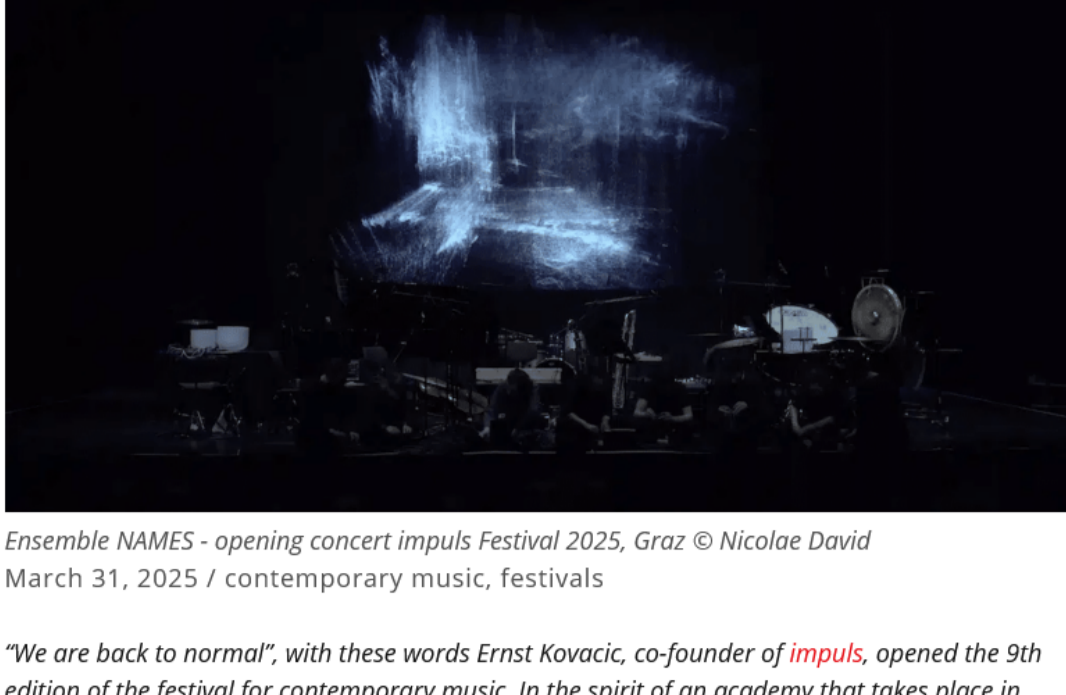


IMPULS FESTIVAL 2025: EXPERIENCING NEW MUSIC UP CLOSE

03/31/2025



Ensemble NAMES - opening concert impuls Festival 2025, Graz © Nicolae David
March 31, 2025 / contemporary music, festivals

"We are back to normal", with these words Ernst Kovacic, co-founder of **impuls**, opened the 9th edition of the festival for contemporary music. In the spirit of an academy that takes place in parallel and in interaction, work, music and learning from each other takes place for two weeks in an atmosphere of stimulating cooperation – and this radiates into the impuls Festival.

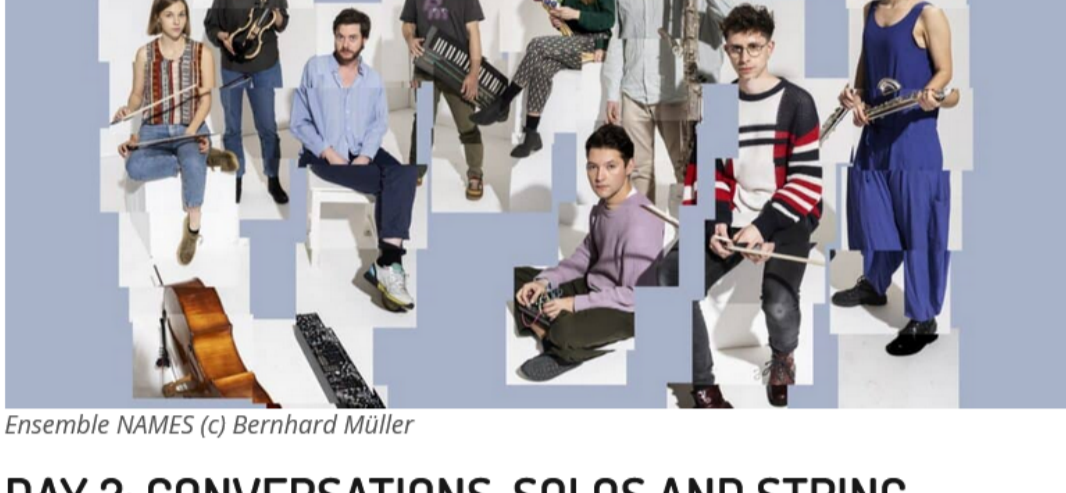
Parallel to the concerts, lectures, discussions, composer talks and much more enrich the program of the impuls Festival and the Academy. Contemporary music, from classical modernism to the latest productions, can be experienced up close in theory and practice, in discourse and sound. In cooperation with Austrian Music Export, the festival dedicated the first three days to the contemporary Austrian music scene. The Austrian Focus kicked off with Ensemble NAMES, which opened the impuls Festival on February 17, 2025.

