

# ISOLATION Revisited

A radiophonic composition  
by  
Werner Cee

Reflections on „Isolation“ in three centuries

The piece's backbone is the Winter Journey by Franz Schubert/lyrics by Wilhelm Müller from 1827. This is the icon of „resignation“. The wanderer flees the company of other people among whom he no longer feels at home.

There is an associated movement today, especially in the U.S., known as the „Big Resignation“: People resign from their jobs, people turn away from a life within restrictions set up by modern society and look for new meanings in life.

The bubonic plague hit medieval society hard. The way the disastrous situation was handled, according to historical documentation, looks helpless or even absurd in our eyes.

At present, humanity is confronted with a similar situation.

As many efforts to „isolate“ from the virus are undertaken, high security (S4) laboratories, bringing forward the necessity of outpacing possible viral mutations, are working at enhancing the virus' aggressiveness. These laboratories constitute places that have to be absolutely, perfectly cut off from our world.

In the composition „Isolation revisited“, these three historical layers interact. There is the medieval character of religious processions (field recordings from Italy and Spain), there are modern electronic and electric sounds, fragments from compositions by Beethoven and Schubert as well as the noise character of musique concrète. As well as triggering mental images and associations, they establish the ties between medieval times, romanticism and presence.

Voices:

Excerpts from Franz Schubert: A Winter's Journey/Words by Wilhelm Müller, 1827.

Voice: Neville Tranter.

Documentary material on the plague: 14th century.

Voice: Jo Truman.

Information on S4 high security microbiology laboratories, 2021: computer-generated voice.

Musicians:

Eivind Aarset: guitar

Werner Cee: e-ch'in, musique concrète, field recordings.

Erland Dahlen: drums

Norbert Grossmann: piano

Markus Stockhausen: trumpet

Field recordings:

Good Friday processions: „Romper la hora“ (Calanda, Spain); „I Misteri“ (Trapani, Italy).

Fragments from Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, Rundfunksinfonieorchester Berlin.

The piece contains quotes from the radio plays „I Misteri“, „Wanderer“, SWR; „Featuring Schubert's Winter Journey“, „Agón“, hr; „de-symphonic“, Deutschlandfunk Kultur.

Composed, directed and realized by Werner Cee, 2022.

Duration: 33'22“

## Manuscript

### ISOLATION Revisited

*Music Banda „I Misteri“ field recording*

*Wilhelm Müller 1827 Txt Winter Journey*

If the snow flies in my face,  
I shake it off again.  
When my heart speaks in my breast,  
I sing loudly and gaily.  
I don't hear what it says to me,  
I have no ears to listen;  
I don't feel when it laments,  
complaining is for fools.  
Happy through the world along,  
facing wind and weather!

If there's no God upon the earth,  
then we ourselves are Gods !

*Drumming field recording*

*Docs medieval plague*

*blue crosses  
should be attached to doors of houses  
that held anyone infected over the past week.  
Inhabitants were to stay indoors  
for one month after the death or infection  
of anyone in the building.*

*Church bells*

Franz Schubert A Winter's Journey piano Excpt

*Wilhelm Müller 1827. Txt Winter Journey*

I cannot choose the time  
to begin my journey,  
Must find my own way  
in this darkness.

A shadow of the moon travels  
with me as my companion.

Music dreamlike

*Docs medieval plague*

*Only one uninfected person  
was allowed out of the house,  
in order to buy provisions  
for the sick or healing.  
To mark their health  
they were meant to carry a white rod,  
which if they forgot would incur a fine  
or even imprisonment.  
Merchants were kept at the port  
and were prohibited from entering the city,  
and all goods were to be aired  
in order not to transport infection.*

*I remember  
Milan  
three houses  
three families  
some of them sick  
Bernabó Visconti  
had them walled up  
in their houses,  
all of them.  
Both infected  
and uninfected.  
Living dead.*

