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A House like a ‘Musical
Instrument*’:
Impulses from the Unbuilt
Performative Architectural
Project of the ‘Contemporary
Opera Berlin’ and the Architectural
Firm ‘GKK Architects’ in Berlin 2001

Hiša kot »glasbeni instrument«:
impulzi, ki izhajajo iz nezgrajenega
performativnega arhitekturnega projekta
»Berlinska sodobna opera« in arhitekturne
firme »GKK Architects« v Berlinu leta 2001

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* “Ein Haus wie ein Instrument” is the title of a radio feature by Gisela Nauck, which was broadcast on January 21, 2002 on “Bayern 2”.

V Berlinu, v Nemčiji, je prišlo do izjemnega projekta hiše, ki bi bila namenjena sodobni glasbi in gledališču (COB/ZOB) in bi nudila vrsto rešitev za urbano, še neutečeno »zono« kulturnega utripa, kjer bi se umetniške aktivnosti srečevale z vsakdanjim življenjem. Vezano na model antičnega trga (agora) je stavbo v letu 2001 skupaj zasnoval tim specialistov za novo glasbo in dospelejšo performativno arhitekturo. Čeprav stavba ni bila uresničena, je možno zaznati, da gre za referenčno trajen ustvarjalen projekt.

In Berlin (Germany) there has been an exceptional project of a house for contemporary music and new music theatre (COB/ZOB) offering a variety of solutions for an urban not yet settled vibrant cultural 'zone', where artistic activity and everyday life meet. Tied back to the model of ancient agoras the building was mapped out during 2001 collaboratively by a team of specialists in New Music and advanced performative architecture. It can be detected – even though it has not been built – as an ongoing and creative reference project.

Formation of the Project

On November 27th 2001 a press conference featuring the visionary project of a building for contemporary opera and music was held in Berlin (Germany). The design was the result of a close collaboration between the Architectural firm "Gewers Kühn and Kühn" and the project's initiators at the "Contemporary Opera" (COB, "Zeitgenössische Oper" ZOB) Berlin. The house was never built, but is a model in many ways for interactive and performative architecture and synergetic planning. Its concept fulfills the often discussed demand for a (re-)vitalization of urban structures and environments.¹

In January of 2001, German director Andreas Rocholl, founding member of COB, initiated the development of such a house for contemporary music theatre. At that time he worked as vice general manager in the office of the Berlin Chamber of Architects. There-through informal conversations with Georg Gewers, director of the Chamber—the impulse came to begin planning such a project. Gewers immediately inspired his partners at the architect's office Gewers Kühn und Kühn in Berlin to become involved. With him and his enthusiastic colleagues Swantje and Oliver Kühn, a prestigious office with experience in building projects incorporating cultural components took over the planning free of charge. Rocholl and Oliver Kühn soon became the main proponents. Early on they agreed that the building project could only be optimally designed when all its potential users and architects worked together in an intense process of exchange.

They invited quite a large group of professionals from the fields of musicology, music journalism, music composition, etc. to participate. Over the course of more than six months,² many enthusiastic meetings took place in which a consensual vision of such a performative house for new music and opera were discussed and planned in great detail. Andreas Rocholl described to me the atmosphere of almost unreal excitement

¹ See: Adam Krims, *Music and Urban Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. XXVI, XXXI. "Not only have the departure of heavy manufacturing and the influx of information and business services transformed cities, so has the increasing reliance of urban economies on other kinds of personal services, in particular entertainment and tourism. Not every city has been able to rely on tourism for revenues, but those with natural, cultural, or historic attributes that enable tourism have turned to it with increasing vigour and sometimes with major transformations in the built environment and economic structure. [...] Such factors often combine to render many urban district regions of integrated aestheticised space."

² From March to October 2001 (Rocholl talks about the "five past months" in the transcript of the round of talks on August 20, 2001, MS, p. 4).

during the meetings, which were all well frequented. It seemed to be exactly the right time for the mutual develop the project.

In an interview in August 2008 Rocholl told me what this project involved:

“...what is this, such an opera house? ...a temple of arts, something elitist, responding to a certain bourgeois cultural tradition? Or could it be a real city center in the ancient sense, and as such an overall expression of its community? Our idea always was: how and by what means can we move the whole concept back into the middle of society?”³

In an earlier interview with me (on July 5th 2008), Oliver Kühn mentioned the idea for the new building was based on the ancient agorá: a central urban square for large gatherings and markets as well as political and cultic (cultural) activities. In this choice, he and Rocholl showed their awareness of the potential interactive qualities of a public space. With “their” house, the intertwining of cultural and performative architecture to provide creative possibilities for use of this space was conceived for an unusually ambitious project in the sphere of “high” art—new art music resp. contemporary music theatre and surrounding artistic projects—and to bring this kind of artistic activity closer or even back to the general public, to connect it with urban life.

As it is important and interesting to know who the initiators are, part of a closer inspection of the project will involve understanding the two main institutions involved in its development: the “Zeitgenössische Oper” and architectural firm GKK.

