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SVEN-INGO KOCH  
TO SPEAK OF

ENSEMBLE MUSIKFABRIK  
EMILIO POMARICO, CONDUCTOR

## to speak of

To what extent does music „say“ something? To what extent can I, as a composer, react to social and political events with my work without already „knocking down open doors“ with the recipient?

Angry, disturbed and agitated by the numerous „unspeakable“ events in 2020, I wanted to think about breathing in „to speak of“: about breathing as a metaphor, about breathing as a musical motif.

In view of the (necessary) force of current debates, however, it became increasingly important to me during the pre-compositional work to give the theme of „breathing“ a positive direction of thought as well, away from my anger, the anger of many: breathing as an elixir of life, as a life-giver. In some ancient texts - from Homer to the Book of Moses in the Bible - there are passages where life is given through gentle rebreathing: In the *Hymn to Demeter* attributed to Homer, Demeter gives breath to a boy to strengthen him. On the other hand, to react compositionally from my unthreatened, safe everyday life to frightening events elsewhere is simple, not courageous, to „speak“ of it alone is not an artistic challenge. That is why I developed an ambiguous text collage that questions the possibilities of music. It is based on short fragments of quotations from the works of Homer, the British poet Jo Shapcott and from „Des Knaben Wunderhorn“ (The boy's magic horn): those passages from „Des Knaben Wunderhorn“ which praise the effect of music and which Gustav Mahler also „set to music“ in his Symphony No. IV (translated into English for the purpose of linking with text fragments by Jo Shapcott). The „text snippets“ are sometimes musically supported, but mostly counteracted. The initial title idea „to speak of breathing“ (after a line of poetry by Jo Shapcott) became „to speak of“.

*Sven-Ingo Koch*

**Ensemble Musikfabrik**

Dirk Rothbrust, percussion

Bruce Collings, trombone

Hannah Weirich, violin 1

Juditha Haeberlin, violin 2

Axel Porath, viola

Dirk Wietheger, violoncello

Florentin Ginot, double bass

Emilio Pomarico, conductor

**commissioned by**

Ensemble Musikfabrik and Kunststiftung NRW

**written for**

Ensemble Musikfabrik

**live premiere**

26 November 2022

WDR Funkhaus am Wallrafplatz

Ensemble Musikfabrik

Kunststiftung  
NRW

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Ministerium für  
Kultur und Wissenschaft  
des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen



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ENSEMBLE  
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Sven-Ingo Koch

to speak of

for seven instruments (2021)

19'57

Ensemble Musikfabrik

Emilio Pomarico, conductor

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