



# ARS ELECTRONICA 2019

Festival for Art, Technology & Society



## THE BIG CONCERT NIGHT 2019

The „Mahler-Unfinished” Project

In cooperation with the Bruckner Orchestra Linz

**FRI Sept. 6, 2019**

POSTCITY, Ground Floor / Train Hall

07:30 PM Doors Open

08:00 PM — 09:40 PM

## The „Mahler-Unfinished” Project

The Big Concert Night 2019 is the third major project to be developed and performed with Markus Poschner as principal conductor of the Bruckner Orchestra. The concert begins with “Mahler Remixed,” by Christian Fennesz, one of the main protagonists of the Austrian electronic music scene, who has already transformed various samples from Mahler symphonies into tonal and musical material for his live performances. Towards the end of this first part, Markus Poschner will improvise on the piano and, together with Christian Fennesz, build a bridge from electronics to the orchestra’s performance. Johannes Braumann and the Ars Electronica Futurelab will continue a collaboration with dancer and choreographer Silke Grabinger, which began last year. With “Underbody” they try to bring to life a human-puppet-machine system in which Silke Grabinger will interact artistically as solo dancer with a configuration of six Kuka industrial robots playing one puppet dancer. Amir Bastan, Peter Freudling, Roland Aigner, Gerhard Senz and Stefan Mittlböck-Jungwirth-Fohringer are also involved in the development

of this human-machine choreography which inverts the constellation of Gertrud Bodenwiesers piece “Dämon Maschine” where five dancers were transformed into one machine. The movements of the robots slowly coming to rest and the fading of their characteristic engine noises are then replaced by the striking initial motif of the viola in the third part of the evening, and the orchestra starts Mahler’s symphony No. 10. The viola motif, the first ten notes of which were entered into one of the currently most powerful machine learning systems (MuseNet from OpenAI) as a starting theme, then begins again seamlessly, as a further movement, so to speak. The result of the machine learning system, which premieres at the end of the evening, was taken over completely unchanged and has been orchestrated by Ali Nikrang and will be performed by the Bruckner Orchestra, conducted by Markus Poschner. This year, Akiko Nakayama from Tokyo will come to POSTCITY for the live visualizations of the orchestra, while the Berlin artist Lillevan will visualize the electronic performance by Christian Fennesz.

Mahler Remixed: Christian Fennesz (AT) & Lillevan (SE/IE)  
Underbody: Silke Grabinger (AT) SILK Cie. & SILK Fluegge, Johannes Braumann (AT) Creative Robotics / UfG Linz, Amir Bastan (IR), Roland Aigner (AT), Ars Electronica Futurelab, Peter Freudling (AT), Stefan Mittlböck-Jungwirth-Fohringer (AT)  
Bruckner Orchestra Linz (AT) conducted by Markus Poschner  
Artificial Intelligence: Ali Nikrang (AT), MuseNet OpenAI, Christine M. Payne (US)  
Live Visualizations: Akiko Nakayama (JP), Lillevan (DE), Gerhard Senz (AT)  
Supported by Yamaha

The Big Concert Night is part of the AIxMusic Festival



**S + T + ARTS**

**AI x MUSIC**

## Uncertainty and Wonder

Comprehending the age in which we live is not an easy undertaking. We are frequently unable to see the forest for the trees. In 1910, Vienna – at the time the seventh-largest city in the world and the fourth-largest in Europe – was already a metropolis of two million people. Which it will be again soon. Emperor Franz Joseph still ruled over a multinational state, Gustav Klimt was leaving his indelible mark on art nouveau, Arthur Schnitzler was provoking theater scandals, Max Winter was writing the first social reportages, and Sigmund Freud was conducting groundbreaking work in the interpretation of dreams. Vienna was a “Silicon Valley of thought” (Allan Janik) and in the midst of a major upheaval, as was the entire epoch. “You alone know what it means,” noted Gustav Mahler above the conclusion of his unfinished Symphony No. 10, a reference to his wife, Alma. A serious marital crisis had accompanied the composition of the work, leading Mahler to consult Freud at the

