



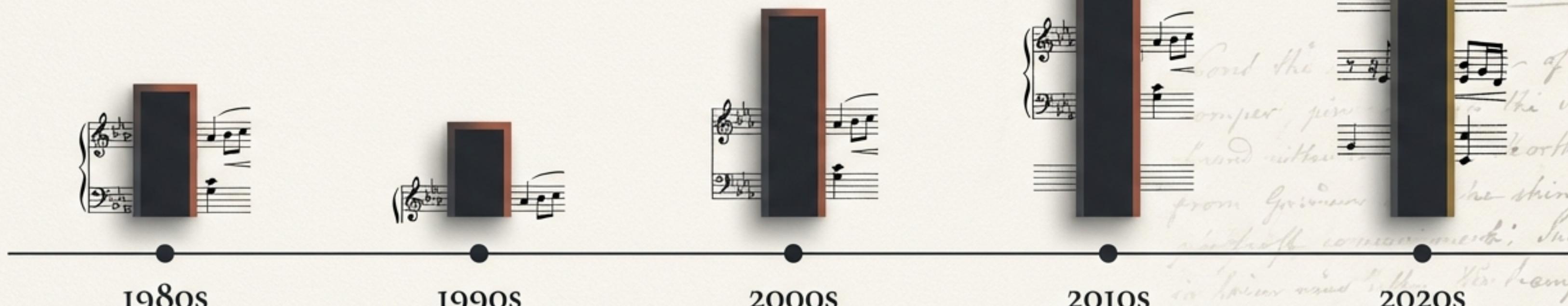
Spheren: A Public Report of a Lifelong Search for Musical Beauty

The Music of Paul Merkus

This is to be regarded as an open public report of my learning process
and lifelong search for my own style and melodious musical beauty.

Over 100 Works, Composed Across Four Decades

Spheren is the collective name for the neoclassical works of composer Paul Merkus. The complete digital archive comprises over one hundred opus numbers, each containing one or more compositions. Composing has been a common thread in his life for decades, resulting in an archive of hundreds of documents, all freely available.



1980s
The early period (Op. 1-14).
Compositions written by hand on music paper.

1990s
Composing resumes after an 8-year hiatus (Op. 15-24).

2000s
Continued development (Op. 25-52).

2010s
Increased output (Op. 53-77).

2020s
A prolific explosion of new works (Op. 77 onwards).

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The Tour Begins: The World of the Piano

The collection features a vast and personal body of work for solo piano, often serving as the origin for pieces later arranged for larger ensembles. Many compositions are tied to specific life events, making them musical diary entries.

Op. 2, *Andante* (1985):

Dedicated to Jose, my then-girlfriend and now my wife. Composed on a Sunday evening after bringing her to the train, facing a week of loneliness and longing.

Op. 3, *Hommage à Satie* (1985):

Written on a Saturday afternoon while my father was taking a nap next to the piano. Its quiet character was a necessity!

Op. 15, *LeapFrog* (1994):

The first work of the "second period," written after an 8-year break. It began as a friendly challenge from a colleague who said, 'I bet you can't write something the better than this.'



A Rich Repertoire for the Flute, Celebrated and Shared

Spheren offers a comprehensive collection for flute, from solo monologues to sonatas and quartets. The quality and appeal of these works are recognized by their inclusion in a major international resource for flutists.

 FluteTunes.com

All *Spheren* flute compositions are published on the popular American website **FluteTunes.com**, where many have been featured as "Tune of the Day".

The full collection is available in two free, printable books from FluteTunes: "Free Flute Music by Paul Merkus" (one for piano parts, one for flute parts).

Featured works include: *Sarabande* (Op. 1), *Sonata* (Op. 9), *Monologues I, II, III* (Op. 48), *Rengaine* (Op. 45), *Trilogette for flute quartet* (Op. 35).



Intimate Conversations for Cello, Saxophone, and Piano

The collection extends into rich chamber music, offering expressive pieces for various solo instruments paired with piano. These works explore a range of moods, from melancholic to lyrical and playful.

Op. 60, Lyrique, Adagio, Vivace:
The *Adagio* was recorded with his son, Bart Merkus, on cello.

Op. 3, Hommage à Satie:
Arranged for cello and piano over 30 years after its composition so I could play it with my son.

