

Suddenly there was silence. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, one country after the other went into a state of lockdown in the first months of 2020. Everywhere across the globe people were confined to their homes and many had to deal with the loss of loved ones. Concerts were cancelled. Just like most musicians, our calendars were suddenly completely empty. Time and again, performances we had looked forward to had to be crossed out.

From that compulsory silence, something good had to arise. A beautiful church in the city we live in, the Nicolai church in Utrecht, from which the oldest, Roman parts dated back to the 12th century, provided us with the opportunity to make music again, though without the presence of an audience. Our goal was to create the experience of a concert, witnessed only by a couple of microphones and cameras. We wanted to create a program that would the spirit of the time: on one hand uncertainty, on the other hand reflection.

The music would also need to fit the remarkable space we found ourselves in. Only few buildings show so clearly how generations dealt with them like the Nicolai church, an inspiring place where one could also feel tiny in comparison. But once you produce sound within its walls, you immediately feel enveloped. The reverb of the church is vast. The centuries old walls talk back.

There seemed to be no more fitting piece than *Castillo interior* (2013) by the Latvian composer Pēteris Vasks (1946), a work with a meditative character. It's not a programmatic piece: Vasks contrived the title only after its completion, when he had sequestered himself to a remote area to meditate. The title refers to the book *Dwellings of the Interior Castle* (*Moradas del Castillo Interior*) from 1577, the magnum opus of the mystic Theresa of Ávila.

If there should be anything that would fit those times even better, it would have to be *ex tempore*. On this digital EP, you will find two improvisations. Or rather, one and a half: a starting-off point for the second improvisation was Bach's *Invention in E minor* (BWV 778).

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