Schutzwall

A chamber opera for two sopranos and live electronics

Jonathan Higgins

Schutzwall – 21'00"
for two sopranos and stereo live electronics

Berlin, 1961. Erected overnight without warning, the Berlin Wall fractured the city. One month after the wall's construction, Schutzwall follows two sisters meeting either side, to wait for nightfall and their chance to be reunited.

Original performers: Mimi Doulton, Ella Taylor and Alex Gowan-Webster

Character information:

Angelika Meyer
Age: 23 – Profession: Attorney's assistant in West Berlin – Location: East Berlin
Angelika is the more outgoing of the two sisters. Prior to the wall she was well settled with a strong job and friendship group. Although she is the younger of the two sisters, since their teens Angelika has been more akin to an older sister to Susanne, looking after her and encouraging her. Her attempt to escape to West Berlin is driven by an intense loyalty to her family.

Susanne Meyer
Age: 26 – Profession: Unemployed – Location: West Berlin
Unlike her sister, Susanne has consistently struggled to fit in. She is fairly unsure of herself and doesn't like to make her own decisions. Susanne is not overtly shy but, is uncomfortable in new social situations. Her introverted nature means she has consistently struggled to find a permanent job and her friendship group mostly consists of Angelika's friends. However, when around friends and family she knows well, she is playful and funny. She tries her best not to upset anyone, even if this means concealing the truth.

Family members (unseen)
Ursula Meyer – Mother
The only other surviving member of the Meyer family. Ursula has recently been diagnosed with lung cancer. Angelika does not know about this. During the war Ursula moved to the German countryside with her three children during the mass evacuations.

Dieter Meyer – Father
During the war Dieter remained in Berlin. He was too old to join the army so worked in a factory. He was killed during an air raid when a bomb stuck the Meyer family home.

Jurgen Meyer – Brother
Angelika and Susanne's older brother. A year after being evacuated to the countryside Jurgen moved back to Berlin to live with his father. He was killed in the same air raid as his father.

Staging

Schutzwall is intended to be staged in a traverse layout with a wall running down the middle of the stage.

Audience	Stage	Wall	Stage	Audience
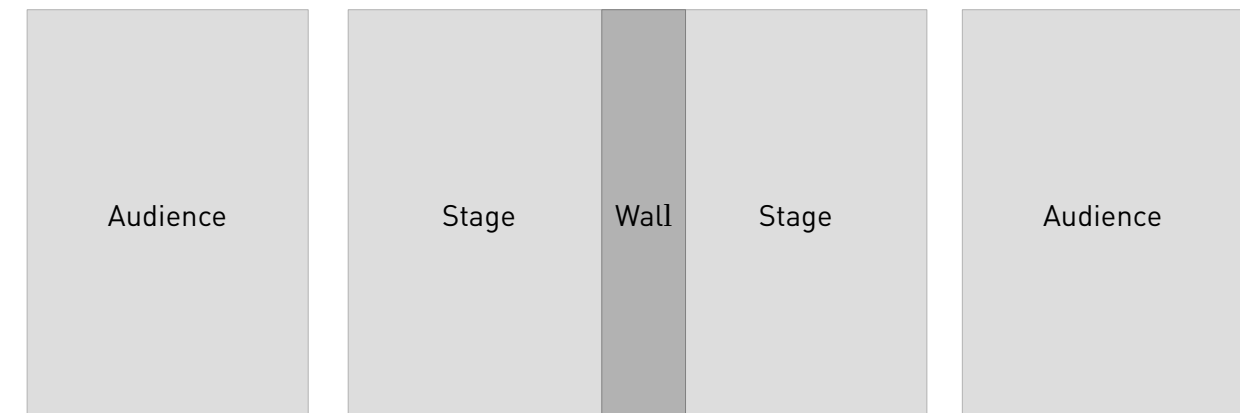
Alternative staging options are possible, however this layout is recommended. It is also recommended that the audience are split up without choice. For example a group of four would be made to sit two on each side to create a disorientating experience evocative of the division of Berlin.