DAY 1: THE SPACE BETWEEN US AND POINTS OF NO RETURN

ENSEMBLE NAMES

"The space between us" was the apt title of the opening concert by the ensemble **NAMES**. Nine musicians from six European countries combined various forms of contemporary art in the ensemble's program, which has been in existence since 2014. The opening was filled with current works by Thomas Grill, Clara Iannotta and a work commissioned for **Rojin Sharafi**. "We work with friends," explained NAMES in a recent **mica** interview. What sounds like exclusivity also harbors great quality. And this quality and closeness could be clearly felt that evening.

For the last piece of the evening, "points of no return" by **Marco Döttlinger**, the ensemble members left their instruments and came together at the edge of the stage with mini synthesizers and permeated the Ligeti Hall of the MUMUTH with visuals and meditatively booming sounds. From this moment at the latest, those present became a sworn community. A successful start to the following festival days!



Ensemble NAMES (c) Bernhard Müller

DAY 2: CONVERSATIONS, SOLOS AND STRING QUARTETS

SAMUEL TORO-PÉREZ

It took 15 minutes before Samuel Toro-Pérez struck the first string of his electric guitar. By then, however, a lot had already happened in the room. His concert "Open Spaces. Tracing the Architecture of Time" invited the impuls Festival audience to an intimate musical exploration of both physical and imaginary space. With changing partners – Elena Rykova (electronics) and Micha Seidenberg (live electronics) – resulting in on-stage dialogues with feedback. Here are passages with melodious sounds that seem like underwater tones mixed with electronic signals. There, the foot pedals are confirmed and subtle amplification is used until the sound almost drifts into noise. And so the musicians always work carefully to ensure that the feedback is audible and yet always remains subtle.



Samuel Toro Pérez (c) eSeL.at – Lorenz Seidler

JUDITH FLIEDL

"She is an old lady of more than 200 years, that has played crazy pieces" – this is how violinist **Judith Fliedl** introduced her violin to the audience. For what is probably the craziest piece her violin has ever played, the violinist has to change her bow after Bernhard Gander's "Bourrée bourrée" before she impulsively sets the strings vibrating. And so the interpretation of Clemens Gadenstätter's "from moves" became a performance of the purest physical mastery. Judith Fliedl and her violin are one. This was followed by "de terrae finae" by **Georg Friedrich Haas** and "Hauch" by Rebecca Saunders. The relationship with the audience plays a major role in the performance practice of Judith Fliedl, who is a research assistant at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz as part of her artistic doctorate. Bruno Strobl and Gerd Kühr will each write a piece for her and her research projects. We will be hearing a lot more from this violinist.



Judith Fliedl (c) Maria Frodl

CHAOS STRING QUARTET

The **Chaos String Quartet** has already won international prizes – and it was clear to see why during their impressive concert with works by Anton Webern, György Ligeti, Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, Francesca Verunelli, György Kurtág and Josef Matthias Hauer, when they delicately spanned the history of the quartet over more than a century. The historical arc often extends even further in their performances, for example when they combine quartet literature by Franz Schubert with free improvisation. It wouldn't be the Chaos String Quartet if they didn't dare to do the unusual. Their first-class and energetic playing often amazed the audience.



Chaos String-Quartet (c) Sven Kristian Wolf

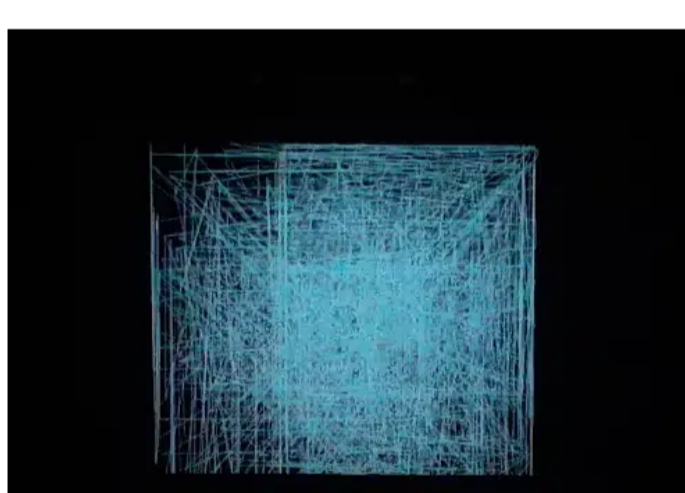
ENSEMBLE LUX

Ensemble LUX, praised for its extraordinary virtuosity, focused at first glance on recent chamber music, such as string quartets by Olga Neuwirth and Beat Furrer. But the 15 fresh miniatures by composer and violinist Thomas Wally in particular also referred to earlier compositions and thus opened up a broader perspective – the final point with Olga Neuwirth's "Settori" drew a bow to the beginning, which the quartet had already impressively set as the opening one with Neuwirth's "Akroate Hadal". Bravo!

