

# APPRaisal

KLANGZEITORT

**Tom Schnauber:**

## **OH, YOU MEAN LIKE ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER?**

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there were dozens of American festivals that have that term in their title. A quick Google search reveals that that is still the case: Red Note New Music Festival, New Music Miami, I/O New Music Fest, New Music on the Point. Also, there were and still are a number of instrumental ensembles in the U.S. that carry the name: Juventas New Music Ensemble, GVSU New Music Ensemble, Los Angeles New Music Ensemble. And, of course, there are always a multitude of competitions asking for new music for ensembles ranging from solo oboe to orchestra. There is even an entire organization “committed to the vitality of the new music community” called New Music USA. If you expand the term to include its sister, “contemporary music”, the lists explode. The country positively resounds with new music!

The problem with the term, though, is that it is somewhat inbred. When I and those musicians with whom I spend the most time say “new music”, there is a particular range of styles that we understand it to mean; but only because we perpetuate the meaning within our own circles, circles that tend to encompass a relatively small population. In fact, most of the new music ensembles in this country are associated with music departments of universities and conservatories. Moreover, those ensembles tend to perform primarily for the composers who write the music they play, along with their students and a handful of clagues and groupies that seem to form around them.

Outside of academia, the designation loses definition. When I used to tell non-musicians that I write new music, it generally garnered blank stares; or, even worse, a response along the lines of, “Oh, you mean like Andrew Lloyd Webber?” And, if you go back to Google, you will also find gatherings around “new music”, such as South By Southwest and Coachella, that feature works

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seemed to dominate the field, leading to some interesting results from the pros, and some confusing ones from the newbies. Soon after my studies with Dittrich, I enrolled as a graduate student in composition in the school of music at the University of Michigan. My first private lesson was with composer and keyboardist William Albright. I was working on some settings for treble choir of E.E. Cummings poetry. “O the sun comes up-up-up in the opening”; the words just had a lilt to them, an easy swing that suggested... well, swing. But at the time, the echoes of the avant-garde still resounded in school hallways; and though I knew I didn’t write Modern music, I was still caught up in the notion that new meant complicated. So my first sketches of the piece were a tortured twist of non-tonal chromaticism and pseudo-big band gestures that just couldn’t get along. Albright looked at it, saw what I was doing, and asked, “If you think the words are jazzy, why don’t you just write jazz?” It was a revelation to me, a blast of sevenths tearing open the cellar doors. I realized that, just because I was learning my craft at a music school, I wasn’t obliged to a particular aesthetic. Style did not have to dictate the piece, the piece could dictate the style.

Of course, Albright, along with William Bolcom (also at Michigan) and Boston’s Joshua Rifkin, were part of the Ragtime revival of the 70s. These were musicians who believed that late 19<sup>th</sup>-century artists such as Scott Joplin and Joseph Lamb belonged in the same sphere as other revered pianist-composers such as Franz Liszt and Frédéric Chopin. This idea of expanding the concept of “art music” (a term that itself is loaded with baggage) to include what in Europe would most likely be considered *U-Musik* is a decidedly American one. True, Ravel let some of his works be colored by jazz, Bartók found inspiration in Hungarian peasant music, and Britten set folksongs from various parts of the continent; but these

I’ve been writing music for about 30 years now. The first ten essentially produced kindling (ah, Brahms, how well I understand you!). My reaction these days to most of what I wrote then is much the same as when I look at a photo of myself from the 80s sporting a mullet: It seemed a good idea at the time, but now I just cringe a little and say, “Well... I was young.”

Relative skill-level notwithstanding, however, nearly all of the works I’ve written over the decades have been in the context of music in the United States, and they have fallen into one category. At least, that’s what I’m told—by arts promoters, program booklets, and some of my relatives.

But what is that category? It is an important question; especially in the United States, where the culture is largely market-driven, and the people want to know what they’re getting before they pay for it. In a country with practically no government subsidizing of the arts, a composer’s livelihood, or even just their ability to have their music heard, is dependent on ticket sales (minimally), institutional grants (largely), private donors (primarily), and/or the good will of fellow musicians (if you’re lucky). In fact, composers’ ability to sell themselves is often more important than their ability to write music, since those who buy it are often shelling out for a product concept rather than a work of art. It is a happy coincidence when the product is also a fine work, but the two are not interdependent. Either way, if you’re going to convince someone to pay for what you produce, you generally have to start by giving it a name.

