

## **Olga Neuwirth: *THE OUTCAST* – Homage to Herman Melville (2009-2011)**

A musicstallation-theater with Video

Libretto von Barry Gifford und Olga Neuwirth  
Mit Monologen für Old Melville von Anna Mitgutsch

Ishmaela (High Soprano), Old Melville (Actor), Ahab (Baritone), Father Mapple (Actor), Queequeg (Countertenor), Bartleby (Chansonnier), Starbuck (Tenor), Stubb (Buffo Baritone), Pip (Boy Soprano), Ship's Carpenter (Actor), Boys' Choir (24) / Men's Choir TBarB (8. 8. 8.) 2 (Picc). 2. 2 (B, Es, Bkl). 2 (Kfg) / 2. 2. 2. 1. / E-Git. Akk. Synthesizer / 2 Schlzg. / 8.8. 6. 6. 4. / elektronische Zuspieldungen

Dauer: abendfüllend  
Uraufführung: 25. Mai, 2012, Nationaltheater Mannheim

### Zum Werk

Inspiration for *The Outcast* came from author Herman Melville; in his works, Melville, like no other, plumbs the depths of human nature in all its insatiable craving for pragmatic utilitarianism in shaping the world around us. Melville's best-known work, *Moby Dick*, is also much more than an adventure novel. In its multifaceted complexity, it has become one of the most influential works of contemporary prose. In terms of content, *The Outcast* is about author and customs official Melville pondering his life in old age. His reflections range from his childhood to power and powerlessness and the enigmatic, unfathomable sea. He is increasingly brought face to face with questions regarding humanity and its darkest depths. Within all this, Melville encounters characters from his own novels, particularly those in *Moby Dick*. Despite – or because of – his pursuit of deeper spiritual truths, which he hopes to fathom through the analogies he draws between the human soul and the beautiful but implacable essence of nature, the yearnings of this figure, a character sage and yet faltering, end only in a –healing through the sea.

Honored with numerous prizes as one of the most significant composers of our time, Olga Neuwirth is a proponent of progressive musical theater that exhibits, among other sources of inspiration, the influence of cinematic elements. This can be seen in the unexpected cuts, cross-fades and montages within her works. With her multimedia compositional approach, the composer seeks not a synthesis of the arts but rather a space for –creative fantasy in order to escape the speechlessness that arises in the face of the irrationality of human existence.

For her first full-length musical theater piece, *Bärlamms Fest* (UA 1999, Vienna), she was awarded the Ernst Krenek Prize. In 2009, for the English version of her opera *Lost Highway* (UA 2002, Graz), she received the South Bank Show Award. The librettist for both was Austrian author Elfriede Jelinek. *The Outcast*, a composition in English, represents a collaboration between Olga Neuwirth and two authors, Austrian writer Anna Mitgutsch and Barry Gifford, co-author of the screenplay for David Lynch's film *Lost Highway*. The influence of film noir as well as the literature of the Beat Generation can be traced in the oeuvre of this American author.