Libretto Contemporary opera by Lars Skoglund, autumn 2021 Title: *Lambert, Lambert!*

We are in the Levin Hall at the Norwegian Academy of Music, it is evening on October 1st 2021.

The performers are Natali Abrahamsen Garner, Ditte Marie Bræin and Halvor Festervoll Melien.

They talk and sing. If necessary they use a microphone each.

The audience sit in a circle around the performers.

In the middle of the room is a model of small buildings and rooms, built by Tormod Lindgren. A garage, a castle ruin, a kitchen, a bedroom/guestroom, or similar. Adjustable lamps inside some of the models. A tiny synthesizer (Korg Volca Keys).

The performers are busy with these things while they sing and speak. Some things are ready when they start, other things are set up and rigged by the performers during the piece.

The music is prerecorded and flows out of the loudspeakers during the piece.

One will notice that in the first part of the text there are quite detailed light instructions. These are followed freely, not in real-time as in the text. It is here a point that there is not always correlation between what one hears and what one sees.

The effect is that the lights at times go on and off "in east and west" independently of what happens on stage and in the text, other times the light is stable and does not disturb.

Opening: The audience enters and sits down.

Ditte sits on a chair on stage during the entrance, Natali is at the gallery, wearing a transparent rain-cape with led-lights inside, and Halvor is off stage.

When the audience is in and the doors are shut, the music starts with a warm chord from a loudspeaker (stereo mix sent to 2 pairs of stereo speakers, in the 4 corners of the room), this is called A-music, or layer A.

After a while Natali starts talking.

The light changes unpredictably while she reads, but as mentioned, it does not follow the development in the text 1:1.

NATALI:

(Spoken)

The light desk has three switches, and each switch controls a lamp. At the beginning two of the three lamps are turned to slightly below half full, and the third is turned all the way down.

Slowly, slowly the third lamp is being turned up, and the other two are getting darker. But they are not turned completely off. There is still some light left in them.

Half a minute later, lamp two is suddenly turned to maximum. Just as sudden, a few seconds later, one and three are dimmed, so that only two is left. It is shining alone for a while. So, while it slowly is being turned softer and softer, one and three are slowly, slowly being turned up again.

At the point where the three meet, number one and three that are shining stronger and stronger, and number two that shines softer and softer, right there all three of them stop at the same strength, one, two and three.

A while after that one and two are going slighty down, and three a little bit up.

(Pause)

The three switches on the light mixer, that controls a lamp each, for a while ago were equally strong, all three of them. But then one and two were lowered, while the third went up. This continued until only three was left alone and the first two got dark. But then the first returned at high speed, simultaneously as the third unnoticeably got softer.

The second lamp continues to be dark, so that the parts of the room it lights are in shadow.

(Pause. Sounds/music is heard all the time)

But it does not last long until lamp two comes back again, and that part of the room once again gets visible.

(Slightly faster:)

Then lamp number one suddenly comes back up again, at high speed! Simultaneously, lamp three unnoticeably gets turned a tiny bit softer.

Then, after a certain amount of time, lamp one and two are turned all the way down. Now only the third lamp is shining.

The first and the second lamp continues to be dark, so that the parts of the room they light are in shadows.

(Halvor enters)

But it does not last so long until lamp one and two are turned on again, and the areas yet again become visible.

Then lamp three is turned all the way off. It is off for quite a long time. Lamp one and two then get to shine and light up what they are meant to light up.

DITTE: (Spoken)

(Music layer B is added; bright g's and microtonal variants)

Håkon enters the room with his hands full of luggage.

Håkon has been away for a while, but now he has returned.

Håkon does not know now, but in 21 years he will give away his new jacket to his nephew Anton.

Håkon went home to participate at the theatre.

He has been away for a while. He has been to a border area. But now he is back. He has just returned from Svinesund.

In the luggage he has a jacket that he bought on the trip.

NATALI:

(Spoken) (Layer B disappears, only layer A is heard)

So, lamp three came back on again. It was not away for very long. Lamp one and two did not get to be on their own particularly long.

All three lamps have again been adjusted so that they shine equally strong.

DITTE: (Layer B returns, layer A disappears) (Spoken)

Håkon has crossed a border. He has been driving around in his red car. And with him in the car was his partner, or girlfriend, as somebody says. They have been on holiday in Håkon's red car. But now they are back, because Håkon is going to participate in the theatre rehearsals.

