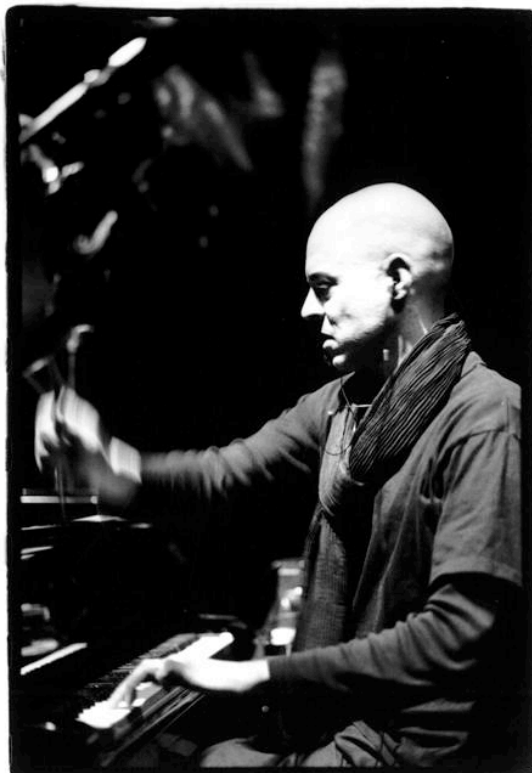


Nik Bärtsch piano solo



Ecstasy through asceticism

RITUAL GROOVE MUSIC, the title of my first CD, also points to the fundamental concept of my musical thinking. The music shows a close affinity to architecturally organized space and is governed by the principles of repetition and reduction as well as by interlocking rhythms. A piece of music can be entered, inhabited like a room. It moves forward and transforms through obsessive circular movements, superimposition of different meters and micro-interplay. The listeners attention is directed toward minimal variations and phrasing. The band becomes an integral organism - like an animal, a habitat, an urban space. One must think with ears and hands.

Normally, we work in three distinct formations. The group MOBILE plays purely acoustic music, performed in rituals of up to 36 hours, including light- and room design. The Zen-funk quartet RONIN, by contrast, is more flexible and plays the compositions more freely. As a solo performer I

perform my compositions on prepared piano with percussion.

Despite the tightly organized compositional construction, improvisation plays an important role in our music. On the one hand, accentuation, ghost notes, and variations within a composition are tossed back and forth between the musicians; on the other hand, a particular voice within a composition might have more freedom than the others. In doing so, that voice forms an independent module that can interact with the strictly notated interlocking patterns in continuously changing ways. Groove-habitats or void musical space of raw poetry emerge.

My thinking and music are based on the tradition of urban space. They are not distilled from a national or stylistic tradition but from the universal sound of cities. The city in its roaring diversity requires an ability to focus and concentrate on the essential: to measure one's actions, to remain silent at the right place. This music draws its energy from the tension between compositional precision and the self-circumvention of improvisation. From self-implied restriction stems freedom. Ecstasy through asceticism.

Nik Bärtsch , January 2003

"Bärtsch's mysterious music will be around for a lot longer than the quick fix that majority taste seems to clamour for." The Observer (UK)

Biography



Born 1971 in Zurich. Pianist, composer and producer. Instruction in piano and percussion from the age 8. 1997 Graduation from the 'Musikhochschule Zürich'. 1989-2001 studies in philosophy, linguistics and musicology at the University of Zurich.

2003-04 stay in Japan.

Ongoing work on his RITUAL GROOVE MUSIC as pianist and composer. Leader of zen-funk quintet RONIN (since 2001; with Kaspar Rast, Björn Meyer, Andi Pupato & Sha) and MOBILE (since 1997). Teacher for 'practical aesthetics' at the 'Musikhochschule Zürich/Winterthur'

(2000-03). Co-founder of the Music club EXIL in Zurich (2009).

Interest in the influence and the combination of music and movement, specially in the following Bodytechniques: Aikido, Feldenkrais, Gyrotonic.

Numerous awards from 1999, including the jazz priority award of Swiss Arts Council in 2006.

