

Olga Neuwirth



Olga Neuwirth Photo © Priska Ketterer

Equivocalities, shiftings and fractures
Notes on the music of Olga Neuwirth
by Stefan Drees

She has no business with the unambiguous. No: the works of Austrian composer Olga Neuwirth seethe incessantly. Sounds reel from one episode to another, gathering up into different aggregate states, before breaking out of them once more. Many tiny events culminate in turbulent sound units and nervous, glimmering textures that are constantly changing shape and volume. In the process, the formal structures of the music resist the conventions of narrative progression: instead of purposeful continuity, there is an opaque sequence of proliferating sound states, continual interruptions and abrupt breaks. The aborted schemes and changes of direction are also rich in contrast, and from the background, there emerge ever evolving and contrasting perspectives of sound.

The confusing effect of Olga Neuwirth's works is founded on shiftings and deformations. Deviations from a norm considered traditional are a means for the composer to develop the elements of an intensely personal musical language. This begins with the very specific use of spatially deformed sounds and the manipulation of instrumental sound. Its conclusion is an equality between electronic or visual elements and the basic musical parameters as they become artistic means of equal value. Thus Olga Neuwirth's art is an extremely artificial one and allows much room for the hybrid. This is not only due to the way she strips well-known sound matter of its associations with beauty – a beauty which may have been a misconception anyway, created by the music industry – using diverse preparation methods and playing techniques to allow a transparency which illuminates the strata lying beneath. It has also to do with the natural way in which she integrates various and often extremely heterogeneous materials into her music and uses them as components for elaborated states of sound.

The virtuosity with which Olga Neuwirth deals with those processes accompanies the pleasure of confusing the listener's habits of perception and

confronting them with the unfamiliar. In this sense, listeners are lured out of their shell and encouraged to achieve an active realisation of the sounding music. Whether we think of *locus ...doublure ...solus*, where the constantly changing moods of the music accompany the soloist and his sound shadow over the different stages of the piece, or of *ecstaloop*, where the overall sound is dominated by effervescent whirls of music and language, or of *torsion: transparent variation*, where abrupt architectonic fissures and fractures question the familiar: such processes always lead to situations in which music turns an unexpected direction, resisting the listener's expectations. The equivocality of all those gestures of language suggests that eventually below the surface of Olga Neuwirth's music there are deep abysses. Therefore the element of catastrophe, of the shifting towards unfamiliar regions with all its consequences, is the ground colour of her works and the thread which links them together.

© Stefan Drees (translation: Andreas Goebel)

OPERAS

... ce qui arrive...

**Szenische Momentaufnahme nach Paul Auster, mit Film- und Raumkonzept von Dor
2004** 55 min

for voice, video, tape and ensemble

Text: text and voice: Paul Auster; song texts: Andrew Patner, Georgette Dee (E-G); film and virtual room: Dominique Gonzales-Foerster

Group I:

ssax.tsax.bn-hn.tpt(=piccpt).tbn-perc(1):cym(med)/SD/2crot/glass/tam-t(med)/gong/timp(C)/cowbell/tgl/1tom-t(lg)/1claves-vln;

Group II: fl(=picc).ob.cl(=bcl)-elec.gtr-elec.pft-vla.vlc.db

(ob and hn doubling children's tpt and mouth org);

live electronics

"Neuwirth's "...ce qui arrive..." combines a taped autobiographical monologue spoken by Paul Auster with an orchestral soundscape (performed by the awesome Ensemble Modern) augmented by electronic samples and an amazingly synchronised video [by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster] of the transgendered chanteuse Georgette Dee... Somewhere over the rainbow of Auster's banal-sounding fables... the work becomes inexplicably profound... Neuwirth's music is not easy, but rarely is an intellectual challenge so enjoyable. Her dazzling sonic combinations strike nerves and funny bones." (Larry L. Lash / James Woodall, Financial Times, 03 Nov 2004)

"Olga Neuwirth has for a long time been Austria's best, most curious and consequential composer... Paul Auster's murmurs came from all directions, a recitation virtually on one note that melted again and again blissfully with the sounds of the Ensemble Modern... Neuwirth creates out of Andrew Patner's poetry three songs à la Kurt Weill in the swell of her rich primeval music... On the video Georgette Dee scrambles in front of the screen, sings, plays with veils, and mutates into a man. Whatever colour appears is overlaid upon the image of the coast that subsequently plunges into darkness. But Olga Neuwirth continually counterpoints the video performer and the suspicion of the cultured person, leading towards the never resting powers of nature..." (Reinhard J. Brembeck, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 23/24 Oct 2004)

