

" There is no absolute point in time. Any point in time is merely a logical abstraction. In fact, it is, roughly speaking, a chord of points – moments – that embodies hours and days, rather than a second... The way to capture this at once, exists beyond this physical world. One can imagine a second that embraces everything – past and future. The whole world rolls up into one point. And then these countless times and places depart, diverge, and unroll... "

Alexander Ivashkin *Conversations with Alfred Schnittke*

This album discusses the invisible connection between Alfred Schnittke, Pēteris Vasks and Arvo Pärt, and my personal connection with them. It explores three pieces, each written approximately at the end of the 1970s, during the period of the Soviet Union.

History always creates an imprint on the composers' output. However, apart from a possible historical link between Schnittke, Vasks and Pärt one might imagine, I felt something more than that. In these three pieces, I felt a sense of timelessness and an urge for an ultimate truth, to be explored through a juxtaposition of extreme emotions, and found in the musical representation of silence.

When I heard Schnittke's *Sonata for Cello and Piano* for the very first time, I envisioned an endless circle of birth and death, with a quick disastrous gallop of life in between. This sonata has had a deep and transformative influence on me, and it epitomized to me what I was looking for in music: the experience of catharsis.

To me, the music of Vasks has a certain resolute force of veracity as told straight from the heart, a truth that can only be found through investigating the biggest opposites: peace through unrest, light through darkness. *The Book*, in its two movements, is about one's voice emerging and elevating above the turmoil of one's psychological reality.

Fratres feels to me like two brothers going through life, side by side. One frantically and emotionally trying to grasp the secrets of life and death, the other ever so still and stable, providing a frame of reason for his sibling. One brother as the instant, the other portraying eternity, and the two of them represent the perpetual struggle within oneself.

The Invisible Link is not only about the invisible connection between Alfred Schnittke, Pēteris Vasks, and Arvo Pärt, or about the relationship between the three pieces. It is about the invisible link connecting the purest and most extreme of emotions, with the everlasting stillness of time itself.

Maya Fridman





ALFRED SCHNITTKE

Alfred Schnittke (November 24th, 1934 – August 3rd 1998) was a postmodernist Russian composer who created serious, dark-toned musical works characterized by abrupt juxtapositions of radically different, often contradictory styles, an approach that came to be known as *polystylism*.

Schnittke's father was a Jewish journalist who had been born in Germany but was of Latvian descent, and his mother was a Volga-born German Catholic; he found inspiration for his music in his German origins and in his homeland. From 1946 to 1948 the family lived in Vienna, where Schnittke learned to play the piano and studied music theory. His studies were completed at the Moscow Conservatory, where he later taught composition. Like most Soviet composers, Schnittke was required to produce many works in easily digestible Socialist Realist style, particularly film scores, of which he wrote more than 60 between 1961 and 1984.

Like his great predecessor Dmitry Shostakovich, Schnittke intermingled disjointed elements within a single work, but his combinations were far more jarring – an offhand Beethoven quotation, a distorted folk song, fragments of a medieval chant, and passages of ferociously dense, dissonant serialism might appear within the space of a few minutes.

PĒTERIS VASKS

Pēteris Vasks (April 16th, 1946) is a Latvian composer, born into the family of a Baptist pastor. He trained as a violinist at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, as a double-bass player with Vitautas Sereikaan at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, and played in several Latvian orchestras before entering the State Conservatory in Vilnius in the neighbouring Lithuania to study composition with Valentin Utkin.

He was prevented from studying composition in Latvia due to Soviet repressive policy toward Baptists. He started to become known outside Latvia in the 1990s, when Gidon Kremer started championing his works, and is now one of the most influential and praised European contemporary composers.

Vasks feels strongly about environmental issues, and a sense of nature, both pristine and destroyed, can be found in many of his works, which are also often associated with his country's struggle for independence. Critics who discuss Vasks in the context of his Latvian inspiration and artistic debt to Witold Lutoslawski nevertheless acknowledge his originality, his characteristic soulfulness, and melodic subtlety, as well as a universality of expression that identifies Vasks as a major European composer.

ARVO PÄRT

Arvo Pärt (September 11th, 1935) was born in a small town in the Estonian countryside. According to a biographer of the composer, he grew up playing an ancient grand piano that lacked a middle register, so that he made music only at extremes of high and low.

His first serious study came in 1954 at the Tallinn Music Middle School, but less than a year later he temporarily abandoned it to fulfill military service, playing oboe and percussion in the army band. While at the Tallinn Conservatory, he studied composition with Heino Eller. As a student, he produced music for film and stage. From 1957 to 1967, he worked as a sound engineer for Estonian radio.

In 1976, Pärt discovered a new, radically simplified language of composition, which came to be called *tintinnabuli*, after the Latin word for bell. In its basic form, it involves the interweaving of two voices, one of which moves by melodic steps, while the other rotates through the pitches of a major or minor chord. The *tintinnabuli* works were also informed by an intense religiosity, flowing from Pärt's embrace of Russian Orthodoxy. Pärt is often identified with the school of minimalism and, more specifically, that of mystic minimalism or *holy minimalism*.

By the late seventies, as Pärt began to acquire international fame, he found that he was not permitted to travel freely abroad, and that his works were being taken off the market. In 1979, at a meeting of the Estonian Composers' Union, Pärt denounced official policy while wearing a longhaired wig. The following year, he was able to obtain an exit visa to Israel.

