

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-1990s 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 1990s 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 20th 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 1990s. The musician attitudes regarding group improvisation, the nature of the sound they produced, their treatment of silence and the 'everyday', and the redefining of the listening experience reflected some of the earlier ideas of John Cage.

On a cover of the first record of the group *The Sealed Knot* consisting of two British (Mark Wastell - cello, double-bass; Rhodri Davies – harp) and one German musician (Burkhard Beins - percussion) involved in the improvised music scenes of London and Berlin respectively it was written: "Critics have dubbed Wastell and Davies' music 'the new silence' and Beins' German counterpart 'new Berlin reductionism'. Categories aside, this is improvised music concerned with space, texture and time, emphasised by the gently ticking clock at the back of 'All Angels' as sounds fade into silence" (The Sealed Knot, Confront CD 06, 2000, http://www.burkhardbeins.de/releases95-03.html#sealed_knot, accessed 13.09.2010.). The labels like *new London silence*, *new Berlin reductionism*, *onkyo* or more general variants like *lowercase-improv*, *micro-improv*, *sound-improv* and similar, are used to designate the reductionist aesthetics characterizing many non-academic improvised musics from the end of the 1990s to the beginning of the 2000s, not only in London (cf. Bell 2005) and Berlin (cf. Beins 2003: 36-37, Wilson 2003: 125-130), but also in Vienna (cf. Wilson 2003: 121-124) and Tokyo (cf. Bell 2003, Plourde 2008, Novak 2010), to name just a few, always in somewhat different form depending on the instruments and techniques the players used as well as on the context of its appearance. The way and form in which reductionist aesthetics manifested itself in respective socio-historical contexts and the influence it had on the musical development of its protagonists make it an interesting subject of research. This article focuses on reductionist aesthetics as collectively developed in the Berlin *Echtzeitmusik*-scene¹ end of the 1990ies by a group of musicians that later, in the year 2000, formed the ensemble *Phosphor*: 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).

The term *reductionism*

The term reductionism exemplifies how, in the ever-changing practice of improvised and experimental music, very specific labelling can even have a negative effect in the long run. The musicians, who at the time of their first records and first bigger tours spread the term themselves for practical reasons (cf. Wastell 2006) now mostly complain when categorized as reductionists. Although certainly benefiting from that phase in their musical development, they all moved away from strict reduced aesthetics long ago. In fact, even at the time when reductionist aesthetics was dominant in some scenes, many of the musicians involved were at the same time playing e.g. *noise*, *free jazz* or composed new music within their other projects (cf. Beins 2010). The term itself, being an -ism, "tends to imply reduction to be an end in itself rather than a strategy, a means to an end" (Hayward 2009/2011). Therefore, "[i]t might have been more useful to find a term that described what the music focuses on, rather than the means it may for a time have used to achieve such focus" (ebd.), perhaps as in the term *onkyo*, which means sound in Japanese. However, the term reductionism is already so established in connection with the Berlin scene and the Berlin sound of that particular period that it has been simply adopted here as well.

As opposed to free jazz, the so-called free improvised music in Great Britain in the 1960s seemed reduced. Musicians like Derek Bailey, John Stevens, Evan Parker or Tony Oxley were playing improvised music that was more restrained, fragile, transparent, fragmented and less directly emotional (cf. Wilson 1999: 37). Emancipating themselves completely from the African American jazz practice (see McKay 2005: 193ff), they rather name pointillist music of Anton Webern as an influence which led them to concentrate on refinement and individualizing of the sound colour and extreme reduction of musical language (cf. Wilson 1999: 38). Building on that tradition, but emerging in a different context, Berlin Reductionism of the late 1990s appeared as a sort of reaction to the state in the improvised music at the time which, "even when very distanced from free jazz, appeared to be too talkative and sometimes almost like driven by *horror vacui*" (Beins 2003: 36). Musically, it manifested itself in a rather strict material selection, concentration on only some acoustic elements by eliminating the other, slowing down, reducing density of musical events, avoiding immediate reactions while improvising in a group, re-evaluating the relation between sound and silence, reducing dynamics range, all in order to be able to achieve more control and more focus on a chosen element (cf. Wilson 2003: 40; also Hayward 2009/2011; Neumann 2003: 128-129). The resulting music was "characterized by long silences, reduced dynamics and restrained use of noise" (<http://www.robinhayward.de/biography.html>, accessed 16.09.2010.).