Equipment Required

A computer with Pure Data software installed and running the schutzwall.pd patch

A usb midi controller with at least 8 faders and 1 button

An audio card for the computer with 2 inputs and 2 outputs

2 lapel radio microphones

Stereo speaker system (double stereo with 2 speakers either side of the wall is recommended)

See readme.txt in the schutzwall folder for more detailed tech set up instructions

Schutzwall
How to interpret the score

Singers
A – Angelika
S – Susanne

Schutzwall is scored without a meter.

Timings are given in seconds across the top of the system. The duration of a system changes throughout the score so be observant to this, changes are indicated on the top left hand side of the page. This usually corresponds to scene changes. These timings are an indication only; the electronics are designed to flex in time to accommodate variations in speed between performances.

Rhythms are generally free and it is recommended that words are sung in a rhythm similar to how they would be spoken. However the distance between the notes does give some indication to how long each note should last when coupled with the time scale across the top of the stave. Additionally filled in note heads indicate notes which should be short and syllabic and hollow note heads indicate notes that should be sustained.

If the performers are able to perform the score at pitch this is preferable. However as the electronic backing does not provide a point of reference for the performer this can be very difficult. The melodic shape is significantly more important than the notes themselves. Performers should strive to sing in tune relative to each other.

Notes joined by a thick line indicate that the words beneath should be sung gradually descending in pitch from the first note to the second. The performer is free to choose exactly what notes are sung.

Text intersecting the stave should be spoken. The timings across the top of the stave still apply.

Electronics
There are three different symbols for the performer to interpret.

Gain Changes:
A boxed number followed by a crescendo of decrescendo specify for a fader to be moved. The number specifies which fader (numbered 1-8 left to right) and the length of the hair pin indicates how long the fade should take (following the time scale on the top of the score). Rather than specifying specific midi values which faders should be set to musical dynamic markings have been used. Each speaker system is different and the performer should do their best to balance the electronics with the singers so that the vocalists *mf* corresponds with the electronics *mf*.

Microphone Mute/Un-mute:
This symbol indicates that the performers microphones should be muted going into the effects process.

This symbol indicates that the microphones should be unmuted.

Play:
Not all aspects of the electronic backing are performed live. Elements which are triggered and left to run are indicated by a play symbol. The number within the play symbol corresponds to which cue that will trigger. For a complete list of cues see readme.txt in the schutzwall folder.

Exactly which buttons are to be pressed for each of these symbols depends on which midi controller you are using. Information on how to setup the patch to work with your specific controller can be found in readme.txt in the schutzwall folder.

Schutzwall

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Scene 1 - Arrival
1 System = 1 Minute

Light cue 1 - Fade into warm white

3

Scene 2 - Family, Current
1 System = 1 Minute

4'00"   10"   20"   30"   40"   50"

A. A: How's mother? Have you told her about this?

S: No, I didn't want to worry her more.

On-ly o-kay?

S: Well, it would've been fathers birthday last week, she is always worse at this time of year. With you gone, I think it's all just too much for her.

A: Of course, I forgot. How's her cough?

S: looking for a job but I'm sure something will come up. What with the money you gave us before all this and mother's savings,

S: Speaking of, I went to your office. They have agreed to hold your job for another week.

S. She's o-kay_____

S: Oh, much better. She saw a doctor yesterday and he said everything was fine.

A: That's good. How are you doing?

I'm___ fine, still

I'm getting by.

E. 5 *f* *mp* 5
7 *mf* 6

5'00"   10"   20"   30"   40" Tacet   50"

p

A. A: Thank you... that's not really what I meant ...

How have you been?   real – ly_____   What's wrong_____

S: and having to look after mother on my own is so hard. I could really do with you here.

A: You're such a worrier, I'm sure mother can look after herself. Don't worry, after tonight I'll be there and everything will be so much better.