Later, Arvo Pärt and his family were able to stay in Vienna – and later, Berlin – thanks to the help of the musician playing the prepared piano in his first Western performance of *Tabula Rasa*, Alfred Schnittke.

MAYA FRIDMAN

Born in 1989 in Moscow, Russia, Maya Fridman is a talented young artist residing in The Netherlands.

From her early years of playing the cello, Maya was recognised as a prodigy and was taken under the hood of the Foundation of Yuri Bashmet, where she took part in various TV and Radio programs. While studying at the Moscow State College of Music named after A. G. Schnittke, she was awarded as the First Prize Winner in the International Festival of Slavic Music among many other reputable awards.

In 2010, Maya has been granted admission at the Conservatory of Amsterdam where she studied under professor Dmitry Fershtman. Here, on the 10th of June in 2016, she successfully finished a Master's Degree with the highest honours, Cum Laude.

For the last five years, Maya has been performing regularly in The Netherlands and Germany. Due to her vast musical interests, she always had a passion for improvisation and playing diverse musical styles. Each of her solo programs has a strong emotional impact on the audience and presents great works of the last century, as well as completely new works of contemporary composers. She was awarded Best Musician of 2013 Prize at De Grote Prijs Van Nederland.

Maya's projects include successful collaborations with Jyoti Verhoeff, Aeon Trio (with Atzko Kohashi and Frans van der Hoeven), Efrén López, Dinosaur Trio and many more. During 2015 and 2016, she accompanied guitar virtuoso Harry Sacksioni on his Jubileum Tour 65, and joined bands such as Faun and Cesair as special guest.

During the Cello Biënnale 2016, Maya performed in the role of Margarita in the musical theatre adaptation of The Master and Margarita directed by Dagmar Slagmolen, where she played together with cellist Kian Soltani.

In 2015, Maya released her first album The Invisible Link, featuring works of Alfred Schnittke, Pēteris Vasks, and Arvo Pärt, which she recorded together with pianist Daniël Kool, under the label TRPTK. Her latest album will feature her own arrangement of Prokofiev's opera The Fiery Angel for cello and piano, on which she worked together with pianist Artem Belogurov. This arrangement was highly appreciated, not only by the research department of the Conservatory of Amsterdam, but also by specialists in Prokofiev's heritage such as James Gaffigan and Christina Guillaumier. The album, as well as the scores of the arrangement, will likely be released in 2017.





DANIËL KOOL

Dutch pianist Daniël Kool (1986) started playing the piano when he was five years old, and after four years of playing, he won a regional competition. In 1997, he was admitted to the Young Talent department of the Conservatory of Amsterdam, where he studied with Majes Benoist. He finished his Bachelor's and Master's degree at the Conservatory of Amsterdam with Mila Baslawskaja. Next to this, Daniël participated in different courses in The Netherlands and abroad.

Daniël has won several national and international prizes, and was praised for his refined and clear style of playing. Daniël is a respected and frequently asked soloist and chamber musician, and he is part of several ensembles. He forms a duo with soprano Nora Fisher and with cellist Ketevan Roinishvili with whom he performs regularly.

Daniël frequently performs in The Netherlands and abroad. In 2003, he made his debut in Carnegie Hall, New York. He made tours in the United States, United Arab Emirates, Indonesia and The Netherlands with varied programs and performers. Daniël regularly performs in The Netherlands and Europe. Furthermore, he also performed with different orchestras as a soloist.





TRPTK

The Invisible Link will always be a special album for us as a record label. When we started this project with Maya Fridman, we never had the intention to start a record label. The original idea was to record a classical album with a younger, more modern look and sound. After the first recordings of the Sonata for Cello and Piano by Alfred Schnittke, we realized that the only way to release this album like a true piece of art, would be if we release it under our own label. Working with Maya Fridman and Daniel Kool on this project meant the beginning of something we never could possibly imagine to grow this much so fast.

In 2014, we founded TRPTK as a movement against the degradation of sound quality and emotional impact of recordings. The only reason why music still exists as an art form, is because there are artists out there, just like Maya Fridman, who want to keep telling their stories, regardless of what it will take to do so. They just want to be heard! And we want to be there to pass their message through.

TRPTK is not being led by commercialism. We only record music because we are passionate about art. Our goal is to raise the standards of recording quality, and we only work with technology of the highest quality, that perfectly captures the emotion of music as transparent as possible. Recording music has little to do with placing microphones or loudspeakers in a room. This is just a means to let people experience music the way it is meant by the artist. After all, it's not only about what a performer is playing, but also how he is playing that. And even more important, why.

We want to invite you to be part of our adventure, whether you are an artist yourself or you are as passionate about music as we are. We feel that there is an urgent need to change the way music is being recorded nowadays, and we need everyone to make this movement one that cannot be unheard.

We want to thank you for supporting us during our mission, by buying this recording. We feel strengthened by the fact that there are people out there like you, who feel the same way about music as we do. Together, we can change the music industry.

TRPTK proudly uses **Sonodore** microphones, **Furutech** cabling, **KEF** loudspeakers **Hegel** amplifiers, and **Merging Technologies** converters at their recording and mastering facilities, carefully optimized by **Acoustic Matters**.

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