Music Contest (WMC) Kerkrade, Eidgenössisches Musikfest, International Clarinet Association Contest, Musik im 20. Jahrhundert, La route des Orgues de Moselle, Festival Radenci, Triangle Festival, Deutsches Bläserforum, Festival International Echternach, Rencontres d'Ensembles de Violoncelles de Beauvais, Quatuors à Saint-Roch, Festival EuropArt, and World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles (WASBE) conferences in Jönköping, Singapore, Killarney, Cincinnati, Chiayi City and Utrecht.

From 1980 to 2018 Pütz taught saxophone, chamber music and instrumentation at the Luxembourg Conservatoire. He was a founder member of the Luxembourg Saxophone Quartet (1982 to 2006), and from 1981 to 2006 appeared as saxophonist with the Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra.

### Moods (2013)

*Moods* was composed in spring 2013 as a commission from the Luxembourg Ministry of Culture for the orchestra Solistes Européens, Luxembourg. The work is dedicated, in deep gratitude, to my father-in-law Robert Weiler, a great lover of classical music, who died in January of that year.

My main purpose in composing *Moods* was to make this music accessible to both musicians and the audience. It continues my ongoing fascination with the creation of 'larger' works from the smallest amount of musical material. The whole work is constructed entirely using the same two intervals – tritone and major seventh, plus embellished stratified chords which end in, for want of a better expression, 'modal clusters'. Although these modal clusters give the listener a sense of tonality, none in reality exists.

In writing *Moods* I missed the diversity of using a full complement of percussion instruments – the commission stipulated the use of timpani only. Having abundantly used percussion in my works for wind band or orchestra, I was, however, in hindsight, surprised by how instructive and positive this restriction proved to be.

*English translation: Niall Brown*

## **Chapters of Life (2010) (version for tuba and orchestra)**

The genesis of *Chapters of Life* goes back to 2009 when I met the tuba player Timothy Northcut from Mason, Ohio at a conference in the US. Tim asked me if I would like to write a tuba concerto for him. His only stipulation was that the composition should include a slow movement in memory of his late brother Dana, who had been a trombonist in the same orchestra as him and only lived to the age of 50, as well as a solo for alto flute – Dana's wife's instrument.

The result was a composition about the stages of life. The first movement, *Wild Days*, is characterised by a recurring rhythmic cell (eight quaver notes against two quaver triplets) paired with a theme of semiquaver notes in the tuba. This rhythmic mixture is symbolic of carefree youth, enterprise and youthful freshness. Before the coda, the soloist can show off all his skills in a demanding cadenza.

In the second movement, *Midlife (to Dana)*, there is a confrontation with death and mourning, but also with the never-ending love for a person to whom one was very close, but who is now suddenly no longer with us. Short solos (trombone, alto-flute) stand for these close family members of Dana.

The last movement, *A Celebration of Life*, represents the joy that can be found in life, despite all the strokes of fate that can befall a person. Lively, virtuoso passages alternate with powerful *tutti* moments and allow the tuba to shine both technically and lyrically.

## **Elegia (2009, rev. 2021)**

*Elegia* is based on the theme of the famous Bach chorale *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*, BWV 244/54, a chorale that I had already used a few years earlier in the second movement of my trumpet concerto.

The original main theme is quoted only once by the oboe, after which it is heard in the form of various mutations, such as reflected and inverted.

The harmonic material is kept very simple and basically consists only of the notes of the first two sections of the chorale, coloured tonally with a selection of percussion instruments. After a prolonged crescendo build-up to a short *ff* passage, the work ends in an atmosphere of calm, peace and balance.

*Elegia* is dedicated to my brother-in-law Charles W., who died of an incurable illness in early 2008, aged only 50.

## **Euphonia's Voice (2019)**

*Euphonia's Voice* was commissioned by the Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra and the Philharmonie Luxembourg in 2019. The idea was to create a series of solo works written for lesser-known instruments.