*Laments „Romper la hora“ field recordings Spain*

*I remember  
the siege of Kaffa  
1347  
The Mongols used catapults  
to hurl dead bodies  
over the walls.  
Plague victims.*

*The people of Kaffa  
fled to Sicily  
bringing the plague  
with them.*

*Music Banda „I Misteri“ field recordings Sicily*

Franz Schubert Winter Journey piano Excerpt

*Wilhelm Müller 1827 Txt Winter Journey*

Why then do I avoid the highways  
where the other travelers go,  
search out the hidden pathways  
through the snowy mountain tops ?  
I've committed no crime  
that I should hide from other men -  
what is the foolish compulsion  
that drives me into desolation?  
Signposts stand along the highways  
pointing to the cities,  
and I wander ever further  
without rest and look for rest.  
Before me I see a signpost standing,  
fixed before my gaze.  
I must travel a road  
from which no one ever returned.

*Docs High Security Laboratories 2021*

The goal of gain-of-function research  
is to create a virus  
with new properties  
that make it  
more pathogenic or  
more transmissible  
to humans.

Recently,  
there have been important advances  
in animal models and  
in molecular biology techniques  
to make precise,  
targeted  
changes to viral genes.

This can lead to the rapid generation of  
new viruses that are  
better  
adapted to humans.

*Docs medieval plague*

*In places, the plague was blamed on cripples,  
nobles,  
and Jews,  
who were accused of poisoning the public wells  
and were either driven away  
or killed by fire or torture.  
many others were also singled out  
who were in any way considered  
different  
and did not  
conform  
to the standards of the majority.*

Music driving rhythm. Fortissimo

Voices und Sounds. Disasters.

*Wilhelm Müller 1827 Txt Winter Journey*

Why should I stay here  
any longer  
so that people  
can drive me away?  
Let stray dogs howl  
in front of  
their master's house.

The dogs are barking,  
the chains are rattling;  
the people are sleeping in their beds,  
dreaming of things they don't have,  
refreshing themselves in good and bad.  
And in the morning all will have vanished.  
Oh well, they had their share of pleasure  
and hope that what they missed  
can be found again on their pillows.  
Drive me out with your barking,  
you vigilant dogs,  
don't let me rest  
when it's time for slumber.  
I am finished with all my dreams.  
Why should I linger among the sleepers?

Music dreamlike, very quiet, dissolved.

*Docs High security laboratories 2021*

**They prepare virus samples at laboratory work benches - high risk work needs to be overseen by another person.**

**The samples are delivered by specialized messengers  
in properly secured containers  
cooled by dry ice  
and transferred into the lab**

through a transfer tank or chemical shower.

*Wilhelm Müller 1827 Txt Winter Journey*

I search the snow in vain  
for the trace of her steps.  
Where she, arm in arm with me,  
crossed the green meadow.  
I want to kiss the ground,  
penetrate ice and snow  
with my hot tears,  
until I see the soil.  
Where will I find a blossom,  
where will I find green grass?  
The flowers are all dead,  
the turf is so pale.

*Docs high security laboratories 2021*

The idea is to get ahead of future viruses that might emerge from nature.

All materials leaving the laboratory  
undergo treatment in special chambers  
called autoclaves.

By applying hot steam and pressure,  
viruses that might stick to the materials' surfaces  
are completely destroyed.

Before leaving the laboratory,  
the staff, wearing their positive pressure suits,  
take a decontamination shower for six minutes.  
The decontamination shower's waste water  
is then heated up and sterilized

These facilities are inherently dual use.

