



## **Gold.Berg.Werk** By Karlheinz Essl

Xenia Pestova Bennett      piano  
Ed Bennett                      live electronics

Saturday 30 January 2021, 1200

Q&A with Karlheinz Essl, Xenia Pestova Bennett and Ed Bennett after the performance.

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### **Programme note**

The *Goldberg Variations* form a cornerstone of keyboard repertoire, yet we rarely question the mode of presentation for this piece. Austrian composer Karlheinz Essl offers a refreshing glimpse of a new performance practice through his unusual take in *Gold.Berg.Werk* (2013-16). Originally envisioned as a performance environment for string trio, there is now a version for piano and live electronics. Gorgeous time-stretched harmonies are manipulated in real time and played back through spatialised loudspeakers in between the piano variations, bringing together Baroque and contemporary sound worlds. This new reimagining of Bach's vision juxtaposes the variations in a new strictly symmetrical structure which reflects the binary form of the original aria (a microcosm within a macrocosm with binary divisions commonly found in digital systems). No two performances are the same due to the live generation of the electronic interludes. *Gold.Berg.Werk* transcends itself and becomes a new piece in its own right, creating a sense of space and grandeur through electronic distribution of the interludes. This magical performance invites and entices the audience to join us on a journey of discovery, opening and blossoming into a whole new universe of sound.

## Aria Piano

### Aria Electronica I

#### A

- Var. 1: *Präludium*
- Var. 3: *Canone all'Unisono*
- Var. 2: *Triosonate*
- Var. 6: *Canone alla Seconda*
- Var. 13: *Sarabande*

### Sarabanda Electronica

#### B

- Var. 9: *Canone alle Terza*
- Var. 10: *Fughetta*
- Var. 12: *Canone alla Quarta (Inv)*
- Var. 7: *Gigue*
- Var. 15: *Canone alla Quinta (Inv, min)*

### Aria Electronica II

#### C

- Var. 16: *Ouverture alla francesca*
- Var. 18: *Canone alla Sesta*
- Var. 19: *Musette*
- Var. 21: *Canone alla Settima (min)*
- Var. 25: *Adagio - Fantasia Chromatica (min)*

### Fantasia Chromatica Electronica

#### D

- Var. 24: *Canone all'Ottava*
- Var. 22: *Alla breve - Stile Antico*
- Var. 27: *Canone alla Nona*
- Var. 29: *Toccata*
- Var. 30: *Quodlibet*

Var. 30: *Quodlibet*

### Aria Electronica III

## Aria Piano

More information: <https://www.essl.at/works/goldbergwerk.html>

## Biographies

### Karlheinz Essl

Born in Vienna, 15 Aug 1960. Austrian composer, performer, improviser, media artist and composition teacher.

Karlheinz Essl attended the Vienna Musikhochschule (1981-87), where he studied composition with Friedrich Cerha and electro-acoustic music with Dieter Kaufmann. From 1979, he also studied musicology and art history at the University of Vienna (doctorate 1989 with his thesis *Das Synthesedenken bei Anton Webern*). Active as a double bassist until 1984, he played in chamber and experimental jazz ensembles. As a composer he has contributed to the *Projekt 3* composition programming environment of Gottfried Michael Koenig at Utrecht and Arnheim (1988-89) which later transformed into his own Real Time Composition Library (RTC-lib) for Max/MSP/Jitter.

Essl also served as composer-in-residence at the Darmstadt summer courses (1990-94) and at IRCAM (Paris, 1992-1993). Between 1995-2006 he taught Algorithmic Composition at the Studio for Advanced Music & Media Technology at the Bruckner University, Linz. Since 2007, he is professor of composition for electro-acoustic and experimental music at the Vienna University of Music and Performing Arts. Between 1992 and 2016, he acted as the music curator of the Essl Museum in Klosterneuburg / Vienna.

His work with computers (with emphasis on *Algorithmic Composition* and generative art) and a prolonged occupation with the poetics of serial music have been a formative influence on his compositional thinking. He has frequently sought to combine music with other genres and has collaborated with the graffiti artist Harald Naegeli (*Partikel-Bewegungen*, 1991), the writer Andreas Okopenko and the artists' group "Libraries of the Mind" (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).

During the 1990s Karlheinz Essl carried out various projects for the Internet and became increasingly involved with improvisation. At the festival WIEN MODERN 1989 he presented as an emerging composer, and in 1997 he was featured at the Salzburg Festival with portrait concerts and sound installations. In 2003, he was artist-in-residence of the festival musik aktuell, and in 2004 he was presented with a series of portrait concerts at the Brucknerhaus Linz. In 2004, Karlheinz Essl received the cultural prize for music of the state Lower Austria.

Besides writing instrumental music, Karlheinz Essl also works in the field of electronic music, interactive realtime compositions and sound installations. He develops software environments for algorithmic composition and acts as a performer and improviser, utilizing his own computer-based real time composition environment *m@ze*<sup>2</sup> and also instruments like electric guitar, toy piano and music box.

