

# doppelgänger

goodmesh concours 2021 – expectation vs. reality



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The Corona Crisis shattered all our expectations - as musicians and audiences - concerning what music is, and what music could be. Painfully, we artists realized that Live-Streaming is not the way to get in touch with our audience.

By taking part in this competition, we wanted to find possibilities to combine and unite classical art song with visual theater. In addition, we also wanted to engage once more with our audience in meaningful and diverse topics that impact society, especially in times of loneliness and mental instability caused by the Corona Pandemic.

## philosophy

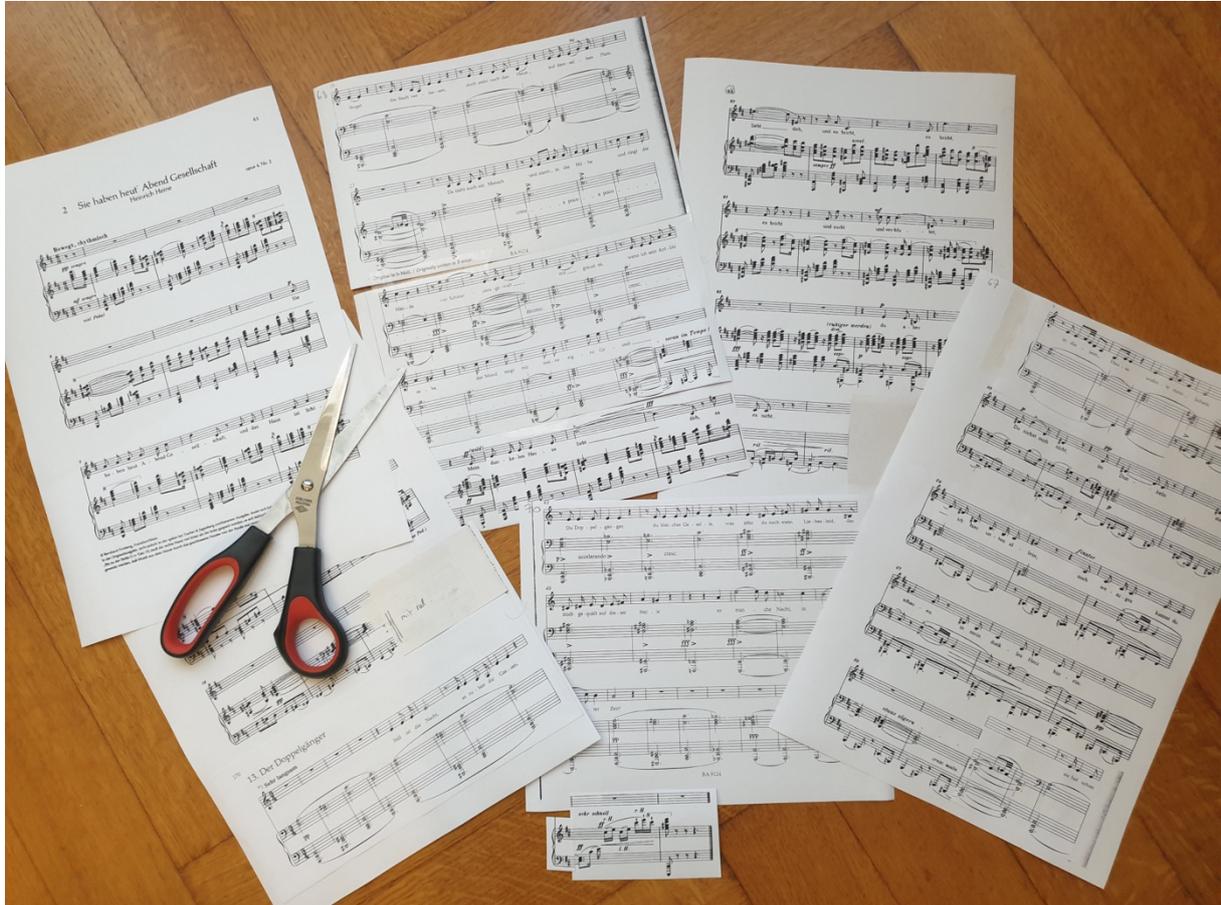
Our video tells the story of a person in a crisis of perception. He increasingly loses his connection to reality. We see that he is no longer in a physical world (walls and windows are mirrored) but rather, in his mind. The lost TV-signal symbolizes his disconnection from reality. The music of "Doppelgänger" and "Sie haben heut' Abend Gesellschaft" is purely a symbol of emotion for us to understand what he is experiencing and represents the feelings of the person. The music is not audible in the room. We are playing with different levels of visual representations and reality. A shadow slowly emerges into two, circling around each other. A life-size puppet, a "Doppelgänger" of the person appears and takes control step by step. As the film progresses, through a change of pace in the video editing and digital effects, the line between what is real and what is not blurs, creating an impression of "the uncanny". The camera shot selection changes between third- and first-person view, revealing different perspectives and interactions between the person and his "Doppelgänger". The person has company ("Gesellschaft") with small visual details of the musicians, appearing on the shadow-wall, creating a bond to the outside world. In the end, the video's opening image is mirrored. A puppet is watching the beginning of a Live-Stream concert, a connection point to a digital reality.