(Silence)

HALVOR: (Singing) *"Mumble-whisper-place nr. 1", without semantically meaningful text.*

HALVOR: Mumle-hviske-sted nr. 1 J =ca. 72 prøvende, mellom hvisking og svak sang ("bam" uttales "bamm" med veldig kort a) _ Baritone bam ba_ ba__ ba__ ba__ ba__ ba. ba. ba bam ba_ pp 4 _ Bar. bam_ bam_bam ba_ bam ba ba_ 8 3 3 # Bar. 2 ba ba _bam ba_ bam. ba ba 12 -Bar. ba___ ba___ ba_ bam_ ba bam ba_ bam_ ba___ ba___ 15 $\overline{}$ Bar. ba bam ba bam ba____ ba__ ba__bam ba ba 19 $\overline{}$ Bar. bam ba ba ba

NATALI:

(Spoken) (on top of his singing after some time)

You were in the guest room in the house of your partner's girlfriend. There it was also three lamps. A small lamp in a corner, a reading lamp above the bed, and a light bulb hanging in a cable down from the ceiling.

None of the lamps are turned on. It is still quite bright outside.

Ruth is upstairs with her girlfriend in the floor above. You hear them talking together. You are alone in the guest room.

You don't know Ruth's friend, and you have never been here before.

There are two beds her, a bench, a table and a wardrobe, and next to the wardrobe you see a door. You feel the door. The door is open. You open the door and look inside.

(Music C starts; moody electronic music) (Halvor stops singing here)

You see a stand.

There are jackets hanging on the stand. There are boots and shoes on the floor. You see a white plastic bag. You look into the bag. The bag is full of video cassettes.

DITTE:

(singing)

Håkon went home to participate in the play. (It was me who invited him in.) Håkon's new jacket is in the bag with things from his holiday trip. (The car is in the garage outside the house.)

Håkon will use, among other things, a sword in the theatre piece. (The sword is much heavier than it looks.)

Ditte synger



NATALI:

(spoken)

Ruth is upstairs, on the floor above the bedroom. She talks with her friend. You hear them through the ceiling. You are going to go up there. But you nose around in the things in the room besides the bedroom. There are groceries there too. Spaghetti, sour pickels, strong mustard, soup bags. Lots of stuff everywhere.

Somebody is walking in the stairs!

You jump back into the bedroom. Ruth asks where you are?

HALVOR:



"Mumble-whisper-place nr. 2", without meaning-carrying text.



DITTE:

(singing, undramatically)

The play is a historical drama. The main character is Lambert, who lives in a castle or a palace.

Or something like that. (It depends on what kind of props we manage to build.)

Håkon has a minor part in the drama, he plays Lambert's arch enemy Hallvard Magnus.



HALVOR: (Shouts with powerful voice)

Lambert! Come out!

DITTE:

(singing)

Håkon is practicing his lines. In this scene he stands outside the castle, or palace, (or whatever it becomes), and shouts to Lambert that he has to get out.

(Music with a beat starts)

HALVOR: (Shouts with powerful voice)

Lambert! I know that you are in there! Come out! Come out, Lambert!

NATALI:

(Spoken)

We were discussing what kind of light settings...

HALVOR: (Interrupts, violently)

Laaaam-beeeert!!!

NATALI:

(Spoken, when he has finished)

...what kind of light...

HALVOR: (Interrupts, fast)

Lambert! I know you are in there! You popinjay! Lambert, you soup cuckoo! Come out, Lambert, you silly person! Oooh, you twit! Lambert!!

NATALI:

(Spoken, when he has finished)

...how the lights should be on him when he stands there and shouts for Lambert. The director refused to use a follow spotlight. - Follow spot? No way! That you get cheaply, she said. - Yes, for "spot-price" [untranslatable wordplay], some funny guy replied. I drank a sip of my can of Red Bull and let them continue their discussion while I went to the bathroom.

While I was out my mobile rang. It was Gunnar. Hello, Gunnar, I said. Hello, Gunnar said. What are you doing, I asked.

(new beat, «apple-beat»)

Gunnar told me that his little brother had gotten a lot of apples from somebody who lived in a place where there was a garden, where those who lived there never picked the fruit themselves. He was wondering if I wanted a big box of apples. Yes, eh, hm, perhaps, I answered, a bit surprised.

