

“Atlas der gesamten Musik und aller angrenzenden Gebiete”: Austrian Stereotypes, Music, and Material Agency as a Relational Model in Georg Nussbaumer’s Concert Installations

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Received: 28/08/2020

Accepted: 04/02/2022

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Published: 13/04/2023

Last updated: 13/04/2023

How to cite: Christa Brüstle, “Atlas der gesamten Musik und aller angrenzenden Gebiete”: Austrian Stereotypes, Music, and Material Agency as a Relational Model in Georg Nussbaumer’s Concert Installations, ‘Austrian Music Studies: Topics, Perspectives, Concepts,’ special issue, Musicologica Austriaca: Journal for Austrian Music Studies (April 13, 2023)

Tags: [20th century](#); [21st century](#); [Austrian stereotypes](#); [Concert installation](#); [Contemporary music](#); [Music theatre](#); [Musical agency](#); [Musical materiality](#); [Nussbaumer, Georg](#)

This article is part of the special issue “[Austrian Music Studies: Topics, Perspectives, Concepts](#),” ed. Federico Celestini (April 13, 2023).

I would like to thank Georg Nussbaumer for his cooperation and Dr. David Heyde for his assistance with the English text version.



Abstract

This article discusses references to Austrian clichés in specifically chosen concert installations by the composer Georg Nussbaumer (b. 1964). Nussbaumer, as one of the outstanding contemporary artists in Austria, has worked with this musical performance format since the 1980s. Therefore, the article begins by explaining the characteristics of this newly established genre of concert installation, which turns out to be a variant of the concert, installation art, and environments. In the subsequent considerations, two principal questions will be addressed: (1) What kinds of material as well as non-material Austrian stereotypes occur in Nussbaumer's artistic projects, and (2) how does the composer use them as scenographic components within the format of his concert installations? He presents, integrates, and intertwines, for example, musical material and specific objects as effective media, which evoke stereotypical associations of the Austrian "homeland" and its "native" culture. Among them are elements of the Austrian landscape as well as folklore and music by Mozart and Schubert. This is most evident in Nussbaumer's works *Schönes Bildnis mit Mozarterwärmung* (2004–06) for a singer and video projection; *winter 42/43* (2001) for a small drum, toy tanks, and a Schubert lied recording; *Eine Winterreise* (2016) with a grand piano, ice, and volcanic ash; *Die schönsten Gipfel der Alpen* (2007) with hanging tuning forks; and *LAWINE, WALD UND STUBENMUSI* (2009) for river stones, bells, branches, and solar-powered string instruments. Therefore, these concert installations will be taken as examples for discussing the above-mentioned questions and considering related subjects. It is assumed that Nussbaumer's artistic material may be discussed in connection with new theoretical approaches to understanding material in the wake of the so-called material turn, as it contains natural relics, musical elements, and objects with a specific history of origin, effectiveness, or "agency." The material thus has a certain history of existence as "biography" and is moreover often related to biographical aspects of a human or animal life. The concept of "agency" should be understood as a relational model of cause and effect occurring between artist, art object, and audience, as strong emotional and associative reactions are always provoked between the audience and Nussbaumer's objects or the sounds he used. This approach may be explained in the article by way of objects such as the Mozartkugel, toy tanks, tuning forks, or vibrators, as well as by means of acoustical components such as the sound of rolling river stones. Nussbaumer's artistic, musical, and theatrical/scenic material and its combinations always provoke a certain kind of familiarity and closeness on the one hand, while on the other hand they elicit distance and sometimes even deterrence, which is an important effect when set in relation to Austrian clichés. One is often attracted by Nussbaumer's idyllic scenes, but when viewed in greater detail they more often than not reveal their repulsive side. In this way, many a project by Nussbaumer is permeated by an indirect critique of traditional and conventional

elements and ideas, both of a cultural and musical nature.



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Introduction

In recent decades, many mixed formats have developed in contemporary music theater that show a convergence between different arts. Whether it is the so-called Stationentheater (processional theater) by Manos Tsangaris or theatrical sound installations by Janet Cardiff, in many cases the established forms of presentation in concert, opera, sculpture, or spatial installations are expanded as well as blended.^[1] Among contemporary composers in Europe who have become known for such mixed musical theater projects in recent years, the Austrian composer Georg Nussbaumer (b. 1964) may arguably be considered an exceptional artist. His works present not merely unusual formats but also many strange combinations and compounds of music, materials, and objects. Furthermore, he is an artist who often develops and implements unconventional concepts with utmost meticulous craftsmanship in his projects. This is evident primarily in his concert installations, in which specific fixtures are repeatedly set up or objects such as musical instruments transformed.

From the very beginning, Nussbaumer was looking for a “way beyond the usual performance practice” (“ein Weg jenseits der gängigen Aufführungspraxis”).^[2] In 1987, he presented an early project called “living room opera” in Linz with the title *Das Phänomen des Hundertsten Affen* (The phenomenon of the hundredth monkey) as an “implied performance.” In 1989, in the play *s'Schdoaschmeissn* (Throwing stones), stones, water, and free fall were brought together with sand, earth, leaves, branches, trees, water, fur, meat, feathers, paws, and teeth. Further concert installations in the 1990s range from *Still-Leben* (Still life) of sounding objects and musical instruments to extended projects inspired by John Cage’s “musicircus.”^[3] In addition, several of his projects were dedicated to opera subjects, such as *Tristan: “Schwimmen und Schweigen!”* (Tristan: Swimming and silence; 1999), *parsivalstudien* (2001), or *orpheusarchipel* (2002), which he even called an “opera installation.” He intensified his interest in Richard Wagner’s oeuvre, producing sound installations, films, and more of his concert installations, particularly around figures, motifs, and actions of the *Ring des Nibelungen* in the 2000s, one highlight of which was the “opera passage” *Invisible Siegfrieds Marching Sunset Boulevard* (2010, Los Angeles), created in response to an invitation by the Californian artists’ residence Villa Aurora, where Nussbaumer had stayed in 2004.^[4]

As an Austrian artist, however, Nussbaumer’s interests are connected not least to his personal musical and social experiences growing up as an Upper Austrian “rural child” and later on when he was confronted with different Austrian music traditions, including folk music and military marches.^[5] In this article, I will show that his works are exceptional mainly because of his idiomatic way of using and accumulating materials and objects which originate from the aforementioned diverse areas. In addition, I will ask about the forms of reference in his concert installations to Austrian stereotypes or to what people associate with Austria, as they seem to also concern the composer in various forms.

Concert Installation as Hybrid Genre: Concert, Installation Art, and Environment

However, before discussing which aspects of Austrian clichés Nussbaumer integrates into his productions and how he uses them exactly, I will outline the artistic performance format of

concert installations. As a fusion between installation art and concert, they were developed as variants of the classical concert at least since the 1960s. As prototypes, one can mention on the one hand works by Alvin Lucier and Ellen Fullman, in which wires acted as sound objects that were installed and sometimes played, and on the other hand sound installations by La Monte Young or Maryann Amacher, which come close to sound environments. However, the term “concert installation” only became established for the combination of these two factors in the 1990s. There are different approaches to defining this format. Volker Straebel, for example, who was one of the first musicologists to deal with this genre, explained: “‘Concert installations’ are today called performances in which musicians act live in artistically staged spaces and the audience is free to move and determine their length of stay.”^[6] However, he felt that the choice of the term “concert installation” was unfortunate, because “many of the events referred to as concert installations are clearly related to the forms of happening and environment and are more in the tradition of performance art than installation art, which developed out of sculpture.”^[7] In fact, concert installations can also be understood as specific variants of installation art, that is, the format of an artistically designed installation can be regarded as their basic model.

In contrast to a classical performance situation, installation art can be categorized into at least four basic directions, which are partly also relevant to Nussbaumer’s concert installations: first, a complete furnishing and design of rooms that recipients experience upon entering as an “other place,” a fantasy or dream world (an early example is Kurt Schwitters’s *Merzbau*, presented 1919–37), including environments; second, exhibitions with everyday objects, natural material, living animals—in short, scenes from life and reality—in the museum (an example is Marcel Duchamp’s ready-mades); third, artistic interventions in spaces that expand, destroy, and dismantle space, that is, the “innocence of space” is mainly undermined in the museum (a main representative of this direction is Daniel Buren); and fourth, artistic interventions in spaces that underline the characteristics and peculiarities of architecture, often remaining almost unnoticed (sound installations often fall into this category).^[8]

A new situation arises for the audience in installation art works, because the recipients themselves become more or less active contributors. For example, they themselves set the beginning and end of a perceptual process.

The viewer is asked to investigate the work of art much as he or she might explore some phenomenon in life, making one’s way through actual space and time in order to gain knowledge. Just as life consists of one perception followed by another, each a fleeting, non-linear moment, an installation courts the same dense, ephemeral experience ... The viewer is in the present, experiencing temporal flow and spatial awareness ... Life pervades this form of art.^[9]

Environments offer similar experiences, and they must also be mentioned here, as Nussbaumer’s concert installations additionally show characteristics of these spacing art projects. Environments were understood in the 1960s as cross-border artistic projects between architecture and visual arts, as they were based on the idea of an extension of the canvas, which could be combined with idiosyncratic plans for the design of the environment.

