

Diamanda Galás | Broken Gargoyles

16 April 2021 and 17 April 2021

Broken Gargoyles is a sound installation by the American singer, composer, and pianist Diamanda Galás, which she composed in 2020 during the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. She worked with the artist and sound designer Daniel Neumann, both remaining in isolation in separate places due to the pandemic—Galás in San Diego and Neumann in New York.

Based on two poems from 1911 by the German poet Georg Heym, *Das Fieberspital* and *Die Dämonen der Stadt*, the work consists of natural and heavily processed voices, manipulated piano, and various other sound sources. In addition, parts of Galás's 2020 album *De-Formation: Piano Variations, A Work for Solo Piano* were added, as well as excerpts from verses from *Das Fieberspital* performed by the artist Robert Knoke.

In *Das Fieberspital*, Georg Heym describes the disturbing condition of people suffering from yellow fever, who live in fear of death, catatonia, and paralysis due to their inhumane treatment and isolation. Galás interweaves these sensations, transformed into sound, with another poem by Heym, *Die Dämonen der Stadt*, in which he describes dark harbingers of World War I in 1911. The atrocities of World War I become visible through *Krieg dem Kriege!*, a work by the German anti-militarist and pacifist Ernst Friedrich from 1924, which Galás references in her title. In *Broken Gargoyles*, Diamanda Galás combines Heym's two poems and discovers in them the harbingers of the horror of World War I.

Now the sound installation *Broken Gargoyles* is being presented in the ruins of the Nikolaikapelle, built around 1250 in Hanover, which was located outside the city wall at the time and served as a quarantine for those who suffered from the plague and leprosy in the Middle Ages.

Diamanda Galás (born in San Diego, USA) is an exceptional phenomenon in the international music and performance scene. The "Callas of avant-garde music" rose to fame with her cycle of works *Plaque Mass*, which is dedicated to the victims of the AIDS epidemic. It was first performed in 1990 at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. Other politically charged works include *Vena Cava*, *Schrei 27*, *De-Formation as well as Defixiones*, *Will and Testament*. Diamanda Galás' work operates at the intersection of performance, scream opera, blues, jazz and rebetiko. Her medium is her voice which covers four and a half octaves, the use of electronics and virtuosic piano playing. She has worked on soundtracks with directors such as Oliver Stone, Clive Barker and Francis Ford Coppola. She was artist in residence at the legendary The Kitchen, New York and at the DAAD in Berlin. In 2005, she was awarded the Italian Demetrio Stratos Award for musical innovation. Her numerous compositions have previously been released by the label Mute Records and now by her own production company Intravenous Sound Operations.

Curator: Robert Knoke

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