Zeitgenössische Oper/Contemporary Opera Berlin e.V. (ZOB/COB)–Portrait

The COB was founded in Berlin in 1997 (<http://www.zeitgenoessische-oper.de>). Its artistic leadership was then in the hands of Andreas Rocholl (director), Sabrina Hölzer (director), and Rüdiger Bohn (musical director). Bohn even gave up his secure position as music director in Lübeck to be part of the project with contemporary music theatre (in the experimental “tradition” of new art music). Since that time, Bohn has moved on to become professor of conducting at the Robert-Schumann-Hochschule for Music in Düsseldorf. Hölzer and Rocholl are still with the COB. Their main venue was the Hebbel Theater in Berlin, which has an infrastructure of small rooms and a traditional stage, and is therefore quite limited for experimental projects. Early on, the team of the COB was successful enough that the Berlin Senate—notoriously short of money—soon gave generous support. However, the organizers of the COB are also familiar with acquiring money for their projects from private business.

Rocholl and Hölzer are not at all disturbed by the possibility of the name “opera” implying something overdone and oldfashioned. The more encompassing term “music theatre” did not appear to be an alternative.⁴ Among their productions so far are: John Cage *Europera 5* (1999), Salvatore Sciarrino *Die tödliche Blume* (2002), Qu Xia-Song *Versuchung* (2004), and Adriana Hölzsky *Tragödia – der unsichtbare Raum* (2001). Their youngest project, running for several years, is called “Ohrenstrand” (ear beach) (www.ohrenstrand.de).

³ Interview Heilgendorff/Rocholl from August 20, 2008 (transcript), MS, p. 7 (transl. of the author).

⁴ Rocholl put the author off during the interview: The discussion of these two terms did not interest him.

ohrenstrand.net) and is part of the nationwide “Netzwerk Neue Musik” (network for contemporary music), initiated and supported by the German Federal Cultural Foundation. In Berlin alone it has nine partners. Activities of the Berlin “branch” are—again—architectural projects: which take the form of competitions for the design of mobile spaces for contemporary music, which are then used for performances.

GKK Architect’s Office—Portrait

The architectural firm GKK Architekten in Berlin was founded in 1991 as “Becker Gewers Kühn und Kühn” and from early on pursued extraordinary ideas because Swantje and Oliver Kühn principally act across genres, and are socially responsible and enthusiastic about culture. Almost twenty years of building experience includes many unusual and interesting projects in the cultural sector, which were designed by them and built under their supervision.

On the current GKK Architects Website the following compilation, documented under the topic “philosophy”, fits their profile:

Key Competences

- innovative architecture and high-end design
- integrating modern art in architecture
- putting progressive building concepts into practice as general planners
- close and transparent online-co-operation within the integrated design team

Aims:

- to make the client eventually our partner and friend
- to develop something really new with each project
- to be a reliable partner with our surroundings⁵

The new building initiated by the COB fit very well with the GKK office concept for a variety of reasons. The GKK partners not only love classical music, especially new music and contemporary opera, but are also engaged in a performative and interdisciplinary architecture. With ambitious and progressive layouts, their projects stand for open structures, as recently demonstrated on several levels with the rehearsal stage for the Bavarian State Opera at Marstallplatz in Munich.⁶

Kühn told me in an interview on July 15th 2008 that he received a tremendous amount of creative impulses from discussions for the development of the building “Center for Contemporary Opera and Music” in Berlin, and that he got to know and understand a lot of music, which he most likely would not have encountered otherwise. Like Rocholl, he mentioned vibrant memories of an enthusiastic and intense time.

⁵ <http://www.gkk-architekten.de/> Accessed April 10, 2011.

⁶ GKK succeeded to combine both the undisturbed rehearsal space for the Bavarian State Opera and the adjacent public square, the Marstall-Platz, in front of the new building, to be connected to this space for people staying outside: “The actions [on that stage] are transferred via digital decoding to the exterior space of the Marstallplatz, as sounds from inside of the building appear outside as lighting impulses on the facade. [In addition] “music and action from the rehearsal space appear fragmented and coded through speakers in the ground of the square, like the ferne Plätschern of a creek.” Oliver Kühn, “Architektur und Aufführung. Performative Architektur – Architektur des Performativen,” in *Kunst der Aufführung – Aufführung der Kunst* (Theater der Zeit. Recherchen 18), ed. Erika Fischer-Lichte, Clemens Risi, and Jens Roselt, 2004, p. 274 (transl. by the author).

Other People from Various Branches and Scenes Who Were Involved in the Project

At that time, GKK produced—aside from a quite small and subtly lighted model—an all-encompassing and appealingly formatted brochure to document the building project. This brochure also accompanied an exhibition of several partition screens on the project displayed in the Philharmonic Hall in Berlin and in a press conference held on November 2001.

It makes one smile to look at the second page of the brochure which proudly mentions all the members of the team: presented by the form of an ellipse with the COB and the architectural office in the middle, with links to satellite-like forms on the right for four specialists in stage machinery, acoustics, and statics, and on the left for a group of 14 music experts—musicologist Helga Haber-de la Motte, cultural editors Ulrich Eickhoff, Horst-Günter Kessler, and Frederik Hansen, journalists Karin Winkelsesser and Renate Klett, composers Adriana Hölszky and Detlev Glanert, music director Markus Stenz, visual artist Milo Frielnghaus, media designer Nils Krüger, managing director of the Berlin Artists' program for the DAAD Ulrich Podewils, and Klaus Heiliger as board chairman of the society of the promotion for the Contemporary Opera in Berlin (there are only 13 listed here).