In some cases this happens as a consequence of a certain frustration caused by the discrepancy between the art and the surrounding architectural space. In others it is simply a turning away from this rift as an insoluble problem and pursuit of the inner evolution of one's work, in which one thing suggests another, which in turn suggests another, and so on ... expanding the work until it fills an entire space or evolves one, thus becoming an Environment ... the pieces of paper curled up off the canvas, were removed from the surface to exist on their own, became more solid as they grew into other materials and, reaching out further into the room, finally filled it entirely.^[10]

Usually environments were available only for a certain period of time and were dismantled or destroyed after the end of their presentation. Visitors of such installations were therefore often invited to arrange their objects and materials. The emphasis was on the ephemera and the metamorphosis of the installations, and their components—often everyday, fragile, and organic elements—clearly emphasized material transience.^[11] Sound was one of the furnishing elements of these interior designs. “The noise of rain and the wind swinging through the branches, the clanging of the constructions, cries of birds, and rasping of crickets—all could be picked up by tiny microphones and amplified earsplittingly over hidden loudspeakers.”^[12]

In concert installations, therefore, situational and aesthetic aspects of concerts, installation art, and environments overlap, both on the side of the creative artists and on the side of the participating audience. Composed and performed pieces of music are thus combined and staged with the presentation of sounding or non-sounding objects and sculptures, using more or less specially furnished or artistically designed rooms or spaces.

Nussbaumer's Background: Questions of Identity

Born in the city of Linz, the capital of Upper Austria, the composer Nussbaumer—as mentioned above—has been working on music projects beyond traditional performance practice since the mid-1980s, including interactive installations, musical walks, music actions and performances, scenic concerts, and musical theater installations. These works are described by curator Martin Sturm as follows:

Georg Nussbaumer understands music as a rubbing of plastic operations, as a side effect of energy transformations. In his *gesamtkunstwerk* concepts, he takes the use of organic and anorganic materials and the expansion of the traditional instruments with objects or appliances from everyday life just as much for granted as working with video, live animals or making objects, typescripts or pornography legible as notation.^[13]

Nussbaumer's subjects and thematic fields as well as sound and action materials, which also evoke associations with Wiener Aktionismus (Viennese Actionism), come from all areas of life and daily-life contexts, also including the world of classical music, such as examples from canonized music history. Mozart and Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, and Wagner are sometimes touched upon and attacked by him as well as reflected on and transformed several times. Rarely if ever does Nussbaumer quote or borrow music in a direct way, but in his artistic transformations he uses clichés and/or deconstructs them and either literally grounds them or atomizes them into wide associative distances, from where they drip back as a bitter aftertaste. Nussbaumer's “post-dramatic” musical theater^[14] is not only about a “revealed semiotics” and an “exuberant

interpretation,” that is, non-understanding or non-sense, but also about the “light-up” of memory and anticipation, and thus about the uncomfortable and repulsive “just too good understanding” of an allusion or an event that Nussbaumer regularly subtly incorporates.

But his reference system also includes his Austrian or rather Upper Austrian music socialization, which he once described “as a *Präsenzdiener* [conscript] piccoloist and thus a front-row witness to military representation in the Upper Austria military band and at the same time, for reasons of village integration, deputy Kapellmeister of the local band in Grünau im Almtal.”^[15]

Without being able to address his own personal identity here, because only he can determine it himself, one may assume, however, that Nussbaumer developed a specific social identity as a villager in Grünau im Almtal and as a member of the Almtaler Musikverein (Almtal Musical Society). This identity is the result of a group process, which, as the political scientist Peter Schmitt-Egner writes, “emerges both diachronically in the individual socialization processes and synchronously as a simultaneous and reciprocal social ‘role taking.’”^[16] In addition to his social identity, Nussbaumer, as a *Rekrut* (private) and military musician, was also subject to a collective identity that “organizes itself into institutions to which a collective-legitimizing meaning is attributed through discourse formations.”^[17] This can be understood, for example, from how the *Rekruten* (privates) in the Austrian army express their oath of allegiance: “I vow to protect and defend my fatherland, the Republic of Austria, and its people; I vow to be faithful and obedient to the laws and the lawful authorities, to obey all the orders of my superiors on time and accurately, and to serve with all my strength the Republic of Austria and the Austrian people.”^[18]

This commitment, as well as Nussbaumer’s affiliation with certain social groups (the village of Grünau im Almtal and the music band), is now overlaid by the formation of a cultural and historical identity incorporating assessments against the codes, behaviors, and structures of social groups and institutional collectives.^[19] Such qualifications and evaluations can be observed in the works of Nussbaumer, but they consist not only in self-distancing processes of destruction, reflection, and transformation but also in elements and events that imprint a very direct and materially justified closeness or intrusiveness and even affliction on his experiences and socialization.

Austrian stereotypes, or what people associate with Austria, are often related to Viennese and Habsburg history, but also to tourist attractions such as skiing and mountaineering. As mentioned above, the subjects as well as the thematic working fields in Nussbaumer’s concert installations include Austrian clichés, which the composer can therefore illuminate from an internal perspective. This means above all that he is familiar with Austrian clichés such as Alpine landscapes, Viennese waltz, or folklore as backdrops, but also as individual premises of an Austrian patriotism, behind which hide cold and calculated tourism marketing as well as kitschy explanations of the past, deliberately biased historical accounts, and poisonous xenophobia. In recent decades, Thomas Bernhard and Elfriede Jelinek in particular have written about this in a most insightful way.^[20]

In Nussbaumer’s case, this reflection involves allusions and associations that are often triggered by the music used, by the staging of its production, by the use of relics, and by their hybrid combination. The composer’s material is therefore deliberately challenging not only through its presence but in particular through its historical significance or origin, its production and the contexts in which it is used, its own “biography” as well as its meaning in relation to Nussbaumer’s biography, and “agency” in terms of the “material turn”:

Things can be said to have “biographies” as they go through a series of transformations from gift to commodity to inalienable possessions, and persons can also be said to invest aspects of their own biographies in things. ... Objects themselves may not be animated, but their relations have certainly animated many debates about the ways to understand society, culture and human lives.^[21]

This perspective of a renewed discussion of material and matter was developed in the 1980s and 1990s, mainly in archaeology and anthropology, and has since expanded into a transdisciplinary branch of cultural studies research. Increased emphasis on the inseparability of material and culture led to changes in the perception of materials. Their production and use in contexts of action, their social and associative effects, and their implicit appeal and invitation functions (“affordance”) began to take precedence over their representative meaning and ontological determination.^[22] In the field of the arts, Alfred Gell emphasized this direction in his book *Art and Agency*, in which he understood the artwork as a “social agent.” He is concerned with the relationship between art production, artwork, and recipient, when he states: “To be an ‘agent’ one must act with respect to the ‘patient’; the patient is the object which is causally affected by the agent’s action.”^[23]

Now one might ask oneself how an object or a relic should perform an action on its own. However, it is clear that things are always integrated into a context in which they unfold actions in the sense of sensual, emotional, or psychological effects, in which they meet or contradict expectations or wishes, in which they serve a certain use or are set aside, or in which they are perceived aesthetically and as art-related. It may also be assumed that in a compositional and staging context there is an artistic intention with which things are brought together, arranged, and put into use. Therefore, in this case, the action or effect of an object consists not only in the context of its natural or everyday origin but also in the context of the work of art in which it was placed by an artistic setting. Hence, superimpositions arise that can be interpreted as irony or subversion, and these effects are therefore due to the artistic intention or “agency.” On the one hand, I thus assume that “agency” represents the property, effect, and “affordance” of an object to be derived from it. On the other hand, however, there is also the artistic “agency” in the sense of the artistic intention, with which the effect of objects and things can be exploited and transformed.

Investigating Nussbaumer’s works and his compositional use of materials against this background is therefore another objective of this article. It may be assumed that this analytical approach can accommodate the working methods of the composer explained above. It is remarkable that in the context of his project *Salon Q* (Donauessingen 2010), for example, he himself gave a quasi-encyclopedic insight into his “material world” in a booklet, which can serve as an orientation.^[24]

Mozartkugel as Host

Austria = Mozart = Austria: although this close connection was sometimes also critically discussed, the composer is not only worshipped in Salzburg but also celebrated worldwide as a representative of the musical tradition of Austria. One object that has long been used to capitalize on this tradition is the famous chocolate candy called Mozartkugel, even if it exists in several different “real” versions. Advertising messages about the sweet truffle claim the following:

The Real Salzburg Mozartkugel is the sweet, culinary ambassador of the famous composer's birthplace and is often given as a popular souvenir by many Austrians to all who want to bring back a piece of Austria. Many public figures present the Real Salzburg Mozartkugel in the red-gold octagonal pack as a sweet ambassador of Austria: a synonym for Austrian culture and tradition. For example, Austria's only astronaut, Franz Viehböck [1991], brought Mirabell's Real Salzburg Mozartkugel as a gift during his visit to the MIR space station.^[25]

The Mozartkugel therefore has a special history which is not directly related to the composer Mozart but is closely linked to the development of tourist marketing since the end of the nineteenth century. In the end, it almost replaced the composer in Austria or at least seems to have become a part of him. The photographer Stefan Dokoupil staged this aspect in a provocative picture as part of his *Mozart Project* in 2012.^[26]

One would almost like to think that Nussbaumer knew Dokoupil's picture, but the concert installation (almost concert sculpture) *Schönes Bildnis mit Mozarterwärmung* (Beautiful portrait with Mozart warming) was created earlier, in 2004-06, and was premiered in Mannheim in 2007 by the mezzo-soprano Christina Ascher.



