

JOAN LA BARBARA IN WEST BERLIN, 1979

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Abstract: This article explores Joan La Barbara's music-making in West Berlin in 1979 during her year as a guest of the DAAD Berliner Künstlerprogramm (the Artists' Programme of the German Academic Exchange Service). It maps significant locations and describes the creative work she did at each site, arguing for inclusion of her musicking in the sonic imaginary of Cold War Berlin. It also posits the role of the Künstlerprogramm as akin to that of a sound designer, locating, distributing and spatialising her voice in the soundscape of the city.

The scene is West Berlin, 1979. Christiane F.'s memoir *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo*¹ has just come out, shocking readers with its account of a drug-fuelled youth subculture around the main West Berlin train station. The city's young people are not subject to mandatory national service and there's no official closing time in bars. The Staatsbibliothek am Potsdamer Platz, the western counterpart to the Berlin State Library on Unter den Linden in East Berlin, has just opened, and other cultural landmarks on the west side, such as the Neue Nationalgalerie, designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and the Berliner Philharmonie concert hall, designed by Hans Scharoun, have been open for a decade or more. David Bowie has just moved on, after living in relative anonymity at Hauptstrasse 155 from 1976 to 1978 and recording at Hansa Studios. Air Berlin begins operation this year as an American charter enterprise to provide service to the city, since the German Democratic Republic (usually referred to in the west as East Germany) has blocked West German commercial airliners from using the air routes. The Berlin Wall looms large, both literally and figuratively, as a foreboding perimeter around West Berlin's 185 square miles. And Joan La Barbara arrives in early January, which she remembers as 'snowy, grey, cold'.²

Many have attempted to imagine or recreate the soundscape of Cold War-era Berlin,³ as La Barbara herself did in the sound painting *Berliner Träume* (1983):

¹ Christiane F., *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* (Munich: Mosaik-Verlag, 1979). The book was ghostwritten by Kai Hermann and Horst Rieck, based on interviews with the 'author'.

² La Barbara, interview with Louise Marshall. Transcript in Marshall, 'Deep Listening: The Strategic Practice of Female Experimental Composers post 1945', vol. 2 (Ph.D. dissertation, University of the Arts London, 2018), p. 284.

³ Interdisciplinary examples include Nicole Dietrich, 'Berlin Sounds: Audible Cartography of a Formerly Divided City', in *Germany in the Loud Twentieth Century: An Introduction*, eds

I visited Berlin for the first time in 1972, returning again and again and eventually living there as a Composer-in-Residence for the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst Künstler-programm. My relationship to the city became a profound one for me and is reflected in this work. The 16 tracks of vocal sound include circular singing (singing on the inhale as well as the exhale) and rhythmic breathing inspired by the Inuit Throat Singers, multiphonics, words and phrases in German and modular ascending linear phrases. In addition, three specific synthesized sounds (the only ones on this CD) were used: the low, sub-bass rumble/chug of a locomotive approaching and departing from West to East and from East to West (my first approach in Berlin was near the main train depot, the Zoo station), the strident hi-lo police siren (somehow disconcerting to American ears), and a sonic boom (the Russian or East German planes reminding Berliners of their fragile and tenuous existence in the walled island), all sounds to which one adjusts and which remain as part of my memory of my years there, even though, happily, the circumstances and tensions have changed radically since the tearing down of The Wall. If this work is at once somber, carefree, joyous, melancholy and thoughtful, it effectively reflects my personal remembrance of Berlin.⁴

During a 1984 interview with Charles Amirkhanian an audience member said to her that the effect of the piece was claustrophobic, particularly the breathing. She replied, 'I mean, there is something a little bit claustrophobic about the city of Berlin.'⁵