At first, whenever someone asked me what kind of music I wrote, I would simply say “new music”. It made sense: it was music (though some of those relatives of mine might not agree), and I had just written it. Not to mention the fact that, in any given year,

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dramatically different in tone and technique than what I and my more immediate colleagues write. They also draw crowds in numbers orders of magnitude higher than my audiences even at their best: According to Billboard Magazine, last year’s Lollapalooza festival drew 300,000 listeners. I doubt there are that many people in this country who even know the name Pierre Boulez.

Maybe there are other nomenclature options. About 20 years ago, I was fortunate enough to take some composition lessons from German composer Paul-Heinz Dittrich. My technique was underdeveloped, and I learned some important orchestration skills from him. But what stands out most in my memory is the first time we met. I showed him what was at the time a recent score of mine, a setting for baritone and orchestra of Lewis Carroll’s *The Jabberwocky*. I had written part of it in 7/8 meter for no other aesthetic reason than to create a sense of disorientation. He looked at it and said, “Simply because you write something in 7/8 does not mean that it is modern music.” At first I was confused; I had just written the thing a couple years earlier, of course it was modern. But then I realized that when he said *moderne Musik*, he didn’t mean “modern”, he meant “Modern”. Furthermore, he expected that I, as a young composer in the 90s, would be striving for a Modern(ist) style. But where I came from, that was somewhat old-fashioned. Even at that time, the aesthetics implied in that term had already been integrated into the fabric of Western music for at least half a century. And in the U.S., it had been upended back in the 60s by, among others, the Minimalists.

In fact, within U.S. academia, there has been no required consistency of style since the 70s, making the issue of music categorization even more confusing. And yet, well into the 90s, the Modernist tendency to equate “cutting edge” with “complex” still

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are all cases in which composers assimilated music outside their recital-hall walls to suit their own idiom. Even more ambitious attempts at putting jazz on the European concert stage, such as Křenek’s *Jonny spielt auf* or Liebermann’s *Concerto for Jazz Band and Symphony Orchestra*, are instances of composers adapting music of one context to another, albeit with great respect. However, the notion that Rag and Jazz are genres that are in and of themselves on a par with operas and concerti is one that I have only encountered in the U.S. Most contemporary music history books published in this country devote the same musicological depth to the various forms of jazz and its precursors as they do to any other Western genre. In music-school texts—for instance the widely used standards by Donald Grout or Bryan Simms—musicians like Joplin and Ellington are engaged with on the same level as Josquin and Elgar. Armand Ambrosini goes so far as to classify Ragtime as classical music.

And there’s the term that causes the most trouble: Classical. Even within musicology it is an artifice, a moniker used by later generations to describe the music of barely eight decades in the 1700s. In 21st-century general parlance, the term casts such a wide net that it captures music from over 90% of Western history. While in graduate school, I worked in a number of CD stores and was always wryly amused by the fact that, when it came to shelving, Tupac and Dr. Dre were each in their own category, while Hildegard von Bingen and Ruth Crawford Seeger were in the same one. The differences between the former two are minimal compared to the latter two, who are separated by worlds of aesthetic and technical divergences. Even when the Classical sections of the stores were large enough for us to create subcategories, we ran into problems. For instance, the Opera section contained many works that were not called that by their creators—by Claudio

Monteverdi (*favola in musica*), W. A. Mozart (*Singspiel*), Claude Debussy (*drame lyrique*), and so on—and that could also differ significantly from one another in nearly every musical feature. But that wasn't the end of it; Andrew Lloyd Webber reared his harmonically bland head here, too. Almost once every week, a shopper would walk into the Classical section of the store and ask for *Phantom of the Opera*, to which most of us would suppress an indignant scoff and reply with as much customer friendliness as we could muster, "That's in the other part of the store, under Musicals." But why? The lineage of his work, and of most musicals for that matter, can be traced directly back to those in the Opera section. From a historical-musicological standpoint, it makes much more sense for Webber to be with Weber than it does for Gershwin to be with Gossec. Instead, *Phantom* is new music that's not New Music, a piece titled "opera" that's not Opera, yet there is no compelling reason for it not to be categorized as either, and if you think too much about it, you get more confused than Don Magnifico at the end of *La Cenerentola* (which can also be found under Opera, despite being a *drama giocoso*).

