

Katia Tchemberdji (*1960)

MAX AND MORITZ [1998]

Chamber opera by Katia Tchemberdji based on Wilhelm Busch in 2 parts and 7 scenes

German

65'

Max	soprano
Moritz	contralto
Widow Bolte	soprano
Teacher Lämpel	tenor
Tailor Böck	baritone
Uncle Fritz	bass
Pomeranian, chickens, geese, beetles and organ pipes (in the last scene with triangle, little bells, metal bowls, gongs and musical clocks).	children's choir
Three mimes	

1(picc).1.1(Eb clar, bass clar).soprano sax. alto sax.1(db bn) – 1.1.1.0 – 3 perc (tgl, rattle, whip, slide whistle, 3 cowbells, 3 temple bl, 3 tom-t, military dr, bass dr, cym, tam-t, glsp, xyloimba). digital piano. children's musical clock. strings (2/2/2/1)

Max and Moritz kill Widow Bolte's chickens with bread decoys bound together by fine threads. After some lamenting, the Widow pragmatically decides to roast and eat the deceased. By telephone, she invites the teacher Lämpel and tailor Schneider Böck to dinner.

The two honest men set off to see the Widow and, on the way, fall into the cold water of the brook when the footbridge sawed by Max and Moritz gives way beneath them. Soaking wet, they finally arrive at the Widow's, who irons her guests dry with a flat iron. While the men take their places at the table, reasonably dry again, and their hostess goes to the cellar to get them another good portion of sauerkraut, Max and Moritz fish the tasty-smelly chickens out of the pan by way of the chimney; moreover, they stuff the teacher's pipe with gun powder. Widow Bolte discovers the robbery of her roast and, in a wild goose chase, pursues her Pomeranian dog, who she thinks is the robber. Turbulent chaos ensues, at the climax of which teacher Lämpel lights his pipe and a loud bang brings the wild chasing to an abrupt end.

After the episode with Uncle Fritz and the crawling May bugs, a large fantastic machine with the powerful gears of a mechanical clock, a combination of a mill and projector, goes into action. Max and Moritz comment on all further events which are projected onto a "screen" like a film: falling into the bread dough and cutting up the sacks, their last prank. The story takes its usual course and the boys find themselves in the deadly gears of the machine – and with them Widow Bolte, teacher Lämpel, tailor Böck and Uncle Fritz. But through the magic of a children's musical clock, the powerful grinding machine suddenly moves backwards and the scene now runs in reverse order: all come out of the machine after each other – singing backwards, corresponding to the text. The two boys also finally tumble in a lively manner, but, wondrously, there are transformations and multiplications so that finally the entire stage is populated by little Max-and-Moritz figures.