To be honest I was not <u>that</u> interested in getting the house full of apples, especially now that we are working here, and I am almost never home, but a small bag would maybe not be so bad.

-Is it possible that I maybe can get just a few apples in a little bit small bag, I said a bit defensive.

I thought that it would be a bit typical of Gunnar to become a bit irritated that only wanted a small bit of what he offered, and sort of did not cheere about his generosity. But he was completely chill. - Yes, I can put a bag in the hallway. - Ok, thanks a lot, I said. I was going to ask him something else, but he had to hang up, and I did not manage to ask him before he had hung up.

(The beat stops)

Then I went back. They were still testing out different light things. Håkon had to save his voice, so he was just standing around gesticulating, pretending to say Lambert Lambert without making a sound.

The sword was not ready either, so he was waving around a spatula. That was supposed to be the sword that he was going to threaten and scare Lambert with.

DITTE:

(Sings)

My job is to put music to the scenes in the drama. I have



(talks)

been twisting my brain about how the music must be in the scene where he is yelling out for Lambert.

At first, I thought it was a comical scene. You know, he is standing there, calling out for a guy who never shows up. Lambert is not home! He is calling out in vain.

But after reflecting on this for a while, I asked the question: From which point of view should we see this character?

Is Hallvard Magnus, played by Håkon, a comical clown, whose screaming is of no use? Is Lambert sitting inside behind the castle walls, laughing at him?

Or: *Is* he really dangerous for Lambert, with his sword and his weaponry? Is Lambert trembling of fear of what Hallvard is threatening him with? Has he gone to hide? Is it danger and drama, or is it comical?

But we must also ask: Why has he come to Lambert, in the first place? Is this about Hallvard's deadly jealousy? Has not Lambert run away with his wife? That is why he is so angry. Should we be sorry for him?

Or, is he a terrible and violent man, who Lambert has saved *her* from? Can we see it from her perspective? Has Lambert saved her from Hallvard the cruel? Whose side are we on? Are they very much in love?

Are we, by the way, really so sure that she is there with him? I cannot find anything in the manuscript that tells us this. I think the original is very deficient and unclear at this point.

And the fact that Lambert does not defend himself makes it seem as if he has disappeared. Otherwise he probably would have come out. Or perhaps he has guardians and servants who could chase the intruder away.

(sings)

There are so many questions here now.



(spoken) Perhaps we add some drums.

HALVOR:

(sings)

"Mumble-whisper-place nr. 3", without words



NATALI:

(spoken, on top of Halvor's song)

The lights in the bedroom of Ruth's friend are three lamps, and two of them are on. It is evening. The one that is not on is hanging from a cable down from the ceiling. The small lamp has an orange lampshade.

Ruth tries on the clothes she has bought. "This is nice," she says about a bright blouse with a small alligator on it.

Ruth's friend knocks on the door

(Halvor stops singing)

and asks if you want to have spaghetti for supper. You go upstairs to the floor above. Vera has made some spaghetti.

(Pause, they mime that they eat, in silence)

You eat practically all the spaghetti. Then Vera fetches what she calls her great hobby and spare time activity. She shows you...

DITTE AND HALVOR:

(*sings* in two-part-harmony, rhythmically unison on rubato speech rhythm) (line change = pitch change) (see score)

+

NATALI:

(parallell: keeps reading the text as above, not unirhythmical with the song, but "heterophonically". play with being in front, behind, and simultaneous.) This is the excess-place in the piece, where the text's meaning does not to be understood 100%.

...a part of a photo that is torn up,

I (meaning the friend, the name is Vera) found it, outside, in front of

one of these doors that one never

notices,

behind the huge red building block at Sagene [in Oslo], where

the photo was lying next to the paper container.

We can see the trouser legs of three persons on the piece of the torn up photography.

Or perhaps four persons. Is it

pants or skirt? Both things are possible, says Ruth. A pair of legs

with socks on. Three or four

persons, posing to be photo-

graphed, perhaps a band, the colours

can give associations to showbiz;

blue, black, pink, in different nuances,

somewhat flashy eighties aesthe-

tics. Wonder who has

torn the picture in pie-

ces?