Turning from the sonification of her memories of West Berlin, this article proposes adding La Barbara's music-making in West Berlin, specifically in 1979, to the project of imagining the sound of that time and place. She spent much of the year there under the auspices of the prestigious DAAD Berliner Künstlerprogramm (the Berlin Artists' Programme of the German Academic Exchange Service). This chronicle expands the otherwise male-dominated accounts of sound in that time and place, touching upon the materiality (her voice, magnetic tape), technologies (equipment), conditions (spaces), networks (collaborators) and sites of La Barbara's work. Her music-making was often created with, committed to and transmitted on magnetic tape, a medium whose distinctive qualities and affordances are well documented by Andrea F. Bohlman, Peter McMurray and others in a recent special issue of *Twentieth-Century Music*.⁶ She recorded two commissioned works at the studios of RIAS (Radio in the American Sector) that year, *ShadowSong* and *Klee Alee*, and then released them on her album *Reluctant Gypsy* in 1980, projecting well beyond the confines of the RIAS commission and broadcast.⁷ The late 1970s and early 1980s also represent a distinctive moment in the history of recording, as the gradual transition from analogue to digital systems often required equipment designed to bridge that

Florence Feiereisen and Alexandra Merley Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 95–108; Florence Feiereisen, 'They Tried to Divide the Sky: Listening to Cold War Berlin', *Colloquia Germanica*, 46 (2016), pp. 410–32; Alison Furlong, 'Politics, Faith, and the East German Blues', *Colloquia Germanica*, 46 (2016), pp. 433–61; Sandra Jasper, 'Acoustic Ecology: Hans Scharoun and Modernist Experimentation in West Berlin', in *The Acoustic City*, eds Matthew Gandy and B. J. Nilsen (Berlin: JOVIS Verlag, 2014), pp. 145–55; and David Buckley, 'Revisiting Bowie's Berlin', in *David Bowie: Critical Perspectives*, eds Eoin Devereux, Aileen Dillane and Martin J. Power (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 215–29.

⁴ www.lovely.com/albumnotes/notes3001.html 4 May 2022.

⁵ The exchange occurs at 41'15" in https://archive.org/details/SOM_1984_03_08/SOM_1984_03_08_A_16.wav 4 May 2022. 'Speaking of Music: Joan La Barbara', recorded 8 March 1984.

⁶ *Twentieth-Century Music Special Issue: Tape*, 14, no. 1 (2017).

⁷ Herbert Kundler, *RIAS Berlin: Eine Radio-Station in einer Geteilten Stadt: Programme und Menschen – Texte, Bilder, Dokumente* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1994); Petra Galle and Axel Schuster, *Archiv- und Sammlungsgut des RIAS Berlin. Ein Findbuch zum Bestand im Deutschen Rundfunkarchiv* (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2000).

gap in the studio.⁸ Her work in European studios more broadly (Radio Bremen, WDR, Radio France, VPRO in Holland) is a fertile topic for further research that would be a valuable contribution to the burgeoning literature on electronic-music studios as sites of cultural work during the Cold War and beyond.⁹

I will also consider the role of the Künstlerprogramm in facilitating La Barbara's music-making and, by extension, her contribution to the Cold War soundscape. As a guest of the Künstlerprogramm, La Barbara enjoyed tremendous artistic freedom to design her own projects. She recalled, 'I had no responsibilities other than to do my work. That particular grant is all about just going and being an artist, and living there, and participating in the cultural life of the city.'¹⁰ She drew on programme support as needed (logistics, equipment rentals, networking, etc.). For example, La Barbara's file in the Künstlerprogramm archive reveals that Helga Retzer, then director of the programme, rented a Sony amplifier for a concert, facilitated arrangements with venues elsewhere, such as the Baack'scher Kunstraum in Cologne, and acted as correspondence intermediary when La Barbara was out of the city.¹¹ (It also attests to the ongoing relationship between La Barbara and the Künstlerprogramm, with correspondence dating well into the 2000s.)

She used West Berlin as a base of operations for travel in Europe and back to the US. The Künstlerprogramm encouraged and supported work outside the city, as evidenced by the rigorous travel itinerary on file: she travelled from West Berlin for a tour in the US (5 February–21 March) as well as for performances in Cologne (May), Munich (June), Vienna (September), Paris, Brussels and Kassel (October). These events were often multimedia in nature, with visual artists contributing work as well. She and husband Morton Subotnick also made an unofficial visit that December to Zeuthen, south of the city in East Germany, to meet with composer Paul-Heinz Dittrich.¹² Within the city, the Künstlerprogramm facilitated the performance of her music at numerous locations: a former factory turned artists' workshop, the daadgalerie, the Hotel Steiner, the Hochschule der Künste, a radio recording studio. This conjured for me an image of spatialisation through her peregrinations, as if the Künstlerprogramm were a sound designer for the quintessential Cold War urban space.

