# Karlheinz Essl

Curriculum Vitae



Born in Vienna in 1960. Austrian composer, performer, improviser, media artist and composition teacher. Karlheinz Essl attended the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna (1979-87), where he studied composition with Friedrich Cerha and electro-acoustic music with Dieter Kaufmann. He also studied musicology and art history at the University of Vienna (doctorate in 1989 with a thesis on Anton Webern's concept of synthesis). Until 1984 he was active as a double bassist in chamber music and experimental jazz ensembles. As a composer, he contributed to Gottfried Michael Koenig's *Project 3* composition programming environment in Utrecht and Arnheim (1988-89), which later evolved into his own Real Time Composition Library (RTC-lib) for Max/MSP/Jitter.

Karlheinz Essl was composer-in-residence at the Darmstadt Summer Courses from 1990 to 1994, and completed a commission for IRCAM in Paris in 1993. From 1995 to 2006, he taught *Algorithmic Composition* at the Studio for Advanced Music and Media Technology at Bruckner University in Linz. From 2007 to 2025, he was Professor of Composition for Electroacoustic and Experimental Music at the *University of Music and Performing Arts* (mdw) in Vienna. In 2016, he was a research fellow at the *Queensland Conservatory* of Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia. From 1992 to 2016, he was the music curator of the *Essl Collection* in Klosterneuburg.

**Works**

His work with computers (with an emphasis on algorithmic composition and generative art) and a long engagement with the poetics of serial music have had a formative influence on his compositional thinking. He has often sought to combine music with other genres, collaborating with the graffiti artist Harald Naegeli (Partikel-Bewegungen, 1991), the writer Andreas Okopenko (*Lexikon-Sonate*, 1992-8), the architect Carmen Wiederin (*Klanglabyrinth*, 1992-95), the video artist Vibeke Sorensen (*MindShipMind*, 1996, a multimedia installation for the Internet) and the artist Jonathan Meese (generative video and sound environment *Fräulein Atlantis*, 2007), the choreographer Andrea Nagl and the poet Erwin Uhrmann.

Since the 1990s, he created countless projects for the Internet and became increasingly involved in improvisation. In 1997 Karlheinz Essl was presented at the *Salzburg Festival* with portrait concerts and sound installations. In 2004 he was awarded the "Kulturpreis für Musik" of Lower Austria.

In addition to writing instrumental music, Karlheinz Essl also works in the field of electronic music, interactive real-time compositions, generative art and sound installations. He develops software environments for algorithmic composition and acts as a performer and improviser, using his own computer-based real-time composition environments as well as instruments such as electric guitar, toy piano and modular synthesizers. A CD of his organ music *ORGANOLOGICS* was released 2023 on the col legno label.

**Performances**

Essl's works has been performed at the most important international music festivals such as Wien modern (Vienna), Salzburg Festival (Salzburg), Musikprotokoll (Graz), Ars Musica (Brussels), Musica Presente (Milano), Présences (Paris), Sonar (Barcelona), Time of Music (Finland), ISEA (Chicago), Convergence (New London), NEMO (Chicago), ISCM World Music Days (Croatia, Romania, Poland), ULTRASCHALL (Berlin), Foro Internacional de Música Nueva (Mexico City), Art meets Media (Tokyo), Rainy Days (Luxembourg), Música y Escena (Mexico City), Klangspuren, Archipel - Musiques d'aujourd'hui (Genève), Klangspuren (Schwaz), NIME Conference (Brisbane), PORTO FRANKO GogolFEST (Ivano-Frankivsk), Toy Music Festival (Seoul), BRANDNEU - Internationaler Orgelsommer (Kassel) etc.

## Collaborations

He collaborates with high-class ensembles such as the Arditti Quartet (London), Ensemble Modern (Frankfurt), Het Nieuw Ensemble (Amsterdam), Ensemble InterContemporain (Paris), Klangforum (Vienna), Radio Symphony Orchestra Vienna, Elision Ensemble (Australia), ensemble recherche (Freiburg), Champ d'Action (Antwerp), Orpheus Trio (Vienna), Ensemble Intégrales (Hamburg), STROMA (New Zealand), Transmission Ensemble (Montréal) etc.

## Lectures

Furthermore, Karlheinz Essl has given lectures and workshops all over the world, for instance at the Darmstadt Summer Courses for New Music, KlangArt Congress (Osnabrück), Florida Electro-acoustic Music Festival, Harvard University, New England Conservatory of Music (Boston) and the music resp. art universities of Toronto, Montréal (McGill), Oaxaca, Morelia and Guadalajara (México), Copenhagen, Mainz, Stuttgart, Düsseldorf, Cologne, Essen, Groningen, Hilversum, Korfu, Valencia, Taipeh, Nottingham, Brisbane, Helsinki, Kiev, Riga, Budapest, Parma, Oslo, Trieste, Ankara, Milano etc. Additionally, has published numerous articles about contemporary music theory and computer-aided composition.

## Contact

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