Figure 1: Georg Nussbaumer, *Schönes Bildnis mit Mozarterwärmung*, first performance, Mozartsommer, Mannheim 2007 (singer: Christina Ascher); photo credit: Georg Nussbaumer

The title of the piece spontaneously recalls the Tamino aria "Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön" (This portrait is enchantingly beautiful) from *Die Zauberflöte*, which actually also serves as a template for the piece, although only fragments from it are audible. Mozart is also mentioned in the title, although the "Mozart warming" is not entirely explainable but could perhaps be a mix-up with "global warming." The soprano Sarah Maria Sun performed this piece at the Rainy Days

festival in Luxembourg in 2015, so one can follow the process.^[27] The singer takes a Mozartkugel in her mouth and then starts singing and speaking. She wears a white cape, which also serves as a projection or mirror surface for her self-portrait. The “beautiful portrait” in this scene does not have a lasting effect, but the bride-like white of the cape is gradually tainted brown while she sings and speaks. The mouth is also transformed into another body opening in a tilting figure, which indicates the back of the “beautiful image.”



Figure 2: Georg Nussbaumer, *Schönes Bildnis mit Mozarterwärmung*, Festival “rainy days,” Luxembourg 2015 (singer: Sarah Maria Sun); photo credit: Georg Nussbaumer
In a commentary on the piece, the composer writes:

The Mozartkugel—in its compressed sweetness and fatness, it is something of a soup cube of music, a spherical record in which the whole Mozart is compressed. Not through the ears do we enjoy the sweet melodies, but like a kind of 3D host sucking, melting, we swallow it. An incorporation. From *A Little Night Music* to the *Requiem*, everything is there. Transubstantiation. His spirit enlightens us chemically, glues the hearing from within.^[28]

The Mozartkugel therefore has a history not only as a tourist souvenir—representative of Austria—but also, for Nussbaumer, as a liturgical, consecrated object in the context of the delightful worship of Mozart. He recalls,

My father listened to a lot of Mozart, a little too much. It ran in the living room on record, in the car on cassette. Other music had edges, surfaces, was opaque or even glass clear like a crystal, still other music was like a conglomerate. Mozart was a brown, amorphous mass; no colors, no reflections, no glitter. Of course, I didn't know his scatological fantasies in his letters; I was a child. It may only have been the music itself that synthesized this soft lava feeling.^[29]

Nussbaumer's highly personal biographical relationship with Mozart is therefore linked to the object of the Mozartkugel. In his concert installation, however, the Mozartkugel is not only included in its representative object function but is also reflected in its materiality, which is based on its function. The truffle usually asks to be eaten joyfully, which may be seen as its effect and "affordance" in a related situation, and the singer first responds to this request. The composer, however, demands that the sweet not be swallowed, as he has other intentions. The singer is required to produce sounds, quoting fragments from the Tamino aria and reciting texts about "chocolate," so the truffle cannot be swallowed but warms, melts, and flows in the other direction. The self-portrait in the mirror projection, and thus the reflection on the event, ensures a reversal of the "incorporation" or the visibility of the dark brown lava flow. For the audience, this reversal of sweet enjoyment evokes embarrassment and disgust, which in turn combines with the music of Mozart as well as the clichéd worship of Mozart. Nussbaumer's concert installation, however, does not cause an affirmative reaction to the Mozartkugel but one of distancing or disturbance. The special use of this object in its material specificity changes the object in its "agency": it acquires the function of alienation in relation to the audience.

Franz Schubert "Fremd eingezogen ... fremd wieder aus"

Another of Nussbaumer's compositional reference points has already been addressed: Franz Schubert. To this day, Schubert is a symbol of Austrian and specific (nostalgic) Viennese music and cultural history. This image formed after his death in 1828, starting from memories such as that of Schubert's friend Eduard von Bauernfeld (from 1857):

Schubert was, in a sense, a double-nature, Viennese cheerfulness interwoven with and refined by a burst of deep melancholy. On the inside a poet and on the outside a man of pleasure of sorts, he was, as if naturally, judged personally according to his external appearance, which moreover lacked the conventional conviviality, so that some educated everyday society might think something far better than this uncouth singer of the "Müllerlieder" and the "Winterreise."^[30]

This image, however, shifted increasingly to a picture of a cozy and petty-bourgeois Viennese, until it turned into a kitsch figure in the first half of the twentieth century.^[31] Especially after 1918, a popular Austrian patriotism and a mythologization of Vienna as a "city of music" were connected with this tendency. The Viennese musicologist Alfred Orel claimed that in Schubert's music, "the singing and sounding of the Viennese suburbs, the Viennese people [found] artistic expression ... Viennese folk music conquered all music here; an artist was born in which the dormant forces awakened to magnificent flowers which had nourished and carried the centuries of musical events on the ground of Vienna; his name marks the turning point of the classical period of the city's splendor."^[32] In this context, Schubert does not remain an isolated "romantic"

figure but becomes a symbol deeply rooted in the people, which should support the creation of an Austrian identity. This tendency was cemented at the celebrations for the 100th anniversary of his death in 1928: “We Austrians love Schubert above all because his music reflects the language of the Austrian people, the Austrian homeland.”^[33]

Nussbaumer developed several projects in which he was inspired by Schubert, particularly by Schubert’s *Winterreise*, that is, precisely by the paradigmatic narrative of the rejected, abandoned and lonely, alienated Romantic human being.^[34] One of Nussbaumer’s Schubert pieces is part of a so-called marching book, written in 2001, in which the figure of the wanderer, a small drum, and two toy tanks are reflected as instruments and objects. Nussbaumer knew marching books from his practice in bands, and he wished to supplement them with another one. In this collection of pieces, there is a march entitled *winter 42/43* for a small drum and a Schubert lied recording, which is the well-known beginning of the *Winterreise*: “Fremd bin ich eingezogen, Fremd zieh’ ich wieder aus.” Nussbaumer describes the piece in a commentary:

The march *winter 42/43* begins with this obscenely sentimental kick by Schubert. Not to use it as such—and yet it does have an effect—but to recall *these* functions of music very briefly and without a raised index finger or fist. In the third measure, an inconspicuous sound sets in at the tempo of Schubert’s march, which, as always, is refined and sparing lyre to the desire for despair: two small plastic tanks take over the tempo and the action. While the *Winterreise* blurs, the sounds fade and will not return; they take turns crossing the drum: step noises. The assumed pace soon begins to change and the two tanks develop their own tempi, which remain unstable throughout the whole piece. ... In total, there are as many individual voyages as tanks were used in the Battle of Stalingrad. ... Whatever the number, it was not and is not about giving an account of these horrible events of war but about trying to lift the naïve and harmless mask-like impression of an instrument, to make it clear and audible what connection to which reality is hidden in these toys, a small drum and a tank. ... In the end, the tanks are getting quite warm, and rubber abrasion from the caterpillars stays on the *Trommelfell* [the drum-skin as well as the eardrum].^[35]

In this piece, the material used is originally not related, but the hybrid superimposition of the title of the work, the music of Schubert, the use of the small drum, and the actions with the toy tanks results in a mixture of chains of association that go far beyond the memory of the war. The lonely wanderer becomes a foreign soldier who was certainly not a romantic figure in the battle of Stalingrad. The small drum may recall Günther Grass’s *Die Blechtrommel* (The tin drum) and at the same time be reduced to the drum-skin/eardrum, which is tortured until a material imprint and a heating result, which are still left behind by the toy miniature.

The small drum as well as the plastic tanks are considered musical instruments and toys at the same time, meaning objects (mainly for children) to play with, which can be seen as their “agency” in everyday life. In Nussbaumer’s setting, they do not lose this function but are stripped of their innocence as children’s toys. Through their contexts and use in the piece, they acquire more serious meaning, which at the same time alienates them from the audience.

From a historical distance, reminiscences of the past that one would not normally prefer to be reminded of at military marches have resurfaced. In the interaction between objects, materials, and human actions, one can therefore speak within this piece’s performance of a “dance of agency”^[36] that also incorporates layers of meaning from Schubert’s song cycle, historical knowledge about Stalingrad, and the sociocultural significance of drums and toy tanks (as well as real tanks). The Schubert relic is the trigger for a melancholy that is no longer suitable for making itself comfortable in a nostalgic recollection.

As mentioned above, Nussbaumer has worked on several projects in which he referred to

Schubert's *Winterreise*. Another example is his concert installation *Eine Winterreise*, which was set up from November 3 to 12, 2016, at the "Wien Modern" festival in the Vienna Konzerthaus.^[37] In this installation, the march from "Gute Nacht" is once again in the foreground as a musical symbol in an arrangement of the song by the composer. Next to the Beethoven monument in the foyer of the Konzerthaus, a grand piano without its top was filled and loaded with a heavy mass of ice that slowly began to melt. The instrument was located in a special basin for the melting water. Within ten days, ten male and female pianists regularly played Nussbaumer's arrangement of "Fremd bin ich eingezogen, Fremd zieh' ich wieder aus" on the ice-covered grand piano, which could only sound in fragments while it was still iced. Even after the release of the instrument, the song fragments understandably tended to remain out of tune.