The next picture is from a beach, taken during winter, me, Vera, has found this photo too, accidentally on the street, it was lying there, I took it with me, the beach is abandoned, it is winter, there is no-one swimming or sunbathing there now. There is a play structure, a climbing structure in backlight on the beach, at the right side of the picture. The sun casts shadows. A sign on land down by the water, impossible to see what is written on the sign. Who has set it up, and why. Why right there? Is it a sign, anyway, not so easy to see, it is so small, it is a pole with something on top, cannot really see, maybe some info about ebb and flow, about when and where it is safe to swim perhaps, nobody on the beach now since it is winter, bet it is full here when the weather is nice, wonder where this is, wonder if it is a huge difference between ebb and flow here, the moon shines down on the empty beach at night, those who made the photo has gone home or back to the hotel, ten pictures left on the film, no, only seven, then they send it to print. The pictures can be picked up in one hour. Here it goes fast!

(They stop and drink)

A bank card, it is a picture of a young boy born in 1996 and he smiles with closed mouth, a part of his left ear is showing. He has thick hair, quite long, the picture is black and white, the hair is quite bright, hard to say exactly which color since the picture is black and white. The hair is combed over from left to right. He does not look straight into the camera. He is looking a bit to the side. Perhaps he is looking at a monitor that shows how the picture turns out.

(Halvor lights a candle)

Behind the guy we see a window where light comes in, above a square that maybe is a window that is covered with some kind of curtain, perhaps a roller blind,

(Natali stops reading and starts throwing photos around, now the text is just sung)

on the wall to the right for this, closer to the camera, closer to us, who are watching, is

a kind of image		
cannot see		
what it depicts	(pause)	а
yellow or		
bright		
something on a		
dark background, symmetrical on both		
sides, a tall bright thing, with		
white framing, under the window a		
table, the table leg reaches down to the		
floor, the table leg disappears out of the picture,		
under the window an iron leg,		
a table leg of iron or metal that		
stands in front of something that has a		
dark colour, that is <i>not</i> the wall		
itself, because it is bright.		
There is also the dark behind		
the dude, which can look like the con-		
tinuation of the sweater of the dude.		
It may look like the dude		
is one with the wall.		
The sweater of the dude has almost the same		
colour as the wall. It		

may look like the dude is one with the wall. The sweater of the dude has almost the same colour as the wall. It

may look like the dude is one with the wall.

DITTE og HALVOR: Duo om foto













(Low-pitched synthesizer sounds)

DITTE:

(spoken)

I make the theatre music with one rhythm machine and two synthesizers, and I record some other things.

I tried to create a balalaika orchestra with one ukulele, don't know how successful that turned out.

I try to find out how I musically can characterize the different people in the drama.

I met Håkon at somebody's home. I thought: We have to get this guy to join the play.

NATALI:

(spoken)

You have bought a jacket in Svinesund, in the same colour as your hair. You don't know now, but in 21 years you will give this jacket to your nephew Anton.

You clean up your house. You sort out old clothes. You walk over to the house next door, where your brother lives with his family. You ask his wife if he thinks that Anton can use this old jacket. You bought it in Svinesund one summer when you were together with Ruth. You have almost never used the jacket, it looks as good as when you bought it.

HALVOR:

(spoken)

In the garage there is a mysterious guy who sneaks in through a hole in the wall at night. He puts two of the planks to the side and climbs into the garage. There the strange guy sleeps at night some times.

And there my red Mazda is standing, when I am not out driving.

(Composed section, see score. All sing:)

NATALI: (singing) Håkon enters the garage

DITTE: (singing) Håkon is spotting the little man

HALVOR: (spoken) Hey! What are you doing in my garage?!

NATALI:

Håkon sees that the little man has arranged himself a sleeping place behind a stable of winter tires

DITTE:

Håkon is lighting with his flash lamp. The light shines in the nails in the winter tires.

HALVOR: Who are you and what are you doing here?!?

NATALI:

Håkon sees that the man has made a bench out of his formwork boards.

DITTE:

Håkon sees that he has spilt mustard and ketchup on his formwork boards.

HALVOR:

What are you doing with my formwork boards? What is this dirty mess?

NATALI: Håkon hears music

DITTE: Håkon hears music from a tape recorder

HÅKON: What are you listening to? (pause) This here is quality music!

NATALI:

The little guy is listening to music from a tape recorder that he stole from the previous garage where he lived

All three sing instrumentally "aaa" together with the cassette recorder music.

HALVOR:

(spoken)

Why do you turn off the music? It has barely just begun?

THE END

Sagesund, Tvedestrand 16.09.2021

Trioen