Berlin *Echtzeitmusik*-scene and the emergence of reductionism

The music scene within which the reductionist aesthetics eventually emerged started to form in early to mid 1990ies in parts of central East Berlin. In the years after the wall came down numerous places – the whole blocks of houses, shops, factory and warehouse buildings etc. – were simply abandoned, inviting creative young people, students, artists, activists, to inhabit them and enrich them with new ideas and initiatives. Up to the late 1990s numerous squats presenting alternative lifestyles and culture could be seen almost on every step through the city districts of Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg and Friedrichshain. The venues emerged only to disappear again in a matter of weeks or months and the cultural scenery was in constant change. This situation was extremely favourable especially for the development of all kinds of non-commercial experimental artistic practices. Because there were no rents for venues, or

they were very low, and also because of extremely low personal living costs many artists moved to Berlin and made alternative art scenes blossom.

The so-called Berlin *Echtzeitmusik*-scene was formed around two venues in the mid 1990s which both vanished before the end of the decade. The first venue and meeting point for many musicians which will later be seen as members of the same scene was a club called *Anorak* in the squat Dünckerstraße 14, Prenzlauer Berg, active from December 1994 till December 1997. It hosted evenings of improvised music entitled simply *Echtzeitmusik* where young musicians/improvisers of different backgrounds, who didn't want to relate to the already established Berlin free jazz and improv circles, formed their first bands and collaborations. *Anorak* was a kind of rebellious, leftist venue, clearly rooted in the Berlin squatter culture and musically still to a great extent inspired by the New York 80-ies' downtown scene. With the founding of the new venue – concert series called *2:13-Club* in *Vollrads Tonsaal* in Schönhauser Allee 177, Prenzlauer Berg, in September 1996 – by the newcomers Burkhard Beins and Michael Renkel, part of the musicians started to turn to the academic new music in search for new projects and creative impulses. Some were at that point intensively discovering "soundworlds of new composed music" (Wilson 2003: 125), especially from the likes of Giacinto Scelsi, Morton Feldman and the late Luigi Nono, which they tried themselves out as interpreters and started to reflect and discuss their musical ideas. The thematic focus of the *2:13-Club* "was a connection between composed and improvised chamber music, presentation of a distinctive, younger generation of musicians and exploration of the newer musical technologies and means of expression" (Beins 2000: 26). In this context the reflection and work on the reductionist aesthetics began but, after the venue closed in May 1998, had to continue mostly in musicians' own flats, where concerts were also organized in lack of a central working and concert space. This changed in June 2000 when the *Echtzeitmusik*-scene got two new important venues – *Raumschiff Zitrone* and *Labor Sonor* – of which the latter still exists.

The years 1998 and 1999 in the Berlin *Echtzeitmusik*-scene saw a conscious attempt of a group of musicians to develop an alternative approach to improvisation. Through discussions and working in different groups² they tried to do just the opposite of the usual free group improvisation, characterized by musical thinking in flow, predictable energy and dynamic curves, expressiveness and the communicational principle (cf. Neumann 2003: 128). Based on a sound-focused aesthetics, their approach mixed the concepts of composition and improvisation and was on several levels informed by the ideas of John Cage, who influenced some of the musicians. As a result, the music started to appear 'reduced', at least in comparison to that what was usual before and around it. This music could be explained in a bigger context of the *zeitgeist*, drawing parallels to the other similar phenomena in other musical genres. Several aspects seem to be unavoidable to be able to understand Berlin Reductionism, although the musicians themselves remember and interpret their experience of reductionism very individually. Some of them emphasize its connection to their personal ethics and lifestyle, some of them were rather occupied with sound-explorations and some with issues of group improvisation. To all of them the reductionist aesthetics provided means to achieve their personal goals at the time.