The Künstlerprogramm was created specifically for this Cold War environment.¹³ West Berlin was a geopolitical anomaly, the result of the occupation and division of the city by the American, British, French and Soviet allies after the Second World War. By 1979 most westerners referred to West Berlin (the former American, British

⁸ João Romão, 'Musical and Technical Negotiations: A History of the WDR Studio for Electronic Music, 1951–2001' (Ph.D. dissertation, Humboldt University, 2022).

⁹ Jennifer Iverson, *Electronic Inspirations: Technologies of the Cold War Musical Avant-Garde* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Romão, 'Musical and Technical Negotiations'; see also a special issue of *Contemporary Music Review* entitled *Opening the Doors of the Studio*, 39, no. 6 (2020).

¹⁰ Interview with Libby Van Cleve, 17 February 1998, in *Major Figures in American Music*, Oral History of American Music, Yale University, 275 a-f, p. 5.

¹¹ Joan La Barbara Fellow File, Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD, Berlin.

¹² Their correspondence is in the Paul-Heinz Dittrich collection, Akademie der Künste. Dittrich first contacted Subotnick in Berlin on 15 July, and La Barbara and Subotnick visited him at his home on 22 December, travelling by train through Friedrichstrasse train station. Dittrich met them at Zeuthen station. He wanted to discuss an upcoming visit to the US in 1980.

¹³ Stefanie Endlich and Rainer Höynck, eds, *Blickwechsel: 25. Jahre Berliner Künstlerprogramm* (Berlin: Argon Verlag, 1988).

and French zones) simply as 'Berlin', as if the eastern side (the former Soviet zone) did not exist; the government of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn (West Germany) identified it as 'Berlin (West)' or 'West-Berlin'; the East German state called it 'Westberlin', some maps simply rendering it as a blank space between the East side of the city and Potsdam on the western side).¹⁴ Initiated by the Ford Foundation in 1962, just one year after East Germany built the Berlin Wall, the Künstlerprogramm was designed to inject cultural energy into a city that was cut off from the rest of the world. After 1966 it was administered solely by the DAAD from offices in Bonn and Berlin. Each year it invited about 20 artists to participate and thus it became a conduit for both established and emerging artists to the western half of the city. The list of American musicians who preceded La Barbara through its portal reads like a Who's Who of experimental music: Frederic Rzewski (1963), Elliott Carter (1964), Earle Brown (1970), Morton Feldman (1971), John Cage (1972), Christian Wolff (1974), Steve Reich (1974) and Terry Riley (1978), all of whom were embedded in the Künstlerprogramm's networks of festivals, venues and artists, both formal and informal, spread across West Berlin, West Germany, western Europe and Austria (politically neutral at the time).¹⁵ The Künstlerprogramm was, and remains, a golden opportunity for artists to cultivate international careers. During the Cold War it was also an instrument of cultural diplomacy, as it 'served the United States' cultural objective – similar to the goals of reeducation – of counteracting West Berlin's isolation from artistic developments in the rest of the world'.¹⁶ Andreas Daum has written about the unique role Berlin played in the American imaginary as both front and frontier during the Cold War, and while he does not include the Künstlerprogramm in his analysis, it could fit into that reading.¹⁷

The remainder of this article maps the locations in West Berlin that were significant for La Barbara in 1979 and describes the music-making she undertook there where relevant. Figure 1 is an overview map of West Berlin for scale and orientation; the Wall is marked in a thick red-pink line around the perimeter. Figure 2 is a close-up of the districts in which La Barbara was active (Charlottenburg, Wilmersdorf, Schöneberg); these are demarcated with thinner, darker red lines. Each address is numbered below and plotted on the map in Figure 2. Numbers 1–11 show the spaces in which she moved; the

¹⁴ <https://360.here.com/2014/11/06/fall-wall-missing-pieces/> 4 May 2022.