"Georgette Dee... seems like an icon of desire, expectation become body and soul. Olga Neuwirth composed three songs for her in the style of Kurt Weill, a study of perfection in terms of their workmanship. In the course of the work the listener is treated to buzzing and clinking noises, sounds as of ice floes superimposing one another – a both tender and harsh cluster symphony with individual melodies bubbling to the surface in between. If listeners are ready to act as resonators, an existential experience awaits them, which is no less than a life poised between happiness and disaster, hope and desperation, transposed into the realm of art." (Ulrich Weinzierl, Die Welt, 04 Nov 2004)

World Premiere: 21 Oct 2004

Helmut-List-Halle, Graz, Austria

Georgette Dee, special appearance; Ensemble Modern

Conductor: Franck Ollu

Lost Highway

2002/03

1 hr 35 min

Music theatre

Text: Libretto by Elfriede Jelinek and Olga Neuwirth, based on the film 'Lost Highway' by David Lynch and Barry Gifford (E)

5 singers, 6 actors;

6 instrumental soloists: sax(S,T,Bar)-cl(=bcl,dbcl)-trbn(A,T,B)-elec.git(=Hawaii git)-accordion-kbd(synth,elec.pft);

2(l,l=picc).1.2(l=Ebcl).1(=dbn)-1.2(l=piccpt).1.1-perc(2):l=glsp/SD/crot(set)/steel string/2gongs/2cowbells/sand bl(lg)/1timp/wooden

bl(med)/BD/tom-t(med)/tgl(med)/wdbl/thunder sheet(thin)/wine glass/beer

bottle/tam-t(lg)/1cym(med)/drum pad/stereo hand microphone; Il=vib/SD/crot(set)/steel

string/2gongs/2cowbells/sand bl(med)/1timp/wooden

bl/chimes/BD/tom-t(lg)/tgl(sm)/wdbl/thunder

sheet(thin)/tam-t(med)/cym(sm)/t.bells/stereo hand

microphone-strings(1.1.1.2.1(=elec.bass))-sampler-live electronics-tape/CD player;

fl2.ob.cl2.bn also mouth org

"The score is enigmatic and labyrinthine, constantly morphing from one thing to the next. Ms. Neuwirth... knows how to bend and twist sound like no other." (Robert Hilfferty, New York Times, 02 Nov 2003)

"A maddeningly complex source is distilled and clarified, and, in the process, something entirely new emerges. Neuwirth's innovation comes with the psychological layers added by her wildly original sonic landscape... I am overwhelmed by its merits. Lost Highway entertains, challenges our perceptions of opera, and demands to be experienced." (Larry L Lash, Financial Times, 12 Nov 2003)

"A comparison with the original is unavoidable and legitimate. The result is not a free fantasy of elements and motives from the film, yet instead, a direct and astoundingly exact adaptation... Olga Neuwirth proves again that she can create congenial as well as complex emotional music using both computerised techniques and traditional orchestral sonorities." (Michael Eidenbenz, Tagesanzeiger Zürich, 03 Nov 2003)

"When [the main character] Fred, plagued with furious headaches, embarks on a mutation in his prison cell and transforms into Pete, bodily language and electronically estranged language reach an intense symbiosis that allows music theatre to find its justification and identity... The musical narrative develops incredibly rich colours around a disconcerting basic mood, a low drone, that furthermore reminds us of the film... an ambiguous world into which jazz elements and even sparkling disco-riffs are fused in stylised fashion. Neuwirth puts here trust in overlaid material, multiple strata, nervous agitations – reinforced through tape recordings and computer-aided distortions of sound and voice."