This "Webber problem", this issue of misleading music categorization, has its broadest impact on contemporary composers and their relationship to the public at large when it is combined with industry marketing tactics. These days, most people download their music from the internet; from software companies making deals with labels making deals with agencies, ad infinitum. It is a slick and complicated dance resulting in products that not only cater to the lowest common denominator, but often create and maintain it. This is reflected in the way online "stores" sort their music. iTunes's list of genres, for instance, includes some fairly specialized designations that suggest current popular trends among large segments of the U.S. population, such as

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times in our careers. In a recent article for the online music journal Cuepoint, producer Craig Havighurst went so far as to suggest an entirely new term to solve this problem: "composed music". While it has a certain elegance, based on the responses from other musicians, it probably won't take. We seem to love our tried categories, even though they usually aren't true. And the struggle continues.

So what category do I fall in? Post-tonal tonic-oriented panmodalism, usually. Try finding *that* on your iPod.

#### APR — VERANSTALTUNGEN

25. — 18 Uhr — **Semestereröffnung** — *Kammersaal, Fasanenstraße 1B*

Es spielt das neu gegründete [Ensemble ilinx](#), Studio für Neue Musik der UdK Berlin.

*Programm:* Salvatore Sciarrino, »Lo spazio inverso« für Flöte, Klarinette, Violine, Violoncello und Celesta; [Elisabeth Angot](#), »Stück für Sopran und fünf Instrumente« für Sopran, Flöte, Klarinette, Violine, Violoncello und Celesta, das Stück ist dem [Ensemble ilinx](#) gewidmet; [Michael Cohen-Weißert](#), »Danksagung« für Streichquartett; [Elena Mendoza](#), »Nana de los que no duermen« für Sopran und Klavier; [Can Wang](#), »Moment aus der Ferne« für zwei Violinen; [Francesco Filidei](#), »I Funerali Dell'Anarchico Serantini« für sechs Interpreten

*Dirigat:* Fernando Bustamente und Leah Muir

*Künstlerische Leitung Ensemble ilinx:* [Leah Muir](#) und Prof. [Elena Mendoza](#)

27.+ 28. — 10–18 Uhr — **Try-Out mit Live-Elektronik** — *HfM Hanns Eisler Berlin, Charlottenstraße 55, Raum 264*

Der Workshop richtet sich an Studierende der Kompositionsklassen sowie interessierte InstrumentalistInnen von Universität der Künste und HfM Hanns Eisler Berlin.

**Tag 1:** Einführung in die technische und musikalische Problematik von Live-Elektronik, Erkundung von verschiedenen Audio-Effekten und Modellen von Interaktionen zwischen SpielerIn und Computer bzw. KlangregisseurIn durch freie Improvisationen.

**Tag 2:** Kompositorische und instrumentale Vertiefung von ausgewählten Konzepten durch das Erproben von fünfminütigen Improvisationen. Am Ende des Workshops werden die entstandenen Arbeiten diskutiert und nach Wunsch aufgenommen.

Die Teilnehmerzahl ist begrenzt, *Anmeldung* bis zum **20. April 2016** an [antoinedaurat@gmail.com](mailto:antoinedaurat@gmail.com)

*Leitung:* [Antoine Daurat](#)

#### MAI — VERANSTALTUNGEN

14.–16. — »**Zeitreisen**« – **Workshop mit dem Ensemble ascolta**

Kompositionsstudierende beider Hochschulen erarbeiten gemeinsam mit den Musikern des Ensembles eigene Stücke. Die Ergebnisse werden am **10. Dezember 2016** unter der Leitung von [Chung-Yuan Yu](#) in Berlin präsentiert.

