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“GOOD MUSIC ALWAYS WORKS” – MYRIAM GARCÍA FIDALGO & LORENZO DERINNI OF SCHALLFELD ENSEMBLE



(c) Wolf Silveri

June 2, 2021 / [contemporary music](https://www.musicexport.at/category/contemporary-music/) (<https://www.musicexport.at/category/contemporary-music/>), [portraits/interviews](https://www.musicexport.at/category/portraitsinterviews/) (<https://www.musicexport.at/category/portraitsinterviews/>)

For the [SCHALLFELD ENSEMBLE](https://www.musicexport.at/artist/schallfeld-ensemble/) (<https://www.musicexport.at/artist/schallfeld-ensemble/>), diversity, the urge to be unconventional, visual aspects and music education play a major role in programming. The ensemble introduces itself as a collective. For the mica interview, MYRIAM GARCÍA FIDALGO and LORENZO DERINNI (SCHALLFELD ENSEMBLE) met with Ruth Ranacher in a virtual space. In the conversation they talk about the paths they take to create a concert experience as a unity, what connects them to the Italian composer Pierluigi Billone, and how the long silence during the ongoing Corona crisis affected their “Call for Scores” at impuls – Internationale Ensemble- und Komponistenakademie für zeitgenössische Musik.

The Schallfeld Ensemble is known for concert formats that deal in a creative way with the respective spatial conditions. This includes sophisticated lighting and visuals. What is the process like from the idea to the performance?

Lorenzo Derinni: Every concert has its own story. The production always serves the music and the concert experience itself. The space where we can experiment the most is our own season of four to five concerts in Graz. In

certain contexts, staging can act like music education, and that is where you meet an audience that is not used to hearing new music concerts. Most of the time, the ideas come from the ensemble members, and we also implement them ourselves. But especially recently, we have had frequent opportunities to work with professional light or video artists. In the fall of 2020 we had a large ensemble production with four composition commissions that we awarded. Since we had to anticipate a limited-size audience due to the Corona situation, we planned right from the start to include a sophisticated video documentation of the concert.

Myriam García Fidalgo: We deliberately decided against the live stream format. With the video artist Nicolae David, we worked out concepts that also represented the music visually. The result was three very different styles. For me, this was a very interesting way of working. In the beginning, Nicolae asked the composers how far he could go. Precisely in order to avoid the effect of the music being disturbed by the visuals. We are talking here about live recordings during a concert, not about studio recordings.

The Inner Limit of an Object - Davide Gagliardi



How important are diversity and the interests of the ensemble members in the programming?

Lorenzo Derinni: It's always a construction site. On the one hand, there is the demand to give international insights. On the other hand, there are different focal points, such as improvisation or open scores, live electronics or multimedia. In addition, there are instrumental-acoustic compositions – we all share a soft spot for new sounds, unusual instrumentation or orchestration. In our programming we try to create a balance between the different interests and currents, while not losing sight of our mission regarding our audience.

Myriam García Fidalgo: Above all, we also want to represent the young generation studying in Graz. Or to bring composers to Graz who are in the process of establishing themselves. These are in most cases very relevant composers throughout Europe.

Lorenzo Derinni: The requirement to act on an international level is easy for us because of the cooperation with the *University of Music and Performing Arts Graz*, which is located here, and not least because of *impuls*.

FOR THE ENSEMBLE, IMPULS ACTS AS A CHECKPOINT, WHERE WE CAN TAKE STOCK EVERY TWO YEARS

Since 2015, the Schallfeld Ensemble has been the ensemble in residence at the impuls festival and academy, which takes place every other year in Graz. For those who don't know the academy, how does such a residency work? What will be special this year, apart from the fact that the festival will take place in summer for the first time?

Lorenzo Derinni: *Impuls* is our ideal stage. On the one hand, hundreds of composers of the younger generation from all over the world will be in Graz for two weeks, which is exactly the scene we want to represent. On the other hand, the most important composers of an older generation are also invited as tutors. To be able to play there is a celebration for us! We are very grateful to *impuls* and the *Ulysses Network*, a *Creative Europe* program, for this support. For the ensemble, *impuls* acts as a checkpoint, so to speak, where we can take stock every two years. This year is a special edition. For the first time we are performing a commission from one of the most important composers of our time, Pierluigi Billone, who is also one of the compositional tutors. We are going to play the Austrian premiere of "MAAT ME" for solo percussion and eight instruments. We are very happy about that!

Through the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation you were able to commission this work from Pierluigi Billone. Why commission a work from Billone?

Lorenzo Derinni: Billone was part of our very first *impuls* concert in 2015. We were able to work with him previously in the *impuls academy*, finding our sound identity and building our aesthetic references. If we now are returning to the composer from our founding period with the commission for a composition, things come full circle, so to speak.

He is also very renowned internationally ...