Sound

Berlin Reductionism was born among musicians who paid much attention to the sound itself. One could say that they are curious about sounds, their structures and timbres, their origins and their combinations maybe even more than they're interested in music as such. Unlike for most people who expect music to have certain qualities such as melody or rhythm, for them perfect music might be found just listening to the sounds of everyday life. In a musical situation, every object can be a sound originator. If they work with musical instruments, they

prefer to search for sounds not typical for these instruments by extending them using different preparations or developing alternative approaches and techniques. They even build completely new instruments and often experiment with seemingly endless possibilities of electronics. One characteristic is that the sounds they are interested in are almost never usual, predictable tones, they are rather noises of all kinds and forms.

in the years previous to his relocation to Berlin in March 1998, the British tuba player Robin Hayward developed a new technique of valve rotation on tuba, the application of which produced a relatively quiet white noise. The technique was soon adopted by the Berlin-based trumpeter Axel Dörner, with whom Hayward was already collaborating with, and the sound came to be very characteristic both for the two players and for the so-called *Berlin sound* in general. "Instead of using the valves on the tuba to change pitch, which is what they're designed to do, I twist the valves, reducing the aperture through which the air flows, which creates the sound of rushing air within the instrument. Different degrees of twisting create different sized apertures and therefore different qualities of noise" (Hayward 2004: 36). Upon Hayward's arrival in Berlin there was already an established circle of musicians gathered around the previously mentioned *2:13-Club*, who were interested in sounds, concepts and discussion and were sharing similar ideas about new approaches to sound and improvisation. Being mostly so-called composer-performers, i.e. musicians that play their own music/sound material, be it solo or in a group, their basic activity was to work on their own sound identities through developing their own distinctive sound palettes: e.g. Burkhard Beins on percussion combined with various other objects, Michael Renkel and Annette Krebs on guitars, objects and electronic devices (cf. Krebs 2002), Andrea Neumann then still working with a piano frame (cf. Neumann 2008), Ignaz Schick who had recently switched from saxophone to turntables and electronics etc. Collectively, they were building common sound territories with focus on relatively quiet noises. They tried to find material which would be rather non-expressive, non-organic, non-'human', more like machinist, objective and noise-like, that would remind on everyday sounds like those of washing machines, toilet flush, heating, ventilation or construction work (cf. Neumann 2003: 129). The tendency to keep it low-volume opened "a microscopic dynamic spectrum with a large potential for differentiation" (cit. Nauck on www.michaelrenkel.de/page/phosphor.html, accessed 14.09.2010.).

This music played in Berlin in the late 90s and even much later, because the musicians didn't give up the sound material discovered back then but rather expanded it, mirrored interestingly the ideas of John Cage. The sounds produced were reminiscent of environmental noises and many silences between them could let the actual environmental sounds in. During the performances it was mostly attempted to achieve a quiet situation in order to be able to observe the qualities and changes within the produced sounds (all present household appliances or similar would supposedly be turned off before the performance would start). However, one can't say the unintended environmental sounds were unwanted. On the contrary, besides the fact that they merged so well with the intended sounds, one could say that one of the aims of this music was to arrange listening situations which would make the audience attentive to this merge and sensitize it to the beauty of sounds/music constantly present in our everyday lives, according to Cage's observation that "nothing is accomplished by writing a piece of music, nothing is accomplished by hearing a piece of music, nothing is accomplished by playing a piece of music, our ears are now in excellent condition" (Cage 1995: xii). The recordings of such improvised music were having an interesting effect too. Again similar to Cage, who in his piece 4' 33" had framed the unintentional sounds of the environment into a piece within a concert situation, wishing the audience would listen to them with the same attentiveness as they would listen to concert music, listening to a recording of this music sometimes reminds one of listening to some ordinary, everyday sounds (although they were thoughtfully produced), which are to be called music only because they are fixed on a CD and should be listened to accordingly. But in addition to that, the unique merge of the

recorded sounds with always different acoustic environment in a listening situation would theoretically always provide a different listening experience.

