

A Pot Calling The Kettle Black

by Andres Bick

A composition for the relaunch of the SilenceRadio.org website on May 1, 2010

Length: 10:14 min.

Singer: Almut Kühne

In March 2010 the Belgian internet radio SilenceRadio.org asked me to compose a piece for the relaunch of their website. At that time I was interested in how sounds could be mirrored in other sounds and how the meaning of sounds shifts depending on context. The title of the piece – “A Pot Calling The Kettle Black” – is an old English phrase already found in works by Cervantes and Shakespeare that is still used today to refer to hypocrisy. The idiom can be interpreted as follows: A pot is sooty from being placed on an open fire, while a kettle, being placed on coals, remains clean and shiny. The pot only sees its own sooty reflection in the shiny surface of the kettle and accuses it of being black, a property that only belongs to the pot itself. In this composition, sounds refer to and reflect each other in a similar manner. The action is transposed from a medieval fireplace to a contemporary household, and many sounds deal with activities set in a kitchen: frying eggs, drinking mineral water, making a cup of tea or cleaning the dishes. Sounds of water and fire, of heating and burning, of immersion and draining appear in many variations. The sounds are orchestrated by a woman who is inspired to vocal experiments by her daily routines. The kitchen noises turn into abstract sound worlds which may arise from her imagination and memory – but perhaps they are just sounds that have been released from their chemical bond with a specific meaning and which, when heated, recombine to form new molecular structures.