

have been re-released recently: *Symbiosis* with Bill Evans and *Cityscape* with Michael Brecker. The only question remaining is, where is he now?"

When in 1988, a group of his classical songs, *Tagore Lieder*, after poems by Rabindranth Tagore, sung by mezzo soprano Brigitte Fassbaender, was released in a CD that also included songs by Mahler and Berg, "classical music" critics on both sides of the Atlantic consulted their reference books to learn more about him. They were disappointed. The critic for *Gramophone* in London wrote: "The composer was born in 1930, and his *Tagore Lieder* were written in 1975, and that is all we are told. Telephone calls and a search of *Grove* revealed no more . . ." In the USA, the critic for *American Record Guide* was equally baffled, writing, "All that I can learn . . . is that he was born in 1930 . . . and he does not appear in any musical reference book I have been able to find." That is because they lived in that separate world of "classical" music. Had they looked in *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, published earlier that year, they'd have discovered a paragraph on him. But in this sense, their unawareness of his prodigious career in popular music and jazz illustrates precisely that very insularity of the classical world against which Claus has always instinctively rebelled. The problem is that he knows too much, if there is such a thing as too much knowledge, about *all kinds* of music, and uses it throughout his idiosyncratic approach to composition.

After he retired from the commercial record business, Claus continued writing, writing, constantly writing, but only his own music, strikingly original and lyrical orchestral compositions — true compositions, not orchestrated songs — that are in my opinion some of the finest works of the late twentieth century, drawing on every idiom in which he had worked, post-serialist works of distinctively personal stamp. The last album he wrote for another artist was Jobim's *Terra Brasilis* for the Warner Bros label in 1979.

He was born in Ratibor, Prussia. It is now known as Raciborz, Poland, having been given to Poland in post-war boundary reassignments. His birth date was August 29, 1930, and thus he was only nine when Germany invaded Poland, thereby setting off World War II. Jazz was forbidden under the Nazis, as it was in various countries, including Russia, during the Communist domination of Eastern Europe. A quite striking movie called *Swing Kids*, released in 1993, was dismissed by American critics who simply did not understand the scope and character of the Nazi persecution of those who played jazz in Germany and the young fans who loved it.

Claus said to me recently, "At the period 1933 to 1945, the things that went on in Germany underground are unbelievable.

I am reading books about this now. And I know from myself that I was listening to nothing but jazz, or at least jazz-similar records that were done in Holland or Belgium. You know, the Nazis pressed American jazz records for export. And some records were stolen or went into the public. I was lucky enough to get some of those. It was just crazy."

I mentioned that the Belgian composer Francy Boland (who, like Claus, once wrote for the Kurt Edelhagen band), told me that in Belgium under the German occupation, when he, still a teen-ager, was playing jazz in clubs, many of the most ardent listeners were in Wehrmacht uniforms.

"Of course," Claus said. "There was a club in Berlin called Delphi. Till the end of the war, they had pretty good bands. One of them was Fud Candrix from Belgium. They played Count Basie and all the repertoire. And then in came the SS soldiers to stop that nonsense. Soldiers, mostly airmen, Luftwaffe, they beat up the SS guys and said, 'We're here on leave. Get the hell out of this place.' There are so many stories like that.

"My parents for six years had three stores, photography, film, cameras and all that. My father had the idea to add a little record store. He wasn't too happy with it. At that time you had to wind up the gramophone. And people would sit there, order coffee from the coffee shop next door, smoke cigarettes, and listen for hours to records, and then they may have bought one record, and he was tired of it. But I was left with about 8,000 78 records, among them a very few Ellington, early Armstrong, American pop records — Fred Waring — and of course a lot of classical records.

"I was eight years old, and I could hear *Le Sacré du printemps*. I grew up with discs. It gave me a chance to listen to music that was no longer played in concerts there, or on radio. It was forbidden music. The German radio programs at that time, the announcer came on and said, 'Until the next broadcast, you will hear march music.' That kind of thing. All the lies and all the blah-blah-blah.

"I started to study music in my home town. My very first piano teacher was Richard Ottinger. I went to a gymnasium. You start with two dead languages, Latin and Greek. A third language is your choice, French or Spanish or English. Richard Ottinger was a very good music teacher.

"It was strange. The Nazis forbade jazz, but they copied it with German bands and German singers. They forbade a lot of things. Looking back, it's ridiculous. They forbade books that were meaningless politically. Just because they didn't like the writer or something. You didn't even have to be Jewish. They clobbered you. If I look back, I see I was untouched by trouble. Ratibor was such a small town. I didn't have to join the Hitler youth or anything. I just went to the movies and played records all day.