Figure 3: Georg Nussbaumer, *Eine Winterreise*, Vienna 2016 (piano: Han-Gyeol Lie); photo credit: Georg Nussbaumer

Once again, a complex range of perceptions that are to be experienced as processes emerges, not only from the symbolic function, meaning, and presence of the materials and objects but above all from their actions and reactions as well as from their potential and real availability within the concert installation. Thus, the ice and melting of the ice not only causes the detuning of the instrument, but by changing its aggregate state it also leads to the formation of dripping water as a sound element and the formation of water in a tub located below the stage. The objects act and react directly with each other. The audience is confronted with the occurring process as well as with the coupling of material and immaterial elements. This includes sensual experiences and emotions, interpretation, imagination, and reflection, not only in acts of recognition and understanding but also in indeterminate areas of wonder, irritation, and non-understanding.^[38]

In his *Winterreise* with a grand piano, ice, and volcanic ash, Nussbaumer refers to the year 1816, which went down in history as a "year without summer" with cold and famine.

WIEDERHOLUNGEN:
Noten oder Notengruppen in einem Rechteck werden wiederholt.
Die Anzahl der Wiederholungen kann (für jedes Rechteck) aus den Ziffern 1816 ausgewählt werden. Ein Rechteck kann also 18 mal wiederholt werden, das nächste 81 mal, das nächste 16 mal etc. (auch 1 mal, 6 mal, 181 mal... (nicht verwendete Ziffern ausstreichen!)).

TEMPO:
Während der Wiederholungen ändert sich das Tempo langsam und kontinuierlich. Jede Tempoänderung geht vom Tempo zuvor aus (immer rit. oder acc. - keine plötzlichen Temporückungen).
Nach den Wiederholungen wird der Schuberttext im erreichten Tempo weiter gespielt.
Das Tempo kann etwas langsamer werden, jedoch nie schneller als das „Originaltempo“.
Ausnahme: bei „zuerst schneller, dann langsamer werden“ kann das Tempo zwischendurch schneller als das „Originaltempo“ werden.

DYNAMIK:
Das Schubertmaterial wird „ganz normal“ gespielt. Innerhalb der Wiederholungen gibt es dynamische Vorgänge, die sehr intensiv und sehr zart werden können.

WIEDERHOLUNGEN:

- ☐ Kontinuierlich langsamer werden
- ☐ Kontinuierlich schneller werden
- ☐ Zuerst langsamer, dann schneller werden
- ☐ Zuerst schneller, dann langsamer werden

TEMPO:

- ☐ Zuerst leiser, dann lauter werden
- ☐ Zuerst lauter, dann leiser werden
- ☐ Immer lauter werden
- ☐ Immer leiser werden
- ☐ Gleich laut bleiben

Figure 4: Georg Nussbaumer, *Eine Winterreise*, score, page 1 and page with performance instructions; © Georg Nussbaumer, by courtesy of the composer

Schubert's *Winterreise* was not composed until 1827, but it was mainly associated with the weather conditions in 1816 via the song "Die Nebensonnen." But Nussbaumer's piano installation is not only an allegory of Schubert's winter loneliness and flood of tears but also contains a number of other approaches to interpretation, which are mainly determined by the central musical instrument. For example, the grand piano has been described by Nussbaumer several times as an object with animal or human features: "It's all like a three-legged beef without a head that stands. The pianist's attitude is also very special: he grabs this strange crippled giant animal with his hands in his mouth and thus gets the sounds out. ... Then it has the big top. It feels like a kind of shell, like a kind of battery, in which all the music that has ever been produced as music in Central Europe is stored."^[39] The object was built as a musical instrument to be played, which can be seen as its main "agency" in the sense of its invitation to use it and to produce (musical) sounds. In his interpretation, however, Nussbaumer reinforces the passive role of the instrument: it is treated to produce Schubert but is not able to do so. The piano here seems to be a very unfortunate object. Furthermore, in this setting the access of the players is called into question, because they no longer retain mastery of the sounds. The actual energy comes from the ice block, which, while leaving traces, at the same time gradually loses its influence. While artists such as Arman, Annea Lockwood, and Nam June Paik have exposed the grand piano to destructive forces since the 1960s, sawing it apart, setting it on fire, letting it sink into the sea, or defacing it, Nussbaumer's instrument is a crippled, pitiful animal and a fragile shell that also houses Schubert's music.

Loading this delicate creature with a three-ton block of ice is not least a body performance that also reminds us slightly of the performance *Lips of Thomas* by Marina Abramović, first shown in 1975, in which the artist lay naked and bleeding on a cross-shaped block of ice that slowly began to melt. At that time, Abramović was taken down by the anxious audience. In Nussbaumer's installation in the Konzerthaus, no one came up with the idea of liberating the grand piano, but

Schubert had to wait patiently until the performance was finished under the eyes of Beethoven.

“Klingendes Österreich”: Music, Landscape, and Nature

Outside the cultural centers of Salzburg and Vienna, the music culture in Austria is not insignificantly interwoven with the country’s beautiful landscapes and local traditions. “Art, landscape, and folk culture” have proven to be “national ‘master narratives’ in Austria since at least the 1920s.”^[40] Today they still serve as identity-creating factors in the country but are on the other hand being exploited more ruthlessly than ever as touristic capital. These three factors are also usually the basis for the construction and ideologization of the Austrian “homeland” as understood in a national and regional sense, in which certain collective identities are to be pooled. The public media play a central role in this because they enable comprehensive and perfidious—because opaque—staging strategies in these processes, which I will present here only very briefly by way of the example of the TV series *Klingendes Österreich*. Since 1986, the Austrian Public Broadcasting Corporation (ORF II, later ORF III) has presented *Klingendes Österreich* at regular intervals (usually six times a year). In every episode the audience is introduced to a region of Austria or to an area of South Tyrol and their idyllic landscapes as well as their impressive histories. The show was presented until 2020 by Sepp Forcher, a former hut owner and pub owner in Salzburg who was discovered as an “authentic figure” and proved to be an ideal presenter of the “folk music and customs show” over the years. ORF General Director Dr. Alexander Wrabetz summed it up:

Sepp Forcher imparts interesting facts about culture and customs and presents genuine, unadulterated folk music. He shows Austrian folk culture in its best sense, makes viewers proud of this country’s wonderful traditions and open to the world.^[41]

This might have been one of the reasons why Nussbaumer came up with the idea of animating and activating people to make a “landscape” sound in the simplest way. In his installation *Die schönsten Gipfel der Alpen* (The most beautiful peaks of the Alps), presented at the *maerzmusik* festival in Berlin in 2007, Nussbaumer hung large tuning forks from the ceiling as an “acoustic hanging model of the Alps.” Each tuning fork was meant to represent a peak.^[42] The audience was asked to play the tuning forks with wooden sticks and wandered through this alpine sound installation, which may be understood as the “affordance” of this piece. Stefan Fricke described the result as “eine irisierende Geografie fürs Ohr” (an iridescent geography for the ear) and “eine tatsächliche Klang-Landschaft fürs Publikum” (a *real* soundscape for the audience).^[43]

This simple effect may be the result, but if one thinks about the project from a distance, it fades into the background. Tuning forks are usually instruments in medical, physical, therapeutic, and musical contexts, because they vibrate at a certain frequency. Even if they are hung like an Alpine panorama, why should tuning forks and their sounds represent the sounds of mountain peaks, even if the frequencies of the tuning forks correspond to the altitude marks of the mountains? Is the installation not more of an artistic setting that promises the audience an “alpine sound” experience if they believe in it?

The strategy of assigning representative sounds to nature or capturing natural sounds in order to

derive product brands or advertising campaigns from them is particularly widespread in Austria (but also often in Switzerland). “Alpenklang” is usually associated with popular folk music (music groups are called “Alpenklang Musi,” “Alpenklang Musig,” or “Tiroler Alpenklang”), whose audience believes it is consuming “music of the Alps.” Alleged traditional fashion and mountain hut traditions (even produced and performed in public multi-purpose halls) contribute to the staging of this belief. There is no connection with the actual soundscapes of Alpine pastures or Alpine peaks, which are mainly composed of natural and animal sounds. The sounds of the tuning forks can also hardly be compared with this.

Nussbaumer already used tuning forks in the context of his preoccupation with Adalbert Stifter’s story of the “Quängers Quartet” in 2005, where he was interested in the “tension of music between physical facts and emotional conceits.”^[44] One year later, the triptych *A Garthen of Odin and the lost paladays* (“a shifting triptych on droning, dragging and drifting”) in Oslo included the world premiere of *Aurora Borealis*, an installation for vibrating radar tuning forks (871–914 Hz) and hammers.^[45] Nussbaumer wrote quite significantly at the time: “I am not the caretaker of my works, who knows every angle, but rather a curator of a temporary museum of reality, who prepares something for a long time, which then quickly discharges—and in its effect uncontrollably—as a performance.”^[46]

In addition to the imagination of landscape, concrete materials also play a major role in Nussbaumer’s scenic actions and installation concerts, for example objects that originate from the area of experience and are associated with nature, landscape, mountains, and forests. In what he once called his “material battles,” he includes stones, sand, earth, foliage, branches, tree parts, water, fur, meat, feathers, paws, teeth, deer antlers, human hair and horse hair, potatoes, salt, ice, snails, fossils, bones and tongues, wax, chalk, bells, wine, train saws, turtles, insects, dogs, and so on. A hunting scene could certainly be put together without problems, but perhaps also a variation of Hermann Nitsch’s *OrgienMysterienTheater* (orgiastic mystery theater).