(Ljubisa Tosic, Der Standard, 03 Nov 2003)
"Olga Neuwirth is one of the beacons of the avant-garde, continuing to take a stand against the current stultification of music... Her telling of Lynch's story is richer in nuances and decidedly more optimistic... a score worked through in masterly fashion." (Reinhard J. Brembeck, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 03 Nov 2003)

"Neuwirth has done more than adapt a movie: She has created an ode to an artwork... A jittery musician; a sadistic gangster; his platinum-wigged moll; a Mephistophelian lurker; an honest, blue-collar kid... Neuwirth leads you through a landscape of musical explosions and violent images... Her instrumental music creates a disorienting world of distantly familiar scraps that flit by like a city seen from a hurtling car." (Justin Davidson, New York Newsday, 26 Feb 2007)

"A deep, disturbing film has met its operatic match... One of the leading young-generation composers in Europe and one of the most fearless, Neuwirth finds what is really going on with these people. She adds texture and emotional activity... She has a way with electronics, and the score for Lost Highway is full of extraordinary acoustical effects.... Live instruments are used straight but also have their sounds manipulated in real time... The result is a rich mix and an invitation to many listenings." (Mark Sweg, Los Angeles Times, 10 Feb 2007)

"Lost Highway is based on the 1997 David Lynch film and endeavours to recreate the surreal, lurid, raunchy world of that psychological thriller. Fusing video, dialogue and music, both live (a 27-piece ensemble ably conducted by Baldur Brönnimann) and pre-recorded electronics, Neuwirth captures the menace lurking round every corner. The plot, weaving reality and fantasy, sometimes confuses the characters as much as the audience. The condition they are suffering from is described by Lynch as a "psychogenic fugue": a state so traumatic that they assume another identity to escape. Diane Paulus's production, designed by Riccardo Hernandez, loc

World Premiere: 31 Oct 2003

Helmut-List-Halle, Graz, Austria

Joachim Schlömer, director; Klangforum Wien

Conductor: Johannes Kalitzke

FULL ORCHESTRA

only an end

2009

40 sec

for orchestra

2(I=picc).2.3(I=Ebcl).2-2.2.2.1-perc(3)-strings(8.8.6.6.4)

World Premiere: 14 Dec 2009

Ö1 (radio broadcast), Wien, Austria

Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien

Conductor: Gottfried Rabl

CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Lost Highway Suite

(revised version)

2008

43 min

for six soloists and ensemble

6 instrumental soloists: sax(S,T,Bar)-cl(=bcl,dbcl)-trbn(A,T)-elec.git(Hawaii git)

-accordion-kbd(synth,elec.pft);

2(I,II=picc).1.2(I=Ebcl).1(=dbn)

-1.2(I=piccpt).1.1-perc(2):timp/vib/glsp/2tgl/cmym/2tom-t/BD/SD/gongs/cowbells/2tam-t/

t.bells/2wdbl/thunder sheet/metal spring/crot/chimes/wine

glass-strings(1.1.1.2.1(=elec.bass))-live electronics;

fl2,ob,cl2,bn also mouth org

World premiere of version: 25 Nov 2008

Cité de la musique, Paris, France

musikFabrik

Conductor: Stefan Asbury

SOLO INSTRUMENT(S) AND ORCHESTRA

locus...doublure...solus

(ensemble version)

2001

25 min

for solo piano and ensemble

2(I=picc).1.2(I=Ebcl).bcl.1(=dbn)-1(=mouth org).1(=piccpt).1(=mouth org).1(=mouth org)-perc(2):I=metal
spring(Ig)/xyl/SD/crot(set)/2gongs/2cowbells/tam-t(Ig)/tgl(med)/tamb/steel dr/thunder sheet(thin); II=steel
spring(med)/vib/glsp/crot(set)/2gongs/2cowbells/tam-t(med)/t.bells/chimes/steel dr/thunder sheet(thin)-sampler(elec.pft/cel)-strings(1.1.1.1.1; db=mouth org)

"...a distinctive vision of the piano concerto in the 21st century." (Tom Service, The Guardian, 09 May 2006)

"Neuwirth loves directness, obstinacy, clear-cut shapes ... in the seven-part locus...doublure...solus, Olga Neuwirth creates a labyrinth of fantastically growing tendrils and break-offs while her combinatorial way of dealing with sounds erupts into breakneck superimpositions of rhythmic gestures and changes of perspectives as fast as lightning." (Wolfgang Schreiber, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 15 Oct 2002)

World Premiere: 08 Sep 2001

Hauptschule Sporthalle, Schwaz, Austria

Thomas Larcher, piano; Birmingham Contemporary Music Group

Conductor: Pierre-André Valade

locus...doublure...solus

(orchestral version)

