



## **WHITEPAPER**

**Nikolaus Harnoncourt Zentrum – Cultural-philosophical Discussion**

### **SPACE FOR ARTISTIC IMAGINATION**

**Florian Boesch in conversation with pianist and cultural manager Markus Hinterhäuser**

**July 11, 2026 – St. Georgen im Attergau**

#### **Starting point: The anecdote of Barenboim and Lang Lang**

Florian Boesch opens with a masterclass scene in which Daniel Barenboim asks Lang Lang to crescendo a chord — physically impossible on the piano — but Barenboim simply says: "You have to believe it." This illusion becomes the leitmotif of the conversation: the imagination that is what allows music to come into being in the first place.

#### **Singing at the piano**

Hinterhäuser explains that he tries "to sing without singing" — the art lies in the spaces between the notes, not in the notes themselves. As an example, he cites Friedrich Gulda's interpretation of the Rose Aria from *The Marriage of Figaro* as "pure singing at the piano."

#### **Score, suggestion, and Stockhausen**

A central part of the conversation concerns the relationship between the score and interpretation: the score is a "suggestion," not a fact. Drawing on his time studying with Karlheinz Stockhausen, Hinterhäuser develops the idea of "liberation": one must first grasp the material exactly, in order to then let go of it and penetrate through to the beauty of the sound. His formula for art: "Form and freedom."

#### **Encounter with composers – "Now or never"**

One highlight is the story of how Hinterhäuser once happened to see Luigi Nono sitting in a café in Venice, but consciously decided not to approach him: "Now or never — and I chose never." He explains this by saying that a published work is free and must not be constrained by the author's own account of it.

#### **Freedom of interpretation**

As an example of permissible freedom, he cites Glenn Gould's (with Bernstein) completely unorthodox yet overwhelming interpretation of Bach: "You're actually allowed to do anything."

#### **Artistic direction as an art form**

Asked whether his work as a festival director is itself an art form, Hinterhäuser indirectly affirms this: he never "managed," but instead tried to create spaces in which work, venue, performer, and audience become "a single act of listening" — as, for example, in Castellucci's *Salome* or *Orpheus and Eurydice*.

#### **Music as an ephemeral art and "presentness"**

Music disappears the moment it sounds — that is what makes it melancholic, but also precious (quoting William Blake: "He who kisses the joy as it flies lives in eternity's sunrise"). He explains why one can listen to beloved music again and again without it wearing out through the concept of "Verfasstheit" (roughly, one's "constitution" or state of being): it is not the music that changes, but we ourselves — which is why it stays new.

### **Why music cannot be explained**

Unlike painting, which contains recognizable objects, music is entirely abstract and its effect cannot be explained — and that is precisely what makes it a gift. Analytical understanding (such as in Boesch's teaching at the mdw) helps with listening, but not with feeling.

### **Audience, trust, and Nikolaus Harnoncourt**

In closing, Hinterhäuser speaks about the "friendship" with the audience, which wants to be challenged, while Boesch speaks about his 14-year collaboration with Harnoncourt: during rehearsals there was an enormous "force of conviction" at play, which was, however, completely relinquished in concert — in favor of the freedom of music-making in the moment.

### **Mentioned in the conversation:**

Masterclass Barenboim, Lang Lang. From min. 21:00

<https://youtu.be/3NYfrht6TU8?si=XeNjy09wCh9aJ248>

Friedrich Gulda, Rose Aria from Figaro:

<https://youtu.be/VqCcWyY2u9c?si=J5Vcl0fcYbhNF0Mt>

Gould, Bernstein, Bach:

[https://youtu.be/9ZX\\_XCYokQo?si=ybMcsIYDZ1W2MUWg](https://youtu.be/9ZX_XCYokQo?si=ybMcsIYDZ1W2MUWg)

Poem by William Blake, "Eternity":

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Eternity\\_\(Blake\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Eternity_(Blake))