The discussion panels were partially recorded and later on transcribed by employees of the GKK office. Unfortunately, these transcriptions are not professional, done without knowledge of the terminology, and therefore extremely fragmentary. By means of the people listed, the transcriptions, and especially the lively descriptions of Oliver Kühn and Andreas Rocholl one can imagine the inspiring effect of this communal time and the resulting concepts. It needs to be pointed out that the group was reduced to a core of the two teams of COB and GKK at the meetings after March 2001. That productive synergies developed between the varying needs and perspectives in this truly interdisciplinary ensemble becomes obvious in this well thought-out building project model.

Synergetic and Inter-Connecting Concepts of this House for Contemporary Music

Before going into further details of the planned unprecedented building's structure we should pursue its unique needs.

It is essential for the building's concept to establish cross-linkages between musical events, musicological research, and offers like food services. Part of the concept is public access 24 hours a day. The cross-linkages of diverse applications under an emphasis on performative architecture refer to visions of how to stimulate and extend each reference system, in this case the culture of performance and exploration of new music, and the revitalisation of public architecture as well as museum offers, or their themed concatenation with possibilities like food services. Almost naturally, new music and especially new music theatre became the carrier, the core activity of this completely public house. Consequently the dream of an optimal performance space for truly contemporary stagings grew to be the focus of the planned building.

On page three of the new house's advertising brochure, quite a number of well-considered offers can be found, as fixed parts of the house. These include a scheme of possible functions showing interconnected activities and envisioning certain activity charts ("Aktivitätsdiagramme"), which anticipate a high rate of occupancy around the clock. Several dynamic diagrams are shown, which refer in detail to possible schemes of building usage which systematically take advantage of its potential for extension of outreach and purpose. A key term here is "programmatically extensibility":

Programmatic Extensibility. Definition

Opera House:

Focus on performances of contemporary operas

Center of Performances:

boundary-transcending space for operas, concerts, installations, etc.

National Center for Contemporary Culture:

reflection of and connection with research, instruction, and media

Public Private Partnership Cultural Complex:

cross-subsidiation of the cultural mandate through profitable private utilisation.⁷

Aside from the assumption that once a phantastic hall as extremely flexible as the main hall of this house existed it would inspire several new projects in the field of music theatre, its justification refers rather to the cross-linking concept of the building project as a whole, around the core of this hall with surrounding infrastructure. This concept provides a solution to connecting the culture of performance with that of daily life in a very up-to-date manner. "Atmosphere" and "ambience" are of special importance in this context because they connect concepts of modern everyday architecture, as realized in newer shopping malls, and concepts of urban art: „Artistic acts principally create spatiotemporal relationships as well as relationships that are produced through social fabrics by everyday-actions. Artistic practices also mediate between diverse locations and various functions of the social apparatus.“⁸ In this context the implementation of "sound rooms" or "sound spaces" along the public passages and routes throughout the house is of special importance. They are displayed in the brochure as red cubes of varying sizes and locations.

These sound spaces (see Illustr. No. 1) are meant to be individually designed, changeable, and individually walkable. The field of sound installation has expanded dramatically throughout the last decades and offers bridges between new art music and experiences of subjective timing and daily life. In this sense, sound installations in certain ways qualify as teasers and might even attract or –as modern theories of architecture and space would say--affect a visitor's decision to come back to the house later on for a performance in the central hall, which they might not have attended otherwise.

⁷ Brochure, p. 3 (transl. by the author).

⁸ Sabine Gebhardt Fink, "Ambient in der Kunst der Gegenwart," in *Klangliche Milieus. Klang, Raum und Virtualität*, ed. Marcus Maeder (Bielefeld: transcript, 2010), p. 126. (transl. by the author) "Kunsthaltungen schaffen prinzipiell ebenso raumzeitliche Beziehungen, wie Alltagshandlungen diese innerhalb sozialer Gefüge herstellen. Auch die künstlerischen Praktiken vermitteln zwischen verschiedenen Orten und unterschiedlichen Funktionen des sozialen Apparatus."

