

BERND FRANKE

open doors

April 2001: Following 1989 and 2000, once again two weeks in New York, staying in the bedlam of downtown Manhattan. Rehearsals and Première of *Petrel Seascapes* for Soprano and Orchestra with the New Juilliard Ensemble, lectures in the Manhattan School and the Juilliard School, visits to musicians and artists as well as to my former Tanglewood Professor, Lukas Foss, who is now 80 years old and still flying once a week to Boston to teach (Performance of Contemporary Music), met the 94 year old Elliott Carter during an impressive concert of works by Carter and Cage –in the middle of working on my piece for Bandoneon and Orchestra- have two especially far-reaching and striking experiences:

a fantastic performance at the Met of Alban Berg's *Lulu* in the Three Act version under Levine (use a quotation in *open doors*)
and

the atmosphere of the New York subway: when the door opens in each station you hear new and outstanding buskers from all round the world, a huge web of sound, a landscape of sound "in motion"!
"To be in motion", to be open for the New, the Different, for not yet heard sound landscapes.

In May a colleague from Peters in New York recorded the sounds of the New York subway on minidisc for me, a part of which I use in my new piece for Bandoneon and Orchestra.

In June I learn from friends in Pittsburgh that a concert of "Subway Musicians from around the World" had been organised in the Lincoln Centre in New York City!

open doors, organically-growing and with aleatoric structures overlaying hierarchically directed orchestral structures, chambermusically "softens" the orchestral effect.

Bare short "phases" of 1-2 minutes are interrupted again and again by "cuts", there is no detailed development in the first part, there are just webs of sound in space.

During work on my last opera *Mottke the Thief*. (commissioned by Hans Werner Henze and the Munich Biennale and premiered in 1998 in Bonn) and led by the subject of the libretto (circus and underworld/variety music) I concentrated intensively on, among other things, an instrument which in Germany is almost forgotten and lost:

The Bandoneon

Next to the electric guitar and an electro-acoustically-amplified iron cage, the Bandoneon even progresses to become a solo instrument.

It was necessary to undertake wide-ranging studies to be able to compose for this instrument. After some performances and learning the "theatrical" and chaotic history

of this musical outsider, the Bandoneon had me immediately under its spell. Discovered by the music teacher Heinrich Band in Krefeld in the middle of the nineteenth century and built in Carlsfeld in Saxony by the firm Arnold, envisaged to accompany the congregations in the small churches of the Erzgebirge, taken by German emigrants to Argentina at the end of the nineteenth century, inside Germany in the first half of the twentieth century a folk instrument, in South America the main instrument of the Tango masters, a two-track production- for the German and the South American market, banned in the Third Reich through its connection with the Bandoneon Union of Workers, under threat and forgotten in Germany after the war by other musical styles and instruments and the nationalisation of the Carlsfelder Bandoneon Producers, primarily preserved by Piazzolla and other South American musicians of the Tango scene, and finally brought back to Europe. Today this instrument, which is very complicated to play, is in the main used by specialists in Tango and in Jazz and also in the realm of avant-garde music because of its unusual sound and above all because of its changeable tonality (like the mouth organ)

In 1996 I purchased a Bandoneon and began to practice it in order really to get the feel of this instrument to be able to compose innovatively for my work *Mottke the Thief*. I tried out all the effects and sounds myself, also those for my composition **Solo 4fach-überlagernd** for Bandoneon, electric guitar, violin and harp from my cycle *half-way house-Solo xfach (für Joseph Beuys)*, which was premiered during EXPO 2000 in Hanover.

Both parts, in my opera and **Solo 4fach** were premiered by a Bandoneon player who prompted me to compose a new work for Bandoneon and Orchestra: Per Arne Glorvigen.

Glorvigen is a Norwegian, who lives in Paris with his Argentinean wife and two children, studied the Bandoneon among other instruments.

The stimulation I got from Per Arne Glorvigen is due to the fact that he is an outstanding Tango player, -one thinks of Gidon Kremer-recordings by Piazzolla-but Glorvigen thinks ahead and is completely open for all avant-garde techniques.

This openness is fundamentally important when composing for this instrument: for me it is the sound of the Bandoneon, the strangeness of the production of scales and tones from the partly chaotic fingering system, the relationship to the “breath” of the Bandoneon with its airy noises, the percussive playing in the special body language of the Bandoneon player and the “looking forward” in developing new playing techniques.

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