¹⁵ Amy C. Beal, *New Music, New Allies: American Experimental Music in West Germany from the Zero Hour to Reunification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 156–58, 196–97, 204–06, 215–17, 235–36. The Künstlerprogramm maintains a searchable database of fellows at www.berliner-kuenstlerprogramm.de/de/bkp-fellows/?posts_per_page=18&fellow_page=1&language=de&type=award_fellow 4 May 2022. Dörte Schmidt has recently written about the programme as one of five points of cultural exchange between West Germany and Latin America in 'In Between: Cultural Exchange and Competing Systems', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 17, no. 3 (2020), pp. 347–59.

¹⁶ Beal, *New Music, New Allies*, p. 157. The Künstlerprogramm remains a prestigious award, even as its mission since the end of the Cold War has evolved from one of diplomacy to 'an aesthetic proposal of geographical diversity', according to Julia Gerlach, who was head of the Künstlerprogramm music section from 2012 to 2018. Juliana Hodkinson, 'Curating Potential: Migration and Sonic Artistic Practices in Berlin: Juliana Hodkinson in Conversation with Elke Moltrecht and Julia Gerlach', in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Sound Art*, eds Sanne Krogh Growth and Holger Schulze (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), pp. 121–39.

¹⁷ Andreas Daum, 'America's Berlin 1945–2000: Between Myths and Visions', in *Berlin: The New Capital in the East: A Transatlantic Appraisal*, ed. Frank Trommler (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press for the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, 2000), pp. 49–73.



Figure 1:

Map of West Berlin, 1974. Used with permission of Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen Abteilung III, Geoinformation-Referat III C, Topographische Karten, Fehrbelliner Platz 1, 10707 Berlin. Data license www.govdata.de/dl-de/by-2-0.

descriptions give a sense of each space and her experience in it. Numbers 12–19 represent other venues at which the Künstlerprogramm hosted events that year.

Kantstrasse 154A

La Barbara arrived in January and moved into a flat at Kantstrasse 154A, on the corner of Fasanenstrasse, above the Paris Bar. It was very conveniently located, just a couple of blocks southwest of the primary transportation hub for West Berlin (Berlin Zoologischer Garten train station) and near several venues she would frequent that year. At least two previous Künstlerprogramm recipients, Stefan von Heune and Michelangelo Pistoletto, had lived in the same apartment. The extraordinary new-music flautist Eberhard Blum lived around the corner on Fasanenstrasse with his wife, artist Ann Holyoke Lehmann; La Barbara collaborated with Blum on the Text-Sound festival later that year. Upon arrival she arranged to rent a Bechstein piano for the year.¹⁸ She began composing *Responsive Resonance (with feathers)* for piano and tape, commissioned by Joan Tower, on that instrument on 7 January, ‘doing a lot inside the piano with objects I found in the apartment (a small wooden ball, paper clips, wooden sticks bouncing off the strings like dulcimer hammers, chopsticks, shells)’.¹⁹

¹⁸ Marshall, ‘Deep Listening’, 285.

¹⁹ Email from Joan La Barbara to the author, 16 August 2021.



Figure 2:
Map of La Barbara's locations in West Berlin, 1979. A close-up of the map in Figure 1, modified and edited on 3 March 2022 by Connor Gilmore, Vanderbilt University.

Zwiebelfisch, Savignyplatz 7

'A Kneipe [local neighbourhood bar] that many artists hung out at and was open into the wee hours of the morning. It was always very welcoming. There were chess boards on tables and if one got hungry, they would serve "available food". I recall a cauliflower dish with cheese.'²⁰

Alt-Lietzow 28

The Standesamt (Registry Office) Charlottenburg, where she and Morton Subotnick were married on 18 December 1979. Blum acted as witness, and Barbara Richter from the DAAD served as translator. Blum had already accompanied them to the office several times to clarify their rather complicated situation ('I had been married once before and Mort had been married twice before and Mort's name on his birth certificate is Morris, so lots of 'splainin' to do').²¹

Klausenerplatz 19

The site of a former factory repurposed as an artist's workshop and reopened under the moniker K19 in 1978. La Barbara and Blum co-produced the Text-Sound Festival there (the Künstlerprogramm documented it as 'Sprechtexpte, Lautgedichte, Klangwerkstücke'), featuring performances of pieces by the Italian Futurists as well as La Barbara, Emmett Williams, Steve Reich, Jackson Mac Low, John Cage, Kurt Schwitters, Ernst Jandl and others. The artist Peter Sedgley created the 'visual ambience', and the festival sold out each night.²² La Barbara premiered her *California Chant* ('Raicha Tria') for amplified or unamplified voice there on 27 October. Other performers included Jolyon Brettingham-Smith and Toni Stooss. Figure 3 shows La Barbara performing at K19 in the Text-Sound festival.