Reductionism in practice

The early reductionist phase was characterized by focusing on sound, extensive usage of silence and "the quality of staying in one place" (Hayward 2009/2011). "Rather than starting out from continuous sound, to be structured by the placement of silences, these groups took silence as the background upon which sounds were imposed" (ibid.). Reducing immediate group interaction allowed the musicians to focus on delayed reaction and deliberate non-reaction and reducing self-expression to a minimum enabled them to focus on the qualities inherent within the sounds themselves (cf. ibid.). Making music static and avoiding immediate reaction was a rather radical concept in the context of musical improvisation, which generally based on some sort of communication. It responded to Cage's critique of improvisation: "...he says improvisation is like a conversation where each musician is supposed to listen as closely as possible to the other one in order to respond to the other one. He worked with some jazz musicians in America and he suggested that each plays as if he were the only person in the world and doesn't listen to the other one. He said it worked in the rehearsal but in the gig they started the conversational thing. And he particularly criticized, when one musician got louder, everyone seemed to get louder too. I certainly didn't get along with the thing that you shouldn't listen to each other. But the idea that it could be modelled according to something other than a conversation – immediately commenting, chatting conversation. I tried to avoid things that seemed to have become automatic" (Hayward Interview, 21.04.2010.; cf. Cage 1984: 215f).

Stasis and the principle of non-reaction allowed a lot of 'silence' to become a part of music. Apart from being the basic state into which sounds were placed, silence was also a means to irritate a flow of musical decisions within an improvisation (cf. Beins 2010) and gain time to reflect, listen or even to give completely another direction to the respective improvisation. The resulting reduced density of musical events enhanced listening abilities both among players and among audience: „In a reduced music it is possible for me to concentrate on the sound of one of my fellow players and to add a sound, that would enrich the first sound (in its frequency spectrum or in whichever other form). The moment in which one of two sounds changes or stops also has a strong effect. This effect that arises in the course of focusing on details (what happens, when I add this sound to that sound, what happens when I suddenly terminate it or slowly fade it out etc.) is for me a motivation while playing. No objective 'necessities' happen then. It is not measured out that after 2/3 of one sound the abandonment of another one sounds especially effective. However, I think that the concentration of players on details while listening can also be transferred to the listeners and that it can represent a quality for them, that makes it possible to follow what is happening with excitement." (Andrea Neumann per email, 03.05.2010.)

After about a year and a half focusing on sound mostly and rather neglecting formal thought, by the turn of the millennium Berlin reductionists started to show an increased interest in narrative elements in music and conscious building forms through improvisation (cf. Neumann 2003: 129-130; Hayward 2009/2011). Hayward saw this turn as an end of truly reductionist approaches and described the music played afterwards as *abstract-narrative*, consciously working with elements like expectation or surprise (cf. Hayward, www.jazzatelier.at/va/kal06.htm#04, accessed 15.09.2010.). The usage of silence was not in focus anymore and musicians were rather searching "for the possibilities of building on the preceding 'clarification-phase' and extending and evolving the gained musical potential in new directions" (Beins 2010).

Improvisation, reduction and form

Musicians of the Berlin *Echtzeitmusik*-scene, most of whom were first and foremost improvisers, started very early to question improvisation as their ultimate working method, or at least the usage of the term to describe their work. Being already part of a completely marginalized scene and hopeless in ever reaching bigger audiences and gaining commercial success, their only chance was in trying to prove the artistic value of their work and hopefully earning institutional recognition and thereby financial support. "There is a noticeable reluctance to use the word [improvisation] and some improvisors express a positive dislike for it. I think this is due to its widely accepted connotations which imply that improvisation is something without preparation and without consideration, a completely ad hoc activity, frivolous and inconsequential, lacking in design and method. And they object to that implication because they know from their own experience that it is untrue. They know that there is no musical activity which requires greater skill and devotion, preparation, training and commitment. And so they reject the word, and show a reluctance to be identified by what in some quarters has become almost a term of abuse. They recognise that, as it is generally understood, it completely misrepresents the depth and complexity of their work." (Bailey 1992: xii.) It is indeed often the case that, if not explicitly followed by an idea or aim which would justify it or make it interesting, improvisation easily can seem senseless, useless or boring to those who are not taking part in it and would probably be valued as not worth of any further attention. Although certainly not with that explicit aim, the reductionist aesthetics still gave improvisational practice in Berlin a form of depth, something that could be identified and reflected on even years later. Besides, concepts and ideas musicians were working on could only be developed and refined in established settings during longer period of time, so this type of improvisation didn't have anything to do with the *ad-hoc* one. One of the ideas was e.g. that reductive strategy could solve some problems of formal development during improvising.

