



Music Infusion

Ben Pelletier

Saturdays, 7am – 10am

I always find December to be a time of the year that is particularly invigorating musically. Not only is there the timeless seasonal classics to be revisited, but there is also the year-end festivities which culminate in the New Year's Eve celebrations (and in Vienna, the New Years Day Concert!) that always lend a fresh and fun feel to month. This year, the Music Infusion programme will be both honoring the traditional music we've come to love over the years, but will also be branching out in a couple of interesting directions. There will be less frequently heard music from the Christmas period taken from musical cultures and traditions from all over the globe, as well as newer, jazzier versions of the old chestnuts.

It will also be my pleasure to introduce you to a fusion artist of a rather uncommon nature. These days I suppose it is not all that unusual to hear a young woman perform hot latin music, or funk, or jazz, but Eliana Burki doesn't just sing the blues, she plays the blues on her alphorn as well.

For those unfamiliar with this instrument from the mountainous areas of Europe, it is a massive horn carved from solid softwood, generally spruce but sometimes pine. It is typically used in a pastoral setting and one can easily imagine it being played by portly older gentlemen in lederhosen. That makes the young and stylish Eliana Burki and her 3-meter alphorn all the more unusual.

Ms. Burki recently was in our studios here at RTHK, kindly organised by the Consulate General of Switzerland in Hong Kong. Brought here with the generous support of Swiss International Air Lines, she recorded, along with her band, a number of eclectic tracks featuring the alphorn in non-traditional musical settings.

Unusual as it may seem, the combination of alphorn, jazz, pop, soul and funk works rather interestingly. While playing the alphorn, Eliana manages impressive musical acrobatics in which she pushes her instrument to its limits. With only 16 available notes spread over 5 octaves, this makes playing a simple melody quite a challenge, let alone improvising over the changes to a jazz standard. Her vocals add an unmistakable personality to several of the songs as well.

"It is very important for me to show the people that the alphorn is not a synonym for mountains, folkloric costumes and dusty traditions", says Ms. Burki who clearly likes to wear trendy clothing and play latin and jazz rhythms instead of traditional melodies. Indeed, it seems a fresh wind is



blowing in the alphorn scene.

I will be featuring the music of perhaps the world's best known jazz alphornist in the final hour of Music Infusion during the first two weeks of December. Happy Holidays and Happy Listening, on Saturday mornings in December they go hand in hand!