A: Can you not get a job at the solicitors with me?

S: No, they've already filled all the positions but yours.

A: Ah

S: But, there is a grocers in Wedding looking for staff. I have an interview on Thursday.

mp

S. Uh___ good?   No_____ not rea-ly – I just miss you_____

Tacet

pp   *mp*

E. 2 *mp* 6 2 1
6 *mp*

Silence as they both
try not to laugh

6'00"   10"   20"   *sfz*

A. A: I'm sure you'll do great.

S: Hopefully, the three of us can't live off your salary forever.

A: You've been scrounging off me your whole life. I don't think you getting a job is going to change that.

×

Burst of laughter

mf

S. Uh Ex-cuse me I have not

(Indignant exhale)

E. 7

5

6'30"

A. Even when we were lit-tle   you'd make me look after the   rab-bits   whilst you went   off   to   play   be - cause   I   was the   youn-gest

S. No   I   di - dn't   Well...

E. 8

6'45"

A. And_____ and   Whenever   you   and   Jurgen   would   get   in   trou-ble   you'd   always   blame   it   on   me.

S. maybe   once   or   twice...   Now_____   thats_____

E.

7'00"

A. How__   so

S. not_____   true_____   I_____   was_____   a__   per - fect   child_____   I   ne-ver got   in trou-ble

E. 4

6

7'15"

A.

Laughter___ Lies!_ So it wasn't you who convinced Jur – gen to stick his head between

S.

Laughter___

E.

mf

7'30"

A.

the ban – i – sters?

S: Where he chose to put his head was entirely up to him!

S.

An – y way___ If he hadn't had such big ears he wouldn't have

E.

f

7'45"

A.

Chuckle

A: How did I get you stuck in a tree?!

S.

gotten stuck. Chuckle What a – bout the time you got me stuck in the ap – ple tree?___

E.

f

mp

7

05" *p*   *mp*   10"   *p*

A. Well_____ I was right was-n't I?_____ As I re-mem ber it you on-ly made it half way up

S. *f*   you bet me I couldn't climb all the way to the top of it   I could – 've

E.

8'15"   20"   *mp*   25"

A. I thought we'd grown out of climb – ing things

S. *f* _____ *mp*   made it the whole way up! If you and Jur-gen hadn't been shaking the tree!

E. *mf*   [2]   [8]   *mf*

8'30"   35"   40"

A. but here_____ I_____ am   A: Jurgen was always the best climber

S. S: If he were here now he'd probably have

E. [2]

Not rea-ly I was too small

S: climbed over to the east just to prove he could do it better than us.

Do you remember when we left Berlin?

I re-mem-ber lots of peo-ple all crammed in-to a train_____ but not much else
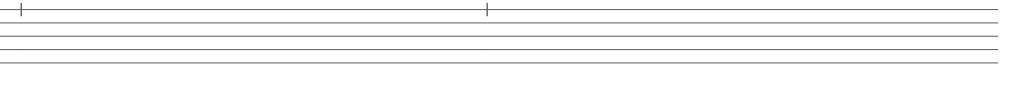
Mo — ther_____ was_____ try — ing

So__ hard__ to keep us all under control

But Jur — gen was so ex — ci — ted a — bout

9'30"

A.

S. be – ing on a train he was causing havoc We kept climb – ing on all the lug – gage

E.

9'45"

A.

S. *mp* *pp* *mf*
but he got shouted at by the train guard I hid though so on-ly Jur–gen got in trou – ble

E.

Light cue 3 - Slow fade into cold blue

10'00" *f* *mp*
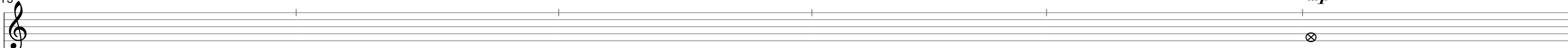
A. Of course you did you al – ways man–aged to a – void get–ting in trou – ble some – how

S.