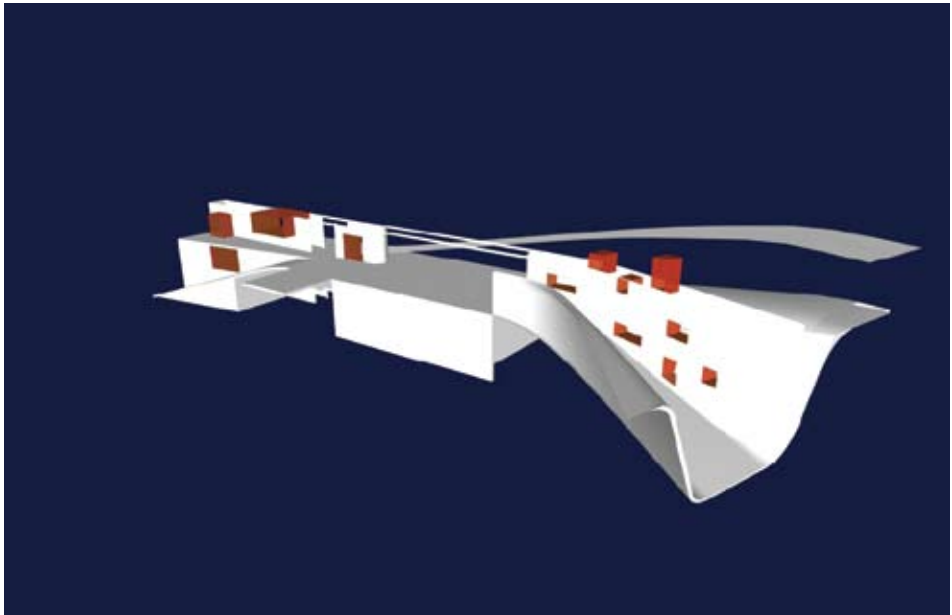


Illustration No. 1: System of ramps (walks) in the building of the COB with spaces for sound installations, shown as red cubes (©GKK Architects).⁹

In addition, the plan to integrate and involve scholarly work refers to certain needs of musical practice, which are rarely considered or settled at the location of musical activity. Due to the lack of precedent for this specific type of building, the synergetic potential of such an interconnection between artistic and scholarly practice is barely calculable but very promising. The concept recently got best company by initiatives of national research funds in Austria and in Germany supporting artistic research as well as scientific research or their combination.

The COB Project, a Case of Real Utopia

Can this house's experimental and open acquaintance with music and space justify the building of a structure costing 50 to 75 Mill. €¹⁰? Once built, its yearly operation would cost another 10 Mill. €.¹¹ Public opinion once the project was presented was unequivocally positive, if not enthusiastic. Several times one read in public media of a "dream object" which came very close to reality. Georg-Friedrich Kühn, a wellknown German music journalist, paraphrased its designer two months after the press conference, as

⁹ Brochure, p. 8.

¹⁰ Sources for the building costs: 50 to 75 Mill. € (NZZ, Nov. 29 2001), 100 to 150 Mill. (G.-F. Kühn for "Radio 3", November 28, 2001).

¹¹ NZZ, November 29, 2001.

part of a still ongoing interest in and discussion of the project, making a clear statement supporting the project:

He [O. Kühn] is hoping for a change of paradigm concerning finances as well as the concept of space: one could perceive it as a downscaled mixture of IRCAM and Cité de la Musique. One should create open spaces of evolution for contemporary music and music theatre, like in museums of our time. And one should not always ask the government, but should stimulate private commitment. Look at Fondation Beyeler.¹²

Very appealing is the location of the potential construction site of this house in the very center of Berlin at the “Humboldthafen”, just across from the main railway station, which newly opened in 2004. This area could, to mention again Kühn, well serve as an “Agorá”, a public meeting place in the best sense. Up until the summer of 2006, the area was available for such a project, but that is no longer the case.



Illustration No. 2: Plans for the position of the new building (©GKK Architects).¹³

¹² Georg-Friedrich Kühn, NZZ, November 29, 2001.

¹³ Brochure, p. 11.

For this fallow ground, no binding land-use plan existed prior to the summer of 2006. There were even signals by the Berlin Senate that the COB would possibly get the area as a present. It is an East German stipulation that there be such fallow ground in the middle of a city. Regularly, such land is unaffordable.

The building opens itself to the south and therefore to the Spree river, with a huge mouthlike entrance area as one of three possible accesses into the interior of the building, which is conceived as an organic whole. On this image (illsutr. No. 3) the red-marked sound spaces are easily noticeable, inviting visitors along the pathway to linger.



Illustration No. 3: Entrance area of the building (©GKK Architects).¹⁴

On several images in the brochure the visitors' possible paths are displayed, as an essential part, based on the underlying principle to enable everybody to stroll through the complex without having to stop anywhere.

¹⁴ Brochure, front page.