In contrast to the pure presentation of these materials, which refer to themselves and their materiality as foreign bodies in the concert, in his projects Nussbaumer focuses on the “agency” and effectiveness of the objects, which result from their material history, meaning, and effect, from their origin, from their use, from their natural habitat, or from their cultural and social contexts. It is about “the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle.”^[47] This power of different materials and objects is linked to their possibilities for sound production and/or their connection to musical organology as well as to the emergence of music. For example, 212 stones thrown into the water in free fall became the above-mentioned open-air concert *s’Schdoaschmeissn* in 1989. In the *St. Huberti Partiten* of 2001 and in the piece *Stalking Song* (part of the *Salon Q*, 2010), violins or violas are played with deer antlers. Nussbaumer described the latter objects as follows: “The antlers as an *objet trouvé* formed and discarded by the deer and its living conditions for a year become part of the instrument and part of the composition: the surface structure, the ‘Perlung,’ releases rhythmic and dynamic small structures via the strings—an audible document of a deer year, a diary of food, the deer’s social position, the weather conditions. The curved shape of the ‘rods’ causes the larger peristalsis of the strokes.”^[48] The objects, which function as a direct representation of a deer’s stage of life, play a crucial role in this context, because even the tonal results are meant to be determined by it. In this sense, deer antlers are truly “biographical objects” that can be considered to represent a living being.^[49]

Another example of the specific use of objects as instruments and instruments as objects is

Nussbaumer's concert installation *LAWINE, WALD UND STUBENMUSI* (Avalanche, forest, and "living room music") for river stones, bells, branches, and solar-powered string instruments, presented at the Bregenz Festival in 2009 in the program section "Kunst aus der Zeit."^[50]



Figure 5: Georg Nussbaumer, *LAWINE, WALD UND STUBENMUSI*, Bregenz 2009; photo credit: Madlene Therese Feyrer

It was performed in four episodes from July 31 to August 3, 2009, and was built up with an artificial scene consisting of elements of the natural environment, a sounding still life with musical instruments, and a holder with bells. Thus, different-sized river stones were placed on a sound-enhancing plank floor and moved or rolled by a performer according to a precise plan. This resulted in sounds ranging from light debris to a stone avalanche.^[51] The branches with leaves mounted on another plateau in the room were also set in motion by performers, creating the impression of leaf noise in the wind. In between, the sound of a battered church bell was added. The ensemble "Stubenmusi" with double bass, guitar, violin, harp, zither, and dulcimer, another installed sound island in the room, was hardly audible, because it was not played by human performers. The instruments were played by vibrators which recognizably came from a sex shop.



Figure 6: Georg Nussbaumer, *LAWINE, WALD UND STUBENMUSI*, Bregenz 2009; photo credit: Madlene Therese Feyrer

It should be noted that in many sound installations objects, strings, or room elements such as pipes or glass plates are set in motion by vibrational agents, but usually with inconspicuous or hidden devices such as body sound converters or “bodyshakers.” Nussbaumer’s vibrators, on the other hand, are not only visible but combine the cozy world of “Stubenmusi” with the “normality” of obscene erotic fantasies, sexuality, masochism, sadism, exhibitionism, and violence, which are lived out in the “Stube” (living room or parlor), in the bedroom, or in Austrian basements.^[52] Nussbaumer has already worked with such vibrators in other contexts, for example in his installation opera *orpheusarchipel* (Bielefeld 2002) or in the piano piece *Junggesellenflügel* (2006), in which the vibrators protrude from the inside of the grand piano. Sabine Sanio emphasized the connection of Nussbaumer’s vibrators with the Orpheus myth:

These remnants of Orpheus lead to the center of Nussbaumer’s thinking and composing. ... Orpheus is not so much about expressing or communicating feelings or inner states in singing, but the change in state he achieves with singing is crucial. Singing is a kind of vibration—it works like a key to another world. As if this sung tone creates a vibration of the world, a vibration that changes something, produces something bigger and more powerful. ... Nussbaumer’s interest in the story of Orpheus is the combination of music and violence. ... Orpheus does not transform the *Stubenmusi* into the spiritual; quite the contrary—this music lives precisely from the seductive power that it receives through Orpheus. But at the same time: sublimation, spiritualization should always be thought of as seduction, as a form of desire. If anything, it is the sounds of nature, the stones and leaves, that do not cause this seduction. For Orpheus, on the other hand, as for humans in general, seduction is always a form of sublimation.^[53]

The flip side of this idea, however, is associated with lustful, sensual risks and with overwhelming delimitations that can even end fatally, if one thinks of avalanches, storms, hurricanes, and tornadoes alone. Louder sounds in nature are their harbingers and various kinds of natural roars their indexical signs, a quake and swing their reverberation. The experience with such orgiastic natural events resulted at times in superstition, and in the Christian context also in the fear of

divine punishment as well as the belief in the protection of the Church. Asked about religiosity and spirituality in the mountains, the composer replies: "I mean the bell that gives people a foothold in the face of all the fear that nature, the mountains, have caused and provoked. The bell as an acoustic symbol of religion. It should be seen more as a sociological phenomenon in cultural history than as a commentary on my own faith or non-faith."^[54]

The mountain world and its living conditions include not least close communities, which are confirmed precisely by joint, self-affirming music making. Nussbaumer describes: "The music serves as a distraction for the inhabitants of the mountains—a relief caused by the 'Stubenmusi,' the dance music, although 'Stubenmusi' is actually more listening music, too quiet to dance."^[55] But anyone who thinks that "Stubenmusi" is a centuries-old custom is very mistaken: "In fact, the first ensemble in this respect, consisting of zither, chromatic dulcimer, harp, guitar, and bass violin (double bass), was only spontaneously created in 1953 by the necessity of a radio appearance by the Salzburg musician Tobi Reiser with his ensemble in Stuttgart, Germany."^[56] This history has its roots in National Socialism, as do so many alleged elements of customs and aspects of popular culture (e.g., dirndl fashion) in Austria.^[57] The subversion of the "Stubenmusi" installation is therefore certainly due not only to the use of the vibrators but also to the fact that in the case of Austrian stereotypes, especially those related to the Alps and rural regions, one must always expect to come across the resonance of ideas from the 1930s and 1940s, for example folk-ideological or xenophobic attitudes. The latter are often overplayed or retained only where tourism is an economic basis.

With the example of *LAWINE, WALD UND STUBENMUSI* for river stones, bells, branches, and solar-powered string instruments, it is once again clear that Nussbaumer also works with elements of the private/public "home" as well as the territorial and musical "homeland." These are detached from their everyday or natural context and receive the status of relics. As such, they are then combined in hybrid constellations with aspects from the history of music and music practice, in which they are not exhibited as "dead objects" but often rather presented as sound objects and/or sound media in action.^[58] In Nussbaumer's setting, the stones and branches are given their own "agency" as playable objects with which sound is produced in a very specific manner due to their shape, size, and weight. The performers, in their capacity as "agents," react to Nussbaumer's instructions to roll the stones or shake the branches.^[59] The "Stubenmusi," on the other hand, is designed in such a way that the objects themselves act and react like an independent machine. Its "agency" is to be found in an invitation to explore the machine's workings and sound, although this is only a detail in the overall picture.

The audience is challenged to react to what Dieter Mersch calls "seam points" and "fractures" which arise in the perception process, even to shocks in the "form of a disbelief, anxiety, a concern that refers to the delimitation by an 'otherness.'"^[60]

Conclusion: New Materialisms and Nussbaumer's Concert Installations

Concerning material in contemporary music, Theodor W. Adorno's concept of musical material has been taken almost generally in the past decades as a basic theoretical point of departure.^[61] The consideration, critical analysis, and thus the successful (dialectical) overhaul of the "historical state of the material" as well as the apparently guaranteed mastery of material are

regarded against this background as a value judgment on and a quality of compositions. This was and still is associated with a conception of musical progress that should ultimately also determine the canon of contemporary music. With the abandonment of this concept, it was feared that this basis for evaluations and quality judgments would be lost, especially in the debates about postmodernism, while the fact was ignored that both the musical material and its compositional use as well as the material thinking had changed or begun to change.^[62]

With music pieces by John Cage, Pauline Oliveros, Annea Lockwood, or Alvin Lucier, to name but a few representative composers, it became obvious that the musical material can also consist of the sounds and silence of nature, which does not require mastery but should at best be framed in order to be included in the context of contemporary music or art. Thus, it was clear that the side of perception or reception was given an increasingly independent status, as had already been the case in the visual arts at least since the ready-mades of Marcel Duchamp. In the meantime, it may be said that the so-called culture of presence no longer seems relevant, or perhaps never was in its exclusiveness, because nature is also superimposed on history and culture, and because natural material is not regarded as a formless and meaningless, ahistorical matter. Daniel Ott's landscape compositions, for example, show in the best possible way a compositional approach to culturally shaped nature, and the river stones in the installation of Nussbaumer also have a history, and hence a very specific "natural" form. Daniel Ott, for example, does not aim primarily at editing his material but focuses on what the material does to him.^[63] The premise of this attitude, similar to Nussbaumer's, is that there is a (specific) agency of the material that triggers and co-determines aesthetic experiences.