Lorenzo Derinni: There is already a relationship, we played "Dike Wall" in 2015, and for a long time there has been an interest in playing something by him again. That he has now composed a new piece for us is an honor.

Do you want to say anything else about the other pieces? Is there a story there, too, that the ensemble associates with them? What is the central theme of the concert evening?

Lorenzo Derinni: The program of the two *impuls* concerts still includes "it" by Franck Bedrossian, a kind of "Schallfeld classic". We played the piece as a prelude to our very first season in 2014 and have presented it many times abroad since then. In addition, we have "Neebmat" by Alberto Posadas, whose music has also accompanied us for a long time, as well as "due lune più in là" by Giorgio Netti and "D'après" by Clara Iannotta. In addition, we will record some pieces from a call for scores. The program will be quite colorful, but all pieces focus on sound exploration.



Schallfeld Ensemble (c) Wolf Silveri

Let's talk about the impuls academy. Apart from the fact that everything had to be postponed already once due to corona, what is special about it this year?

Lorenzo Derinni: Maybe we can enjoy the weather a little more, since *impuls* is now taking place in August instead of February. [laughs] This has been a quiet year. In the summer, over one hundred composers will be coming to Graz and they will want to hear their music. They want to hear and play music – just like we do. The excitement is great, because now there is finally a concrete date, which we are all waiting for quite intensely.

Myriam García Fidalgo: After so many months without concerts, this is like a dream.

Lorenzo Derinni: We had a call for scores through the *academy* and received many applications. You can feel this long silence. Some composers seem to have said to themselves that there's more time, and that they want to write a great work. You can notice the great ambition in the new pieces. Then there are submissions where you can feel the urge to try something out. We see that in miniatures, for example, where greater risks are taken.

That is, you can feel the effects of the Corona crisis in the submitted pieces ?

Lorenzo Derinni: Yes, in two ways. We find it very difficult to choose. After these many months of not being able to play, our ambition is to see to it that as much as possible can be experienced. In particular, students or younger composers have not had any opportunity to hear their music.

Myriam García Fidalgo: Our goal is to be able to give a feedback to as many submissions from the call as possible.

Is there a piece from the call that particularly surprised you?

Myriam García Fidalgo: That will be evident in the concert program. No spoilers!

What will the collaboration with the up-and-coming younger composers look like?

Lorenzo Derinni: In addition to the festival, where the *Schallfeld Ensemble* is represented with two concerts, there is the *impuls academy* with an extensive program. Mainly we will be rehearsing in the presence of the composers. These rehearsals can work towards the concert or be designed as a kind of workshop-laboratory with the composers.

Myriam García Fidalgo: We will work in detail on the instruments and give our feedback on the instrumentation, the notation, on their idea of sound. We will offer suggestions for solutions or look for alternative playing techniques. Maybe something is going to show up that we ourselves don't know yet? I always find this work particularly exciting. Young composers, for example, have a very specific idea of sound, but perhaps don't exactly know yet how the corresponding notation or instrument works out. It doesn't matter if you are more or less experienced, here you have the opportunity to work together.

Lorenzo Derinni: Up to now, outstanding soloists have come to *impuls* who always supervised the master classes as well. This time, ensembles will also take on this task. As part of the *impuls academy*, a series of special programs will take place again. With the *Schallfeld Ensemble*, we offer various focal points. Among them are a sound session with percussion by Manuel Alcaraz Clemente, reading sessions on notation of extended playing techniques for clarinet and a very special workshop for flute, double bass and voices. Elisa Azzarà and Margarethe Maierhofer-Lischka will explore the interplay of the human voice with and through their instruments; they will work as a kind of "singing instrumental duo". There's not much time and it will be exciting.

Will you also try something out where you can see from the outset that it won't work?

Myriam García Fidalgo: Of course, it can be that a certain idea of sound, as it is written down, cannot be met. But with our experience, we can often guess what is asked for. The goal of such workshops is always to encourage people to take risks. Maybe the technique will be different, but you will find the sound that was intended, that the composer

wants.

That would be the best result. I notice a certain tension here, is that due to the long break?

Lorenzo Derinni: Two full weeks of festival including the forerun in the summer in Graz after a break of two and a half years, because of the postponement, we are very happy to be able to participate. It will be a celebration!

How have you kept in touch as an ensemble during the Corona pandemic which has been going on for over a year now? How have you been personally or as an ensemble?

Lorenzo Derinni: Personally, this constant rescheduling has been the most difficult thing for me to cope with. Some projects had to be rescheduled three times ...

Miryam García Fidalgo: ... some had to be totally canceled. We discussed a lot, as I said before, whether to offer livestreams or solo recordings, and we decided against it. But we have started our own radio project with Graz-based *Radio Helsinki*. Maybe Lorenzo would like to say something about that?