DAY 3: FROM VISUALIZED SOUND TO 12 SAXOPHONES, A STRING QUARTET IN THE DARK AND THE HUMAN BODY

DANIEL LERCHER "LISA 5"

Daniel Lercher visualizes the sound. The world premiere of "LISA 5" begins with a rotating white circle of light on a black screen, which is transformed into increasingly complex, ever-changing graphic figures through the manipulation of electro-acoustic signals. To do this, Lercher uses the 100-year-old technology of the oscilloscope. "We have forgotten how to listen," Lercher stated in a **mica** portrait. By means of sound art, we should make it our task, to learn to hear again.



Daniel Lercher: LISA 5, Video still © Daniel Lercher

Perhaps you also have to be a bit nerdy to fall in love with the reduced graphic projections and electronic sound. In any case, the show, which is obviously backed by a wealth of know-how, makes a great impression. After the concert, Daniel Lercher addressed the audience and answered questions – anyone interested in finding out more about the technology behind "LISA 5" would be well advised to look up **Lissajous curves**.

SPECTRUM SAXOPHONE QUARTET

Twelve saxophones were standing ready for the **Spectrum Saxophone Quartet's** performance and were already glistening in the stage lights when Florian Bauer, Daniel Dundus, Severin Neubauer and Stephanie Schoiswohl took to the stage. They began with a composition by **Gerald Preinfalk**, with whom the four wind players also studied. The musicians showed that the quartet, which was founded in 2020, can also take on quiet tones with the piece "Mägen" by Yulan Yu, a former fellow student. Friedrich Cerha's "Ondate" requires several instrument changes, hence the total of twelve instruments used. The saxophone quartet by Friedrich Haas again captivates with its particularly elongated bows, including the use of low notes. The selection of pieces gives an idea of the quartet's versatility, and the four musicians master the feat of strength of the concert with brilliant technique. Most of the works can also be heard on their debut CD.



Spectrum Quartett (c) Spectrum Quartett

KANDINSKY QUARTET

Plucked and silant sounds, moments of surprise – the perfectly rehearsed **Kandinsky Quartet** masters all of this. For "A Failed Instrument" by Clara Iannotta, in playing. In order to fulfill Georg Friedrich Haas' wish for complete darkness for his String Quartet No. 10, violinist Hannah Kandinsky invited the audience to close their eyes. The hall lights went out, only the emergency exit signs were lit and the Kandinsky Quartet played the 40-minute piece from memory – the only way possible, in complete darkness.



Kandinsky Quartet (c) Lizaveta Tomanova

SCHALLFELD ENSEMBLE

For its first concert of the season, "KORPUS I", Graz-based **Schallfeld Ensemble** opened its bag of surprises. With Claudio Panariello's "To learn the obscene art of suffering pain", Schallfeld introduced the audience to a program dedicated to the body. The ensemble, which has been closely associated with impuls since its foundation, integrated works by Carola Bauckholt and Misato Mochizuki, both of whom regularly teach at the impuls Academy.

The work "don't leave the room" by Alexander Khubeev was very effective. In this musical intervention, the body is used several times as a linguistic medium: a performer interprets Joseph Brodsky's poem, "Don't leave the room" in sign language, the text runs in parallel in the large projected live video in the background and humorously reveals the impracticalities of linguistic translations when the ambiguity of signs causes confusion. The performers pulled out all the stops and received a well-earned thunderous applause from the audience as a result.

Judith Fliedl, Daniel Lercher Samuel Toro Perez, ensemble LUX, Chaos String Quartet, Spectrum Saxophone Quartet were selected for the "New Sound of Austrian Music (NASOM)" program of the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs.

Ruth Ranacher

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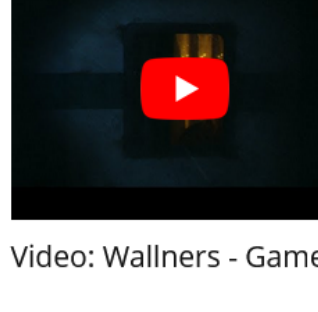
Translated from the **German original** by Arianna Alfreds.

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