The form in improvisation is always open since it depends on the intuitive decisions musicians make in the course of performance, in real-time. Through questioning that intuitiveness, those 'instinctive' feelings that decide about formal progressions (cf. Neumann 2003: 129) a need emerged "to carefully examine when and why one plays something when improvising with the aim to gain more clarity, transparency, 'necessities' in processes and formal progressions. That is easier to achieve when one chooses certain things and eliminates others (i.e. reductive strategy). It concerns the choice of the material (...), the treatment of the material (...), what regarding time e.g. means: When does a sound begin, when does it end, where will it be placed?" (Ebd.) However, in spite of the attempt and the fact that some really interesting music came out of it, the reductionist approach might not have solved those questions in a satisfactory manner: "It is certain that through the conscious choice of material and the more conscious employment of the time-factor a special sound approach was formed. But the question about the 'necessary' progressions or satisfactory forms in this kind of improvisation has not been solved – and it is possibly not solvable within improvisation. The quality of improvisation – openness for the moment, spontaneous, lively creation in the present – perhaps rules out the qualities of composition – finding coherent form for musical thoughts and work it out with time" (Neumann 2003: 129-130). Neumann concluded rather pessimistic at the time: "The attempt to structure improvised music more clearly through a certain form of reduction maybe meant removing its distinctive qualities, what for example proves the accusation that it (this reduced form) is too mental, not instinctive enough, a product of the head, but still not a composition" (ebd.).

Still, through processes of reduction, but even more important, by regularly working together, a group was establishing common musical territories which helped the music appear more coherent in result although this might have escaped the conscious control of involved musicians. Burkhard Beins also explains that improvising "groups that work together over longer period of time, and in doing so inevitably search for similar musical territories together over and over again, develop self-organisational processes in the course of their collective learning history that can among other things lead to a notable increase of probability to make decisions on a high quality level, i.e. to keep achieving music that is coherent in itself and that can always produce new forms but at the same time always carries the character specifically necessary to a given situation" (Beins 2008/2011).

Conclusions

Berlin Reductionism appeared as one of the manifestations of the basic need for clarity and focus combined with interest in inner qualities of sounds of an ever increasing spectrum that happened in the course of the 1990s in different styles of experimental and innovative music due to overwhelming changes in the everyday environment. Parallels can be seen not only in fellow improvised music scenes of Vienna, London or Tokyo but also e.g. in many experimental styles of newer electronic music, like *clicks'n'cuts* and *glitch electronica* or minimalistic, analytical textures of e.g. the Raster-Noton artists. It would be interesting to map those phenomena in the respective contexts and connect them, it is however unfortunately out of the scope of this text.

Berlin reductionists based their approach and appearance in sound on a unique clash of different elements marking their collective identity in a given context. Being clearly not part of the academic scene but certainly aspiring for and deserving recognition, the output of Berlin *Echtzeitmusik*-scene is one argument for the necessity to finally re-evaluate distinction between the supposed high and low arts. One could argue that the rather wild context in which Berlin Reductionism at the end of the 1990ies emerged allowed it to develop freely and take a form it wanted to. It is hard to claim that it responded to or negated any clearly definable phenomena in music or life completely consciously: the reflections about it came mostly later. The way to the quiet and concentrated playing and listening, although inspired by certain ideas and followed by reflection at the time, seems to have been found rather intuitively, as a reaction out of need for something different. In comparison to what it most obviously built on – tradition of European free improvisation – it manifested its difference in an insistence on conscious avoidance of any kind of automatisms as well as in rigorous reduction of the musical parameters and attempt of gaining as much control as possible over material used.