Lorenzo Derinni: With radio, the attention is on listening, which suits us per se. We first cleaned up our archives and asked ourselves what to do with recordings from seven years of the ensemble's history. The original idea for "Radio Schallfeld" was to create a single program that would provide insights into our perspective on current musical events and at the same time reflect us as an ensemble. The initiative came from our colleague Margarethe Maierhofer-Lischka, who was a pioneer and fully committed to that. It grew into something more, and we are now creating a monthly series of broadcasts that can also be streamed over the internet. In terms of content, we are aiming to have a good balance and make the shows both for a specialist and a general audience. For us, this is a constant attempt at music education – creating access for new listeners of contemporary music and at the same time preparing content for a group of people who are actively involved in the contemporary music scene. To our knowledge, we are the only ensemble hosting its own radio program for contemporary music. The radio audience is extremely mixed, which is a challenge. So far, we have received a great feedback.

Step Turn - Sylvain Marty



THE ANSWER IS ALWAYS IN THE SOUND ITSELF

How do you manage this balancing act in terms of content between a group of people who are familiar with the subject matter and the so-called general public? This is a question that many people are asking themselves.

Lorenzo Derinni: The answer is always in the sound itself. Many technical hurdles can be overcome if you can awaken attention to the sound itself. Good music always works.

At the very beginning of the interview, you talked about concert formats with music education. Can you please elaborate on that a bit more?

Lorenzo Derinni: We want to offer sensual concert experiences. You don't always have to make something extra educational or explain it, it's more about creating the conditions that draw attention to what is happening during the concert. Questioning what makes this gathering in that place something special is already an education of sorts. That opens one's ears.

Myriam García Fidalgo: We try to design a concert as an event that can be experienced as a unity – and not according to the familiar pattern of concert, applause, fifteen minutes break, and so on. We can incorporate multimedia elements or interludes. Of course, it depends on the program.

You both took the master's course "Performance Practice in Contemporary Music (PPCM)" at KUG (University of Music and Performing Arts Graz). What is the most important thing there that you were able to take along with you for your practice?

Lorenzo Derinni: In a nutshell – sound culture and commitment to the new, in all its different forms. We are constantly driven by curiosity to discover pieces by younger colleagues, to take risks at events and try something out.

Myriam García Fidalgo: The ensemble was born out of the study program. We met each other there and decided to create our ensemble while playing together during our studies.

TO BE ABLE TO PRESENT CONCERTS ABROAD AFTER THIS GREAT SILENCE IS FANTASTIC

The Schallfeld Ensemble is one of the Focus Acts 2020/2021, a grant from Austrian Music Export and the BKA (The Federal Chancellery). Can you briefly outline your intention with the ensemble?

Myriam García Fidalgo: The next few months will be very exciting, if everything goes as planned. We plan to give two concerts in Spain, another one in France, as well as in Russia. To be able to present concerts abroad after this big silence is fantastic.

For us, this travel grant is a great help! Very often small cultural initiatives want to invite us, but don't have the money. This kind of support, which we are grateful to receive through collaborations with the *Austrian Cultural Forums* or the federal government, is an essential vehicle for presenting new music that is fresh and unconventional. Smaller institutions would otherwise not be able to realize our projects. The funding also enables us to implement larger projects. In addition, we are getting support from the *AVL Foundation* for some projects, and we are very proud of that.

Lorenzo Derinni: For 2021, we have also planned guest performances at smaller events such as *Mostra Sonora Sueca* (Spain) in June or at the *Il Suono Academy* (Italy). At the latter, we are guests of another ensemble and organizer, *Il Suono Giallo*. They are organizing the festival as the conclusion of an international master class for composers – here we can return to our mission of being advocates for the younger generation.

Thank you very much for the interview!

Ruth Ranacher

Links:

[Schallfeld Ensemble \(https://www.schallfeldensemble.com/\)](https://www.schallfeldensemble.com/)

[Radio Schallfeld \(https://cba.fro.at/series/radio-schallfeld\)](https://cba.fro.at/series/radio-schallfeld)

[Schallfeld Ensemble \(music austria Datenbank\) \(https://db.musicaustria.at/node/181592\)](https://db.musicaustria.at/node/181592)

[impuls festival | academy \(http://www.impuls.cc/\)](http://www.impuls.cc/)

[Ulysses Network \(https://www.ulysses-network.eu/\)](https://www.ulysses-network.eu/)

Translated from the [German original \(https://www.musicaustria.at/gute-musik-wirkt-immer-myriam-garcia-fidalgo-und-lorenzo-derinni-schallfeld-ensemble-im-mica-interview/\)](https://www.musicaustria.at/gute-musik-wirkt-immer-myriam-garcia-fidalgo-und-lorenzo-derinni-schallfeld-ensemble-im-mica-interview/) by Julian Schoenfeld

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