2001

25 min

for solo piano and orchestra

4(I,II=picc).2.4(I,II=Ebcl).2bcl.2(I=dbn)-2(I=mouth org).2(I,II=piccpt).2(I=mouth org).1(=mouth org)-perc(3):I=metal
spring(Ig)/xyl/SD/crot(set)/2gongs/2cowbells/tam-t(Ig)/tgl(med)/tamb/steel dr/thunder sheet(thin); II=steel
spring(med)/vib/glsp/crot(set)/2gongs/2cowbells/tam-t(med)/t.bells/chimes/steel dr/thunder sheet(thin);
III=BD/vib/glsp/maraca(sm)/tgl(sm)/tam/gong-sampler(elec.pft/cel)-strings(6.6.6.4.4; db1=mouth org)

"In seven movements, Neuwirth explores a gamut of piquant sonorities and aggressive or quizzical relationships between solo piano and a novel array of instruments, including harmonicas, synthesizer and multiple percussion. The pianist seesaws between violence (arm clusters, stabbed notes) and delicacy (strings plucked inside the instrument). There is too much to absorb in one hearing..." (Donald Rosenberg, The Plain Dealer, 23 Jan 2004)

"Ms. Neuwirth's fits of depression are ingenious. Mistuned strings create foggy eeriness. Chord combinations grate forcefully on the ear. Shrill peeps and percussive explosions offer theatrical punctuation. Marino Formenti at the piano is all palms, fingers, fists and forearms. The results sting, and Mr. Formenti's balletic mugging of the instrument make the pricks sharper. If beauty in music is a standard that secures our attention and conveys a message, however unpleasant, directly to the listener's heart, then locus...doublure...solus is beautiful. We should store its impression in our minds...." (Bernard Holland, New York Times, 28 Jan 2004)

"Melodies and rhythms found in everyday life don't have a place in this writing. The piece has the whiff of music concocted in a petri dish instead of at the kitchen table." (Elaine Guregian, Akron Beacon Journal, 23 Jan 2004)

World Premiere: 08 Feb 2002

De Singel, Antwerp, Belgium

Thomas Larcher, piano; Flanders Philharmonic Orchestra

Conductor: Olari Elts

... miramondo multiplo...

(ensemble version)

2007

19 min

version for solo trumpet and ensemble

solo tpt(=piccpt);
1(=picc).1.1(=Ebcl.bcl).1-1.1.1.1-perc(2):I=cencerros(d1-d3)/tam-t(Ig)/2t.bells(d2,g1)/tgl/
2gongs(g-d1)/SD/tom-t(sm)/SD/cym(sm);
II=tgl(sm)/cym(med)/cym(set)/BD/glsp/tam-t(med)/plate-bell(d)/gong(A)/tom-t(sm)
-strings(2.1.1.1.1)

World premiere of version: 19 Oct 2008

Funkhaus am Wallrafplatz, Klaus-von-Bismarck-Saal, Köln, Germany

Marco Blaauw, trumpet; musikFabrik

Conductor: Christian Eggen

... miramondo multiplo...

(orchestral version)

2006

19 min

for solo trumpet and orchestra

solo tpt(=piccpt);

2(l=picc).2.3(l=Ebc,II=bcl).2-2.2.2.1-perc(3):l=cencerros(d1-d3)/tam-t(lg)/cym(med)/handbell(g2)/t.bell(d2)/gong(g); II=cym set/tgl(med)/SD/BD/concussion

cym(sm,lg)/gong(d1);

III=carillon/tam-t(med)/cym(sm)/handbell(d3)/plate-bell(d)/gong(A)-strings(8.8.6.6.4)

"... a brilliant rivalry between the elements... a precisely staged feast of orchestral colours."
(Wolfgang Schreiber, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 22 Aug 2006)

"Neuwirth has created a compact work for trumpet...[which] represents a multifarious observation and admiration of the world (miramondo multiplo). She lures the listeners into a skilfully joined, shimmering realm of random memory tableaux, where you meet, for example, Miles Davis, Berg, Mahler, Messiaen and even Handel." (Stefan Musil, Die Presse, 21 Aug 2006)