end of August 1910 in the Dutch spa town of Leiden. Arnold Schoenberg believed that in Mahler’s “ninth,” which at the end falls silent in a pianississimo, the composer no longer speaks as a subject. But this “subject” then reappears in the subsequent symphony fragment in a highly expressive manner: the last gasp of an “ego”? The composer died the following year, and the Tenth Symphony can be seen as the soundtrack to his lovesickness – “With all the horrors of this time in it,” as Alma Mahler wrote in a letter. The work reflected the state of matters at the time. The Adagio we will hear today begins with a recitative-like “swan song” by the violas, which also played the final gesture of the Ninth Symphony. They are entrusted here with a fresh start: the end contains the beginning; the downfall holds within it the departure into yet unknown terrain. “Against orientation, stability and knowledge – uncertainty and wonder,” as the Spanish sculptor Eduardo Chillida wrote.

Text: Norbert Trawöger – Artistic Director Bruckner Orchestra Linz

KUKA robot, © KUKA Deutschland GmbH





Christian Fennesz (AT), Lillevan (SE/IE)

## Mahler Remixed

Austrian guitarist, composer, and electronic musician Christian Fennesz is recognized as a key figure in the electronic music scene today. His wide international reputation has been consolidated through his substantial contribution to a new musical expression. Within the last 10 years, Fennesz has collaborated with many musicians, filmmakers, and dancers such as Ryuichi Sakamoto, David Sylvian, Keith Rowe, Mark Linkous of Sparklehorse, and Mike Patton. At this year's Ars Electronica Festival, Fennesz will perform Mahler Remixed, which was initially recorded live at Radiokulturhaus, Vienna by Christoph Amann, in May 2011. Together with visual artist Lillevan he will re-contextualise samples taken from Gustav Mahler's symphonies.



Akiko Nakayama (JP)

## Alive painting for Bruckner Orchestra

*Alive painting* is a live performance of dynamic, changing pictures and sounds. During the performance, people concentrate on the beauty of blending paints, as well as the philosophical meanings of colors, shapes and movement. This is the second appearance of *Alive painting* with the Bruckner Orchestra. The entire body feels the joy and dynamics of music created by the Bruckner Orchestra. The audio-visual element unites the musicians and audience in one larger-than-life artistic experience.

Technical Assistant: Masaki Fukui

Silke Grabinger (AT)

## SILK Cie. & SILK Fluegge – Underbody

This 15-minute performance follows on from last year's cooperation with Johannes Braumann and the Ars Electronica Futurelab. It is based on Gertrud Bodenwieser's play "Dämon Maschine" (1923), in which five dancers turned into one machine. Now, five machines play one dancer. Whereas in the original performance each person controlled a part of a machine, an industrial Kuka robot now controls a body part. Choreographer and dancer Silke Grabinger goes into a dance with this marionette. The dancer is confronted with a "manly" technology, an animus, with whom she is also confronted in herself. In the dance it can become unclear who reflects whom, who reacts to whom or who leads whom.

The question arises as to the relevance of Bodenwieser's assessment that in the existing form of society machines prevail over people instead of people controlling machines.



Artistic director/ Performance: Silke Grabinger  
 Production team: Olga Swietlicka, Sandra Krampelhuber, Adelina Nita, Sandra Eidenberger  
 Dramatic adviser: Ludwig Felhofer  
 Costumes: Bianca Fladerer

vog.photo

## Mahler 10:10 – Challenging the AI

"Unfinished" – the concept was and still is a challenge: not so much in the sense of finishing, but to think ahead and reinterpret. Especially in the second half of the 20th century, many artists tried their hand at this open legacy at the end of a musical and historical epoch. Today, in the 21st century, it is of course particularly appealing to take on the challenge again with the latest technical possibilities – not to imitate or improve Mahler, but to measure our artistic approaches as well as our technical possibilities against it. The path to new possibilities of expression always leads through the transformation of what has shaped us before, is always testing the limits and exploring what evolves from it. Ali Nikrang,

