

Olga Neuwirth



Olga Neuwirth Photo © Priska Ketterer

OPERAS

... 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

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,ll=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)/1tmp/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)/1tmp/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 Hilferty, 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 Tomic, 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