"In her 20-minute work for trumpet and orchestra, Neuwirth does not employ the concerto principle in the sense of rival friction. Rather, she creates, as in a kaleidoscope, a fulfilled ideal of peaceful cooperation, of coexistence based on freedom... The five movements draw the listener into a labyrinth of memories, where Handel's *Lascia ch'io piango* meets the fanfare end of Mahler's 5th symphony, and snatches of a Stravinsky march meet the jazz idiom of Miles Davis... the solo protagonist is led via numerous uncertainties, dangers and delusions to freedom." (Julia Spinola, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 23 Aug 2006)

"Each of the five movements, all called *Aria*, tells its own complex stories. Together, they create a multidimensional, richly faceted perspective. The dramatic eruption, over which the trumpet soars unperturbed, is followed by whirring and floating and an invocation of Mahler. The third movement is moving along with urgency, the fourth leads to a peacefully quiet, iridescent glowing, the last aria is characterised by an involved passionate dialogue with a fanfare finale." (Hans Langwallner, Kronen Zeitung, 21 Aug 2006)

9790202532133 Study Score (paperback)

World Premiere: 20 Aug 2006

Großes Festspielhaus, Salzburg, Austria

Hakan Hardenberger, trumpet; Wiener Philharmoniker

Conductor: Pierre Boulez

Remnants of songs... an Amphigory

2009

20 min

for solo viola and orchestra

2(l=picc).2.2(l=Ebc,II=bcl).bhn.2-2.2.2.0-perc:l(1-2players)

=tam-t(med)/rattle(sm)/tgl(med)/SD/cymbal set/tom-t(med)/2gongs(A,f)/tmp(D)/vib;

II(1-2players)=susp.cym(med)/rattle(med)/glsp/t.bells/steel dr/2gongs(Bb,eb)/BD(with cym)-harp-cel-strings(8.8.6.6.4); fl1,fl2,ob1,ob,bn2 also mouth org

"Remnants is essentially a 20-minute, five-movement concerto for viola and orchestra with a fiendishly difficult solo part, written especially for violist Antoine Tamestit and breathtaking in its virtuosic range. After long, lyrical high arcs on the viola, the orchestra jumps in with exotic percussive effects. Every now and then, a snatch of something tonal and vaguely familiar drifts in. The first movement builds to a glistening cha-cha. The shimmering, unearthly second movement is interrupted by huge, dissonant brass chords. The third movement features chimes, sirens, apocalyptic drums, and the feeling of the world collapsing set against snatches of rhythmic patterns and odd whiffs of tonality. The gorgeous fourth movement is dominated by a big, lyrical viola solo with a grab-holdable melody. The final section virtually follows traditional concerto form, with dialogue between soloist and orchestra, and builds to an audacious, richly-textured finale suggestive of Mahler at his most kitschy. But the work is entirely original, astoundingly complex and, ultimately, gloriously rewarding and uplifting."
(Larry L. Lash, MusicalAmerica.com, 08 Dec 2009)

World Premiere: 10 Oct 2009

Helmut-List-Halle, Graz, Austria

Antoine Tamestit, viola; Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien

Conductor: Peter Eötvös

torsion: transparent variation

2001

16 min

for solo bassoon and ensemble

solo bn(lightly ampl); ob.cl(=bcl)-tpt(=piccpt).trbn.tenor Wagner tuba-perc(1-2):steel spring(lg)/vib/Turk.cym(sm)/3gongs/4cowbells/3crot-vln.vla.vlc-sampler CD player

World Premiere: 31 Jan 2002

Maison de Radio France, Paris, France

Pascal Gallois, bassoon; Ensemble intercontemporain

Conductor: Sylvain Cambreling

Zefiro aleggia... nell'infinito

(in memoriam Luigi Nono)

2004

17 min

for solo bassoon and orchestra

solo bn(AMPL);
2(I=picc).2.2.bcl.asax.0-2.2(I=piccpt).2.0-perc(2):I=ttl/Turk.cym(sm)/steel
spring(lg)/vib/3gongs/3crot/4cowbells;
II=ttl/Turk.cym(med)/1claves/3gongs/3crot-strings(4.4.3.3.0)-CD-player

World Premiere: 14 Oct 2004

Teatro la Fenice, Venice, Italy

Pascal Gallois, bassoon; Orchestra del Teatro la Fenice

Conductor: Bernhard Kontarsky

ENSEMBLE AND CHAMBER WITHOUT VOICE(S)

In Nacht und Eis

(accordion version, 2007)
2007

10 min

for bassoon and accordion
9790202532065 Bassoon, Accordion

World Premiere: 19 Aug 2007
Konzerthaus, Großer Saal, Wien, Austria
Lorelei Dowling (bn); Krassimir Sterev (acc);