Website: <http://www.essl.at/>

### **Xenia Pestova Bennett**

Xenia Pestova Bennett is an innovative performer and educator. Described as “a powerhouse of contemporary keyboard repertoire” (Tempo), “stunning” (Wales Arts Review), “ravishing” (Pizzicato) and “remarkably sensuous” (New Zealand Herald) in the international press, she has earned a reputation as a leading interpreter of uncompromising repertoire alongside masterpieces from the past.

Xenia’s commitment and dedication to promoting music by living composers led her to commission dozens of new works and collaborate with major innovators in contemporary music. Her widely acclaimed recordings of core piano duo works of the Twentieth Century by John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen are available on four CDs for Naxos Records. Her evocative solo debut of premiere recordings for the Innova label titled “Shadow Piano” was described as a “terrific album of dark, probing music” by the Chicago Reader. Xenia’s own compositions are available on Diatribe Records and TakuRoku. Her full-length album “Atomic Legacies” features Ligeti Quartet and the Magnetic Resonator Piano, while her digital EP “Atonal Electronic Chamber Music for Cats” explores vintage synthesizers.

Past projects include commissioning and performing in Arlene Sierra’s “Urban Birds” at the Southbank Centre (with Kathleen Supove and Sarah Nicolls, recorded for BBC Radio 3 and available on NMC Records), burning a piano with Annea Lockwood in Wales, instigating and performing in the World Toy Piano Summit at Festival Rainy Days in Luxembourg (with Margaret Leng Tan and others), designing cutting-edge digital musical instruments at McGill University and collaborating on a new digital version of the analogue electronic processing required for Karlheinz Stockhausen’s epic masterwork “Mantra”. She is a Schoenhut toy piano concert artist and has championed many new works for this instrument.

Following childhood music education in Western Siberia, Xenia’s studies took place with Judith Clark (Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand), Philip Mead and Ian Pace (London), Hakon Austbo (Amsterdam), Yvonne Loriod-Messiaen (Avignon and Paris), Louise Bessette (Montreal) and Sara

Laimon at McGill University, where she was awarded a Doctor of Music degree in 2009. She received the unanimous First Prize at the Xavier Montsalvatge International Piano Competition in Girona, Spain and prizes at the Messiaen International Piano Competition in Paris and the KeriKeri National Piano Competition of New Zealand. From 2011-2015 Xenia was the Head of Performance at Bangor University, where she founded and directed the highly successful INTER/actions Festival and Symposium for interactive electronic music.

In addition to her career as an interpreter, Xenia is active as an improviser, composer and educator. She is a fully-certified and insured yoga teacher, completing a 200-hour Hatha Yoga Teacher Training qualification led by Eleonora Ramsby-Herrera in 2019 and Yin/Yang Yoga and Mindfulness (primary and secondary levels amounting to 100 hours certified by Yoga Alliance) with Sarah Powers in 2018. Since 2015 she lectures in music at the University of Nottingham. She also provides coaching to individuals and organisations on anxiety management using movement, breathwork and focus interventions.

Website: [www.xeniapestovabennett.com](http://www.xeniapestovabennett.com)

## **Ed Bennett**

Irish composer Ed Bennett was born in Bangor, Co.Down. His music, which has been described in the press as 'anarchic' (Irish Times), 'manic' (Classical Music) and 'thrilling' (Gramophone) is often characterised by its strong rhythmic energy, extreme contrasts and the combination of acoustic, electronic and multimedia elements; it was recently described in The Guardian as 'unclassifiable, raw-nerve music of huge energy and imagination' and by Sinfini Music as 'one of the most scintillating voices to emerge of late from the British Isles.' His body of work includes large-scale orchestral works, ensemble pieces, solo works, electronic music, opera, installations and works for dance and film. In 2019 he was awarded the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's Major Individual Artist Award, the highest honour awarded to an artist from the region.

He performs with and directs his own ensemble, *Decibel*, which is dedicated to the performance of new and experimental cross-discipline work and with whom he has released three critically acclaimed CDs of his music. *Dzama Stories* (Quartz Music) was described as 'a glorious addition to the contemporary canon...I haven't heard a disc of Irish Composition as vital and as urgent as this in a long while' (Musical Criticism, 5/5 stars) and *My Broken Machines* (NMC) was Chicago Time Out's No.1 Contemporary CD of 2011. His most recent release 'Togetherness' (2018) was described in a 5 star review in Classical Music Magazine as 'high-octane music that demands the listeners attention.'

He has been commissioned and performed the world over by many diverse artists, ensembles and organisations including the BBC, RTE, PRSF, Music Network, Moving On Music, 2012 Olympics, Integra and the arts councils of England, Ireland and N.Ireland. Noted collaborators and performers of his work include the BBC Symphony and Philharmonic Orchestras, the National Orchestra of Belgium, RTE National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, Ulster Orchestra, the London Sinfonietta, Crash Ensemble, Icebreaker, Riga Sinfonietta, Orkest de ereprijs, Fidelio Trio, Berlin Percussion Ensemble, Ensemble SurPlus, Lontano, Concorde, the Smith Quartet, Noszferatu, Ensemble Ars Nova, Garth Knox, Pedro Carneiro, Reinbert de Leeuw, James MacMillan, Darragh Morgan, Mary Dullea, Rolf Hind and Paul Dunmall. Ed has also enjoyed collaborations with several visual artists and choreographers including those with Juneau Projects and the award-winning Belgian choreographer Ann Van den Broek.