The social relevance of the Berlin Reductionism and other extremely reductive approaches to music could be traced in a way their musical output provoked one's listening habits in order to introduce new modes of listening and open minds, according to Cage: "I saw art not as something that consisted of a communication from the artists to an audience but rather as an activity of sounds in which the artists found a way to let the sounds be themselves. And in their being themselves to open the minds of the people who made them or listened to them to other possibilities than they had previously considered. To widen their experience, particularly to undermine the making of value judgements." (Cage in Kostelanetz 2003²: 44.) Reductionism attempted to make one listen to and enjoy the usually inaudible (unimportant, quiet, ordinary) by creating special listening situations where sounds and their relations would be explored in their finest details and which invited audiences to attentive and active listening. In addition, this kind of training could be especially useful in learning how to listen properly to much of contemporary music and any possible future music, whatever form it might take. On a more abstract level, this music could also be an example of how one could live, the idea

especially Hayward was occupied with, although only for a while: "The idea that this aesthetics is somehow going to change the way in which I behave in the world and make me content simply with whatever the world is offering me and accept what I don't intend, that idea I seriously began to question by 1999. Now it seems like a very naïve idea, the trip I was on I think" (Hayward Interview, 21.04.2010.).

Although no one of the musicians likes to be labelled as just reductionist nowadays, each one of them acknowledges the importance of this phase of focused working with sound and reflective searching for answers on important questions of improvised music practice for his/her own musical development. It also had a great influence on the whole scene: "Reductionist phase gave people something to react against; it became associated to the city, the sound of the Berlin scene. People could join in with it or react against it. I never thought at the time it will have the influence it had." (Hayward Interview, 21.04.2010.) Since the reductionist phase which, broadly defined, lasted approximately to 2003, the approach of the musicians involved opened up again in different directions. In the extremely diversified Berlin *Echtzeitmusik*-scene no such formulated collective aesthetics evolved ever since and the time will show which direction(s) these practices are taking at the present moment.

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Music examples

1. Das Kreisen (Burkhard Beins-wooden suitcase, Robin Hayward - tuba, Annette Krebs – electroacoustic guitar). 1998. Live at Symposium for Contemporary Music, Copenhagen, 20.11.1998. On CD in Wilson 2003.
2. roananax (Axel Dörner - trumpet, Robin Hayward - tuba, Annette Krebs – electroacoustic guitar, Andrea Neumann – inside piano). 1999. Unpublished. – Excerpt.
3. Andrea Neumann (inside piano, mixing desk) & Annette Krebs (electroacoustic guitar, mixing desk). 2000. *Rotophormen*. Charhizma, cha009. - Rotophorm 2.
4. Ignaz Schick (electronics) & Andrea Neumann (inside-piano, electronics). 2001. *Petit Pale*. Zarek, CD 05. – Petit I.
5. Phosphor (Burkhard Beins – percussion, objects, Alessandro Bossetti – soprano saxophone, 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). 2002. *Potlatch*, P501 CD. – p1.

Notes

¹ The term *Echtzeitmusik* (real-time music) was first used in a club called Anorak in the mid-1990ies in order to designate a concert series presenting a new generation of improvisers that didn't have/want to have much in common with already established Berlin free jazz and free improv scene. After starting the online concert calendar for underground improvised and experimental music in Berlin in 2000/2001 under that name (www.echtzeitmusik.de), the term has grown to be used as a general designation for a scene of musicians and venues promoted through that website. Although it has recently been tried to define *Echtzeitmusik* and its scene very broadly, claiming that "its bandwidth stretch[es] from electro-acoustic music, new reductionism, noise, jazz, avant rock, pop/songwriting, new composed music, performance, sound-art/installations all the way through to rock and club music (techno, electronica)" (cf. <http://zangimusic.de/index.php?id=180>, accessed 13.09.2010.), the term is still mostly used in connection only with certain practices, names, venues, concert series and aesthetics within the much bigger context of experimental or improvised music scene(s) of Berlin. It is however (still) impossible to claim that it designates a kind of a new musical style.

² E.g. rar (Robin Hayward, Axel Dörner, Radu Malfatti), Roananax (Robin Hayward, Andrea Neumann, Annette Krebs, Axel Dörner), Das Kreisen (Burkhard Beins, Annette Krebs, Robin Hayward), Robin Hayward & Axel Dörner Duo, Andrea Neumann & Ignaz Schick Duo, Andrea Neumann & Annette Krebs Duo, Phosphor (Burkhard Beins, Alessandro Bosetti - shortly, Axel Dörner, Robin Hayward, Annette Krebs, Andrea Neumann, Michael Renkel, Ignaz Schick) among others.