²⁰ Email from Joan La Barbara to the author, 2 February 2022.

²¹ Email from Joan La Barbara to the author, 9 February 2022. See a less detailed account in Marshall, 'Deep Listening', 288.

²² Endlich and Höynck, *Blickwechsel*, 220. There is a list of musical performances under the auspices of the Künstlerprogramm for the year 1979 on pages 412–13, although it is not without error (La Barbara's first name is given as 'John' in one instance).



Figure 3:

Joan La Barbara performing at the Text-Sound Festival at K19 in October 1979, photograph by Ingeborg (Lommatzsch) Sedgley, used with permission of the photographer, taken in the context of La Barbara's residency at the DAAD Berliner Künstlerprogramm.

Lützowstrasse 2

Another repurposed factory space in use at the time, known colloquially as Fabrik (it was subsequently demolished). In June La Barbara led her 'Voice Workshop' there, which was a joint venture with RIAS and Radio Free Berlin (SFB) and part of the Insel Musik 2 festival. Photographer Petra Grosskopf documented the event and her images reveal at least seven participants in an open, unfinished industrial space with concrete floors and pillars and a wall of windows on one side. Two Czech visual artists exhibited work in conjunction with the workshop: Rudolf Valenta created an installation focused on the floor, and Jan Kotik's 'Dreieck-Object' was on display.²³

Kurfürstenstrasse 58

There were two important venues at this address, which is the former villa of Henny Porten, a German movie star and film producer of the silent era: the Café Einstein, and the daadgalerie on the floor above it. Café Einstein was a favourite hang-out and a venue for Künstlerprogramm events, such as John Cage performing 'Writing through Finnegans Wake', '62 Mesostics re Merce Cunningham' and '45' Minutes for a Speaker' that June. The daadgalerie opened above it in 1978 and remained there until relocating to its current home, in Kreuzberg, in 2017. La Barbara's first gig in West Berlin that year was here, in a performance that included the premiere of *q-autre petites bêtes* (four little beasts) as a sound installation (it was premiered as a performance work for voice and tape that year in Cologne). She took the phrase from Marcel Duchamp's 'Rendez-Vous du Dimanche 6 Fevrier 1916', in which he broke the first word after the first letter rather than at the syllable. She released it on the LP *Reluctant Gypsy*, where she explained that 'the separation of the word "quatre" and the idea image intrigued me and I created a clearing in my imagination where four strange, dissimilar creatures

²³ Endlich and Höynck, *Blickwechsel*, pp. 221–22.

could meet, converse, make love and war and disappear'.²⁴ She elaborates further:

My fantasy included creating a sonic language for each of the beasts, differentiating them from one another: 1. – birds, flutters, trills; 2. – low, rapid language; 3. – click language (inhaled glottal clicks); 4. – high rapid language, all imaginary languages of course. I then arranged their encounters as a quadraphonic soundance, which I define in my journal notations. ... 'quatre petites bêtes' was recorded and mixed in March 1979 at CalArts in Valencia, CA, where I had access to Buchla equipment for spatialization, but premiered at the daadgalerie in Berlin.²⁵

Handwritten notes in her Künstlerprogramm file list the tech needs for this event: 'four speakers, amplifier, mixer (4 channel), 4-track tape deck (4 track in-line), 7½ (19 cm), 15 (38 cm) [reel-to-reel-tape speed], in a quad setup'.²⁶

A critic for the West Berlin-based newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel* seemed dubious about both the new venue ('a small, empty, bare octagonal room, from which doors lead into other small, empty, bare rooms') and the installation ('whispers, quacks, and babbles from various loudspeakers') but grew quite enthusiastic once the live performance began:

Well, at the end of this sound exhibition the voice phenomenon gives a live performance, begins to wander among the bystanders and emit calls against the walls, against the corners, and tests the acoustics. Then, as at the last *Metamusik* [1978 festival at which she had performed], she lets the 'birds sing in her head', in another piece reveals the changing overtone spectra that can, for example, accrue to a single tone through vowels and coloring, and concludes with a study in descending tones; studies are Joan La Barbara's overall elaborations. And then she leaves the field to the four creatures again. The content of this conversation without words can be imagined by everyone.²⁷

The critic remembered La Barbara from her performance of her 'soundance' *Autumn Signal* for voice and Buchla synthesiser in the third and final iteration of the *Metamusik Festival*, which had taken place at the Neue Nationalgalerie in October 1978. Walter Bachauer curated these massive events, working closely with the Berliner Festspiele, the Academy of the Arts, RIAS, SFB and the DAAD. As Beal notes, 'luckily for Bachauer (and the Americans involved), the peak of renewed interest in American experimentalism coincided with a peak in subsidized funding for innovative cultural programming in West Berlin'.²⁸ La Barbara believes that Bachauer, along with Hans Otte, who was music director at Radio Bremen, were on the jury that invited her to the Künstlerprogramm.²⁹

Albrecht-Achilles-Strasse 58

The Hotel Steiner was the site of the Hotel Room Event on 5 May, during which 'fifteen artist videos were taped in different rooms of the Hotel Steiner'.³⁰ The event was organised by Fluxus artist Ben Vautier and Mike Steiner. Steiner was an artist, gallerist and collector

²⁴ Joan La Barbara, *Reluctant Gypsy*. 1979, Wizard Records, RVW2279.

²⁵ Email from Joan La Barbara to the author, 12 August 2021.

²⁶ Joan La Barbara Fellow File, Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD. This was the event for which the Künstlerprogramm rented an amplifier.

²⁷ G. E., 'Lebendige Musikalität: Klavierduo Aran in der Philharmonie – Joan La Barbara', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 11 April 1979. Clipping in Joan La Barbara Fellow File, Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD.

²⁸ Beal, *New Music, New Allies*, p. 207.

²⁹ Email from La Barbara to the author, 12 August 2021.

³⁰ www.smb.museum/en/exhibitions/detail/live-to-tape/ 4 May 2022.

with a keen interest in video art; in 1979 the Studiogalerie Mike Steiner (aka Steiner Galerie) moved to this address as well. For the Hotel Room Event La Barbara performed a version of her 'Performance Piece', which she describes as 'a very challenging right brain/left brain work that involves making abstract vocal sound when one is focusing on that and if one begins to analyze what one is doing, immediately verbalizing those thoughts. Mike videotaped my performance, which I called "she is always alone".³¹ An anonymous critic raved about it:

She talks about her life, steps dimly into the backlight of the open window, utters those shrill, musical screams for which she is famous, and finally gives a kind of concert, a maenad's voice that hardly sounds human, reminiscent of an instrument or the lament of the Erinyes. The 29-minute 'she is always alone' is truly the best thing I've ever seen on video – a complete piece, a work of art.³²

This video is part of the Mike Steiner Collection of the Nationalgalerie, and it was included in an exhibition called 'Live to Tape: The Mike Steiner Collection' at the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart in 2011–12. A still from La Barbara's video is featured on the museum's site for the exhibition.³³

Corner of Hardenbergstrasse and Fasanenstrasse

The Hochschule der Künste occupied this large space, just up the street from her apartment. It was established in 1975 as a merger of two extant institutions, the Hochschule für Bildende Künste and the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst. In 2001 it became the Universität der Künste Berlin. There La Barbara performed *Responsive Resonance (with feathers)*, the first piece she composed in West Berlin, in 1979, as part of the Insel Musik 3 festival on 8 December.