His work has been featured in festivals such as Gaudeamus (Amsterdam), Musica Viva (Portugal), Huddersfield, Spitalfields, Bath, City of London, Homecoming (Moscow), Crash, Sonorities, Sonic Circuits (USA), Bourges, the BMIC Cutting Edge Series, Soundings (London/Vienna), News from the UK (South Bank), Integra and at New Music/New Ireland in Carnegie Hall, New York. In 2008 Ed Bennett was the first composer in residence at the Irish Cultural Centre in Paris, France.

Recent projects include 'Psychedelia' a substantial work for Thomas Ades and the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, 'Out of Nowhere' a large-scale work for piano and electronics for Xenia Pestova (PRSF Beyond Borders commission), 'Suspect Device' for amplified ensemble for Icebreaker (Britten-Pears commission), an opera in collaboration with the writer Stacey Gregg (commissioned by Northern Ireland Opera for the 2012 Cultural Olympiad), 'Internal Organs' for mechanical organ and ensemble for the Dutch ensemble Orkest de Ereprijs (commissioned by the Orgelpark, Amsterdam), 'Heavy Western' for violin and ensemble for Barbara Lueneburg and Decibel and 'Freefalling' for the RTE National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland (commissioned by RTE). Future commissions include those for Garth Knox, the Crash Ensemble, Syzygy Saxophone Quartet, Decibel and Northern Ireland Opera.

He is represented by the Irish Contemporary Music Centre and Composers Edition Publishing where further scores and recordings of his music can be obtained. In 2012 Ed Bennett was awarded the prestigious Philip Leverhulme Prize for the Performing Arts and in 2014 he was awarded a fellowship by the New York based Civitella Ranieri Foundation.

Website: <https://edbennett.co.uk/>

## Forthcoming events

**The Narcissistic Fish | Thu 28 January | 1500**

Join Scottish Opera's Emerging Artists for a visceral exploration of the clash between class, gender and workplace pressure in 21st century Scotland

**Ensemble Court Circuit | Thu 28 January | 1700**

World premiere of Tansy Davies' *Grand Mutation* and works by Grisey and Ligeti

**Richard Ingham and Pete Stollery | Thu 28 January | 2000**

Music for saxophones and electronics by Pete Stollery, Denis Smalley and Richard Ingham

**social sound | Thu 28 January | 2130**

Join us online for a chat about the day's events in the company of featured artists

**Rookh Quartet | Fri 29 January | 1200**

Programme includes works written for the Rookh Quartet, exploring unusual sounds as well as capturing the soul of the horn

**The Metalization of a Dream | Fri 29 January | 1500**

Duncan MacLeod's *The Metalization of a Dream* is an open form sound-work responding to the dada and surrealist-inspired collages of artist Eduardo Paolozzi

**We Ask These Questions Of Everybody | Fri 29 January | 1700**

Operatic event sharing disabled people's experiences under austerity in the UK, performed by an exceptional cross-genre, all-disabled ensemble

**Ensemble Court Circuit | Fri 29 January | 2000**

Works by Philippe Hurel and Ravel

**social sound | Fri 29 January | 2130**

Join us online for a chat about the day's events in the company of featured artists

**Promenade Concert | Sat 30 January | 1000**

Join us for a winter themed discovery of new music for the whole family with Ruth Wall (harp), Richard Watkins (horn) and Richard Ingham (saxophone)

**Gold.Berg.Werks | Sat 30 January | 1200**

Karlheinz Essl's unusual take of Bach's *The Goldberg Variations* performed by Xenia Pestova Bennett (piano) and Ed Bennett (electronics)

**Aberdeen | Sat 30 January | 1500**

New collaboration between David Fennessy, Sonia Cromarty and Tim Cooper

**Any Enemy & Brandon University New Music Ensemble | Sat 30 January | 1700**

Unique live digital performance including new works specially commissioned for joint performance by the two ensembles

**Richard Watkins, horn + Composer Conversation | Sat 30 January | 2000**

Philip Cashian's *Scenes from the Life of Viscount Medardo* and discussion with Philip Cashian, Aileen Sweeney and Rylan Gleave

**social sound | Sat 30 January | 2130**

Join us online for a chat about the day's events in the company of featured artists

**Listen Carefully | Sun 31 January | 1000**

**Siobhan Dyson's audio-visual work depicts a day in the life of an autistic person**

**Hebrides Ensemble *Diversions* | Sun 31 January | 1300**

**Works by Joe Stollery, Ben Teague, Rylan Gleave, Siobhan Dyson, Ben Lunn, Jason Hodgson and Lucy Hale**

**Available throughout the festival:**

**[Digital French Horn Exhibition](#)**

*Most of the performances will be available on our YouTube channel until 28<sup>th</sup> February. Please see our website for more information.*

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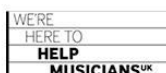
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