



Towards Carnegie Hall

*A lucid mind inside a red brick house:
Pianist Christiane Klonz is ready to take on the world.*

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By TOBIAS FISCHER

On the pages of the Carnegie Hall, there is a simple black and white text entry:

CHRISTIANE KLONZ, PIANO
WEILL RECITAL HALL
MONDAY, APRIL 21, 2008 AT 8 PM

To anyone in New York, this is nothing but yet another interesting concert announcement amidst an ocean of similar offers. To German pianist Christiane Klonz, it is possibly the highlight of her career and a moment she is already anxiously anticipating as the countdown clock keeps ticking.

Seventeen Chickens

For an outside observer, however, the feverish expectations remain well hidden: Klonz lives in “a red brick house with a pond in front of her door, a dog and a cat and seventeen chickens”, as reported by local newspaper “Schweriner Volkszeitung”. This place of refuge, close to the idyllic Plauer See, allows her to withdraw completely into her music, closing all doors and lowering the blinds to focus on playing her Steinway for up to eight hours each day. She occasionally leaves the house to teach at the internationally renowned faculty “Hanns Eisler” in Berlin and the music school in Parchim, but other than that, she enjoys the almost perfect isolation of her home, her thoughts immersed in art. When reading through the select set of interviews she’s done over the last years, one can’t help but feel that this presents both a tremendous joy as well as the typical hardships of life as a classical instrumentalist: “The

hardest part of life as a musician is to keep practising daily and continuously,” she tells me, “and to have to deal with your bad conscience if there’s not enough time for that.”

More than just a promising debut

Hard work is, however, never the full story, just like talent can’t explain for everything. Klonz certainly has had enough of both and still she has remained a local sensation for quite some time. In 1996, she is the first pianist ever to receive a scholarship by the Konrad Adenauer foundation and she enjoys several masterclasses with, among others, Justus Frantz—an important benefactor of young musicians in Germany, as well as a former presenter of classical music on TV. Only a year after the sponsorship, she records her first CD. Now republished by Animato/Bauer Studios, the disc captures performances of Bach, Mozart, Chopin and Shostakovich. Not the most surprising line-up of composers, but it is the way in which Klonz plays these well-known works that attracts attention. Her Bach is fluent and supple, gently forces wayward trills into the groove and retains a pure picture of the polyphony. In the Adagio of Mozart’s F-Major Sonata, she slows things down to a bittersweet dream and her Shostakovich is marked by the archetypical polarity between seeming mockery, sarcasm and black premonitions. Even though it mainly eschews the contemporary composers she presents in her live programs—this is more than just a promising debut.

More Music, More Silence

Over the course of the next five years, two more CDs are recorded at the Johanniterkirche in Groß Eichsen with producer Eberhard Hinz behind the microphone: “Bach, Beethoven, Schubert Lizi” is even more analytical and transparent and the product of a lucid mind, while “Romantische Werke” is a fresh, unfettered, free and no-cliche take on Schumann, Grieg and (again) Chopin. The barely one minute short “Arietta” by Grieg is a miniature summary of what the latter album is all about: Almost brittle and elegantly played, this is nothing but a thought, a wink and a whisper. But Klonz follows the spur of the moment and turns it into an undeniable piece.

Eventually, the albums sell out in plentiful concerts, but simultaneously, a silence ensues that one can't be sure about. For five full years, there is no further recording and unless one were paying close attention, her performances aren't always easy to find out about. Maybe this is what she means when she tells the *Schweriner Volkszeitung* that she would probably not advise any of her students to go for a career as a professional pianist—“It's a complicated market”—or when she, too, observes that “the audiences in classical concerts are becoming increasingly older and that only few younger people are attending them.” Possibly it is just her love for the small world she is living in. When asked about what she would have become, if she hadn't chosen for music, she replies: “I'd probably studied Medicine and gone on to become a doctor here at the Plauer See in my own country doctor's practice.”

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Then, in 2007, things start to change. Andreas Keil, who has already shot the pictures to her first CD, opens up a new label, claXL, and invites Klonz to be the first artist on the roster. Quickly, the three first records are re-issued with extensive booklets and in a new look. Thanks to claXL, Christiane's first showcase of her own material also sees the light: “Ballads”, a sort of EP and a running time of sixteen minutes, includes six instrumentals between Billy Joel, Elton John and Chopin. A radical break with her past? Not really. Not only is she already preparing a new collection of classical repertoire, but her own music is fed by the same romantic attitude as her life as an artist—track titles like “Moonlight”, “Dream” and “For You” speak a clear language.

Next up are performances in Switzerland and Luxemburg and then, of course, the Carnegie Hall concert as part of a fully fledged North American tour. If you look close enough, the Weil Recital Hall has even published the program already and things are all set for the most magical moment of Christiane Klonz' career. Or is it? At least, she seems to award the day she got her Steinway and the concert on the occasion of her final exam the same importance. In any case, it looks like the hard last years will soon be standing under the same banner as the closing piece on “Ballads”: A “Happy Ending.”