

Araxi Karnusian Strange Sounds – Beautiful Music „interrupted“

press release (short version)

The outstanding players of the ensemble **Strange Sounds – Beautiful Music**, which consists of a string quartet and a jazz quintet, uncompromisingly pursue the vision of their leader: to create a unique music beyond styles that effortlessly blends Western classical music with Afro-American jazz, composition with improvisation, driving beats with sweeping soundscapes, and structure with freedom. With ***interrupted*** Araxi Karnusian presents an emotionally dense, carefully structured work for nine independent instrumentalists, which makes the listener sit up and seamlessly combines influences of Béla Bartók, Gustav Mahler, Dave Holland and Ornette Coleman into an integrated whole.

press release (long version)

“... fascinating music that is deeply melancholic and captivating, with driving beats and powerful solos,” a thrilled critic wrote in *fmf*; “Alluring Sound Worlds,” the headline of the *Bund* critique read when in 2003 the composer and saxophonist Araxi Karnusian presented her ensemble Strange Sounds – Beautiful Music and a suite of the same name; “ ... Araxi Karnusian and her musicians played her suite with verve and electrifying emotional power,” the *BaZ* applauded after the performance at the Basle festival Strings On Top.

With the new three-part work ***interrupted***, Araxi Karnusian now comes out on CD with the essence of her musical work. The outstanding players of the ensemble, which consists of a string quartet and a jazz quintet, have grown together into a tight group and uncompromisingly pursue the vision of their leader: to create a unique music beyond styles that effortlessly blends Western classical music with Afro-American jazz, driving beats with sweeping soundscapes, composition with improvisation, and structure with freedom.

Recorded in February 2007 at Radiostudio Zürich, ***interrupted*** reflects familiar emotional states experienced by the composer in the three cities of Bern (Part 1), New York (Part 3), and Paris (Part 2). The pieces take the listener on a musical journey to these cities – albeit not in terms of clichéd programme music, for it’s a journey into one’s personal world of feelings and emotions.

Karnusian weaves *strange sounds* – bold resonant sound spaces and adventurous improvisations – into *beautiful music* – lyrical melodies and warm harmonies. Building upon deep personal reflections the composer goes beyond the scope of traditional patterns, seeks new structures, develops motifs, explores sounds, superimposes rhythms in odd metres, opens up spaces for collective improvisation, probes the full range of contrapuntal possibilities and adds harmony to melodic line. Though

influences from Béla Bartók and Gustav Mahler to Dave Holland and Ornette Coleman are felt in the music, it never strikes one as an imitation. The result is a carefully structured composition for nine independent instrumentalists who meet in diverse combinations to merge seamlessly into an integrated whole and, as a congenial collective, span a wide musical spectrum in their performances.

Because the work deliberately gives the players a lot of freedom, the musicians were all hand picked, or rather, the composition was cut to their individual strengths, since it is their abilities and inspiration that brings the music to life: the powerful and warm tone of saxophonist and alto clarinetist Araxi Karnusian captivates and enthralls, as does her charismatic playing that is always focused on the moment. Interplay with Jürg Bucher on a vast array of reed instruments allows a manifold combination of sounds, for he contributes a warm and full rich tone as well as sensitivity and elegance in his playing. Coming from the French-speaking part of Switzerland and highly, and rightfully, acclaimed for his sophisticated and virtuoso performances, pianist Colin Vallon combines lyrical sensibility with the eruptive forces of nature. The earthy and agile bass work of Daniel Schläppi is marked by groovy driving lines, while drummer Dominic Egli stands out for his spectacular cascading rhythms as well as imaginative orchestrations.

Not only are the violinists Simon Heggendorn and Tobias Preisig, violist David Schneebeli, and cellist Bruno Fischer experienced, flexible and brilliant ensemble players, they are also well up in free soloing. Their playing is characterised by advanced and beautiful refined sound, rhythmic precision, and breathtakingly secure intonation even in complex harmonies. Having studied at conservatories *and* jazz schools, these exponents of the younger generation of string players are known for their collaboration with diverse crossover projects.