Samuel Wilson points out that Adorno's material concept also provides for an interaction between the requirements of the material and the compositional decisions, but with the following limitation: "Adorno perhaps sensed the agentive capacities of non-human forces; but without making this feeling explicit, agency remained for him something possessed solely by the subject."^[64] Thus, with an emphasis on the effectiveness of the material, even the artistic creative subject is more in the role of the recipient, for whom the material is interesting in the aesthetic experience not only because of its materiality but also because of its generative and pragmatic, historical, or sociopolitical contexts. This applies to sound and silence as well as to a dominant seventh chord or to the beginning of "Für Elise," not to mention non-sounding materials.^[65]

With the inclusion of contexts of origin and action or reception, or with the "biography" of what is integrated into a composition as material, a relational complexity arises which also includes ethical, moral, socially critical, or political dimensions.^[66] Personal attitudes towards these "biographies" and connections to the composer's biography play a role, as does the responsibility for how they are handled. This aspect becomes all the more clear when it comes to animals or biographies of people that are integrated as material into an artistic work, for example in dance productions by Pina Bausch, in the theater projects of *Rimini Protokoll*, or in Nussbaumer's concert and opera installations.

Nussbaumer's works may perhaps be considered in the context of the German philosopher Harry Lehmann's *Gehaltsästhetik* (aesthetics of meaning), which he claims to have replaced material aesthetics in contemporary music.^[67] As indicated above, however, the concept of material is changeable, and in addition to meaning, content that has become material or that (again) challenges its integration into art has also come to the fore.^[68] Another central aspect of contemporary music is the choice of its presentation and/or performance format, which today determines not least the form of a composition. The conscious decision on a concert format, on

the one hand, involves at least thinking about a beginning and a finale, as they might be expected; the decision on a concert installation, on the other hand, offers the possibility of a permanent installation, which also changes the behavior of the audience. The latter initiates a meandering reception behavior, which oscillates between the perception of objects in space, the events in the performance, and their interaction as music, sounds, and silence. It should be borne in mind that the concept of music has long since proved to be changeable too.

As I hope to have demonstrated, Nussbaumer's concert installations, which also include content as musical and non-musical Austrian stereotypes, do not result in political music in the sense of explicit political statements. But his attitude towards the clichés—melancholic, mindful, disturbing, sometimes humorous to biting—is an underlying and communicative energy that characterizes his works. This energy and spirit are related directly to the use and composition of relics, objects, and materials, including music and sound, which are in a way “revived” in the installation and performative contexts. The fact that these processes succeed certainly derives from the composer designing the environments from his personal experiences in Austria, while at the same time keeping as much distance as possible.

This distance also implies Nussbaumer's critique of institutions, which is not least due to his unusual concert formats. His projects all question the usual, traditional conceptions of music, opera, and concert or are located at their edges. This is a deliberate outsider position of Nussbaumer, but it also makes him attractive, provided that exactly these opposing positions are regarded as an aesthetic gain. For an Austrian conservative audience, however, these opposing positions represent irritations and provocations, which arise not least from Nussbaumer's “desecration” of supposedly cultural treasures.

The Mozartkugel, for example, is brought before the audience in an extremely sensual fashion but is almost blasphemously reinterpreted as an abuse of hosts. Schubert's musical fragments are intended to touch the audience in order to evoke the associations of loneliness and desolation, which are contrasted, however, by toy objects and chunks of ice from the freezer. A natural idyll is created to counter the reality of vibrators—which is a replacement of satisfaction. Nussbaumer's concert and opera installations are interspersed with these contrasts, which implant mistrust in familiar areas and use the “madness” of real circumstances artistically. The composer is therefore one of the most unconventional and interesting artists in Austria, not least because of this idiomatic entanglement of intimacy and estrangement.



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2. *parsifalsurvivaltrail: Eine Operninstallation von Georg Nussbaumer*, Schriftenreihe O.K Centrum für

Gegenwartskunst 44 (Linz: O.K Centrum für Gegenwartskunst Oberösterreich, 2002), 87–88. ↑

3. Nussbaumer's concert installation *Atlas der gesamten Musik und aller angrenzenden Gebiete: Eine begehbare Symphonie mit Hunderten von Mitwirkenden in 85 Räumen* (Atlas of all music and related fields: A walk-in symphony with hundreds of participants in 85 rooms), for example, was an event of about three and a half hours, premiered on November 17, 2018, at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, as part of the festival "Wien Modern"; see Bernhard Günther, "Atlas der gesamten Musik und aller angrenzenden Gebiete: Georg Nussbaumer und Hunderte von Studierenden realisieren am 17. 11. 2018 am mdw-Campus eine begehbare Symphonie für Wien Modern," *mdw-Webmagazin*, September 27, 2018, accessed November 1, 2021. Nussbaumer himself understood this performance as a reference to John Cage's *A House Full of Music* (first performance, 1982 in Bremen, Germany), in which hundreds of music-school students played pieces of their repertoire simultaneously. ↑
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5. Upper Austria is one of the nine Austrian states. It is located in the northwest and borders in the north on Bavaria and South Bohemia, in the mountainous south on the states of Styria and Salzburg. ↑
6. Volker Straebel, "Musik zwischen Konzert, Theater und Installation: Von der Darbietung klingender Kunst," in *MaerzMusik: Festival für aktuelle Musik 13. bis 23. März 2003, Programmbuch*, ed. Berliner Festspiele (Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2003), 030. Original wording: "'Konzert-Installationen' werden heute Aufführungen genannt, in denen Musiker live in künstlerisch inszenierten Räumen agieren und das Publikum frei ist, sich zu bewegen und seine Verweildauer selbst zu bestimmen." ↑
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10. Allan Kaprow, *Assemblage, Environments & Happenings* (New York: Abrams, 1966), 164–65. Cf. Adrian Henri, *Environments and Happenings* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1974). ↑
11. Clarence Schmidt's large environments can be seen as paradigmatic examples. Cf. Greg Bottoms, "Mountains Harmony and Everlasting Peace," *Killing the Buddha*, June 30, 2011, accessed November 1, 2021. ↑
12. Kaprow, *Assemblage, Environments & Happenings*, 172. ↑
13. "Versuch der Aufnahme eines Fadens: Zur Verdeutlichung einer Stringenz," in *parsifalsurvivaltrail*, 96–97. ↑
14. Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt: Verlag der Autoren, 2001), 143. ↑
15. Georg Nussbaumer, "täuschen und tarnen: von trommeln und märschen," in *Musik und Politik*, Musik im Dialog 3, Yearbook Berlin Society for Contemporary Music (Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2004), 61. Original wording: "als Präsenzdiener Piccolist und damit fußfreier Zeuge militärischer Repräsentationskunst bei der Militärmusikkapelle Oberösterreich und zeitgleich, aus dörflichen Integrationsgründen, stellvertretender Kapellmeister der Ortsmusikkapelle Grünau im Almtal." Cf. "Militärmusik Oberösterreich," *Bundesministerium für Landesverteidigung*, accessed November 1, 2021. In the years

of its existence (since 1955), more than 2100 musicians have served in the military band of Upper Austria. Grünau im Almtal is a municipality in the district of Gmunden in the Traunviertel district of Upper Austria, see [“Grünau im Almtal,” Austria-Forum](#), last modified March 1, 2021, accessed November 1, 2021. ↑