## process

### music and text

Our whole project started with the music of Schubert's "Doppelgänger" with words by Heinrich Heine. Very early in the process we found another poem by Heine with similar themes: altered consciousness, "the uncanny", identity, depersonalization and loss of control. The second poem was set to music by Hans Pfitzner and even

musically, the two pieces seemed to connect. We were able to combine both songs without leaving any music out. We rearranged the pieces with five splices, based on tonality, dynamics and text to remain consistent in our storytelling.



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In both poems a person is standing in front of a house. The house can be seen as the person's self and identity. By intermingling both songs we are getting a new perspective. It seems like the person is talking to himself. Both poems are taken from the cycle "The Homecoming", in which expectation and reality are prominent themes.

## Depersonalization

Simultaneously we were talking with psychotherapists about the theme "Expectation vs. reality". It is a topic which can be found in all mental disorders. When we face our fears through trials and tribulations past and present, we foresee a certain result at the end, but many a time, the reality isn't what we expect. In traumatic situations the body can develop a protection mechanism called "depersonalization" to avoid emotions and to flee from a situation. Patients often talk about seeing themselves from the

outside, like in Heine's poems. Those symptoms can be seen in war refugees and rape victims for example. Years later the reminder of just a smell or a sound can trigger this experience of depersonalization. Everybody has small symptoms of depersonalization and only if they appear regularly over a long period of time can one talk about a mental disorder.

### Recording and rehearsals

Manon and Johannes recorded the audio in Strasbourg (France) on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October. It was interesting to see how our "new version" changed our approach to both pieces. We had to work hard to "unhear" the original versions and to find a natural connection between the songs and development for this collage of music. Meanwhile, Emilien was working in Stuttgart to find interesting movements and interactions between the puppet and himself as a performer. Furthermore, he worked with flashlights and explored the dramaturgical possibilities of the play with light and shadows of himself and of the puppet, and how those different forms of representations (puppet and shadow) could interact. We had weekly Zoom-Meetings to exchange new ideas, and to develop a storyboard. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of October we had our video recording in Tübingen (Germany). The "Shedhalle" was perfect for our idea of an abstract room, not grounded in reality, with a variety of backgrounds. With Philipp Sigle taking care of the camerawork, we were able to fully concentrate on our artistic vision. We created a shot list and were able to get all shots within eight hours.



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At one point during the filming, Manon and Johannes re-entered the location after a small break with a bit of a shock: nobody was there except the puppet, waiting for them to return. Emilien was still in another room of course. We often had this “uncanny” feeling when the puppet was housed in a suitcase for transportation or when it was only sitting around, watching. During our recording we had expectations of how the puppet had to move, based on our storyboard. However, a big part of working with the puppet was to observe and feel how the puppet would react to the impulse the performer would give. The puppet was not directly moved by strings or attachments. Sometimes, we had to face the reality of the puppet’s movements and we were obliged to deal with it. It was both challenging and interesting, as not every movement could be replicated exactly how we had imagined it. We had prepared a detailed storyboard of what we wanted, while incorporating intended coincidence and “happy accidents”. In the video edit, we created more than six different versions before committing to the final cut.



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## future prospects

With this project we wanted to focus on the strengths of digital storytelling. We were also talking about filming a live performance but agreed very early on, that it is not satisfying to film what is meant for stage and live audience. Nonetheless, we have taken the thoughts about live performance into account at every step. It is our goal to create a concert program connecting classical art song and visual theater. There are many more possibilities of a visual language that could add another layer such as masks and direct interaction with the musicians and audience. Heinrich Heine's poems are set to music by many composers to this day and could establish a connection in such a multifaceted program.