*Drumming field recording Calanda Spain*

*Docs medieval plague*

*I remember that  
doctors wore a special outfit  
a coat covered in scented wax,  
breeches connected to boots,  
a tucked-in shirt,  
and a hat and gloves made of goat leather.  
a rod that allowed them to poke or fend off victims.*

*Docs High security laboratories 2021*

**The vast majority of countries do not regulate dual-use research, which refers to experiments that are conducted for peaceful purposes but can be adapted to cause harm.**

*Docs medieval plague*

*They wore spectacles,  
and a mask with a nose half a foot long,  
shaped like a beak,  
filled with perfume with only two holes,  
one on each side near the nostrils,  
with herbs enclosed further along in the beak.  
They filled their masks with theriac,  
a compound of more than 55 herbs  
and other components  
like viper flesh powder, cinnamon, myrrh, and honey.  
The beak shape of the mask would give the air sufficient time  
to be suffused by the protective herbs  
before it hit plague doctors' nostrils and lungs.*



*Wilhelm Müller 1827 Txt Winter Journey*

It burns under both my feet,  
even though I walk on ice and snow;  
I don't want to catch my breath  
until I can no longer see the spires.  
I tripped on every stone,  
as I hurried out of the town;  
the crows hurled chunks of  
snow and ice  
on my hat from every house.  
How differently you received me,  
you town of inconstancy!  
At your sparkling windows sang  
the lark and nightingale  
in competition.

Music dreamlike, isolated; excerpts Beethoven Pastorale

*Wilhelm Müller 1827 Txt Winter Journey*

I saw three suns in the sky, Stared at them hard  
for a long time;  
And they stayed there  
  
so stubbornly  
that it seemed  
they didn't want to leave me.  
  
Ah, you are not my suns!  
Go,  
  
look into someone else's face  
  
Yes,  
  
recently I, too, had three  
  
But now  
  
the best two  
have gone down.  
  
If only the third would also set  
  
I will feel better in the dark.

Music concrète. Dreamlike, isolated excerpts Beethoven  
Pastoral Symphony.

*Docs medieval plague*

*I dreamed of being cured*

*by unicorns*

*the cure of sound*

*church bells*

*cannons fired*

*the contemplation of silver, gold and precious stones*

*is comforting to the heart,*

*they said.*

*I remember*

*the professors recommended*

*not to think of death*

*to think about pleasant things only*

*agreeable, delicious things*

*to visit beautiful landscapes*

*to listen to beautiful, melodious songs*

Schubert Winterreise piano Excerpt

*Wilhelm Müller 1827 Txt Winter Journey*

I dreamed of many-colored flowers,

the way they bloom in May;

I dreamed of green meadows,

of merry bird calls.

I close my eyes again.

*Docs Medieval Plague*

*I remember  
the professors recommended  
not to sleep during daytime*

Music atmospheric drones. Dreamlike,

*Wilhelm Müller 1827 Txt Winter Journey*

Into the deepest  
mountain chasms  
a will o' the wisp lured me;  
how to find a way out  
doesn't worry me much.  
I'm used to going astray,  
and every way  
leads to the goal.  
Our joys, our sorrows,  
are all a will  
o' the wisp's game!

Music atmospheric drones. Dreamlike, \_ Noise

*Music Banda „I Misteri“ field recording*

*Docs high security laboratories 2021*

**Scientists enter and leave the laboratory  
through a series of airlock security doors.**

**They enter in airtight full-body protective suits.**

**The suits connect breathing air supplies and are pressurized - to prevent laboratory air  
from entering the suit in the event of a puncture.**

**The laboratory is a completely independent, airtight unit  
with its own air, power and water supply  
a space within a space**

**The air pressure in the laboratory is negative,  
so that if a leak were to occur,  
the air would be unable to escape.**

*Wind Outdoor Atmo*

The air flowing in and out of the high-security laboratory  
is filtered through a multi-level system  
to ensure that it is pure,  
and all waste products and wastewater  
are inactivated completely.

Schubert Winterreise piano Excerpt

*Wilhelm Müller 1827 Txt Winter Journey*

The cold winds blew  
right into my face;  
the hat flew off my head,  
I didn't turn around.

Music massive drones. Church bells, Drumming

\*\*\*