AI expert at the Ars Electronica Futurelab, computer scientist, composer and pianist (graduate of the Mozarteum Salzburg) has developed an AI-based adaptation of the significant viola theme at the beginning of the 10th Symphony especially for the Mahler Unfinished Project. For this purpose, he worked with Musenet, currently the most powerful GPT-2-based machine learning system for musical applications from OpenAI. The first ten notes of the original melody were given to the system as well as stylistic parameters according to which the AI system then composes any number of new interpretations. Ali Nikrang selected one of these compositions and then orchestrated it again "by hand" without any changes.

# RECOMMENDATION

## AIxMusic Festival St. Florian

SAT 7.9. 2:00 PM – 10:00 PM / St. Florian Monastery

Although the applications of artificial intelligence are still in their infancy, it is clear that we are heading towards a turning point. Machine learning, in particular, is already making it clear today what disruptive changes we are facing. What role will—or should—AI-based systems play in the future? What will we use intelligent machines for and how do we want to be supported by them? It is this very encounter between human creativity and technical perfection to which the first AIxMusic Festival, organized by Ars Electronica and the European Commission as part of the STARTS initiative, is dedicated. At Saturday noon, the AIxMusic Festival will move to the St. Florian Monastery for a special program of moderated lectures, talks, demonstrations, and concerts. Renowned personalities from the world of art, such as Hermann Nitsch, Oliviero Toscani, Dennis Russell Davies, Maki Namekawa, and Sophie Wenerscheid, and from the world of science, such as Josef Penninger, Siegfried Zielinski, and Ludger Brümmer will be present. In addition, there will be internationally leading developers such as the Yamaha R&D Division AI Group.

Shuttles operate every 15 minutes between POSTCITY and Monastery St. Florian between 1:00 PM – 10:30 PM. For holders of an event ticket or FESTIVAL/DAY pass.

Werner Jauk (AT), Tilman Hatje (DE)

## Music Monday

MO 9.9. 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM / Meeting point: Main Entrance Ars Electronica Center (Admission free)

The Sound Art Parcours “Music Monday” is a longstanding Ars Electronica tradition. The tour passes through the diversity and plurality of the relationship spaces of music/sound art and the media arts. Theoretical reflection and discussions with the artists, individual physical experience, immersion in the mediality of sound: this is what Music Monday stands for, because it enables intensive and guided encounters with sound worlds and those media worlds that are formed after listening – this year’s focus “AIxMusic” shows the mutual enrichment of music and media art in an “auditory culture.”

Maki Namekawa (JP), Dennis Russell Davies (US), Cori O’Lan (AT)

## Pianographique – Piano Music meets Digital Images

MON 9.9. 7:30 PM – 10:00 PM / POSTCITY, Train Hall

The festival will conclude this year with another collaboration by the two pianists Maki Namekawa and Dennis Russell Davies with the digital visual artist Cori O’Lan. It is part of a multi-year Ars Electronica project dedicated to the visual interpretation of musical expression and perception as well as the direct encounter between analog sound and digital visuals. The evening’s music program includes a “classic” and a premiere. “L’Oiseau de feu” (“The Firebird”) by Igor Stravinsky is a reference piece in music history. The second part is the Austrian premiere of the first piano sonata by Philip Glass, which he dedicated to Maki Namekawa. Composed 110 years after “The Firebird”, the piano sonata is a joint commission of Klavier-Festival Ruhr, Philharmonie de Paris, and Ars Electronica. Its world premiere performance took place in July 2019 at the Klavier-Festival Ruhr and both the composer as well as Maki Namekawa received enthusiastic appreciation.

