

Heiner Goebbels

Amongst the composers for contemporary music Heiner Goebbels is a singular figure. After early experience with rock music, his artistic career is shaped by the student movement. In his dissertation for his sociology degree ("The Question of the Progressiveness of Musical Material. The Social Relationship between Compositions Produced During the Pre-Classical Period and by Hanns Eisler") he finds his way to the categorical imperative that is still valid for him today: always compose in such a way, that your music does not deprive the listener of his right to form his own opinion. Music reflects social reality, its position and attitude have to be continually redefined. For his purpose Goebbels uses many different genres and casts ranging from theatre, film and ballet music to radio plays and experimental music theatre.

Heiner Goebbels composes – never without a non-musical reason – in close co-operation with writers and musicians utilizing the power of their instrumental expression. His music always aims below the surface of his subjects and creates a tension between them and other remote levels of meaning. Montage and collage with inbuilt free spaces: the composition, no longer describable, reassembles itself in the listener's head. In his work on texts (especially Heiner Müller's), he deciphers the subtexts whose meaning is conveyed by means of tectonics and speech rhythms. Often he uses patterns taken from popular music; these are functionalised with avant-garde techniques and brought to a final and radical form in the experimental rock group "Cassiber" founded in 1982. Although unusually productive and innovative, the critical standards he sets himself lead him away from a personal style. His instinct for attractive and shocking effects ensure his extraordinary success with his audiences.

Bernd Leukert