As I had already been able to gain experience with the euphonium in previous years (through commissions from virtuosos Steven Mead and Robbert Vos), the choice of solo instrument was not difficult. I love the warm, unobtrusive sound and the breathtaking virtuosity that can be achieved with this saxhorn instrument. Added to this, I have enjoyed a positive, long-standing relationship with the excellent Luxembourg euphonium player Philippe Schwartz, the soloist in this recording.

The work consists of three movements, which are played *attacca*, and is quite conventional in its structure.

At the end of the first movement, *Intrada*, a short cadenza over a pedal tone of the double basses leads to the second movement, a *Cantilena* with a simple, sung theme (oboe – euphonium – piccolo – euphonium), underscored with layered string chords and tuned percussion instruments. The third movement, *Dance*, colourfully orchestrated and in (mostly) 7/8 time, once again gives the soloist every opportunity to bring his instrument to the fore both lyrically and technically. Before the repeat, a short but very intense string movement appears, before a powerful coda, featuring reminiscences from the first movement, closes the work.

## **Strömungen (2014)**

*Strömungen* was written in early 2014 as the second work commissioned (after *Moods* in 2013) by the Luxembourg Ministry of Culture for the orchestra Solistes Européens, Luxembourg. The title *Strömungen* has two meanings, both of which are expressed in my composition: 1. the movement, the flow of the music, the urge to move forward, and 2. the different stylistic tendencies that are united in this piece.

Two powerful dissonant chords and a short transition to a pure fifth with superimposed oboe cantilena mark the opening bars of *Strömungen*.

The 'head' motif of the composition (pure fifth, tritone) is introduced in the strings (*con sordino*) and gradually develops into a first climax, which then leads into a wild *allegro agitato*, which is only interrupted once (*molto sostenuto e espressivo*). After that, the music flows towards its final zenith. There is a break within the intensely rhythmic *allegro* music, 'as if the composer wanted to tell the listener where the true power of life lies, where the true values are to be found, not in hectic striving, but in the tranquillity that comes too short in our world today' (Remy Franck, *Pizzicato*, September 2014).

Once again, the opening cantilena is heard, this time performed by solo flute and piccolo, over stratified chords. A tonal chorale follows, beginning with the same interval (fourth) as the cantilena – and finishes with a surprising ending. From then on, the composition flows towards its conclusion, the atmosphere peaceful.

**Marco Pütz**



## Karl Berkel



Photo: Marlies Kross

Karl Berkel grew up in a family of professional musicians in Rhineland-Palatinate. During his youth he repeatedly won First Prize at the Jugend musiziert, toured as a soloist with the Provincial Youth Orchestra and joined the German National Youth Orchestra at 16. He studied at the Hochschule für Musik Saar and the Hochschule für Musik Frankfurt am Main, winning a two-year scholarship at the Karajan Akademie and subsequently performing with the Berliner Philharmoniker and Sir Simon Rattle. Following this, he joined the orchestra of Oper Frankfurt and the Hessisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden. A member of the brass quintet BRASSerie and violin/tuba duo Kapis, he currently appears as a soloist at the Cottbus State Theatre, where he also teaches at the conservatory.

## Philippe Schwartz



Photo: Claudia Hansen

Philippe Schwartz (b. 1985, Luxembourg) studied at the Luxembourg Conservatoire and the Royal Northern College of Music. Since 2009 he has held principal euphonium positions with the Leyland Band, Brighouse & Rastrick Band and Grimethorpe Colliery Band. He also gives regular performances with the Hallé, BBC Philharmonic, RTÉ Concert and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic orchestras, and has premiered a plethora of solo works by composers such as Gavin Higgins, Lucy Pankhurst and Marco Pütz. His educational work saw him become the first specialist euphonium professor at the Luxembourg Conservatoire, and he is currently a visiting tutor at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. Schwartz is a Besson – Buffet Crampon performing artist and plays exclusively on the Besson Prestige 2052 euphonium.