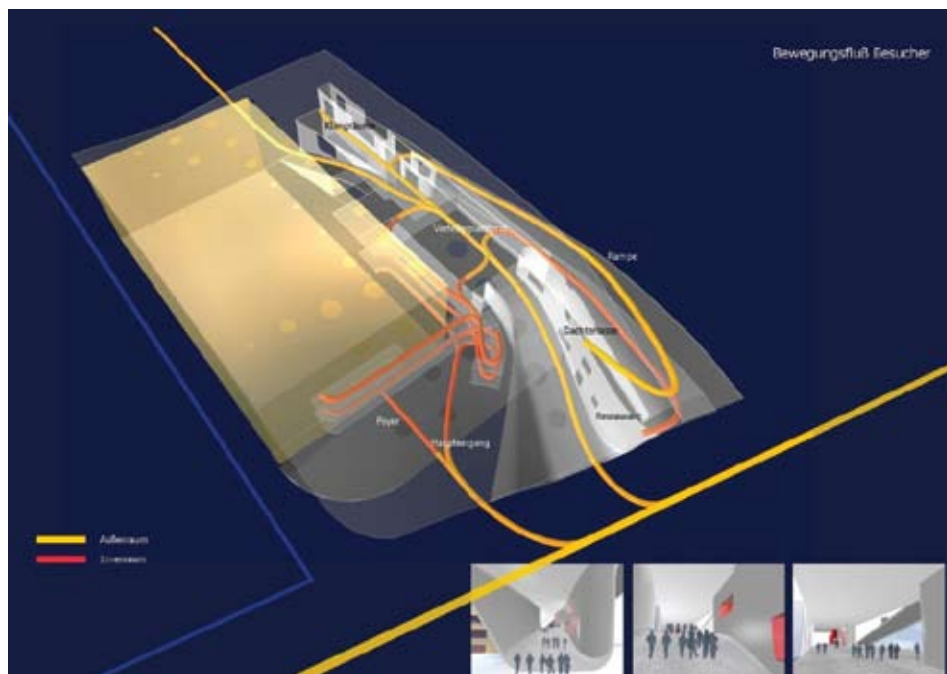


Illustration No. 4: Stream of visitors (©GKK Architects).¹⁵

On illustration No. 4 the hall is displayed as a half transparent cube in apricot. Its maximum size is clearly depicted. The stream of visitors leads past the hall, into the hall, and up to the spacious roof terrace overlooking Berlin and the river, with a restaurant nearby. The image of the stream of visitors also gives an impression of the upper three stories from a total of six planned for this house. The total elevation (height) accumulates to 24 meters above ground.

¹⁵ Brochure, p. 8.

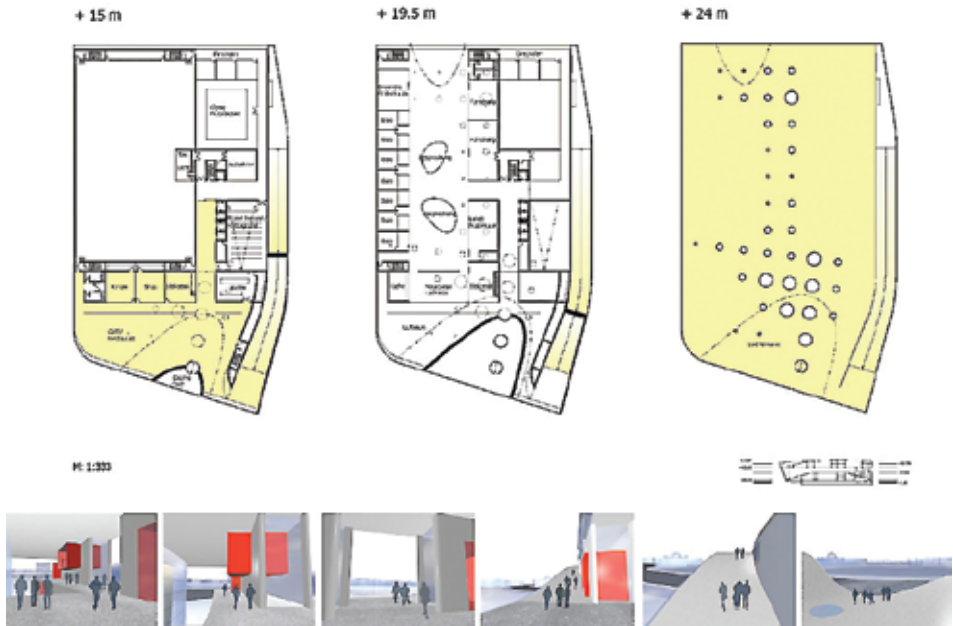


Illustration No. 5: The three upper floors (©GKK Architects).¹⁶

On the penultimate floor several rooms are designed which adjoin the hall. Another principal part of the overall concept this floor will feature rooms for research, meetings, offices, and rehearsal spaces. “Through this unprecedented design of the hall this big performance space not only meets visual requirements, but also acoustic demands towards multi functionality and unlimited flexibility; architecture of the performative in the best sense. Encircling the hall, research labs constitute interfaces between sciences and economy. A media library, a rehearsal stage, spaces for sound installation, an exhibition on electronic music, a music playground and a restaurant invite the public not only to be there during the evenings of performances.”¹⁷

The rooms designed are (see illustr. No. 5): six “flex rooms” of various sizes, the main hall, a side stage, a ballet hall, a lecture hall, large and small rehearsal stages, rehearsal space for ensembles, one open space for rehearsals, a warm-up room, storage spaces, a makeup and costume workshop, a library, a restaurant and café, a bookstore, a main office, research laboratory, atelier, experimental studio, a room for audio engineering, three meeting rooms (small, medium, large), the office of artistic direction, the office for the director), a PR office, and a web publishing office.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 10.

¹⁷ Oliver Kühn, “Architektur und Aufführung. Performative Architektur – Architektur des Performativen,” in *Kunst der Aufführung – Aufführung der Kunst* (Theater der Zeit. Recherchen 18), ed. Erika Fischer-Lichte, Clemens Risi, and Jens Roselt (2004), p. 276–277 (transl. by the author).

The main hall itself, the heart of the house, can be transformed in five directions. It can be divided and acoustically manipulated through applicable features in the walls and ceiling. The levels of the floor can be arranged and divided in several ways. In the walls, spaces for audiences can be opened. The possibilities appear to be limitless. Illustrations 6, 7, and 8 give insight into the possibilities.