# The Bruckner Orchestra meets Media Art

**Since 2003, Ars Electronica and the Bruckner Orchestra Linz have been jointly celebrating an annual Big Concert Night—a highlight of every Ars Electronica Festival. In 2019, this concert night will mark both the start of the first “AI x Music Festival”—and the farewell to the spectacular POSTCITY Linz.**

The venue where principal conductor Markus Poschner and the Bruckner Orchestra Linz will be performing on Friday evening, September 6, 2019 is anything but a classic concert hall. The huge railway hall of the former postal distribution center, with its tracks and platforms, its mighty concrete girders, steel bridges and house-high rolling gates, is a spectacular and fascinating place. One that transforms making and listening to music into a different, completely new experience. But it is not only the venue that will make the Bruckner Orchestra’s performance so unique on this evening. It is also the spectacle with people and machines that is staged in front of, in the middle of and around the musicians and the poetic visualizations that immerse everything in a wonderful, abstract world of colors. The Big Concert Night is an experiment in which past and future, human virtuosity and technical perfection meet—not just theoretically but as if in a test tube in a laboratory. The fact that Mahler’s 10th will be played at the POSTCITY at the last Big Concert Night fits perfectly: The Unfinished Symphony was composed in 1910, one year before Mahler’s death, in a time with a sense of disorientation and uncertainty comparable to ours today. And so Gustav Mahler’s 10th Symphony is a swan song and a new departure in equal measure.



# SCHEDULE

## THE BIG CONCERT NIGHT 2019

### The "Mahler-Unfinished" Project

7:30 PM	Doors Open
8:00 PM	Mahler Remixed: Christian Fennesz (AT) & Lilllevan (SE/IE) Underbody: Silke Grabinger (AT) SILK Cie. & SILK Fluegge, Johannes Braumann (AT) Creative Robotics / UfG Linz, Amir Bastan (IR), Roland Aigner (AT), Ars Electronica Futurelab, Peter Freudling (AT), Stefan Mittlböck-Jungwirth-Fohringer (AT) Bruckner Orchestra Linz (AT) conducted by Markus Poschner Artificial Intelligence: Ali Nikrang (AT), MuseNet OpenAI, Christine M. Payne (US) Live Visualizations: Akiko Nakayama (JP), Lilllevan (DE), Gerhard Senz (AT)
10:00 PM	Start of the Ars Electronica Nightline Program

## NIGHTLINE

### 10:00 PM – 4:00 AM POSTCITY COURTYARD/TRAIN HALL/SALONSTAGE

#### COURTYARD

10:00 PM	Tripods One — Moritz Simon Geist (DE) Live A/V
10:50 PM	RRUCULLA (ES) Live A/V

#### TRAIN HALL

11:00 PM	SILK Cie. & SILK Fluegge — Underbody Silke Grabinger (AT) Performance
11:20 PM	Babii (UK) Live A/V
12:05 AM	Cid Rim (AT) Live
1:00 AM	Sinjin Hawke & Zora Jones (WWW) Live A/V

#### SALONSTAGE

11:15 PM	AG-MX70 DDX3216 — Stefan Tiefengraber (AT) Live A/V
11:40 PM	Chronic Youth (AT) Live A/V
12:30 AM	HDMIRROR (UK) Live A/V
1:30 AM	Masha Dabelka (AT/RU) DJ — With Visuals by LEX.LAB
2:45 AM	Polyxene (GR) DJ — With Visuals by LEX.LAB

In cooperation with SALON 2000

## ARS ELECTRONICA ANIMATION FESTIVAL

10 AM – 11:30 PM POSTCITY, Art Thinking House — Animation Festival

LIMITED CAPACITY: Admission with a valid ticket or reservation voucher only. Reservation vouchers for the Big Concert Night can be picked up at the POSTCITY Infodesk upon presentation of a FESTIVAL- or ONE-DAY-PASS.

The Big Concert Night was first launched in 2003 by Dennis Russell Davies, Gerfried Stocker, Wolfgang Winkler and Heribert Schröder as a cooperation project of Ars Electronica, Bruckner Orchestra Linz and Brucknerhaus Linz.