

Agnus Dei (2000)

The *Agnus Dei* was composed by Jan Rokus van Roosendael for the Nieuw Sinfonietta Amsterdam who premiered the work during the last season. In the beginning was the word and *only* afterwards the music which is something the early music movement has discovered during the last years. An idea which was pushed into the background after the 19th century's abundance of instrumental music. But not with our contemporary Van Roosendael who in this work takes as his starting point the Renaissance. He began with the word of the mass text *Agnus Dei* and out of this built the composition up. First he lets the strings scan the text: in a choral-like passage the notes follow the cadence of the mass text. It is not without good reason that the text is written in the conductor's score. After the refrain a couplet follows. There are four couplets, the refrain sounds five times. The couplets portray in quick tempo the restlessness of the world. Each couplet has a development from a thin to a full force and a question and answer repartee sounds between low and high. The refrains become increasingly intense, the couplets as well. The tension culminates in the last refrain, wherein the music is very broad and the strings all play independent parts. *The Agnus Dei* is the last section of the mass and actually a prayer for deliverance. Two Biblical polarities hold Roosendael's attention here. The pacifistic innocence of the Lamb of God. This symbol stands for sacrifice. It is offered to cleanse our sins and to free the way for a new beginning. In opposition stands power and violence, as has already for centuries been symbolized by the lion and the bull. 'Pacem' is the last word of the text. Upon this Van Roosendael composes the only triad in the work. A symbol of balance and peace.