

JUDITH WEGMANN

LE  
SOUFFLE  
DU  
TEMPS

X (RÉTRO-) PERSPECTIVES



Photo by Judith Wegmann

I once attended a small recital of Olivier Messiaen's music, made by the composer's wife Yvonne Loriod, and in his presence. Mme Loriod came onstage, acknowledged the audience and sat down at the keyboard. And then nothing happened for what seemed like a very long time.

She seemed composed (in the other sense); there was absolutely no suggestion that she might have forgotten the notes to the first piece she was to play; she was not nervous, or struck with stage-fright. She was, simply, waiting.

It's a device that improvisers sometimes use to build drama or to suggest the importance of the very first attack, and as such it can be horribly overdone. Cecil Taylor often approached the keyboard only indirectly and after various dance movements and vocalisations. Keith Jarrett sometimes bows, eyes closed, as if some message will whisper up from the soundbox, giving permission to start. Stan Tracey would glare at the piano, as if it was an unruly platoon of recruits, before selecting one poor soul and stabbing out a percussive note. And so on.

What was different about Mme Loriod's gesture was its air of infinite calm and of inevitability.

And when she did, at last, play the first few notes of the new piece, with their characteristic allusion to birdsong, it was as if time past and time future had been bundled up and condensed into that particular moment.

That is the impression I get from Judith Wegmann's music. It is not "timeless" in the sense that it postmodernly suspends styles or that it sets out to evoke a long history of

pianism. It is more in the air of unhurriedness, of quiet preparation, that the parallel seems to hold. There may also be some accidental connection in the underpinning of bells – actually modified strings – that supports this astonishing performance. Bells have many, and in some respects contradictory, associations in our culture. They imply both celebration and mourning. They are inherently musical, but often played in the midst of a vast urban confusion that blurs and eclipses their most musical elements: the famous church bells of London sometimes seem to fight it out on a Sunday morning. Bells can be warnings, and sometimes they can simply mark the passage of time.

It's the last aspect that seems the most potent in Judith Wegmann's case. And yet her bell-strings are not about simple chronology, or "time" in the jazz musician's sense. Nor are they ritualised in the usual way. Instead, they seem to assert that this, here, now, is the moment and the only moment for this spontaneous but intuitively prepared music to emerge. There is a potential paradox and a required explanation lurking there. The notion of improvisation as creation *ab nihilo* is a dangerously naïve one. The creative improviser does not declare Year Zero on all previous performance or any older style. Instead, (s)he brings the accumulated knowledge of a lifetime, every musical understanding and external cultural impetus, and (s)he makes them meaningful in that moment.

Judith says, in an e-mail, "I waited a long time to record a CD . . . I was waiting for the right

moment . . . I just know it is the right moment now". As listeners, whether to Wegmann or Loriod or someone else, we are not privileged to know why this *now* rather than another *now* is the right *now*, but as listeners we can tell that it is. The rightness and logic of Wegmann's playing here is testimony to the decisive moment. The clear, unhurried attack and logically but still mysteriously evolving lines are the product not of urgent, headlong haste, but of long thought and of emotion (as the poet said) recollected in tranquillity.

When Yvonne Loriod finished her Paris recital, there was no immediate onrush of applause. Instead, she sat very still on her piano stool, only after a moment or two glancing across at her

composer husband. He neither nodded nor applauded, nor gave any indication of approval or disapproval, but the connection made released something in the room, and one of the quietest and most heartfelt ovations I ever heard greeted the finished music. And what did she do then? She played the pieces over again. I tell this story advisedly and advisably.

Make time to listen to this music, as the musician made time to prepare for it. Don't wedge it into a pile of other CDs clamouring to be heard. Don't immediately applaud it and move on to the next thing. Play it again. You'll be playing it for years.

Brian Morton, December 2016



Photo by Sabine Burger

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Judith Wegmann, *piano*

I	9:07	ISRC CH 130.1700771	VI	4:35	ISRC CH 130.1700776
II	5:22	ISRC CH 130.1700772	VII	5:20	ISRC CH 130.1700777
III	5:18	ISRC CH 130.1700773	VIII	9:45	ISRC CH 130.1700778
IV	4:38	ISRC CH 130.1700774	IX	5:02	ISRC CH 130.1700779
V	7:28	ISRC CH 130.1700775	X	3:11	ISRC CH 130.1700780

Total Time 59:53

DDD <sup>24</sup>Bit

Composed by Judith Wegmann, Tuhtah publishing SUISA.

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Mixed by Simon Fankhauser; CD-master by Peter Pfister; Liner notes by Brian Morton; Graphic  
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Präsidialdepartement Kultur der Stadt Zug.

Special thanks to my friends and family.

Judith Wegmann has been playing the piano since the age of 6. She has studied jazz, classical and improvised music  
and successfully completed her Master's Degree. Today, she is active as a freelance pianist in a variety of projects.

For more information, visit [www.judithwegmann.ch](http://www.judithwegmann.ch).

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