16. Peter Schmitt-Egner, *Handbuch zur Europäischen Regionalismusforschung: Theoretisch-methodische Grundlagen, empirische Erscheinungsformen und strategische Optionen des Transnationalen Regionalismus im 21. Jahrhundert*, Regionalisierung in Europa 4 (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2005), 105. Original wording: “sowohl diachron in den einzelnen Sozialisationsprozessen als auch synchron als gleichzeitiges und wechselseitiges soziales ‘role taking’ vollzieht.” Cf. Georgina Born, “Music and the Materialization of Identities,” *Journal of Material Culture* 16, no. 4 (2011): 376–88. ↑
17. Schmitt-Egner, *Handbuch zur Europäischen Regionalismusforschung*, 106. Original wording: “sich in Institutionen [organisiert], denen über Diskursformationen ein kollektiv-legitimatorischer Sinn zugeschrieben wird.” ↑
18. [“Treuegelöbnis,” Austria-Forum](#), last modified March 25, 2016, accessed November 1, 2021. Original wording: “Ich gelobe, mein Vaterland, die Republik Österreich, und sein Volk zu schützen und mit der Waffe zu verteidigen; ich gelobe, den Gesetzen und den gesetzmäßigen Behörden Treue und Gehorsam zu leisten, alle Befehle meiner Vorgesetzten pünktlich und genau zu befolgen und mit allen meinen Kräften der Republik Österreich und dem österreichischen Volke zu dienen.” ↑
19. Schmitt-Egner, *Handbuch zur Europäischen Regionalismusforschung*, 105. ↑
20. Thomas Bernhard, *Heldenplatz* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988); and Elfriede Jelinek, *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)*, drama, first performed 2018 in Munich (produced by Jossi Wieler). ↑
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23. Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2013), 22. ↑
24. Georg Nussbaumer, *Salon Q*, Booklet, Donaueschinger Musiktage 2010 (Klagenfurt: Ritter, 2010). ↑
25. Benedikt Zacherl, [“Mozart wirkt Völker verbindend: Seine Musik und die Mozartkugeln verzaubern die Welt,” Kraft Foods Österreich, APA-OTS, press release August 8, 2003](#), accessed November 1, 2021. Original wording: “Die Echte Salzburger Mozartkugel ist der süße, kulinarische Botschafter der Geburtsstadt des berühmten Komponisten und wird von vielen Österreichern gerne als beliebtes Souvenir allen geschenkt, denen ein Stück Österreich gebracht werden soll. Viele Personen des öffentlichen Lebens überreichen auf Reisen und Staatsbesuchen die Echten Salzburger Mozartkugeln in der rot-goldenen Achteck-Packung als süßen Botschafter Österreichs: Ein Synonym für österreichische Kultur und Tradition. So hat beispielsweise auch Österreichs bisher einziger Astronaut Franz Viehböck [1991] bei seinem Besuch auf der Raumstation MIR die Echten Salzburger Mozartkugeln von Mirabell als Gastgeschenk mitgebracht.” The originals of the Mozartkugel are the specimens produced in the Salzburg confectionery Fürst: [“Unsere Geschichte,” Fürst Konditorei](#), accessed November 1, 2021. ↑
26. See Stefan Dokoupil’s picture on [Wikimedia Commons](#), accessed December 11, 2022. ↑
27. [“Georg Nussbaumer: Schönes Bild mit Mozarterwärmung,” YouTube](#), June 7, 2016; and [“Georg Nussbaumer: Schönes Bild mit Mozarterwärmung,” YouTube](#), July 11, 2018, both accessed November 1, 2021. ↑
28. Georg Nussbaumer, “Schönes Bildnis mit Mozarterwärmung,” comment by the composer, received on

December 12, 2019, by e-mail. Original wording: "Die Mozartkugel—in ihrer komprimierten Süße und Fette ist sie so etwas wie ein Suppenwürfel der Musik, eine kugelförmige Schallplatte, in der der ganze Mozart komprimiert ist. Nicht über die Ohren genießen wir die süßen Melodien, sondern wie eine Art 3D-Hostie lutschen, schmelzen, schlucken wir ihn. Eine Einverleibung. Von der *Kleinen Nachtmusik* bis zum *Requiem*, alles da. Transsubstantiation. Sein Geist erleuchtet uns auf chemischem Wege, verklebt uns das Gehör von innen." ↑

29. Georg Nussbaumer, "Schönes Bildnis mit Mozarterwärmung," comment by the composer, received on December 12, 2019, by e-mail. Original wording: "Mein Vater hat viel Mozart gehört, ein wenig zu viel. Es lief im Wohnzimmer von Platte, im Auto von Kassette. Andere Musiken hatten Kanten, Oberflächen, waren opak oder gar gläsern klar wie ein Kristall, andere wie Konglomerate. Mozart war eine braune, amorphe Masse, keine Farben, keine Reflektionen, kein Glitzern. Seine brieflichen Kotfantasien kannte ich selbstverständlich nicht, ich war ein Kind. Es kann nur die Musik selbst gewesen sein, die dieses weiche Lavagegefühl synästhetisierte." ↑
30. *Schubert: Die Erinnerungen seiner Freunde*, ed. Otto Erich Deutsch (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1957), 53. Original wording: "Schubert war gewissermaßen eine Doppelnatur, die Wiener Heiterkeit mit einem Zuge tiefer Melancholie verwebt und veredelt. Nach innen Poet und von außen eine Art Genuß-Mensch, war er, wie natürlich, persönlich nach der äußeren Erscheinung beurteilt, welchem überdies der herkömmliche Geselligkeitsschliff fehlte, so daß mancher gebildete Alltagsgesell sich etwas weit Besseres dünken mochte als der ungehobelte Sänger der 'Müllerlieder' und der 'Winterreise.'" ↑
31. See, for example, Rudolf Hand Bartsch's novel *Schwammerl* (1912), Heinrich Berté's operetta *Das Dreimäderlhaus* (1916), and Richard Oswald's *Dreimäderlhaus* film (1918). ↑
32. Alfred Orel, *Franz Schubert: Ein Künstler seiner Heimat*, Bücher der Heimat 11 (Altötting: Bücher der Heimat, 1926), 10. Original wording: "Das Singen und Klingen der Wiener Vorstädte, des Wiener Volkes fand in seinem Schaffen künstlerischen Ausdruck. ... Die Wiener Volksmusik eroberte sich hier alle Tonkunst, es erhebt der Künstler, in dem die schlummernden Kräfte zu herrlichen Blüten erwachen, die das jahrhundertelange musikalische Geschehen auf dem Boden Wiens genährt und getragen hatten, sein Name kennzeichnet die Wende der klassischen Glanzperiode der Stadt." ↑
33. [Richard Schmitz, "Franz Schubert," *Wiener Zeitung*, November 18, 1928](#), title page. Original wording: "Wir Österreicher lieben Schubert vor allem, weil seine Musik die Sprache des österreichischen Volkes, der österreichischen Heimat widerspiegelt." In addition, the then federal minister for education added in his speech on the 100th anniversary of Schubert's death: "We love and worship him and with us Austrians the whole German people, because the German soul, the German mind, speaks so forcefully to us from his melodies. The wonder of his genius has become an inheritance for the German people." Original wording: "Wir lieben und verehren ihn und mit uns Österreichern das ganze deutsche Volk, weil die deutsche Seele, das deutsche Gemüt aus seinen Melodien so eindringlich zu uns spricht. Das Wunderbare seines Genius ist Erbe für das deutsche Volk geworden." ↑
34. Susan Youens, *Retracing a Winter's Journey: Schubert's "Winterreise"* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press; 1991); and Andreas Dorschel, "Wilhelm Müllers 'Die Winterreise' und die Erlösungsversprechen der Romantik," *The German Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (1993): 467-76. ↑
35. Nussbaumer, "täuschen und tarnen," 63. Original wording: "Marsch 'winter 42/43' beginnt mit diesem obszön-sentimentalen Tritt mit Schubert. Nicht um ihn als solchen zu benutzen—und doch bleibt er nicht ohne Wirkung—, sondern um ganz kurz und ohne Zeigefinger oder Faust über *diese* Funktionen der Musik zu sprechen. Im dritten Takt setzt im Tempo des Schubertschen Marsches, der, wie immer zum Niederknien raffiniert und sparsam sich der Lust an der Verzweiflung hingibt, ein unscheinbares Geräusch ein: Zwei kleine Plastikpanzer übernehmen das Tempo und das Geschehen. Während der Prägestempel 'Winterreise' schwimmt, der Akkord verklingt und nicht wiederkehren wird, fahren sie abwechselnd über das Trommelfell: Schrittgeräusche. Das übernommene Tempo beginnt sich bald zu verändern und die beiden Panzer entwickeln eigene Tempi, die das ganze Stück hindurch instabil bleiben. ... Insgesamt finden so viele einzelne Fahrten statt wie in der Schlacht um Stalingrad überhaupt

Panzer im Einsatz waren. ... Welche Zahl auch immer die richtige sein mag—es ging und geht hier nicht um buchhalterische Grauensfassung, sondern um den Versuch, einem Instrument die Verkleidung des Lächerlichen und Harmlosen zu lüften, sicht- und hörbar zu machen, welche Verbindung zu welcher Realität sich in den Spielzeugen Trommel und Panzer verbirgt. ... Am Ende sind die Panzer ziemlich warm und Gummiabrieb von den Raupen liegt auf dem TROMMelfell.” ↑