Other examples:
Moment mélancolique (Op. 30),
Elegie & Vocalise (Op. 68).

Saxophone:
Pledge (Op. 65) for Saxophone & Piano.

Trumpet:
Trumpet Voluntary (Op. 38).

And more:
The collection features expressive works for a range of solo instruments.

The Human Voice: From Art Song to the Choral Collective

Vocal music is a cornerstone of Spheren, with works ranging from intimate songs set to the poetry of friends to large-scale pieces for mixed choirs.

Art Song Highlights:

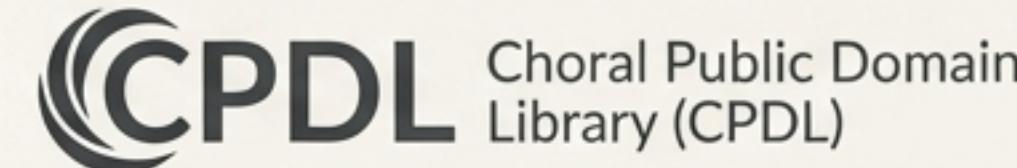
Op. 8 & 10, "Dat jij daar ontstond" & "Waaiende tranen":

An early cycle based on texts by poet
Annemieke Buter, written in 1986.

Op. 34, "Kleyne Rymen oover Vogels":

A four-part song cycle set to historic Brabant dialect poems about birds.

Choral Music & Partnership:



Choral Public Domain
Library (CPDL)

Most choral works are available on the CPDL, making them accessible to choirs worldwide.

Featured Works:

Otherwise (Op. 32)

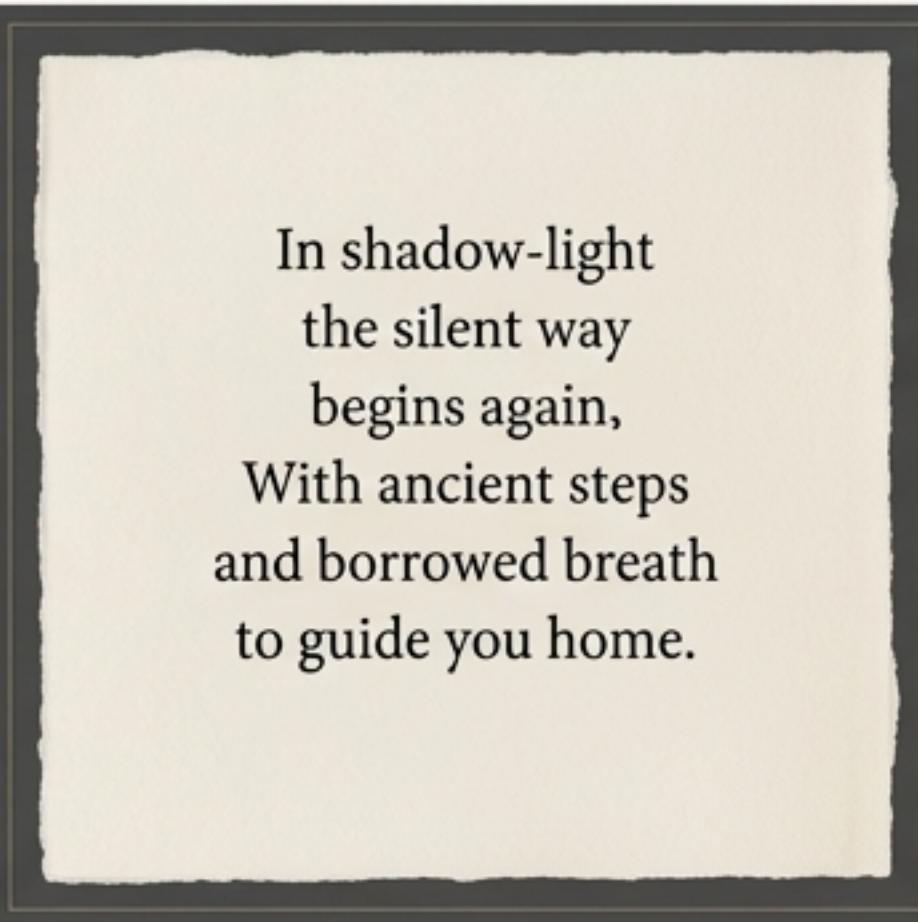
Wayfaring (Op. 75)

Child of the Rainbow (Op. 37)

Creating a ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’: The Art of Co-Production

A core principle of Spheren is collaboration, combining music with other art forms in a ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’ (total work of art) where creative dialogue is central to the process.

