

Fragen an ... Yoko Hamabe Wylegala Komponistin

von Rebekka Bindewald



Yoko Hamabe Wylegala (Foto: Regina Geisler)

Rebekka Bindewald: You have already lived, studied and worked in different countries. Could you please characterize the different "phases" in your life?

Yoko Hamabe Wylegala: Like a snake molting its skin only to replace it with a more fitting one, I experienced several instances of transformation in the course of moving from continent to continent, continuously studying music as I went. Living in Mexico was an important period of my life as a composer because I re(-)started formal music studies there, after a hiatus of many years. It was a challenge to learn everything through a new idiom, Spanish. Also it was a relatively late start, but I believe it has worked out as an advantage for me. In Peru I further expanded my musical vocabulary, while my years in Germany have been my most creative and productive ones to date.

When did you know that you wanted to become a composer?

Probably during an early stage of my music studies in Mexico when I was taking harmony theory and counterpoint. I was fascinated by the beautiful blending of sounds and interweaving of melodies. It's always a struggle to write music, but it is hard to describe in words the sense of fulfillment I gain upon

completing a project. If I must choose one word to describe my relationship to music it would be "addiction".

How could you classify your previous compositions stylistically and for which genre have you composed so far?

I was trained as a classical composer and most of my music is concert music ranging from solo instrumentation to full orchestral works with acoustic instruments.

The composition „Willkommen im Dodoland“ is a custom work of the Irish saxophonist Antonio Cafolla. How did you work together during the process of composition?

Antonio asked me to compose for tenor saxophone and orchestral music. He noted that there are very few orchestral pieces for tenor saxophone. Through my music he wanted to prove that tenor saxophone can be an integral part of the wind section, blending perfectly well with the rest of the orchestra. I proposed the suite form for „Willkommen im Dodoland“ instead of a conventional concerto. We talked a lot between California and Dublin during the composition stage, I also visited Dublin to collaborate with him and for our early rehearsals. Antonio has been an ideal partner in terms of communication and cooperation. Hopefully he will have many opportunities to play this piece around the world.

How would you characterize the music of your composition „Willkommen im Dodoland“? And concerning the contents, what is the message of this work?

I hope „Willkommen im Dodoland“ can reach the audience as an entertaining work that also conveys a message. WDL (Willkommen im Dodoland) entertained me while I was writing it. This aspect is very important for a composer who is, in fact, the first audience of a work in progress. WDL is a suite and in the quasi-symmetric style. It starts and ends with tenor saxophone solos. The final chord is introduced as an aleatoric aspect. I asked the orchestra players to choose note C, C# or Cb to make a destiny chord, which thus reflects the individual musician's view of how to conclude the story I created. It need not be the same sound each time. The final sound constitutes a surprise for me, also, at each playing.

Dodo birds are symbolic of extinction for many people, but not all are aware of the creature's fate. Hopefully my music contributes to awareness of the loss and void experienced through extinction of life.

You intended to write a composition for the "Orchester Berliner Musikfreunde". Has this influenced your work? And could you describe how your work with the orchestra turned out during the rehearsals?

OBM is a very special entity for me. It is not too much to say that OBM enabled me to be a better composer. By joining the orchestra I learned works of fabulous composers. Then I wrote two orchestral works for OBM, the first one called "B isst Eis" (2005) and the second „Willkommen im Dodoland" (2008). Because I know every player in the orchestra it was my great pleasure to write music while imagining each member's face and sound! From this aspect, both "B isst Eis" and WDL are very much custom-made music.

It was simply a magical flow of energy during the rehearsal among conductor Yukari Ishimoto, OBM, Antonio Caffola (Ireland) and the Icelandic orchestra under the baton of Oliver Kentish. I really appreciated everyone's contribution. The premiere concert at the Berliner Philharmonie was the best performance of this work I have experienced.

How was it for you to experience the premiere of your work?
It was just wonderful. A premiere for a composer is some-

thing like giving birth and staging a wedding at the same time. One introduces music to the world and then this new born music immediately should be "married" to the public. We had a very supportive audience. From this point on the music has to walk alone and take on its own life. I hope I gave WDL everything that I intended to give it, such as beauty, strength, intelligence, humor and wisdom, in order to survive and be loved by people for a long time.

What are your current projects?

My next project will be writing solo pieces for bassoon. After that I plan to orchestrate "Fantasia Inca". This piece was composed as a violin and piano piece when I was studying at the conservatory in Lima, Peru. The main theme is the sorrow and dignity of the Inca tribe. It is a very dramatic music. I remember I enjoyed writing it and now I'm again anticipating with excitement the work of orchestrating it.

Many thanks for this interview!

Die Dritte Szene
♩ = 180 Allegro
L : Via-Rock Dodol!

The image shows a page of a musical score for 'Die Dritte Szene'. It features five staves: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in B, Bassoon, and Tenor Saxophone. The music is in 4/4 time and marked 'Allegro' with a tempo of 180. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *f*, and *sf*. There are also vocal lines with lyrics 'Do - dol!' written below the woodwind staves. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines, and there are some performance instructions like 'L.II' and 'L.II' above certain measures.

Auszug aus der 3. Szene „Willkommen im Dodoland“