Welserstrasse 25

This was the location of the Arsenal Kino der Freunde der Deutschen Kinemathek. In August the DAAD sponsored a week of programming at the cinema, beginning with a screening of Meredith Monk's *Quarry* (1976). La Barbara's event on 4 August featured *Vermont II* and *Hunters*, two video performance pieces for vocalist in an outdoor environment from 1975, as well as a screening of *she is always alone*.³⁴

Kufsteiner Strasse 69 (Funkhaus am Hans-Roenthal-Platz)

RIAS was located at this address. She worked in the studio here for three days, 18–20 September, recording two works RIAS had commissioned from her: *ShadowSong* and *Klee Alee*. (I wondered if, given the Berlin-specific commission, the title of *Klee Alee* was an allusion to Clayallee, the street in the American sector named after General Lucius D. Clay and the location of the US State Department presence, in the form of US Mission Berlin rather than an embassy,

³¹ Email from La Barbara to the author, 12 August 2021.

³² Undated anonymous review, 'Video für Video-Verächter: Ben Vautiers und Mike Steiners "Hotel Room Event"'. Clipping in Joan La Barbara Fellow File, Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD.

³³ www.smb.museum/en/exhibitions/detail/live-to-tape/ 4 May 2022.

³⁴ Joan La Barbara Fellow File, Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD.

but it is not.³⁵) RIAS records do not preserve the details of her sessions (engineers, equipment, studio number), but it may have been Studio 7, identified in 1981 as ‘the only studio for realizing complicated recordings’.³⁶ Technicians had begun updating Studio 7 in 1978, collaborating with the local company Georg Neumann to assess needs and identify appropriate equipment. This included items like an auto-locator, which ‘can be connected to a multitrack allowing control over different functions of that mixing/recording console as well as a series of automated functions in sound production’, and a compander system, ‘a neologism for compressing and expanding’ that ‘allows communication between analog and digital instruments and audio production settings’. Both were common in radio broadcasting and recording studios at the time of the transition from analogue to digital.³⁷

RIAS broadcast her recordings on 3 December, and she premiered them as works for live voice and tape in Paris that October. She writes that ‘both works, conceived, composed and recorded in Berlin, are for multiple voices (all my own) with no electronics other than equalization and placement in the stereo horizon’.³⁸ She requested permission from Herbert Kundler at RIAS to release the recordings on her album *Reluctant Gypsy*. In a letter dated 25 December 1979 she explained her situation.

As you may be aware, the commercial recording companies are not interested in ‘avant garde’ music and so many composers have started ‘independent’ labels, mostly for issuing their own music. I am one of these, having already issued a first record (titled ‘Voice is the Original Instrument’) on my own label, Wizard Records. As I must cover all printing, pressing, and related costs myself, I cannot afford to pay additional costs.³⁹

Kundler granted use of the tapes for free up to 2,000 copies sold, after which RIAS would expect 5% of the retail price. He required only that the cover state ‘Production: Radio RIAS Berlin’ and five free copies upon release.⁴⁰ In the liner notes to *Reluctant Gypsy* La Barbara described the pieces as follows:

‘Klee Alee’ was inspired by a Paul Klee painting which is layered both two- and three-dimensionally; one can look at blocks of color from a distance and at delicately scratched detail on closer inspection. I did not intend to sing the painting but to create a textured piece translating some of the visual elements into sound: thick, blocklike solid colors became repeating melodic units, greens and blues, with delicately curving figures, designs carved into the thick fabric of sound.

‘ShadowSong’ is a threshold experience where concentration is interrupted

³⁵ Zoom interview with Joan La Barbara, 9 February 2022.

³⁶ Letter from Hildegard Curth at RIAS to Joan La Barbara, 7 August 1981. F504-02-02/0053 Schriftwechsel 1980 bis 1981 G-Z. Historisches RIAS-Archiv im Deutschen Rundfunkarchiv, Potsdam.

³⁷ Aktennotiz, 22 June 1978 F900-00-01/0009 Programmdirektion Prof Kundler. Historisches RIAS-Archiv im Deutschen Rundfunkarchiv, Potsdam. I am indebted to Romão for assistance with this technical language.

³⁸ Email from La Barbara to the author, 12 August 2021.

³⁹ Letter from Joan La Barbara to Herbert Kundler, 25 December 1979, received 4 January 1980. F504-02-02/0053 Schriftwechsel 1980 bis 1981 G-Z. Historisches RIAS-Archiv im Deutschen Rundfunkarchiv, Potsdam.