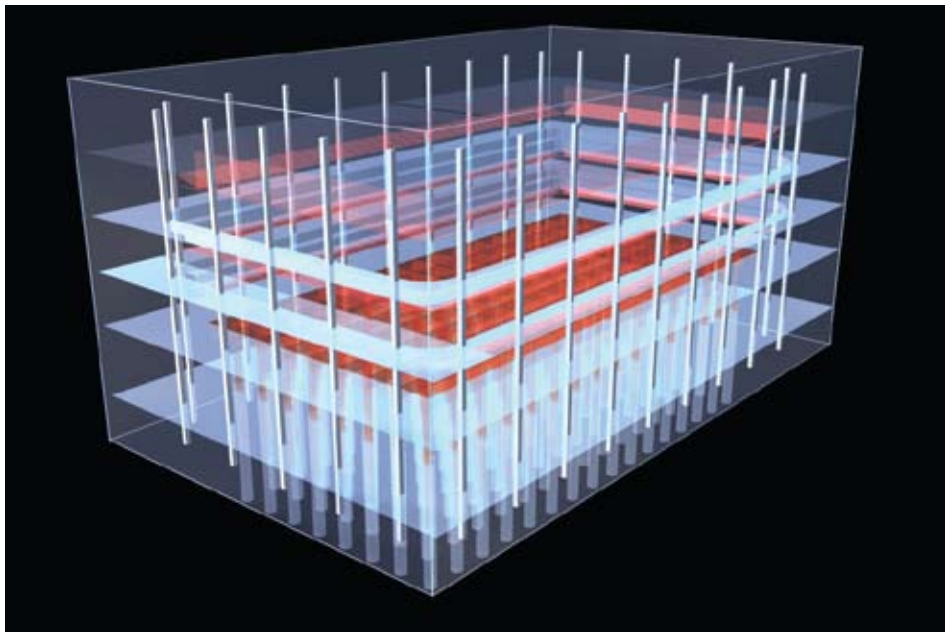


Illustration No. 6: Main hall, variants with the system of stilts (©GKK Architects).

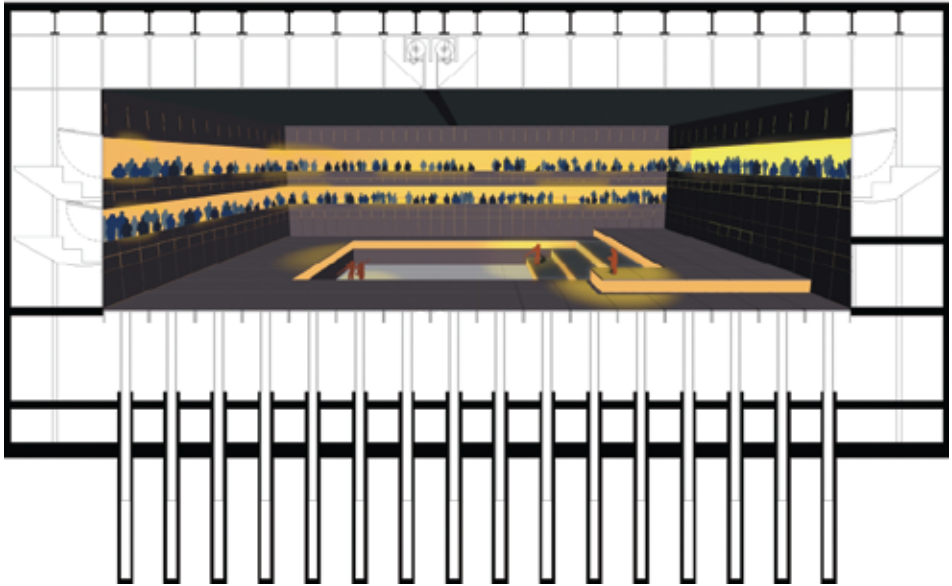


Illustration No. 7: Interior view with “anchoring” below (©GKK Architects).



Illustration No. 8: Main hall, variant 4 (©GKK Architects).

Operas and especially scenic music from the recent repertoire of contemporary art music, which could use a multifunctional hall, might be for example:

John Cage *Europeras* (1 a. 2 1987, 3 a. 4 1990, 5 1991)

Adriana Hölszky *Tragödia – der unsichtbare Raum* (1997)

Mauricio Kagel *Staatsoper szenische Komposition* (1967/70)

Helmut Lachenmann *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* Musik mit Bildern (1990–1996)

Liza Lim *Yué Ling Jié* (A Street Feasting) A Ritual Street-opera in seven parts, for three

singers and nine instrumentalists (1999)

Luigi Nono *Prometeo Tragedia d'Ascolto* (1984), also his operas from the 1960s

Karlheinz Stockhausen *Aus Licht* Opera -cycle (seven days in seven operas, 1977 bis 2003)

Bernd Alois Zimmermann *Die Soldaten* (1958)¹⁸

All of these operas could profit from a multifunctional facility like this hall, as they rely on spaces and groupings of musicians, actors, etc. layed out on several levels in space. There is testimony that Hölszky, who belonged to the original team conceiving the building and its functions, almost broke out into tears, when she was first informed of the building's final design and particularly about the range of variation for the main hall.¹⁹

Resonance, Media Response, Outlook

During the early phase of planning a number of supporters from business were already interested, most notably the Maecenata Institute Berlin (Count von Strachwitz), a foundation acting across borders in the fields of civil society, philanthropy, and non profit organisation („Kompetenzzentrum für Zivilgesellschaft, Stiftungswesen, Philanthropie, Gemeinnützige Organisationen“ versteht.²⁰) The Maecenata Institute has grown immensely since then and now-aside from actively supporting nonprofit projects-also hosts a research program at Humboldt University in Berlin.