**14.–16. Mai, Stuttgart:** Teil 1 — Ausprobieren von Ideen, Skizzen und / oder Teilen der Kompositionen

**7.–10. Dezember, Berlin:** Teil 2 — Proben und Konzert

22. — 18 Uhr — **Berliner Lautsprecherorchester** — *HfM Hanns Eisler Berlin, Charlottenstraße 55, Studiosaal*

Konzert des Berliner Lautsprecherorchesters mit neuen Werken der Kompositionsstudierenden der Berliner Hochschulen.

*Leitung:* [Prof. Kirsten Reese](#) und [Prof. Wolfgang Heiniger](#)

27. — 13–17 Uhr — **Upload-Workshop mit Sarah Sun** — *HfM Hanns Eisler Berlin, Charlottenstraße 55, Raum 458*

In diesem Workshop, der sich an KomponistInnen richtet, wird die Sopranistin [Sarah Sun](#) Gesangs- und Arbeitstechniken von SängerInnen sowie einzelne Werke des Repertoires genauer vorstellen.

29. — **Konzerte im Rahmen von »crescendo 2016«, Musikfestwochen an der Universität der Künste Berlin**

**Elektro Retro** — 18 Uhr: *Foyer des KonzertsaaIs Hardenbergstraße*

Im Seminar **Elektro Retro** beschäftigten sich Studierende im letzten Wintersemester mit historischen elektronischen Instrumenten und präsentieren nun eigene Installationen, Performances und Kompositionen für diese Instrumente und Geräte, die die Akustik und das gleichfalls historische Ambiente der Architektur des Foyers des KonzertsaaIs nutzen.

*Leitung:* [Prof. Kirsten Reese](#) und [Prof. Dr. Martin Supper](#)

Arbeiten von [Alexander Choeb](#), [Lea Danzeisen](#), [Ellie Gregory](#), [Anna Petzer](#), [Walter Sallinen](#), [Evelyn Saylor](#) u.a.

**Living Electronics – Kompositionen für Instrumente plus Live-Elektronik** — 19.30 Uhr: *Konzertsaal Hardenbergstraße*

Es spielt das [Ensemble ilinx](#), Studio für Neue Musik der UdK Berlin.

Das Konzert beleuchtet die vielfältigen Beziehungen von instrumentaler und elektronischer »Technik«. Kompositionen für Soloinstrumente oder kleine Besetzungen und Elektronik von [Peter Ablinger](#), [Thomas Kessler](#), [Luigi Nono](#), [Kirsten Reese](#), [Steve Reich](#), [Kaija Saariaho](#) und [Simon Steen-Anderson](#) spannen einen Bogen von den 1960er Jahren bis heute. Der Klang der Instrumente wird in Echtzeit verändert und gestaltet, denn für eine lebendige Realisierung der Werke bedarf es der musikalischen Interpretation am Musikinstrument ebenso wie an Computer und Mischpult.

*Interpretation und Klangregie:* [Ensemble ilinx](#), Studierende der UdK und der HfM Berlin

*Leitung:* [Prof. Kirsten Reese](#), [Leah Muir](#), [Prof. Wolfgang Heiniger](#), [Prof. Dr. Martin Supper](#), [Prof. Elena Mendoza](#)

*In Kooperation mit UNIK, Studio für Klangkunst und Klangforschung der UdK und dem Studio für elektroakustische Musik der Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin.*

#### VORSCHAU — VERANSTALTUNGEN IM JUNI / JULI

2.–6. Juni — **Exkursion zur Münchener Biennale für neues Musiktheater**

*Anmeldung* (begrenzte Kapazität, nur solange noch Plätze verfügbar) bis zum **22. April 2016** an [contact@klangzeitort.de](mailto:contact@klangzeitort.de)

4.–8. Juli — **KomponistInnen-Intensivwoche** — *Gutshof Sauen – Die Begegnungsstätte der künstlerischen Hochschulen Berlins*

Instant Composing. Entwickeln von musikalischen, intermedialen und musiktheatralischen Ideen. Gemeinsame Realisation und Reflexion von Kurzestkompositionen. Intensive Arbeitsphasen für individuelle und kollektive Kompositionsprojekte.

