

kolberg+stern

## press information

### Songs of Life and Death

concert // reading // live-projection

homage to Anne Sexton

image: Ralf Emmerich

**Songs of Life and Death** is a musical and visual rollercoaster through the short life of the American poet Anne Sexton, a haunting mixture of concert, reading and live-projection.

**Michael Kolberg** (e-guitars, sounds and effects) and **Anna Stern** (voice and vocals, live-projection) turn her lyrics into touching songs. Guitar grooves alternate with floating sounds and looped cascades of noise, the voice talks, mumbles, sings, conjures, flirts, dies away and revives again.

The two performers act against a moving background and are part of the „picture“ at the same time: The aquarium on stage is being filled with material associations to the lyrics, the rising, floating and sinking objects are projected onto a screen. The shift of dimension in the live-projection gives both objects and texts a new and alienated semantic level.

The performance has been developed in 2012 and was shown in different locations ( e.g. Theater im Pumpenhaus, Münster, Kunsthaus Essen, Kunsthaus Kanne, Ruller Haus, Osnabrück). Until now „Songs of Life and Death“ was received enthusiastically by an audience with members between 17 and 77.

#### about Anne Sexton

American poet Anne Sexton who committed suicide in 1974 at the age of 46 is regarded as one of the most prominent representatives of the so called „confessional poets“. She won major awards for literature, including the Pulitzer Prize. Almost not a single American poet in her time was as popular as she was, or, like a contemporary expressed it: „I don't read poems, but I read Anne Sexton“. She lived in a time of frozen conventions and her choice of literary subjects – incest, madness, female sexuality, adultery, suicide... – provoked fierce objections. The ruthfulness and originality of her language are touching until today. Her main oeuvre dating from the 60ties and 70ties is still considered an insiders' tip in Germany. The „Tagesspiegel“ called the poems of this „secret beatnik“ „sparkling first-rate structures of speech“.

#### excerpts from reviews

*„...singer and reciter Anna Stern peels Anne Sexton's different layers of consciousness with overwhelming passion and a broad vocal spectrum... The virtuosic instrumentalist Michael Kolberg congenially turns these inner escapes between illusion and being into music... The duo enthused with a first-class lyrical and musical roller coaster through the cosmos of Anne Sexton's life. With a full hypnotic undertow that lasted long and created all kinds of inspiring films in the head...“ Westfälische Nachrichten, 2012*

*„an extremely dense performance...beautiful songs...“ Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung, 2014*



image: Ralf Emmerich

### short cv

**Michael Kolberg**, \*1960, improvising musician, composer and interpreter; 1988 1st prize City-contest with performance group Onyx; 1992-2000 organisation of the concert series „Stage Off Limits“; 1990 „Diese ganze lange Nacht“, cooperative project with Kreativ-Haus and the municipal theatre Münster; 1991-1993 musician for the New-Dance-group Sigma; 1991-1995 musician in several productions of the Theater im Pumpenhaus; since 1992 various performances as improvising musician in theatre-, film- and dance-productions; 1994 soloperformance „Gitarrenprojekt IV“, Münster; 1995/96 performances together with „luna7 meldet sich nicht“; many solo- and ensemble-performances in Northern Germany, at TonArt-Hamburg e.V., MIB (Bremen), IIM (Münster), Kunstverein Dortmund; 2010 founding of the music-performance-duo kolberg+stern; the latest collective production was the performance „Get out of your CAGE“ about the ideas and methods of John Cage (Premiere at the Theater im Pumpenhaus, Münster, october 2012); at present development of a new audio-visual show „invisible dark matter“ together with additional musicians

### about kolberg+stern

somewhere I have never travelled... the first line of e. e. cummings' poem describes the duo's sophisticated claim: to leave the mainstream, to discover new soundscapes. Inspired by Bela Bartok and Kurt Cobain, Laurie Anderson and Meredith Monk, they set to music their own lyrics and compose songs loosely based on selected poems of American poets. Their songs are minimalistic, but subtle and complex at the same time, soundscapes oscillating between rough coastline, glittering desert and calm oasis. Anna Stern breathes life into the words, Michael Kolberg paints the sound. Hard grooves alternate with floating sounds, spoken words turn into melodious lines. The singer/performer and the guitarist discovered their artistic common ground in 2010. Since then they are developing their own musical style using elements rooting in jazz, pop, rock, new music and improvised music. The songs are always based on a strong presence and exert a hypnotic pull on the audience. The performers kolberg+stern turn poems into small musical jewels with touching beauty and present them in a multimedia show, combining their songs with reading and live video-projection.

**Anna Stern**, \*1968, performance artist, 1992-1999 study at Academy of Fine Arts Münster, master scholar; 2004-2006 study of Art in Context at Berlin University of Arts, masterdegree; 2007-2012 lectureship on performance art at Kassel University; since 2012 dissertation project on performance art and cooperative learning at Osnabrück University; solo- and group-performances and -exhibitions in Germany and abroad; occupation with Anne Sexton since 2000, one of the outcomes was the dramatic feature „Anne Sexton - rats live on no evil star“, co-produced with Manfred Kerklau, Münster; 2010 founding of the music-performance-duo kolberg+stern; the latest collective production was the performance „Get out of your CAGE“ about the ideas and methods of John Cage (Premiere at the Theater im Pumpenhaus, Münster, october 2012); at present development of a new audio-visual show „invisible dark matter“ together with additional musicians

**contact** Anna Stern, Kanalstr. 73, 48147 Münster, +49 (0) 251 2760920

**mail** [post@kolbergundstern.de](mailto:post@kolbergundstern.de)

**website** [www.kolbergundstern.de](http://www.kolbergundstern.de)

**youtube** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSLIm3M2Dgo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSLIm3M2Dgo)

**soundcloud** <https://soundcloud.com/michael-kolberg/young>