In shadow-light
the silent way
begins again,
With ancient steps
and borrowed breath
to guide you home.



With Poets: **Manja Geijsel** on multiple choral pieces like *Wayfaring* (Op. 75) and *Amor's fire* (Op. 88).



With Photographers: **Carina Weijma** on the orchestral piece *Jour à la Plage* (Op. 77), where music illustrates a series of photos.



With Composers: **Joachim Hafergut** on the choral piece *Make me be seen*, composed in a 'relay race' style.

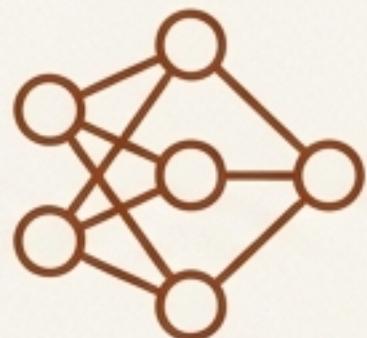
The Modern Composer's Toolkit

The Spheren project embraces contemporary tools to compose, render, and augment musical ideas, positioning it at the intersection of traditional neoclassicism and modern technology.



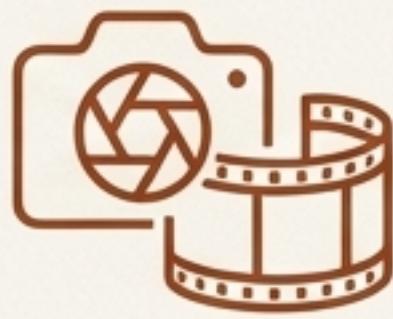
Composition & Rendering

Extensive use of **StaffPad** with high-end sound libraries (Berlin Strings, Tina Guo Cello, VOXOS Choir) to create realistic synthetic 'weergaves' (renderings).



Creative Augmentation

Collaboration with AI for lyrical inspiration, using **ChatGPT** for 'Make me be seen' and **Claude.ai** for 'The Snake' (Op. 99).



Visual Storytelling

Using AI image generation (DeepAI) for 'Visuele Verhalen' (Op. 103) and AI video tools for the children's clip 'Midas & Opa' (Op. 107).



Transcription

Using StaffPad's 'Piano Capture' feature to transcribe improvisations directly into sheet music, as with the *Miniatures* (Op. 102).

The Symphonic Scale: Music for Orchestra and Film

The collection culminates in a growing body of work for orchestra, exploring symphonic textures, narrative scoring, and multimedia projects.

Key Orchestral Works

- **The Four Elements (Op. 106):** A four-part suite depicting Earth, Water, Air, and Fire, with the "Fire" movement inspired by Carl Orff's "O Fortuna."
- **Verklankte Verhalen (Op. 100):** Inspired by Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf," this work for orchestra and narrator sets the fairy tale of "De Lavendelmuis" to music.

Film & Media Scoring

**The
Cue
Tube**

The portfolio of film music is also featured on The Cue Tube. Entries include rescored scenes from Netflix's **Bridgerton**, the animated short **Wing It!**, and the film **The Lost Piano**.



An Open Invitation to Explore, Perform, and Share

Spheren is fundamentally an open resource. It is not a commercial endeavor. The entire archive is made freely available to musicians, students, conductors, and music lovers.



Sheet Music:

Sheet Music: PDF files for all compositions.



Source Files:

Source Files: Encore (.enc) or MusicXML (.xml) files for further study or arrangement.



Audio Renderings:

MIDI (.mid) and MP3 (.mp3) files for every piece, including both live 'opname' (recordings) and high-quality 'weergave' (renderings).



Video Performances:

Links to YouTube for scrolling scores, photo animations, and live performances.

Access the Universe of Spheren



pmerkus.dse.nl/Spheren/

Explore by Opus Number, Period (1980s-2020s), or Title.

Browse directly by Instrumentation: Piano, Flute, Choir, Orchestra, and more.

Discover Co-productions, Arrangements, and Film Music.

The search for musical beauty is ongoing. You are invited to join the journey.