

Laura Winkler – Voice, composition, lyrics

It all started in Graz, home to an arts university internationally renowned as a hotspot for young jazz and classical musicians from Central and Eastern Europe. Laura Winkler (born 1988 in Styria) studied jazz voice in this lively, multicultural milieu, while beginning to pursue her burgeoning interest in composition. She released her first album with original music, *Umami*, as the leader of the quintet *aura:L sculptures* in 2010. After finishing her bachelor's studies with honors, she began a master's program in composition under Ed Partyka. She transferred to the Berlin University of the Arts in 2012, where she continued studying under John Hollenbeck and Greg Cohen, and graduated – again with honors – in 2013. During this period she also founded the spirited, acoustically adventurous *Wabi Sabi Orchestra*. She remained in Berlin after finishing her master's degree and still loves the city's unique energy, openness and creativity.

A few months after her arrival in Berlin, Laura founded the international pop/jazz/folk band *Holler my Dear*. Known for its unconventional instrumentation, the band has since released three albums on the prestigious label *Traumton Records*. From their debut *Have You Seen the Troll?* to their latest album, *Steady As She Goes*, the sextet has consistently garnered enthusiastic reviews. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* praised Laura's "humor and depth of meaning,". *Rondo Magazine* wrote that "every piece builds inevitably to a hymnic climax with Winkler's masterful vocals shining at the glowing core." Austrian Radio Ö1 called it "music as antidepressant," and the magazine *Folker* found that "progressive music doesn't require electronic effects." Other sources have applauded the "artistic, enjoyable pop" (*mica – Music Austria*) and the music's borderlessness.

Winkler's projects also include the electropop band *kwenä* (with Yasmin Hadisubrata, Ben Barritt and Joh Weisgerber), which takes a rather different musical direction; she has also collaborated with Max Andrzejewski's *Hütte & Chor*, Maria Gstättners project *Inventar der Gegend*, and the a capella quartet *Ensemble O*, among others.

For years, she has composed music for theatre and modern dance projects; her work has been performed in Vienna's *Sophiensäle*, *HAU* and *Radialsystem V* in Berlin, and *TaO!* in Graz. She has also contributed pieces to the Vorarlberg concert series *Musik in der Pforte*, including a string quintet (2018) and a 2020 work for orchestra, part of the project *A Musical Friday For Future*. Her works for big band and contemporary chamber ensemble have been performed by the *Metropole Orchestra* (Hilversum, NL), the *Ricciotti Ensemble* (Amsterdam, NL), the big band *Fette Hupe* (Hannover, DE), and the *Graz Composers Orchestra*. In 2021 she was commissioned to write music for the Austrian opera/theater music theater project *Die lange Nacht von Allerheiligen*, as well as for a planned festival in Berlin featuring Persian speaking singers and choir music.

Communication and networking in the music scene are no less important to Laura than her artistic work. During her time in Graz, she was active with the *Jazzwerkstatt* musicians' initiative and drew inspiration from its stylistic diversity. After her arrival in Berlin she soon became active in the *KIM-Kollektiv* (Collective for Composed and Improvised Music); she

has since widened her scope to include cultural politics, as an executive board member of the advocacy group IG-Jazz Berlin.

Laura's principles have never allowed her to simply play music; she is committed to the exploration of content, forms, and structures. This standard applies equally to her lyrics, which reflect subtly on politics, society, and current events, without losing a unique, optimistic sense of humor.

"A joyful march to a different drummer. Amiable resistance, optimistic determination [...] with clear-eyed, poetic lyrics." (MDR)

"Winkler's expressive voice strengthens the directness and intensity. She sails powerfully through heroic melodies, her phrasing ranges from theatrical to jazzy, now purposefully laconic, now accelerating toward recitative." (FAZ 2015)

Concert highlights

Akkordeonfestival Wien (AT), Bozcaada Festival (TUR), Brückenfestival Nürnberg (D), Compass Osaka (JPN), Donauinselfest (AT), Eurojazz Festival Mexico City (MEX), ÖKF Teheran (IRN), Fusion Festival (D), Jarasum Festival (KOR), Jazzit Salzburg (AT), Jazzkaar Tallinn (EST), Jazzfestival Cairo (EGY), Jazzfest Berlin (D), Jazz Festival Almaty (KAZ), Jazzfestival Bishkek (KGZ), Jazzopen Stuttgart (D), Jazz & The City Salzburg (AT), Musik in der Pforte (AT), Lido Berlin (D), Nikolaisaal Potsdam (D), Porgy & Bess (AT), Odessa Jazz Festival (UKR), Open Ohr Festival Mainz (D), Orpheum Graz (AT), Reeperbahn Festival (D), Treibhaus (AT), Unterfahrt München (D), XJazz Festival Berlin (D)

Awards and grants

Scholarship, University of Music & Performing Arts Graz, 2009

Finalist, ProJazz composition competition, 2011

Finalist, Metropole Orkest Arrangers' Workshop, 2012

Chosen for the Radio Ö1 Talentbörse, 2011

START Stipend, 2012

Stipend from Yehudi Menuhin Live Music Now, Berlin,

Featured artist, "New Austrian Sound Of Music" program (Austrian Foreign Ministry), 2016/2017

www.laurawinkler.com