



**SOUND
STREAMS**

Lawrence Cherney,
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

NEW DIRECTIONS IN MUSIC

MUSIK FÜR DAS ENDE

by Claude Vivier

"Music for the End" [is] a shadowy, otherworldly rite, almost medieval in its soberly overlapping incantations, with drone layered on slow babble."

Zachary Woolfe, New York Times



Musik für das Ende, Part III

Musik für das Ende is a ritual spectacle that transports audiences and performers, or "celebrants", beyond time and place to an eternity of pure sound and light. It is a journey to a final ecstatic state, a rebirth beyond all conceptions of life and death. An audience member at opening night described it as "one of the most perfect representations of the human experience, overall, that I have ever witnessed onstage."

This Soundstreams production marks the first fully staged version of the work called *Musik für das Ende* by Canadian composer Claude Vivier. The production is in three seamless parts, with a total duration 80' without intermission. This work is combined in a dramatic evening with Vivier's final work, *Do you believe in the immortality of the soul*, and an original monologue inspired by Vivier's letters.

Part I. *Il faisait nuit*

Monologue inspired by Vivier's letters and diaries.

Scenario: Vivier returns to his Paris apartment to find the door ajar.

Part II. Vivier's *Do you believe in the immortality of the soul*

Tenor and soprano soloists, vocal ensemble (10), percussion, synthesizers (2).

Scenario: Staged on a subway platform, a stranger stabs the protagonist to death in the subway, an eerie premonition of Vivier's own death.

Part III: Vivier's *Musik für das Ende*

Vocal ensemble (10) and actor

Scenario: a ritual journey through life, death and beyond.

The score for *Musik für das Ende* is challenging: highly structured yet requiring nuanced improvisation based on that structure. For the premiere and subsequent touring, Soundstreams created a vocal ensemble inclusive of a number of cultural heritages and musical genres. They were rehearsed over many weeks to achieve remarkably complex exchanges of rhythm, pitch and language.

These exchanges create a constant sense of divergence and convergence among the vocal lines, a cosmic mirror of the ebb and flow of humanity. From time to time, pairs or groups of the singers come into complete unison – also called a “meld.” At other times, they disintegrate into almost incomprehensible fragments from multiple languages, pitches and rhythms. Later in the work, the surreal evocation of a ghostly Kyrie portends our ritual journey to Vivier’s eternity of pure sound and light.

The production is best staged in an open theatre with flexible seating on all sides. In this way, audience and celebrants inhabit the same space on the same plane, offering an intimate and immersive format that allows for the exchange of stories from “the most tender moments in one’s life,” says Vivier.

Musik für das Ende, Part III

① LES 5 VOIX SONT EN AVANT DE LA SALLE, TOURNANT EN ROND CHERCHANT SON-CLÉF MOT RYTHME.

QUAND TOUS SE SONT BIEN DÉFINIS COMMENCE LA MUSIQUE.

② LES 5 VOIX SONT EN ARRIERE DE LA SALLE, TOURNANT EN ROND CHERCHANT SON CLÉF MOT RYTHME.

Solo PASSE M.F. ca 5"

Solo PASSE M.F. ca 3"

Reprende au clique de b'

Reprende au clique de ca

The score is handwritten and features five vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor 1, Tenor 2, Bass) and piano accompaniment. It includes various musical notations such as clefs, notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The lyrics are written in French and describe the spatial arrangement of the vocal ensemble during two different sections of the piece.

A score sample from *Musik für das Ende*



Claude Vivier

Claude Vivier: A Short Biography

Many consider Claude Vivier the greatest composer Canada has yet produced. At the age of 34, he was the victim of a shocking murder, leaving behind some 49 compositions in a wide range of genres, including opera, orchestral works, and chamber pieces. György Ligeti once called Vivier “the finest composer of his generation.”

Born in Montréal, Vivier studied at the Conservatoire de Musique. In the fall of 1976 a visit to Bali caused Vivier to reevaluate his ideas concerning the role of the artist in society, initiating a new period in his stylistic evolution. In the wake of this journey he wrote *Shiraz* (1977) for piano, *Orion* (1979) for orchestra, and his opera *Kopernikus* (1978–79). Above all, it was in his cycle of pieces for voice and instrumental ensemble, particularly *Lonely Child* (1980) and *Prologue pour un Marco Polo* (1981) that Vivier’s unique style crystallized. In a *New York Times* profile, Paul Griffiths observed, “The harmonic auras are suddenly more complex, and the fantastic orchestration is unlike anything in Vivier’s earlier music, or anyone else’s...”