In the weekly paper “Die Woche” dated January 4th 2002, when still discussing the project two months after public presentation of its design at the press conference, we read the double-edged but probably well-intentioned “Verführung der Ahnungslosen” (seduction of the unsuspecting) of the Maecenata foundation: “Above all the initiative has won a circle of supporters, to which belong managing directors of Daimler Benz, VW, Allianz, and other potent trademarks. This circle fosters the theatre financially and communicatively and also commits its resources to the building project.”²¹

Count Strachwitz from Maecenata was on stage at the press conference on November 27th 2001. Also on stage were, as representative for the architects' office Oliver Kühn, for the COB Andreas Rocholl, and the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media at the time Michael Naumann, as well as Secretary of State for the new Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media Julian Nida-Rümelin.

The energy and persuasiveness of the project might have added to its overwhelming resonance in the media, with 50 original articles and contributions-notably on a project which was not about to be executed in the then near future. They could be found in the German speaking region as well as in foreign media as far as the US, in the daily press as well as specialized press in music, architecture, and real estate, on the internet, on TV, and in broadcasts.

¹⁸ Further composers could be Frederick Rzewski, Georges Aperghis, and Vinko Globokar.

¹⁹ Interview with A. Rocholl August 20, 2008.

²⁰ See the website of the foundation: <http://www.maecenata.eu/index.html> (September 24, 2008).

²¹ Claudia Vüllers, “Verführung der Ahnungslosen,” in *Die Woche*, January 4, 2002 (transl. by the author).



Illustration No. 9: Article from Berliner Kurier (November 24, 2001, first page) (©GKK Architects).

Even the „Berliner Kurier“, the Berlin version of the German tabloid newspaper “Bildzeitung”, acknowledged the COB project with a colored full page (Illustr. No. 9) three days before the press conference²² and joined in the round of hymns of praise. This is very likely not due to the sudden insight that Berlin, the new music scene, or the world without fail need such a house. It rather involves the resonance of a supremely attractive and convincing architectural design and because of the prominent performative quality of the space, advised for a fallow area in the middle of Berlin for which no other project then came to mind.

²² However they refer to the wrong location.