In Nacht und Eis

(cello version, 2006)
2006

10 min

for bassoon and cello with ring modulator

World premiere of version: 24 Jan 2008
Konzerthaus, Neuer Saal, Wien, Austria
Pascal Gallois (bn), Rohan de Saram (vlc);

in the realms of the unreal

2009

18 min 30 sec

for string quartet

"Olga Neuwirth's in the realms of the unreal – a homage to the American artist Henry Darger – ventures out of the academic cover: with a score of highlighted contrasts and un hoped-for turns, just as one has come to expect from the Austrian composer; with a density and keenness and also a depth of sharpness that always lay and conceive several layers of tonal fabric on top of one another. Especially touching are its threadbare, or rather transparent passages that, now in clear-as-glass sequences, now in sensual kinetic motion, let one sense something of the beauty and fragility, of the inner song that once inspired the genre."
(Christine Lemke-Matwey, Der Tagesspiegel, 25 Mar 2010)

World Premiere: 15 Jan 2010
Cité de la musique, Amphithéâtre, Paris, France
Arditti Quartet

Lost Highway Suite

(revised version)
2008

43 min

for six soloists and ensemble

6 instrumental soloists: sax(S,T,Bar)-cl(=bcl,dbcl)-trbn(A,T)-elec.git(Hawaii git)
-accordion-kbd(synth,elec.pft);
2(I,II=picc).1.2(I=Ebcl).1(=dbn)
-1.2(I=picc)pt.1.1-perc(2):timp/vib/glsp/2tgl/cmym/2tom-t(BD/SD)/gongs/cowbells/2tam-t/
t.bells/2wdbl/thunder sheet/metal spring/crot/chimes/wine
glass-strings(1.1.1.2.1(=elec.bass))-live electronics;
fl2,ob,cl2,bn also mouth org

World premiere of version: 25 Nov 2008

Cité de la musique, Paris, France
musikFabrik
Conductor: Stefan Asbury

Marsyas II

2005

13 min

for flute, viola, cello and piano

"The differently tuned instruments created a nebulous veil under which disaster was looming, heralded by momentary flashes. A fulminant dance on – or even in – the volcano, graphically demonstrating the artist's power and her suggestive perception of sound." (Pedro Obiera, Aachener Zeitung, 13 Jun 2005)

9790202531877 Mixed Ensemble

World Premiere: 10 Jun 2005

Kraftwerk, Heimbach, Germany
Chiara Tonelli, fl / Hanna Weinmeister, vla / Danjulo Ishizaka, vlc / Thomas Larcher, pft

Musik zu "Diagonal Symphony" von Viking Eggeling

2007

8 min 30 sec

for ensemble

tpt.trbn-perc(2):I=tam-t(med)/crot(C4,Db4,Eb4)/cym(med)/tom-t(lo);
II=tam-t(med)/vib/Chin.cym/metal bl/bongo(lo)/metal grate stick-elec.git-pft-vlc-CD
soundtrack

World Premiere: 27 Jan 2007

Radialsystem, Berlin, Germany
Ensemble Ascolta
Conductor: Titus Engel

spazio elastico

2005

15 min

for ensemble

tpt(=piccpt).tbn-perc(2):l=gls/cym(sm)/tam-t(sm)/gong(Eb1)/cowbell/33crot;
ll=vib/tomt-(lg)/2cowbells/cym(med)/tam-t(med)/5crot-elec.gtr-elec.pft(or synth)-vlc

"a work of striking freshness that is both straightforward and passionately edgy" (Reinhard Schulz, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 16 Feb 2006)

"a compelling work, not least on account of its arch of suspense" (Stephan Schomaker, ÖMZ 7/2008)

World Premiere: 12 Feb 2006

T3, Stuttgart, Germany

Ensemble Ascolta

Un posto nell'acqua

2009

16 min

for ensemble

1.1.1.sax.1-1.1.1.0-perc-2elec.pft-elec.gtr-accordion-vln.vla.vlc.db

"Olga Neuwirth plays with auditory expectations in Un posto nell'acqua. Distorted scraps of memory shimmer through sound. The work has the effect of the compositional unfolding of a dying away of sound: the sforzato which kicks off the work also forms an abrupt end to it."

