

# **Berlin reductionism – An extreme approach to improvisation developed in the Berlin *Echtzeitmusik*-Scene**

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## **Abstract**

In Berlin there is a very diversified underground contemporary music scene, popularly called *Echtzeitmusikszene* (real-time-music scene), that gathers many musicians and artists of different backgrounds who are involved in improvised and experimental music. The scene was formed in early to mid-1990ies in the squatter-circles of central East Berlin by the young musicians who were mainly practicing improvisation but were also interested in an exchange with the Berlin New Music scene. Near the end of the 1990ies a group of musicians started to work together on a specific sound aesthetics and a different approach to group improvisation which was later labeled Berlin Reductionism (ca. 1998-2003). Building on a tradition of European free-improvisation but searching for even more clarity and focus in real-time music-making and orienting to finest details of sound led them to radically reductive actions considering musical material, group interaction and self-expression under the motto: reducing one element within the music has the potential to increase the intensity of the perception of another. The 'sound' of Berlin Reductionism was very specific due to unique instruments, playing techniques and sound-identities of the musicians involved: Burkhard Beins (percussion, objects), Axel Dörner (trumpet, laptop), Robin Hayward (tuba), Annette Krebs (electro-acoustic guitar), Andrea Neumann (inside piano, mixing desk), Michael Renkel (acoustic guitar, laptop) and Ignaz Schick (turntables, electronics). In the socio-historical context of the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Berlin Reductionism appeared as a subversive quiet comment on the rush, fullness, loudness and all-at-onceness of everyday life and as such represented one of the manifestations of a common tendency in many critical experimental arts in the course of the 1990ies. The musician attitudes in the group improvising, the nature of sound they produced, their treatment of silence and the 'everyday', and redefining listening experience reflected some of the earlier ideas of John Cage.

## **CV**

Born in 1981 in Zagreb, Croatia. Studied musicology at the Music Academy of the University Zagreb. Graduated in 2006 with the thesis about the experimental electronic music of the mid 1990s and its relation to the media theory and the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Currently a doctoral student at the Musicological Seminar of the Humboldt University in Berlin under supervision of Prof. Dr. Peter Wicke, researching on aesthetic and sociological aspects of the Berlin *Echtzeitmusik*-scene from its beginnings until today.