

ARI BENJAMIN MEYERS

**KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC
in Mönchengladbach**

Museum Abteiberg is realizing a two-part project with the Berlin-based American artist and composer Ari Benjamin Meyers. The idea was born in 2022 on the 40th anniversary of the Museum Abteiberg, when the KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC transformed the museum's sculpture garden into a performance and meeting place at the interface of art and music. Following on from this, Acts II and III will expand the presence of the KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC in Mönchengladbach in 2024. First with a seven-week live music exhibition at Museum Abteiberg, then with a composition project for the city, which Meyers will develop and perform together with Borussia Mönchengladbach fans.

**Act II
May 5 – June 23, 2024**



KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC in Mönchengladbach, Act II, Workshop, Museum Abteiberg, 2024

**Act III
September 7, 2024 & October 6, 2024 – January 5, 2025**



Nordkurve, stadium in Borussia-Park, Mönchengladbach

Ari Benjamin Meyers (b. 1972 in New York) studied composition and conducting at the Juilliard School in New York, Yale University in New Haven, CT, and the Peabody Institute in Baltimore. Based in Berlin since the late 1990s, his internationally featured projects explore the structures and processes inherent in the performative, social, and ephemeral nature of music. His works often draw attention to overlooked details of playing and listening. Earlier work by the artist has explored musical scores, for example, but also the shapes and placement of musical instruments as well as concert settings and gestures of performers and conductors. At the same time, his compositions, installations and performances question the relationship between performer and audience. On the one hand, they reveal structures of dominance, hierarchies and social inequalities; on the other, they appeal to the power of commonality. Noteworthy projects include the PUBLIC ORCHESTRA OF PHILADELPHIA (Rehearsing Philadelphia); the WERKSORCHESTER for the OSTEN Festival in Bitterfeld 2022; and the STAATSORCHESTER (State Orchestra) that Meyers launched together with Munich street musicians as part of Public Art Munich 2018.



Anthem, 2017, exhibition view KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC, Witte de With, Rotterdam, 2018



WERKSORCHESTER, OSTEN-Festival, Bitterfeld-Wolfen, 2022

“Ari Benjamin Meyers has been working with large groups of non-professional musicians for several years. In doing so, he develops compositions that always aim to reactivate an often neglected social tool: listening to one another.”

OSTEN-Festival, Bitterfeld, website text excerpt



STAATSORCHESTER, 2018

Short documentary on the STAATSORCHESTER:

<https://vimeo.com/877465439/0596020b44?share=copy>



PUBLIC ORCHESTRA, part of the program
Rehearsing Philadelphia,
Cherry Street Pier, Philadelphia, 2022

“I created the Public Orchestra as a proposal for a new way to think about political, social, and personal agency through music making,” says Ari Benjamin Meyers. **“The Public Orchestra of Philadelphia is first and foremost about people, about Philadelphians coming together; a public space for action between the orchestra, the composers, and the audience taking place through the mode of rehearsal. Rehearsal being the act of imagining, trying, enacting, and re-trying different and perhaps even better futures.”**

Short documentary on REHEARSING PHILADELPHIA: <https://vimeo.com/778052695>



Founded in 2017, the **KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC** is a nomadic institution dedicated to creating musical, experiential spaces in visual arts venues and public settings. Meyers' project consciously draws on the analog traditions of experiencing music. Consequently, the experience is not of a preserved recording, nor of an audio or data carrier, nor of streamed audio, but of the immediate and unfiltered event of a concert, now in a visual art setting and during the opening hours of an art exhibition.

Meyers first conceived the KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC as part of a commission for Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam and the Spring Workshop in Hong Kong. Initial KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC performances and exhibitions were held at Witte de With (now: Kunstinstituut Melly) in 2018, at the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB), and at the VAC Foundation in Moscow in 2019. An "educational version" followed in 2022 at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

Excerpts from Rotterdam: <https://vimeo.com/264061713/e61ffebf3c?share=copy>



The ensemble performs Sora Kims *Breathe* (2017), exhibition view KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC, Witte de With, Rotterdam, 2018



ARI BENJAMIN MEYERS: KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC, Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB), Santa Barbara, 2019

Act II

May 5 – June 23, 2024

After initial appearances at exhibition venues without collections, the KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC will make its museum debut in Mönchengladbach. A dynamic live music exhibition will take shape against the backdrop of the Museum Abteiberg collection, establishing connections with the expanded art concepts of the 1960s and 70s while evoking their historical ideals and thinking them further. The central point of contact is the extensive ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE, which has been housed in the Museum Abteiberg since 2018. A "live" area for the KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC will be installed adjacent to the Schaumagazin (visible storage) containing the iconic collection of Fluxus and related movements. This creates a direct connection to relevant works exhibited nearby, such as Joe Jones's musical instruments and Dick Higgins's symphonies. Similar to Meyers, both Jones and Higgins pushed the boundaries of music and art in the early 1960s. The character of the Happening, the fleeting nature of many Fluxus works also resonates in the performative concept of Meyers's KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC.



KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC in Mönchengladbach, Act I, Museum Abteiberg, 2022

Over a period of seven weeks, the KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC will take over various exhibition spaces. Eight performers from the fields of music, dance, performance and related disciplines—all selected in an open workshop based on musical and performance skills as well as diversity—form the ensemble. Four days a week, they spend the entire day presenting pieces from the so-called *Songbook*, the KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC repertoire. The latter was started by Meyers about 10 years ago and has been continuously expanded ever since; it contains compositions by Meyers along with works by Ei Arakawa, John Baldessari, Jonathan Bepler, Marcel Duchamp, Julius Eastman, Philip Glass, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Christian Marclay, Yoko Ono, Laure Prouvost, Steve Reich, Terry Riley, Anri Sala & Franz Ferdinand, Erik Satie and Superflex, among others. Together with the ensemble, Meyers is creating a site-specific exhibition score that is open to variation and offers the audience a new, unique experience with each visit. The repertoire will also be supplemented by a few selected works from the ANDERSCH COLLECTION/ARCHIVE.



KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC in Mönchengladbach, Act II, Workshop, Museum Abteiberg, 2024



Various works from Ari Benjamin Meyers' *Songbook*, 2013-today

There will also be three new works: commissioned pieces from the German musician and composer Irmin Schmidt, the British musician and artist Melika Ngombe Kolongo, and the British artist and activist Rory Pilgrim. The new compositions will be added to and expand the exhibition score over the course of the show. At the same time, they create a rehearsal process that the audience experiences within the exhibition.

Irmin Schmidt (b. 1937 in Berlin, lives in southern France and Cologne) is a founding member of the band Can, which gained international fame in 1968 with an innovative blend of free jazz, funk, Krautrock and stylistic elements of electronic music. The musician and composer studied at the Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen with György Ligeti, at the Mozarteum in Salzburg and Cologne University of Music with Karlheinz Stockhausen. Since the late 1970s, Schmidt has released numerous solo albums. To this day he works regularly for film and television. In 2015 he was awarded the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture. The documentary *Can and me* about Schmidt, who is now the only living founding member of Can, was also released in spring 2023.



Irmin Schmidt, 2017

Melika Ngombe Kolongo (b. 1988 in Kinhasa, lives in London and Berlin), aka **Nkisi**, works at the interface of electronic music, production and visual art. She uses performance and sound to address visible and invisible or conscious and unconscious structures of social power relations. She is a founding member of NON Records, an independent record label and collective dedicated to artists of the African diaspora or of African descent. She is also co-founder of Radical Agency Axis Arkestra, which explores alternative forms of knowledge production.



Melika Ngombe Kolongo, 2019

Rory Pilgrims (b. 1988 in Bristol, lives and works in Amsterdam) cross-media artistic-activist approach includes painting and drawing as well as music, film, text, and live performances. His internationally featured work questions the way we come together, communicate and advocate for social change. He often combines art, music and social engagement, realizes collaborations or workshops and invites people to engage in dialogue about social topics. In 2019, Pilgrim won the Prix de Rome. In 2023, he was nominated for the prestigious Turner Prize.



Rory Pilgrim, 2023

Act III – “A song for the city“

September 7, 2024: performance in the city

October 6, 2024 – January 5, 2025: presentation at Museum Abteiberg & QR-codes on site

(Schedule of performance depending on local cooperation partners)

Act III of KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC deals with the specific music that is stadium chants. Ultras’ fan chants in Mönchengladbach are among the most powerful in the Bundesliga: at home games they fill the stadium with sound from the north curve; at away matches they act as their city’s choir. Meyers takes these chants that move the masses, their choreographic structures and processes as an opportunity to work on a joint “choreo” with lead singers, drummers and a choir of Ultras and Borussia fans.



Fans of Borussia Mönchengladbach in Hamburg



Borussia player Peter van Houdt with drummer “Manolo,” 2002, Bökelbergstadion, Mönchengladbach

The idea is to decouple the engaging “power” (Meyers) of this music from soccer matches and instead highlight it as a culturally significant form of contemporary music. There is a desire to transplant it to iconic places in Mönchengladbach: both beloved sites like the Kaiser-Friedrich-Halle or the water tower in Windberg and the abandoned and obscure (the ruins of Haus Westland; the tank hangar on the REME grounds; or the remote district of Odenkirchen, home to a number of Ultras).



Otto Greiß, New water tower, 1907-09, Mönchengladbach-Windberg



Residential area Am Römerbrunnen, Mönchengladbach-Odenkirchen

The “new song” debut and a behind-the-scenes glimpse of Act III will be presented at Museum Abteiberg starting October 6. Music at the various performance location sites themselves will be accessible via QR codes—with the effect of a radically new museum audience from the soccer scene and an unexpected representation that reinforces a sense of intercultural exchange between art and soccer, music and the city.