

Olga Neuwirth



Olga Neuwirth Photo © Harald Hoffmann

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 heterogenous 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.

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OPERAS

... ce qui arrive...

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

for voice, video, tape and ensemble

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

World Premiere: 21 Oct 2004

Helmut-List-Halle, Graz, Austria

Georgette Dee, special appearance; Ensemble Modern

Conductor: Franck Ollu

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Lost Highway

2002/03 1 hr 35 min

Music theatre

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; ll=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

World Premiere: 31 Oct 2003

Helmut-List-Halle, Graz, Austria

Joachim Schlömer, director; Klangforum Wien

Conductor: Johannes Kalitzke

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

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

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

... ce qui arrive...

**Nach Textfragmenten von Paul Auster, für 2 Ensemble Gruppen, Samples und Live-E
(concert version)**

for two ensemble groups, samples and live-electronics

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.

World premiere of version: 08 Nov 2012

Konzerthaus, Mozart-Saal, Wien, Austria

Paul Auster, voice; International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE)

Conductor: Jayce Ogren

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Lost Highway Suite

(revised version)

2008

40 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(1,1=picc).1.2(1=Ebcl).1(=dbn)

-1.2(1=piccpt).1.1-perc(2):timp/vib/glsp/2tgl/cmyps/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

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

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(lg)/xyl/SD/crot(set)/2gongs/2cowbells/tam-t(lg)/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)

World Premiere: 08 Sep 2001

Hauptschule Sporthalle, Schwaz, Austria

Thomas Larcher, piano; Birmingham Contemporary Music Group

Conductor: Pierre-André Valade

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

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(lg)/xyl/SD/crot(set)/2gongs/2cowbells/tam-t(lg)/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)

World Premiere: 08 Feb 2002

De Singel, Antwerp, Belgium

Thomas Larcher, piano; Flanders Philharmonic Orchestra

Conductor: Olari Elts

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

... 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(lg)/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

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

... miramondo multiplo...

(orchestral version)
2006

19 min

for solo trumpet and orchestra

solo tpt(=piccpt);
2(I=picc).2.3(I=Ebcl,III=bcl).2-2.2.2.1-perc(3):I=cencerros(d1-d3)/tam-t(lg)/cym(med)/ha
ndbell(g2)/t.bell(d2)/gong(g); II=cym set/tgl(med)/SD/BD/concussion
cyms(sm,lg)/gong(d1);
III=carillon/tam-t(med)/cym(sm)/handbell(d3)/plate-bell(d)/gong(A)-strings(8.8.6.6.4)

9790202532133 **Study Score (paperback)**

World Premiere: 20 Aug 2006

Großes Festspielhaus, Salzburg, Austria

Hakan Hardenberger, trumpet; Wiener Philharmoniker

Conductor: Pierre Boulez

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Remnants of songs... an Amphigory**2009**

20 min

for solo viola and orchestra

2(I=picc).2.2(I=EbcI,II=bcI).bhn.2-2.2.2.0-perc:I(1-2players)
=tam-t(med)/rattle(sm)/tgl(med)/SD/cymbal set/tom-t(med)/2gongs(A,f)/timp(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

World Premiere: 10 Oct 2009

Helmut-List-Halle, Graz, Austria

Antoine Tamestit, viola; Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien

Conductor: Peter Eötvös

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

torsion: transparent variation**2001**

16 min

for solo bassoon and ensemble

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

World Premiere: 31 Jan 2002

Maison de Radio France, Paris, France

Pascal Gallois, bassoon; Ensemble intercontemporain

Conductor: Sylvain Cambreling

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Zefiro allegria... 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=tgl/Turk.cym(sm)/steel
spring(lg)/vib/3gongs/3crot/4cowbells;
II=tgl/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

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

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);

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

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);

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

in the realms of the unreal

2009 (rev.08/2011)

18 min 30 sec

for string quartet

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

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Lost Highway Suite

(revised version)
2008

40 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(l,ll=picc).1.2(l=Ebcl).1(=dbn)
-1.2(l=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

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Marsyas II

2005

13 min

for flute, viola, cello and piano
9790202531877 Mixed Ensemble

World Premiere: 10 Jun 2005
Kraftwerk, Heimbach, Germany
Chiara Tonelli, fl / Hanna Weinmeister, vla / Danjulo Ishizaka, vlc / Thomas Larcher, pft

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Musik zu "Symphonie Diagonale" von Viking Eggeling

2007

8 min 15 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

World Premiere: 27 Jan 2007

Radialsystem, Berlin, Germany
Ensemble Ascolta
Conductor: Titus Engel

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

spazio elastico**2005**

15 min

for ensemble

tpt(=piccpt).tbn-perc(2):l=gisp/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

World Premiere: 12 Feb 2006

T3, Stuttgart, Germany
Ensemble Ascolta

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Un posto nell'acqua**2009**

16 min

for ensemble

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

World Premiere: 10 Dec 2009

Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ, Grote Zaal, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Klangforum Wien
Conductor: Sylvain Cambreling

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

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

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Verfremdung/Entfremdung**(saxophone version)****2003**

12 min

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

9790202531587 **Soprano Saxophone, Piano**

World premiere of version: 22 Apr 2007

Festsaal, Witten, Germany
Marcus Weiss, saxophone; Yukiko Sugawara, piano

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

ENSEMBLE AND CHAMBER WITH VOICE(S)

... ce qui arrive...

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

for voice, video, tape and ensemble

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

World Premiere: 21 Oct 2004

Helmut-List-Halle, Graz, Austria

Georgette Dee, special appearance; Ensemble Modern

Conductor: Franck Ollu

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

ecstaloop

2001 20 min

for soprano, speaker, sampler and ensemble

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

World Premiere: 24 Oct 2001

Burghof, Lörrach, Switzerland

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

Conductor: Joachim Krause

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

No more secrets, no more lies

2004 9 min

for voice and ensemble

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

World premiere of version: 31 Oct 2004

Konzerthaus, Mozart-Saal, Wien, Austria

Andrew Watts, counter tenor; Klangforum Wien

Conductor: Johannes Kalitzke

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

PIANO(S)

Marsyas

2003/04

13 min 50 sec

for solo piano

9790202531747 Piano

World Premiere: 24 Jul 2004

Harenberg City-Center, Amphisaal, Dortmund, Germany

Thomas Larcher, piano;

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

INSTRUMENTAL

Addio...sognando

2009 9 min

for solo trumpet and tape (4-channel)

World Premiere: 31 May 2009

Bergkirche, Eisenstadt, Austria

Bill Forman, trumpet;

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Laki

2006 (rev 11/07) 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

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

torsion

2003/05 12 min

for solo bassoon (with tape)

9790202530917 **Bassoon**

World premiere of version: 02 Apr 2003

Salle Cortot, Paris, France

Pascal Gallois, bassoon;

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

VOCAL

'tintarella di luna'

2005/13

11 min

cold songs for countertenor and piano

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world