E.

A.

mp

Laughter_____

S.
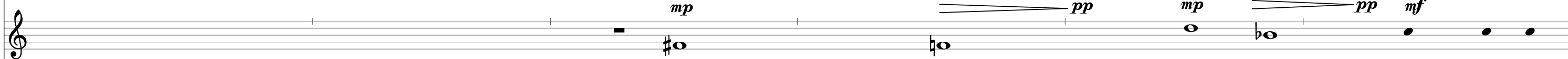
mp *mf*

You_____ were_____ too young_____ for_____ us_____ to blame so I had to let Jur – gen take the fall Laughter_____

E.

A.

How old was I then?_____

S.

mp *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf*

It_____ was_____ a – bout_____ twen – ty years

E.

A.

p

Has_____ it

S.

mf *f*

A – go so_____ you can't have been much ol-der than three? And I was on – ly five or six

E.

11
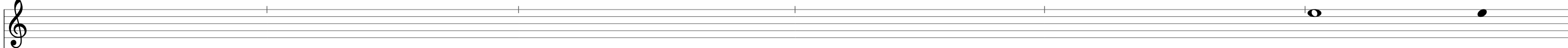
Scene 4 - Berlin Current
1 System = 30 Seconds

A. Ah — not long and it will be time — Ah —

S. It's near-ly da – rk now — Have you told an-y-one a-bout this —

S: Surely no one you know would inform on you?

A: I don't think so. I don't know. I hate it here, I feel scared of my friends.

A. No — I don't know — who might be talk-ing to the Sta – si —

S. Ah —

A. I — can't trust a – ny-one — e – ven those I care a – bout —

S. Ah —

S: That's awful.

A: Two of my friends - Christine and her husband – were arrested last week for planning to join their family in Spandau.

S: How did the Stasi find out about that?

A.

14'30"   **35"**   **40"** molto legato **mp**   **45"**   **50"** **mf**   **55"**

I don't___ have an – y choice___ if I don't stay calm none of this is go-ing to work.

S.

ppp

I'm___ ter – ri – fied and I'm safe___ here___

nat.

E.

1 **mp**

8 **mp**

3 **p**

A.

15'00"   **05"**   **10"** **mp**   **15"**   **20"**   **25"**

S: It's all going to be ok isn't it?

A: (Reassuringly) Of course

S: You promise?

S: But, if it isn't ok what should I do?

A: It will

be___ O – kay___

S.

A: I promise, now stop worrying!

E.

2 **mp**

4 **ff**

A.

15'30"   **35"**   **40"**   **45"** Tacet   **50"**   **55"**

S: But if it isn't?

A: There won't be anything you can do.

S.

Tacet

E.

12

16'00"

A.

A: Ok, here is what is going to happen.
First, I am going to throw a rope over
the wall to you. I need you to catch it
and hold onto it tight. Then, once you
have told me you are ready I will
start...

What__ was__ what_____

I did-n't hear an - y - thing____

S.

What was_____ that

That__ sound____

E.

13   2   mf   5
8   mf   7

17'00"

A.

It's fine

A: Once you have told me you have the rope
and are ready I will start climbing over
the wall.

A: You will need to hold the
rope really tight ok?

A: Are you ready?

S: Go, GO.

ANGELIKA STARTS READYING THE ROPE TO THROW IT OVER WHEN SUSANNE
STARTS TO PANIC AGAIN.

Wait, stop. Someone is coming I can hear them. Stop.

A: No one is coming. I promi...

S.

I__ de - fin - it-ely_____   O - kay_____ yes____ o - kay____

E.

18'00"

A.

p

shh

A: It's probably nothing.
I'm going to check.

ff   f

Su - sanne____ they're here____ they've seen us

S.

mp   ppp

An - ge - li - ka_____   hu - rry____

E.

2   1   1   mf
2   3   ff   4   ff