



Cerha, Friedrich

Baal Gesänge - Requiem für Rikke

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With Baal Gesänge and Requiem for Rikke, QUNTON RECORDS presents two landmark works by Friedrich Cerha, offering a compelling insight into one of the most significant voices of postwar Austrian music. Both compositions exemplify Cerha's lifelong artistic engagement with the fundamental questions of human existence and his unique approach to music theatre.

For Cerha, music was never an abstract sonic construct but a powerful reflection on freedom, violence, social structures, and the fragile relationship between the individual and society. His works combine uncompromising compositional precision with profound emotional intensity and rank among the most important achievements of Austrian contemporary music.

Cerha regarded his major stage works as forms of modern "world theatre." Rather than illustrating literary sources, they examine the tensions between society and the individual—a central concern throughout his creative life. In "Baal", based on Bertolt Brecht's early play, this exploration reaches one of its most radical expressions.

Cerha's Baal is neither a romantic outsider nor a revolutionary hero. He embodies an uncompromising individual who refuses to submit to social conventions or predetermined paths. Driven by an insatiable longing for freedom and life, he searches for a place "where life can be lived better," only to descend ever deeper into isolation and ultimately destruction. For Cerha, Baal becomes the symbol of a human being unable to find the conditions necessary for authentic existence.

Composed between 1974 and 1980, "Baal" also marks a decisive stage in Cerha's musical development. Different compositional layers—nature, society, and individual expression—merge into an organically unified musical language. Dense tone clusters, expansive sound fields, complex polyrhythms, and expressive declamation combine with vocal writing that closely follows the natural rhythms and inflections of speech, creating fluid transitions between speaking and singing. Compiled in 1981 as an independent concert cycle, the Baal Gesänge bring together the opera's principal musical numbers, connected by orchestral interludes. Detached from the stage, they reveal the dramatic and musical essence of the work with remarkable concentration. Songs such as "The Ballad of Evelyn Roe", "The Song of the Drowned Girl", "The Beggar's Aria", and "The Song of Death in the Forest" reflect Baal's relentless search for meaning, his bond with nature, and his increasing alienation.

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Requiem for Rikke, drawn from Cerha's opera "The Pied Piper", forms the second part of a triptych for tenor and orchestra. It is a lament for the young girl Rikke, whose love of life is extinguished by political violence and abuse of power. Beyond the fate of one individual, Cerha conceived the work as a requiem for the countless human lives destroyed throughout history in the name of ideology, power, and conflicting interests. Framed by orchestral scenes from "The Pied Piper", the work combines deeply personal grief with a universal human message. A chorale-like interlude evokes hope and renewal, accompanying young people who leave behind the world of their parents in search of a more humane future.

About Friedrich Cerha

Cerha achieved worldwide recognition for completing the third act of Alban Berg's unfinished opera "Lulu" between 1963 and 1978. Premiered in Paris in 1979, this completion restored one of the twentieth century's most important operatic masterpieces to the international repertoire.

Born in Vienna in 1926, Friedrich Cerha was one of the most influential Austrian composers of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Before completing secondary school, he resisted the Nazi regime, deserted twice from the German army, and survived the final months of the Second World War in the Tyrolean Alps. After the war he studied violin, composition, music education, musicology, German literature, and philosophy in Vienna. Initially active as a violinist, he became closely associated both with Vienna's post-war avant-garde artistic circles and with the Austrian section of the International Society for Contemporary Music.

In 1958, together with Kurt Schwertsik, Cerha founded the renowned ensemble die reihe, which became one of Europe's pioneering ensembles for contemporary music and played a decisive role in introducing audiences to the Second Viennese School and the international musical avant-garde. From 1959 onwards Cerha taught at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, where he held a professorship in composition, notation, and the interpretation of contemporary music from 1976 to 1988. As a conductor, he appeared with leading orchestras and

ensembles at many of the world's foremost festivals and opera houses, including the Salzburg Festival, the Vienna Festival, the Venice Biennale, the Berlin Festival, Warsaw Autumn, Teatro Colón Buenos Aires, and the State Operas of Vienna, Berlin, and Munich.

His own operas include "Baal" (premiered at the Salzburg Festival in 1981), "The Pied Piper" ("Der Rattenfänger", 1987), "The Giant from Steinfeld" ("Der Riese vom Steinfeld", Vienna State Opera, 2002), and "Uncle President" ("Onkel Präsident", Munich, 2013). Throughout these works, Cerha consistently explored the complex relationship between the individual and society. His catalogue encompasses solo, chamber, orchestral, choral, and stage works commissioned by many of the world's leading musical institutions and festivals. He received numerous international honours, including the Austrian Decoration for Science and Art, the French Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice Biennale, the Salzburg Music Prize, and the Ernst von Siemens Music Prize, often described as the "Nobel Prize of Music."

Band member

Bertolt Brecht	Text
Carl Zuckmayer	Text
Kenneth Riegel	Tenor
Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien	Dirigent: Friedrich Cerha
Theo Adam	Bariton

Producer

Andreas Rathammer

aufnahmestudio

Baal Gesänge	19.10.1984 im Großen Saal des Wiener Konzerthauses
Requiem für Rikke	12.05.2000 im Großen Saal des Wiener Musikvereins

Tracklist

1.	Ichtyosaurus Parabel M: Friedrich Cerha T: Bertolt Brecht P: Universal Edition	03:42
2.	Legende der Dirne Evelyn Roe M: Friedrich Cerha T: Bertolt Brecht P: Universal Edition	08:28
3.	Sommerlied M: Friedrich Cerha T: Bertolt Brecht P: Universal Edition	04:17
4.	Loblied auf den Abort M: Friedrich Cerha T: Bertolt Brecht P: Universal Edition	02:30
5.	Couplet M: Friedrich Cerha T: Bertolt Brecht P: Universal Edition	01:28
6.	Arie des Bettlers M: Friedrich Cerha T: Bertolt Brecht P: Universal Edition	05:51
7.	Lied vom ertrunkenen Mädchen M: Friedrich Cerha T: Bertolt Brecht P: Universal Edition	05:11
8.	Der Tod im Wald M: Friedrich Cerha T: Bertolt Brecht P: Universal Edition	05:22
9.	Von Sonne krank M: Friedrich Cerha T: Bertolt Brecht P: Universal Edition	06:16
10.	Baals Tod M: Friedrich Cerha T: Bertolt Brecht P: Universal Edition	05:39
11.	Requiem für Rikke M: Friedrich Cerha T: Carl Zuckmayer P: Universal Edition	10:49