⁴⁰ Unsigned letter from the E-Musik division of RIAS (apparently from Walter Bachauer, as she responds to him about the terms on 17 February 1980 and says she expects the record to be available in the autumn) to Joan La Barbara, 12 February 1980. F504-02-02/0053 Schriftwechsel 1980 bis 1981 G-Z. Historisches RIAS-Archiv im Deutschen Rundfunkarchiv, Potsdam. This correspondence reveals a discrepancy in the release date of *Reluctant Gypsy*, which La Barbara always cites as 1979, although WorldCat lists it as 1980. https://www.worldcat.org/title/reluctant-gypsy/oclc/7361224&referer=brief_results accessed 4 May 2020.

by shadows at the outer edges of vision and by memories on the periphery of thought. Words float by that are not quite distinguishable, melodies have an ominous quality, shadow/memories compound with resolute persistence until one confronts the decision to go with the shadows or against them.⁴¹

Given the visual nature of these descriptions it is not surprising that she re-released both tracks in 1991 on the CD *Sound Paintings*. La Barbara discussed them in that context during her lecture at the Red Bull Music Academy in 2016. “Those early sound paintings like “Twelvesong”, “Klee Alee”, “ShadowSong”, “Urban Tropics”, it was a way of translating the visual into sound, and how you use your vocal instrument or other instruments to give a sense of what visual is inside your brain.”⁴²

Potsdamer Strasse 50

In the west the Neue Nationalgalerie was frequently referred to as simply the Nationalgalerie, although technically that term applied to the museum in East Berlin. La Barbara recalled many trips to this museum, where an exhibition of paintings by Ernst-Ludwig Kirchner made an especially vivid impression. It ran from 29 November 1979 to 10 August 1980.

The other points on the map are additional venues in which the Künstlerprogramm sponsored events in West Berlin that year. La Barbara may or may not have attended any of them, but they are provided to show the extent of the institution’s networked presence in the city.

Blücherplatz 1

The Amerika-Gedenkbibliothek showcased string music by Joji Yuasa and Isang Yun.

Hardenbergstrasse 22

Amerika Haus Berlin hosted a composer portrait of Emmanuel Nunes, as well as the S.E.M. Ensemble playing Cage and LaMonte Young.

Spandauer Damm 22

The Orangerie of Schloss Charlottenburg featured Petr Kotik’s music in a concert by the S.E.M. Ensemble.

Potsdamer Strasse 33

The Staatsbibliothek on the Potsdamer Platz was the site of a concert of string music by Nunes.

Hanseatenweg 10

The Akademie der Künste (West) hosted a festival of Hindustani classical music.

⁴¹ La Barbara, *Reluctant Gypsy*.

⁴² www.redbullmusicacademy.com/lectures/joan-la-barbara-lecture 4 May 2022.

Steinplatz 2

The DAAD offices held Daniel Lentz's composer portrait.

Am Rathaus 2

Alt-Schöneberger Saal is a space at the Rathaus Schöneberg where the Berliner Bläsertrio played the music of Charles Boone and Clement Calder.

(A nineteenth venue, the Haus am Waldsee at Argentinische Allee 30, was too far southwest to fit on the map. Literatur und Musik 4 featuring Milko Keleman took place there.)⁴³

Of course, La Barbara was not finished with West Berlin after 1979. She took up another long residency there in 1981 when her husband, composer Morton Subotnick, was a Künstlerprogramm guest, and she has returned many times since. If American experimental music comprises a large part of the soundscape of West Berlin, the Künstlerprogramm played a large part in its presence there. The map helps to visualise the music's spatialisation in the city, the distribution of which is largely due to the nodes established by the Künstlerprogramm. My narrow focus also throws into relief the fact that it is La Barbara herself, her voice, whether live or manipulated and multiplied on tape, who reverberated in spaces all over the city. In other words, she constitutes a significant component of the Cold War soundscape – its pitches, decibel levels, timbres, textures, extended techniques and effects.

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⁴³ Most venues listed in Endlich and Höynck, *Blickwechsel*, pp. 412–13.