

# American Lulu

**Werktitel:** American Lulu

**Untertitel:** Neuinterpretation von Alban Bergs Oper "Lulu"

**KomponistIn:** [Neuwirth Olga](#)

**Beteiligte Personen (Text):** Neuwirth Olga

**Entstehungsjahr:** 2006-2011

**Dauer:** abendfüllend

**Genre(s):** Neue Musik

**Subgenre(s):** Experimental/Intermedia Modern/Avantgarde

**Gattung(en):** Oper/Musiktheater

**Sprache (Text):** Englisch Deutsch

**Besetzung:** Solostimme(n) Orchester

## **Besetzungsdetails:**

**Orchestercode:** MSt, S, 2T, Bar, 2B - 1 (Picc)/0/1, BKlar/0, SSax, ASax, BarSax - 0/2/2 (TPos, BPos)/1 - 2Perc, Schlagz - 2/2/2/2/2 - E-Git, Synth, Sampler

Solo: [Sopran](#) (1), [Tenor](#) (2), [Bariton](#) (1), [Bass](#) (2), [Männerstimme](#) (1), [Stimme](#) (2, SchauspielerIn)

[Flöte](#) (1, auch Piccoloflöte), [Klarinette](#) (1, auch in Es), [Bassklarinette](#) (1), [Sopransaxophon](#) (1), [Altsaxophon](#) (1), [Baritonsaxophon](#) (1), [Trompete](#) (2), [Posaune](#) (2, auch Tenorposaune und Bassposaune), [Tuba](#) (1), [Perkussion](#) (2), [Schlagzeug](#) (1), [Violine](#) (4), [Viola](#) (2), [Violoncello](#) (2), [Kontrabass](#) (2), [Elektrische Gitarre](#) (1), Sampler (1), [Synthesizer](#) (1)

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## **Beschreibung**

"Notes on American Lulu (2006-2011)"

Extremes have always fascinated me, sensual and abstract extremes, and both can be found in Alban Berg's *Lulu*. Yet it was not my aim to recreate an authentic Alban Berg, but to take a fresh look from the perspective of a woman, a composer of my generation, at this mystical female figure (who has been seen as an "enigmatic woman", a "serpent", "demonic woman", "sphinx" or "child woman", and characterized by famous scholarly interpreters of women, such as Krafft-Ebing, or Sigmund Freud and his associates). The female character of *Lulu* has always been seen through the eyes of men. This male view of leading female characters in operas has often puzzled me.

While the Second Viennese School is well known for their adaptations of works by other composers, it seemed natural for me to reconsider in particular the opera figure of *Lulu*. I believe that precisely this unfinished, famous 20th-century music theater and its characters lend themselves to being rethought by each generation. For in his music, Berg sounds the depths of the story in all its psychological nuances and offers musical solutions for everything.

Stirred by a film I had seen as a child – namely, Otto Preminger's *Carmen Jones* from 1954, in which the director took the opera *Carmen* and set it in the South of the USA, and cast all the roles with African-Americans – I decided to transplant Alban Berg's *Lulu* to New Orleans and New York. Drawing on Berg's idea of putting Wedekind's drama, which was originally set around 1900, in a new social context around 1930, I moved my reinterpretation of the opera to the US in the 1950s and 1970s, that is, against the backdrop of the civil rights movement, counterculture and diverse liberation movements. My father is a jazz musician, and I grew up with jazz and jazz musicians. It was the enthusiastic accounts of my father's US colleagues about African-American Edward Bland's documentary *The Cry of Jazz* (1958) that motivated me, at the early age of twelve, to write a theater play revolving around African-American jazz musicians in Harlem. To my pleasure, it was then performed at a school theater festival in 1980. Though with regards to a "relocated *Lulu*", I was also interested in exploitation films. From the 1930s onwards, they were often low-budget films that, due to their desire for lurid subject matters, dealt with violence, sexual acts and other kinds of delicate issues. The fluid boundary between trash, kitsch and counterculture is what I find especially fascinating in blaxploitation films like Melvin Van Peebles' *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* or Jack Hill's *Coffy*.

In the opera *Lulu*, the formal structure of Berg's rich musical language includes not only a number of absolute forms, such as sonata, arietta or cavatina, but also English waltz and ragtime. Due to the spreading popularity of jazz in the 1920s, Igor Stravinsky, Paul Hindemith and Ernst Krenek, and others, all wrote compositions influenced by jazz. And apparently this did not go unnoticed by Berg. These influences were mentioned in a correspondence between Alban Berg and Erwin Schulhoff, who had become acquainted with jazz, ragtime and

American dance music in the early 1920s via his friend George Grosz, who collected phonographic recordings of American music. This is why I chose to have the passages in Berg's score that were marked "film music" and music for a "jazz band" performed on a Wonder Morton organ. For Berg's use of film and composition of Lulu began in 1929, and this coincides with the heyday of this special theater organ. One of the only still functioning Wonder Morton organs which is used to accompany screenings today is at Loew's Jersey Theater in Jersey City. When I was living in New York in 2007 and exploring ideas for American Lulu, I began researching theater organs. I discovered there was a Wonder Morton organ that, after ye..."

*Olga Neuwirth, Notes on American Lulu (2006-2011) (Werkkommentar, Ricordi Berlin), abgerufen am 24.06.2021 [<https://www.ricordi.com/de-DE/Catalogue.aspx/details/442235>]*

**Auftrag:** Komische Oper Berlin

### **Uraufführung**

30. September 2012 - Berlin

**Veranstalter:** Komische Oper Berlin

### **Weitere Informationen**

Musik des 1. und 2. Akts bearbeitet und neu orchestriert von Olga Neuwirth

Text des 1. und 2. Akts bearbeitet von Olga Neuwirth und Helga Utz unter Beachtung der englischen Übersetzung von Richard Stokes und Catherine Kerkhoff-Saxon

Musik und Text des 3. Akts von Olga Neuwirth, übersetzt von Catherine Kerkhoff-Saxon