## Cottbus State Theatre Philharmonic Orchestra



Photo: Marlies Kross

The Philharmonic Orchestra of the Cottbus State Theatre can look back on more than 100 years of history. Besides opera, philharmonic concerts are at the heart of the orchestra's work, with standard repertoire cultivated alongside the music of the 20th and 21st centuries. Regular exchanges and collaborations with various schools and young artists constitute a part of the work of the orchestra, and the ensemble regularly brings music to the city and Brandenburg through various events such as flash mobs or open-air concerts. In spring 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, the musicians participated in the Concerts for Cottbus series, where members of the orchestra performed uplifting works in unusual locations. The Philharmonic Orchestra makes regular guest performances at various theatres and events in Brandenburg, with guest engagements taking the ensemble to Winterthur, Berlin, Paris and Mallorca. The Orchestra's concerts are regularly broadcast on Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg and Deutschlandfunk Kultur.

[www.staatstheater-cottbus.de](http://www.staatstheater-cottbus.de)



## Alexander Merzyn



Photo: Ron Petraß

Alexander Merzyn has given concerts with numerous orchestras and soloists in Europe and Asia, and in the process has acquired a repertoire that spans from the Baroque to the present. Since 2020 he has been general music director at the Staatstheater Cottbus. Born in Kiel in 1983, he studied cello in Berlin with Jens Peter Maintz and initially performed with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin and the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra. He began his conducting studies in 2009 in Weimar with Nicolás Pasquet, Gunter Kahlert and Anthony Bramall, also attending masterclasses with Herbert Blomstedt, Kurt Masur, Heinrich Schiff and the Alban Berg Quartett, among others. In 2010 he won the MDR Conducting Competition, and following this was engaged as First Kapellmeister at the State Theatres of Coburg and Cottbus. Merzyn has worked with the Dresden Philharmonic, MDR Symphony Orchestra, Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken Kaiserslautern, Hamburg Symphony Orchestra, Tonkünstler Orchester, North Bohemian Philharmonic Orchestra of Teplice and the Ho Chi Minh City Orchestra, among others.

[www.alexandermerzyn.com](http://www.alexandermerzyn.com)





Photo: Marlies Kross



Marco Pütz gained international recognition after winning awards for his compositions in the mid-1990s. Accessibility and enjoyment for both audiences and musicians are a central element in Pütz's music, and he is renowned for numerous symphonic, wind band and chamber works that have become standard repertoire throughout the world. *Euphonia's Voice* is part of an exploration of lesser-known instruments, and the virtuoso contrasts of joy and grief in *Chapters of Life* are always at the service of expressiveness – the power of love, life and the commemoration of those close to us forming a theme throughout much of this superb programme.

## Luxembourg Contemporary Music • 2



Marco  
**PÜTZ**  
(b. 1958)

1	<b>Moods</b> (2013)	12:32
	<b>Chapters of Life</b> (2010) (version for tuba and orchestra)*	16:50
2	<b>I. Wild Days</b>	5:45
3	<b>II. Midlife (to Dana)</b>	6:37
4	<b>III. A Celebration of Life</b>	4:27
5	<b>Elegia</b> (2009, rev. 2021)*	5:28
	<b>Euphonia's Voice</b> (2019)*	17:43
6	<b>I. Intrada –</b>	7:15
7	<b>II. Cantilena –</b>	4:22
8	<b>III. Dance</b>	6:06
9	<b>Strömungen</b> (2014)*	16:39

**\*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

**Karl Berkel, Tuba 2-4 • Philippe Schwartz, Euphonium 6-8**

**Cottbus State Theatre Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Alexander Merzyn**

Recorded: 11–12 June 2021 at the Staatstheater Cottbus, Germany

Producer and engineer: Marco Battistella • Assistant engineer: Katharina Stark

Mastering engineer: Horst Pfaffelmayer (Goldchamber Mastering) • Booklet notes: Marco Pütz

Publisher: Edition Kunzelmann – Edition Peters • A co-production with MB-Records

Cover photograph by Eric Engel

© & © 2023 Naxos Rights (Europe) Ltd • www.naxos.com