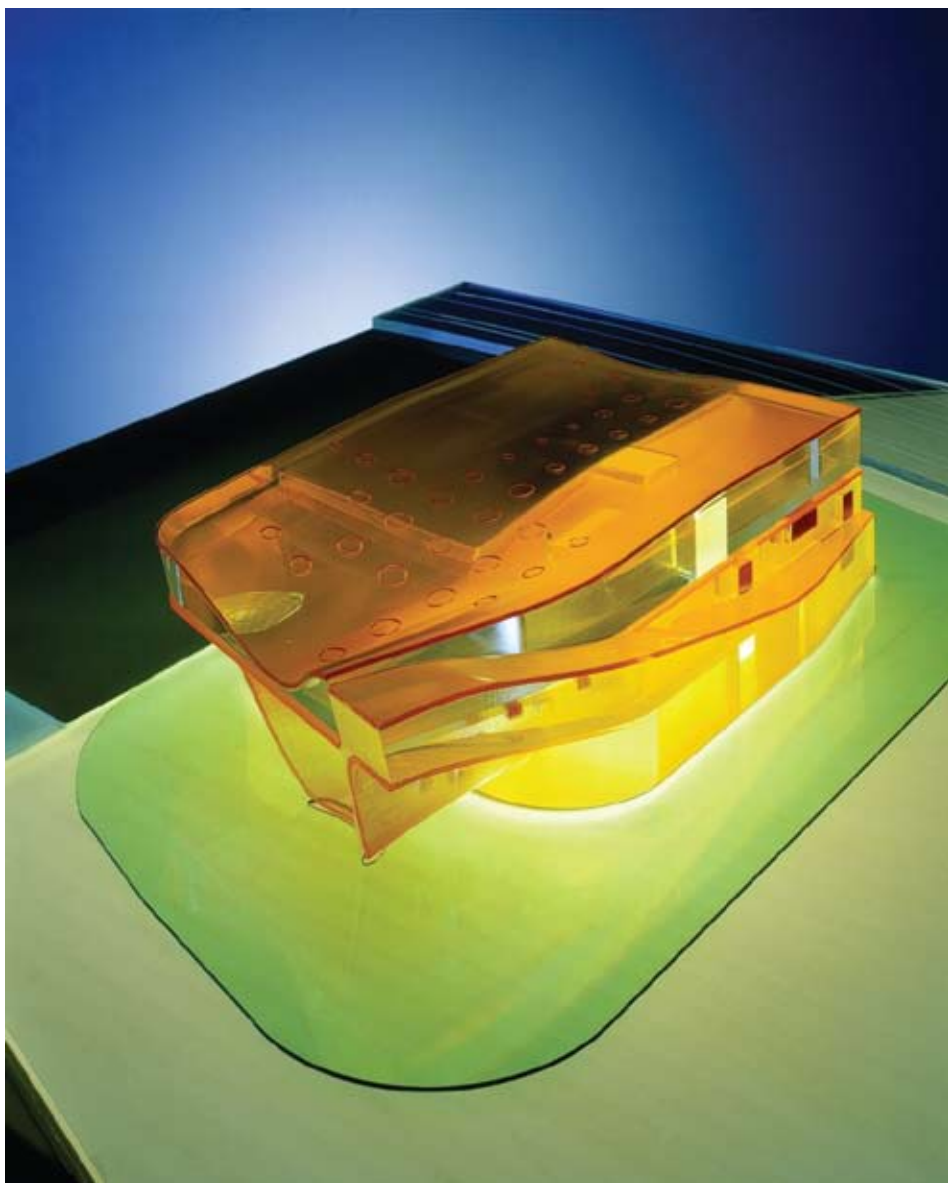


Illustration No. 10: Photo of the illuminated architectural model with its skin of glas from a slant behind the building (©GKK Architects).²³

²³ © GKK architects.

It is unfortunate that this project has not been built and consequently brought a central urban area, which is still a wasteland to life. No other comparable project has been realized anywhere else, but the potential interested parties keep, maintain, and perform in already existing alternative locations. In Berlin e.g. the Kulturbrauerei am Prenzlauerberg is worth mention, as is the performance space “Radialsystem” in a former transformer station in Kreuzberg-Friedrichshain (in operation since 2006), as well as, most recently, the projects “Ohrenstrand” (ear beach), for mobile locations. With “Ohrenstrand”, Andreas Rocholl from COB is also in charge; it is supported by the young German “Netzwerk Neue Musik”.

Kühn and Rocholl however are both confident that their idea of this house for contemporary opera and music has already influenced other building projects like the new opera house on the water in Oslo opened in April 2008. The building of the “Cite de la musique” in Paris, designed by Christian de Portzamparc and opened in 1995, may serve as the example of an older building, conceived as a somewhat similar performative space. They also assume that in some cases at least specific performative qualities of newly designed buildings are desired, not only due to a certain “Zeitgeist”, but also in reference to the design of their “house” perceived worldwide. This could possibly be the case for the plan of the new “ensemble house” for the joint Ensemble Academy in Freiburg i. Br. (Southern Baden-Wuerttemberg), which is currently in the building phase, located just next to the University of Music, a communal project conceived for Ensemble Recherche for Contemporary Music and the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra specializing in historically informed performance practice. The two ensembles are independent units acting for two important spheres of art music, both as musicians as well as coaches and teachers, and for years searching for and practicing together the synergetic effects between baroque and new art music activities.

It appears certain that such buildings as that conceived by Kühn and Rocholls will come into being. One of the main reasons is that they suit our time and the needs of our musical and urban cultures.²⁴ “Architecture has its own realm of existence. She is connected with life through a special bodily connection. In my imagination at first she is neither message nor sign, but the envelope and background of the life passing by, a sensitive vascular system for the rhythm of footfalls on the floor, for concentration on work, for the quiet of sleep.”²⁵ This is the vision of the Swiss architect Peter Zumthor, who conceived the building next to the COB’s former construction site: Berlin’s new main railway station. His poetic sense of life in space, in certain locations, and in buildings corresponds strongly with the yet-to-be-built house for ambitious contemporary art music, which is like a “musical instrument”.

²⁴ Interview of the author with both, July 15, 2008.

²⁵ Peter Zumthor (2010³), *Architektur denken* (Basel: Birkhäuser), p. 12 (transl. by the author).

POVZETEK

Sodobna glasba, še zlasti v njenih scenskih in interdisciplinarnih različicah, se vse bolj pomika v sredo zanimanja in pozornosti v današnjih kulturah. V Berlinu, v Nemčiji, je prišlo do izjemnega projekta hiše, ki bi bila namenjena sodobni glasbi in gledališču (COB/ZOB) in bi nudila vrsto rešitev za urbano, še neutečeno »zono« kulturnega utripa. Vezano na model antičnega trga (agora) je stavbo v letu 2011 skupaj zasnoval tim specialistov za novo glasbo in dospelejšo performativno arhitek-

turo. Čeprav stavba ni bila uresničena, je možno zaznati, da gre za trajen in ustvarjalen vir oziroma referenčni projekt, ki zadeva estetske in komunikativne procese v umetniškem, arhitekturnem in urbanem razvoju. Koncept obravnavane hiše se kaže kot mejnik na poti k sodobnemu in danes vedno bolj razširjenemu pristopu h glasbi in k umeščanju kulturnih dogodkov v vsakdanje življenje, nadalje, k ponovnemu odkrivanju vrednosti in žarčenju živih prireditev ter njihovega usidranja v težavnem področju, kjer se srečujejo umetniške aktivnosti in vsakdanje življenje.