Wiener Zeitung

World Premiere: 10 Dec 2009

Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ, Grote Zaal, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Klangforum Wien

Conductor: Sylvain Cambreling

Verfremdung/Entfremdung

(flute version)

2002

11 min 33 sec

for flute, piano and tape (6 track)

9790202531570 Flute, Piano, CD

World Premiere: 31 Aug 2002

Luzerner Saal, Luzern, Switzerland

Eva Furrer, flute; Marino Formenti, piano

Verfremdung/Entfremdung

(saxophone version)

2003

12 min

Version for soprano saxophone, piano and tape (6 track)

"Olga Neuwirth's composition Verfremdung/Entfremdung made the audience sit up and take notice ... Its rigid structure was convincing in its strong spatial sound effects. In its structure, a kind of variation traces a gradual loss of tonal identity, interlinking it with a sampled alteration of the instrumental characteristics that was generated through 'morphing' and added from tape." (Stefan Drees, *klassik.com*, Apr 2007)

9790202531587 Soprano Saxophone, Piano

World premiere of version: 22 Apr 2007

Festsaal, Witten, Germany

Marcus Weiss, saxophone; Yukiko Sugawara, piano

ENSEMBLE AND CHAMBER WITH VOICE(S)

The Cartographer Song

2006

5 min

for soprano, two clarinets, viola, cello and double bass

Text: Stephanie Fleischmann (from: 'Hotel Carter') (E)

World Premiere: 20 Jun 2006

Jubilee Hall, Aldeburgh, United Kingdom

Mary Wiegold, soprano; Composers Ensemble

Conductor: Christopher Austin

... ce qui arrive...

Szenische Momentaufnahme nach Paul Auster, mit Film- und Raumkonzept von Don 2004

55 min

for voice, video, tape and ensemble

Text: text and voice: Paul Auster; song texts: Andrew Patner, Georgette Dee (E-G); film and virtual room: Dominique Gonzales-Foerster

Group I:

ssax.tsax.bn-hn.tpt(=piccpt).tbn-perc(1):cym(med)/SD/2crot/glass/tam-t(med)/gong/tim p(C)/cowbell/tgl/1tom-t(lg)/1claves-vln;

Group II: fl(=picc).ob.cl(=bcl)-elec.gtr-elec.pft-vla.vlc.db

(ob and hn doubling children's tpt and mouth org);
live electronics

"Neuwirth's "...ce qui arrive..." combines a taped autobiographical monologue spoken by Paul Auster with an orchestral soundscape (performed by the awesome Ensemble Modern) augmented by electronic samples and an amazingly synchronised video [by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster] of the transgendered chanteuse Georgette Dee... Somewhere over the rainbow of Auster's banal-sounding fables... the work becomes inexplicably profound... Neuwirth's music is not easy, but rarely is an intellectual challenge so enjoyable. Her dazzling sonic combinations strike nerves and funny bones." (Larry L. Lash / James Woodall, Financial Times, 03 Nov 2004)

"Olga Neuwirth has for a long time been Austria's best, most curious and consequential composer... Paul Auster's murmurs came from all directions, a recitation virtually on one note that melted again and again blissfully with the sounds of the Ensemble Modern... Neuwirth creates out of Andrew Patner's poetry three songs à la Kurt Weill in the swell of her rich primeval music... On the video Georgette Dee scrambles in front of the screen, sings, plays with veils, and mutates into a man. Whatever colour appears is overlaid upon the image of the coast that subsequently plunges into darkness. But Olga Neuwirth continually counterpoints the video performer and the suspicion of the cultured person, leading towards the never resting powers of nature..." (Reinhard J. Brembeck, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 23/24 Oct 2004)

"Georgette Dee... seems like an icon of desire, expectation become body and soul. Olga Neuwirth composed three songs for her in the style of Kurt Weill, a study of perfection in terms of their workmanship. In the course of the work the listener is treated to buzzing and clinking noises, sounds as of ice floes superimposing one another – a both tender and harsh cluster symphony with individual melodies bubbling to the surface in between. If listeners are ready to act as resonators, an existential experience awaits them, which is no less than a life poised between happiness and disaster, hope and desperation, transposed into the realm of art." (Ulrich Weinzierl, Die Welt, 04 Nov 2004)