*Leitung:* [Carola Bauckholt](#), [Isabel Mundry](#), [Iris ter Schiphorst](#), [Daniel Ott](#), [François Sarhan](#), [Manos Tsangaris](#) und [Caspar Johannes Walter](#)

*Anmeldung* bis zum **20. Mai 2016** an [contact@klangzeitort.de](mailto:contact@klangzeitort.de)

23. Juli – 7. August — **KlangKunstBühne Spezial 2016**

**23.–30. Juli:** [Jurij A. Vasiljev](#), Sprecherzieher & Regisseur (St. Petersburg) »Die handelnde Stimme«

**1.–7. August:** [She She Pop](#), Performance-Kollektiv (Berlin) »Uneins Sein. Chöre – Dialogstrategien – Redespiele«

Außerhalb der biennalen Reihe bietet die [KlangKunstBühne](#) zwei einwöchige Workshops mit dem russischen Sprecherzieher und Regisseur [Jurij A. Vasiljev](#) und dem Berliner Performance-Kollektiv [She She Pop](#), die sich beide mit dem Thema Stimme und Sprechen beschäftigen. *Anmeldung* bis zum **23. Mai 2016**.

*Nähere Informationen zu den Kursen und zur Anmeldung* finden Sie unter [www.klangkunstbuehne.de](http://www.klangkunstbuehne.de)

K-pop und Latino; as well as rather specific delineations, such as Metal being independent from Rock. If a person happens to like Coldplay and wants to find similar music, they can restrict themselves to other artists in the Alternative section, never running into St. Lucia, who is in a different category—Indie—despite being relatively similar in sound and aesthetics. On the other hand, a curious listener who runs into a piece by Brahms can easily find more by Brahms; however, if they want to find music by someone else that is similar in style, they are just as likely to call up de Machaut or Webern as they are to find Dvořák, since all are found in Classical. (Oddly enough, our Coldplay fan will find Milton Babbitt—also under Alternative—sooner than a Boulez buff searching Classical would.) Many of my colleagues and I often try to narrow the field by identifying ourselves as composers of "contemporary classical" music. The name can serve fairly well, even within iTunes (though it results in quite the hodgepodge on Amazon). Yet to the average listener, it is still unclear—a confusion of images, not to mention a contradiction in terms.

But why all this obsession with categories in the first place? Sadly, as much as we are loath to admit it, marketing is an important consideration, especially in North America. But it goes beyond that. As composers, we want to reach as many listeners as possible, both live and through recordings, yet the audience for what we do has been dwindling for at least a century. Entire treatises have been written on why; but a result is that confusion and pre-conceptions built into just about any term we use turn away droves of potential listeners before they even consider stepping into the concert hall. And yet we also define ourselves by these terms; unless the audience is already in the seats and the music playing, we only have words to describe what we create. It is a contradiction with which most of us struggle more than a few

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German-American composer **Tom Schnauber** is Co-Founder of the arts organization WordSong and Professor of Performing Arts at Emmanuel College, Boston. He holds a Ph.D. in Composition and Theory from the University of Michigan. He also studied French horn performance, ethnomusicology, and did a small stint in Hollywood scoring films no one will ever see. Schnauber composes for a variety of vocal and instrumental ensembles, as well as for stage productions. His works have been performed throughout the U.S. and in Europe and Russia.

#### Impressum

KLANGZEITORT, ein gemeinsames Institut für Neue Musik der UdK Berlin und der HfM Hanns Eisler Berlin

*Leitung:* [Wolfgang Heiniger](#), [Irene Kletschke](#), [Daniel Ott](#) und [Iris ter Schiphorst](#)

*Redaktion:* [Stephanie Bender](#), [Iris ter Schiphorst](#) und [Cornelia Schmitz](#)

*Text:* Originalbeitrag von Tom Schnauber (Januar 2016)

*Gestaltung:* [Boris Brumnjak](#), [Maria Mikalo](#), [Müller+Hess](#)

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Kontakt — KLANGZEITORT  
Ein gemeinsames Institut für Neue Musik der UdK Berlin und HfM Hanns Eisler Berlin  
Bundesallee 1–12, 10719 Berlin  
[www.klangzeitort.de](http://www.klangzeitort.de), [contact@klangzeitort.de](mailto:contact@klangzeitort.de)  
Tel. 030/3185-2701

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