36. Andrew Pickering, “Material Culture and the Dance of Agency,” in Hicks and Beaudry, *Material Culture Studies*, 191–208. ↑
37. “Georg Nussbaumer: Eine Winterreise,” [YouTube](#), March 2, 2017, accessed November 1, 2021. ↑
38. Martin Seel, *Ästhetik des Erscheinens* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2000). Cf. Hans-Thies Lehmann, “Ästhetik: Eine Kolumne; Über die Wünschbarkeit einer Kunst des Nicht-Verstehens,” *Merkur* 48, no. 542 (1994): 426–31. ↑
39. Stefan Fricke, “Steine schmeissen, Klaviere und manch anderes: Der Komponist und Gesamtkünstler Georg Nussbaumer,” *Dissonanz/Dissonance* 99 (September, 2007), 23. Original wording: “Es hat was ungemein Animalisches wie ein dreibeiniges Rind ohne Kopf, das steht. Die Haltung des Pianisten ist auch sehr speziell: Er fasst diesem komisch verkrüppelten Riesentier mit den Händen ins Maul und holt so Töne raus. ... Das wirkt wie eine Art Muschel, wie eine Art Batterie, in der alle Musik gespeichert ist, die man in Mitteleuropa jemals als Musik gemacht hat.” ↑
40. Tobias Schweiger, “Zur Repräsentation von ‘Landschaft,’ ‘Kunst’ und ‘Volkskultur’ in Österreich-Bildbänden der Nachkriegszeit,” *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 60, no. 4 (2006), 399. ↑
41. “30 Jahre ‘Klingendes Österreich’ – großes Jubiläum für Sepp Forchers Erfolgsformat,” [ORF, APA-OTS, press release June 14, 2016](#), accessed December 12, 2022. Original wording: “Sepp Forcher vermittelt Wissenswertes über Kultur und Brauchtum und präsentiert echte, unverfälschte Volksmusik. Er zeigt österreichische Volkskultur in ihrem besten Sinn, macht die Zuseherinnen und Zuseher stolz auf die wunderbaren Traditionen dieses Landes und offen für die Welt.” ↑
42. “Die schönsten Gipfel der Alpen: Georg Nussbaumer,” [YouTube](#), November 4, 2011, accessed November 1, 2021. ↑
43. Fricke, “Steine schmeissen,” 22. ↑
44. *Quänger’scher Quartett Querschnitt* (staged “Salonszenen” with String Quartet), October 15, 2005, O.K Centrum für Gegenwartskunst, Linz, Upper Austria, accessed November 1, 2021. ↑
45. *A Garthen of Odin and the lost paladays*, Triptychon, 3 places: gallery, pier, ship, April 8, 2006, Oslo, HAPPY DAYS festival, accessed November 1, 2021. See here for a short documentary report: “[Happy Days Sound Festival 2006, Part 1](#),” [YouTube](#), March 14, 2007, accessed November 1, 2021. ↑
46. Georg Nussbaumer, “Dreimal mit der Faust ... gegen die Tür in Kopfhöhe, dann mit dem Fuß unten dagegen, einmal,” *Positionen* 66 (February 2006), 17–19. Original wording: “Ich bin nicht der Hausmeister meiner Werke, der jeden Winkel kennt, eher ein Kurator eines temporären Wirklichkeitsmuseums, der lange etwas vorbereitet, das sich dann schnell—und in seiner Wirkung unkontrolliert—als Aufführung entlädt.” ↑
47. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 6. ↑
48. Nussbaumer, *Salon Q*, 27. Original wording: “Das Geweih als ein vom Hirschen und seinen Lebensbedingungen eines Jahres gebildetes und abgeworfenes *objet trouvé* wird Teil des Instrumentes und Teil der Komposition: die Oberflächenstruktur, die ‘Perlung’, setzt über die Saiten rhythmische und dynamische Kleinstrukturen frei—eine Hörbarmachung eines Hirschjahrs, ein Tagebuch der Nahrung, der sozialen Stellung, der Witterungsverhältnisse. Die geschwungene Form der ‘Stangen’ bewirkt die größerflächige Peristaltik der Striche.” ↑
49. Janet Hoskins, *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell the Stories of People’s Lives* (New York: Routledge,

1998). ↑

50. *Klang zu Gang: Gedanken zur Musik in heutigen Theaterformen*, ed. Laura Berman and Madlene Therese Feyrer, *Recherchen 73* (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2009). Video documentation (excerpt), see “[Lawine, Wald und Stubenmusi: Georg Nussbaumer 2009](#),” [YouTube](#), November 3, 2011, accessed November 1, 2021. ↑
51. Nussbaumer’s earlier piece *Lawine/Welle* (2007) might have been an inspiration. ↑
52. See Ulrich Seidl’s film about basements in Austria: *Im Keller* (2014). ↑
53. Sabine Sanio, “KlangszENARIO eines Abendidylls? Georg Nussbaumer’s Konzertinstallation *LAWINE, WALD UND STUBENMUSI*,” in Berman and Feyrer, *Klang zu Gang*, 27 and 29. Original wording: “Diese Überreste des Orpheus führen ins Zentrum von Nussbaumer’s Denken und Komponieren. ... Bei Orpheus geht es nicht so sehr darum, Gefühle oder innere Zustände im Gesang zu äußern oder mitzuteilen, entscheidend ist die Zustandsveränderung, die er mit dem Singen erreicht. Das Singen ist eine Art Vibration—es funktioniert wie ein Schlüssel zu einer anderen Welt. Als erzeuge dieser gesungene Ton eine Eigenvibration der Welt, eine Schwebung, die irgendetwas verändert, irgendetwas Größeres und Mächtigeres hervorbringt. ... Nussbaumer’s Interesse an der Orpheusgeschichte gilt der Verbindung von Musik und Gewalt. ... Orpheus transformiert die *Stubenmusi* keineswegs ins Geistige, ganz im Gegenteil—diese Musik lebt gerade von der verführerischen Kraft, die sie durch Orpheus erhält. Doch zugleich: Sublimierung, Vergeistigung ist immer als Verführung, als eine Form des Begehrens zu denken. Wenn überhaupt, dann sind es die Klänge der Natur, die Steine und Blätter, die diese Verführung nicht kennen. Für Orpheus hingegen ist, wie für die Menschen überhaupt, Verführung immer eine Art der Sublimierung.” ↑
54. “Der Klang ist nur ein Nebeneffekt der Musik. Interview mit dem Komponisten von *LAWINE, WALD UND STUBENMUSI* Georg Nussbaumer,” in Berman and Feyrer, *Klang zu Gang*, 30. Original wording: “Darunter verstehe ich hier die Glocke, die den Menschen Halt bietet vor dieser ganzen Angst, welche die Natur, das Gebirge hervorruft und hervorgerufen hat. Die Glocke als akustisches Symbol für Religion. Es ist eher als ein kulturhistorisches soziologisches Phänomen zu sehen, als ein Kommentar zu meiner eigenen Gläubigkeit oder Nicht-Gläubigkeit.” ↑
55. *Ibid.*, 34. Original wording: “Die Musik dient den Bewohnern des Gebirges als Ablenkung—eine Erleichterung durch die ‘Stubenmusi,’ die Tanzmusik, wobei ‘Stubenmusi’ ja eigentlich mehr Hörmusik ist, zu leise zum Tanzen.” ↑
56. Gerlinde Haid, s.v. “Stubenmusik,” [Österreichisches Musiklexikon Online](#), accessed November 1, 2021. Original wording: “Tatsächlich ist das erste diesbezügliche Ensemble, das aus Zither, chromatischem Hackbrett, Harfe, Gitarre und Bassgeige (Kontrabass) bestand, erst 1953 spontan aus der Notwendigkeit eines Rundfunkauftritts des Salzburger Musikanten Tobi Reiser mit seinem Ensemble in Stuttgart/D kreiert worden.” ↑
57. Oliver Rathkolb, *Tobi Reiser und der Nationalsozialismus* (Salzburg: Salzburg Museum, 2016). Cf. Elsbeth Wallnöfer, *Geraubte Traditionen: Wie die Nazis unsere Kultur verfälschten* (Augsburg: Sankt Ulrich, 2011). ↑
58. The interaction between the components of the installation may be described as intermediality and intermateriality. Cf. Christa Brüstle, “Klang sehen: Konzepte audiovisueller Kunst in der neuen Musik,” in *Mediale Performanzen: Historische Konzepte und Perspektiven*, ed. Jutta Eming, Annette Jael Lehmann, and Irmgard Maassen, *Rombach Wissenschaften—Reihe Litterae 97* (Freiburg: Rombach, 2002), 181–96. ↑
59. For a discussion of agency and agents, see Robert S. Hatten, *A Theory of Virtual Agency for Western Art Music*, *Musical Meaning and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 31–35. ↑
60. Dieter Mersch, *Ereignis und Aura: Untersuchungen zu einer Ästhetik des Performativen*, *Aesthetica 2219* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2002), 47. ↑

61. Concerning Adorno's concept of musical material, see Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). [↑](#)
62. See, for example, the contributions in *Das Projekt Moderne und die Postmoderne*, ed. Wilfried Gruhn (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1989). Cf. Joakim Tillman, "Postmodernism and Art Music in the German Debate," in *Postmodern Music/Postmodern Thought*, ed. Judy Lochhead and Joseph Auner, *Studies in Contemporary Music and Culture* 4 (New York: Routledge, 2002), 75–91. [↑](#)
63. Christa Brüstle, "Composing with Raw Materials: Daniel Ott's Music-Theatre Portraits and Landscapes," in *Composed Theatre: Aesthetics, Practices, Processes*, ed. Matthias Rebstock and David Roesner (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), 257–77. [↑](#)
64. Simon Wilson, "Notes on Adorno's 'Musical Material' During the New Materialisms," *Music & Letters* 99, no. 2 (2018): 272. [↑](#)
65. Nussbaumer composed pieces using the opening of "Für Elise" as material, see his *Elise, eine Treppe herabsteigend* for six piano players (Elise, descending a staircase; 2019) and *Elisenschauer* (Elise shiver; 2019) for six pianos and twelve players. [↑](#)
66. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationnelle* (Les Presses du Réel, 1998). For an English translation, see *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon-Quetigny: Les Presses du Réel, 2002). [↑](#)
67. Harry Lehmann, *Gehaltsästhetik: Eine Kunstphilosophie* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2016). [↑](#)
68. In contrast to Lehmann, I assume that there is always meaning, i.e. interpretations of art and music (also in so-called absolute music); but what is new in contemporary music is the attempts to adequately include private, social, and political content. [↑](#)

Cover picture: Video still (musician with antlers), "[Salon Q, Georg Nussbaumer, Opera Lab Berlin](#)," [YouTube](#), Ackerstadtpalast Berlin, September 11–13, 2015, director: Evan Gardner, video: Swen-Erik Scheuerling, accessed October 29, 2022.