World Premiere: 21 Oct 2004

Helmut-List-Halle, Graz, Austria

Georgette Dee, special appearance; Ensemble Modern

Conductor: Franck Ollu

ecstaloop

2001

20 min

for soprano, speaker, sampler and ensemble

Text: Stephanie Fleischmann, Ivetta Gerasimchuk, Banana Yoshimoto, Craig Raine, Kathrin Röggla (E-G)

1(=picc).1.1.bcl.0-1.1(=piccpt).1.btrbn.0-perc(1):Turk.cym(med)/SD/vib/gong/3crot/1tim p(D)/5cowbells/1tuned beer bottle(A)-sampler-vln.vla.vlc.db

"Neuwirth loves directness, obstinacy, clear-cut shapes in the creation of her dense, often staggering mixture of sound, noise and text, as in the quasi musical theatre work ecstaloop. There are sudden, violent moments as well as meditative ones, with the general air ranging from almost brutal noise to whispering or whining." (Wolfgang Schreiber, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 15 Oct 2002)

World Premiere: 24 Oct 2001

Burghof, Lörrach, Switzerland

Isolde Siebert, soprano / Lucas Rössner, speaker; Ensemble 14

Conductor: Joachim Krause

No more secrets, no more lies

2004

9 min

for voice and ensemble

Text: Andrew Patner and Georgette Dee (E-G)

tsax/ssax-tpt.trbn-perc(1):BD/cym(med)/SD/2tom-t(hi,lo)/1crot-elec.gtr-elec.bass-elec.pf t-vlc(amp)

World premiere of version: 31 Oct 2004

Konzerthaus, Mozart-Saal, Wien, Austria

Andrew Watts, counter tenor; Klangforum Wien

Conductor: Johannes Kalitzke

PIANO(S)

Marsyas

2003/04

13 min 50 sec

for solo piano

"Neuwirth exhausts the keyboard to its utmost limits ... Agitated convolutions and tonally independent tendrils of sound alternate with a contemplative flow of steadily pulsating musical images – a very expressive and multifaceted piece of music." (Regina Bruns/Karsten Mark, *Westfälischer Anzeiger*, 26 Jul 2004)

9790202531747 Piano

World Premiere: 24 Jul 2004

Harenberg City-Center, Amphisaal, Dortmund, Germany

Thomas Larcher, piano;

INSTRUMENTAL

Addio...sognando

2009

9 min

for solo trumpet and tape (4-channel)

"In addio...sognando, the solo trumpet (William Forman) floated over a musical texture filled with electronic sounds. This solo seemed to pervade the sound tracks, called 'audio tracks', with various playing techniques and the use of different kinds of mutes, thus achieving an effect of entangled sounds in a fascinating way, which was both new and familiar at the same time." (Ute Büchter-Römer, nmz, 03 Jun 2009)

World Premiere: 31 May 2009

Bergkirche, Eisenstadt, Austria

Bill Forman, trumpet;

Laki

2006

8 min

for solo trumpet

9790202531952 **Trumpet**

World Premiere: 24 Sep 2006

Cité de la musique et de la danse, Strasbourg, France

Gary Farr, trumpet; Remix Ensemble

torsion

2003/05

12 min

for solo bassoon (with tape)

"Torsion is demanding in all respects, a score in which the most diverse elements are brought together: sustained sounds that vibrate as if from within, jaggedly scraping moments that rough the texture up, fragments of traditional music conjuring up brief recollections of history, which is characteristic of all of Neuwirth's music." (Tim Gorbauch, Franfurter Rundschau, 13 Feb 2007)

9790202530917 **Bassoon**

World premiere of version: 02 Apr 2003

Salle Cortot, Paris, France

Pascal Gallois, bassoon;

VOCAL

'tintarella di luna'

2005

11 min

cold songs for baritone and piano

Text: based on texts by Leopardi, Michelangelo and Sappho (G-I)

World Premiere: 06 Oct 2005

Konzerthaus, Neuer Saal, Wien, Austria

Georg Nigl, baritone; Ueli Wiget, piano

Alla marcia

2007

8 min 30 sec

for ensemble

tpt.trbn-perc(2):l=tam-t(med)/crot(C4,Db4,Eb4)/cym(med)/tom-t(lo);

ll=tam-t(med)/vib/Chin.cym/metal bl/bongo(lo)/metal grate stick-elec.git-pft-vlc-CD
soundtrack