Important Compositions:

- 'Modul 26 for Sextet' für die New Yorker Gruppe Bang On A Can (25 Minuten, 2010, UA Merkin Hall New York).
- 'Orit' for three percussionists (20 minutes, 2008, premiere at the Mehrklang Festival Freiburg 08).
- 'BLUE TRILOGY' with MOBILE (2000-02), three 36 hour multimedia live concerts.
- 'SEE - a live musical soundpicture', 4 hour performance on the lake stage in Zurich; with oos AG (Co-Production with the Theaterspektakel Zurich).
- Openair performance together with the Butoh dancer Imre Thormann and the Gagaku ensemble of the Osaka Gakuin University Japan at the Hiyoshi Shrine in Otsu Japan (2005).
- 'Modul Ritual', New Chamber Funk I, composition for 4 saxophones, piano, rhodes, drums & percussion (70 minutes, written in Japan 2003/04 for the ARTE QUARTETT).
- 'Orchestrated Moduls', New Chamber Funk II, composition for RONIN and the Ensemble für Neue Musik Zurich (2005, 60 Minutes).
- 'Macbeth' by Shakespeare/Müller, (Sophiensäle Berlin 2004), director: Nora Somaini.
- Solo project 'Hishiryō' for prepared piano and percussion (since 2001)

As well as:

- Music for the documentary film projects Photo Suisse (2003-04), Design Suisse (2005-06), and "Swiss View" (2005-10 with the producer Marco Fumasoli) for the Swiss TV SFDRS.
- Various music scores for theatre: 'Titus Andronicus' by Shakespeare/Müller at the Theater Kampnagel in Hamburg (1999); 'Gier' by Sarah Kane (Dresden 2001) and 'Kühltransport' by Maxim Biller (Dresden 2002); 'Medea' by Euripides' (Stadttheater Mönchengladbach 2002), director: Nora Somaini.
- Music score for the CD 'Design Hören' of the architecture magazine "Hochparterre" & the ITH (2004)
- Various commissions for television including ARD (Germany) and SF (Swiss Television)

Press

"Then Nik Bärtsch solo on the grand piano. The crystalline stringency of the pure acoustic modules are musically very demanding and their more ambient sound spaces without any linear direction of movement build up subtle tensions of progression. (...) Great, very rewarding concert, still an incredible talent - a new solo CD is almost a must." Marcus Maida, Jazzthetik March 2010 (D)

"When Bärtsch finally starts his concert in the Babylon Mitte cinema hall, it soon becomes clear that the music of the 39-year-old is always about precision and physicality, ritual movement and high concentration." Markus Schneider, Berliner Zeitung 2010 (D)

"Postulate: precision: tension in free improvisation is perhaps always due to the contrast between musical stringency and mere noise. Nevertheless, during the "unerhört"-concerts occasionally one dreamt of an improvisation that would at all times follow - despite the freedom - the postulate of precision and conciseness to deliberately form, emphasise, animate each tone. Similar maybe to Nik Bärtsch, who had demonstrated in his solo performance on Saturday how, in his minimal funk, every individual tone comes fully into its own - rhythmically, melodically, colourful." Ueli Bernays, NZZ 2009 (CH)

"The paradox is that Bärtsch's music, from his solo on the piano to his two groups Mobile and Ronin, demands extreme concentration and great relaxation. It comes from a dominance of the rhythmical. It puts waves of grooves into motion which add up to major complexity but adjust themselves so smoothly into a dramaturgy that one can glide on them without knowing what is happening."
Peter Rüedi, Die Zeit (D)

"Cool modules rather than well-behaved songs, polyrhythmical funk of hypnotic stubbornness."
Rolling Stone (D)

"Groove without any ego - the Swiss musician Nik Bärtsch makes great zen-funk." Süddeutsche Z. (D)

"Seldom has the emptiness been so lively, rarely repetition is so stimulating. And never before have awry sound patterns been so groovy." Fridtjof Küchemann, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (D)

"Sounds like Japanese knives, Bärtsch's precision and clarity awakes ... Recommendable for all: from theoreticians and tea ceremony buffs to dance freaks." Oliver Hochkeppel, Süddeutsche Zeitung (D)



Selection of CDs:

Nik Bärtschs Ronin, „LLYRÌA“, ECM 2010
Nik Bärtschs Ronin, „HOLON“, ECM 2008
Nik Bärtschs Ronin, „STOA“, ECM 2006
Nik Bärtschs Mobile, „AER“, 2004, Ronin Rhythm Records
Nik Bärtschs Ronin, „REA“, 2004, Ronin Rhythm Records
Nik Bärtschs Ronin, Live, 2003, Ronin Rhythm Records
Nik Bärtsch, „Hishiryo“, Piano Solo, 2002, Ronin Rhythm Records
Nik Bärtschs Ronin, „Randori“, 2002, Ronin Rhythm Records
Nik Bärtschs Mobile, „Ritual Groove Music“, 2001, Ronin Rhythm Records



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