

Press release

5 June 2024



Waldemar Alder on the banjo and Lotte Gerson playing saxophone, ca. 1931, anonymous, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin

Bauhaus Music 2024 Music festival on freedom

17–19 October 2024

the temporary bauhaus-archiv
Knesebeckstraße 1
10623 Berlin-Charlottenburg

St. Elisabeth + Villa Elisabeth
Invalidenstraße 3
10115 Berlin-Mitte

“I felt released, freed”, recalled composer Ruth Crawford Seeger after visiting the Bauhaus Dessau in 1931. Freedom is more relevant than ever before and is the central theme of the 2024 “Bauhaus Music” festival. With a spotlight on “exile”, the three-day festival will highlight artistic and political positions and forms of expression surrounding the concept of freedom, past and present. The moderated concerts include works by Arnold Schönberg, Kurt Schwitters, Johann Sebastian Bach, Béla Bartók, Alban Berg, Stefan Wolpe, Cathy Milliken and Ruth Crawford Seeger. Numerous artists and renowned soloists like Claudia Barainsky, Kolja Blacher, Gunnar Brandt-Sigurdsson and Jocelyn B. Smith, and the Deutsches Kammerorchester Berlin will come together over three days to explore the musical life and work at the Bauhaus.

“Bauhaus Music” is part of an interdisciplinary research project at the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung, which has been studying the relationship of the Bauhaus and music since 2021.

Marc Blitzstein, Cathy Milliken, Jocelyn B. Smith

Lunch concert, Thursday, 17 October, 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm, the temporary bauhaus-archiv (free admission with prior registration)

Event language: German

The festival kicks off with a sensational discovery: While researching musical life at the Bauhaus, scholars recently unearthed the 1929/30 avant-garde opera “Parabola and Circula” by the American composer Marc Blitzstein. It was supposed to debut at the Bauhaus theatre in Dessau, but the performance was ultimately cancelled. At the opening of the “Bauhaus Music” festival at the temporary bauhaus-archiv, audiences will get to hear excerpts of the opera for the very first time. Inspired by Blitzstein’s occupation with Constructivist Art, “Parabola and Circula” tells the story of a romance between a square and a dot, accompanied by many other geometric shapes. Marc Blitzstein, along with Kurt Weill, is one of the most influential composers of anticapitalistic and antifascist theatre of that age.

The 2017 radio play “Driving with Fatima” by composer Cathy Milliken transports listeners to modern-day South Africa. The piece is dedicated to the writer Fatima Dike who grew up in the Langa Township where she lives again today. On a drive through Langa, she relates stories of home and exile, modernism and tradition, which Cathy Milliken intertwined to create a radio play. The singer Jocelyn B. Smith, who performed the vocals, will sing songs from “Driving with Fatima” live during the lunch concert.

Béla Bartók, Alban Berg, Johann Sebastian Bach

Friday, 18 October 2024, 7:30 pm – 9 pm, St Elisabeth (advance ticket sales)

Event language: German

On Friday evening, works by Alban Berg and Béla Bartók will be performed alongside Johann Sebastian Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, presented by the Deutsches Kammerorchester in the Church of St Elisabeth.

Both Alban Berg and Béla Bartók maintained close contacts with numerous members of the Bauhaus and were regular guests at the school. They pioneered modernist trends in music which disregarded musical conventions and called for the equal treatment and “liberation” of all tones. Similar to the field of design at the Bauhaus, these composers questioned the validity of any and all time-honoured certainties in music.

The meticulously structured music of Johann Sebastian Bach stands in stark contrast to these modern compositions. However, Bach was a role model for many members of the Bauhaus and the musical avant-garde which found the formal stringency of Bach’s masterful fugues especially liberating.

Stefan Wolpe, Arnold Schönberg, Kurt Schwitters, Ruth Crawford Seeger

Moderated concert “Portrait of Stefan Wolpe”

Saturday, 19 October 2024, 3 pm – 5 pm, Villa Elisabeth (free admission with prior registration)

Event language: German and English

Concert featuring works by Kurt Schwitters, Arnold Schönberg and Ruth Crawford Seeger

Saturday, 19 October 2024, 6:30 pm – 8 pm, Villa Elisabeth (advance ticket sales)

Event language: German

Many Bauhaus-affiliated artists and musicians were persecuted by the National Socialists and forced into exile, including the Bauhaus student and composer Stefan Wolpe. The moderated concert at Villa Elisabeth on Saturday afternoon is dedicated to his work. The performance follows the various chapters of his life – from the Weimar Republic to Israel to the United States – and reveals how his early experience at the Bauhaus influenced his path to becoming a composer and instructor.

Arnold Schönberg, a prominent figure of New Music, also lived in American exile. His melodrama “Pierrot lunaire” was produced at the Bauhaus in Weimar in 1922. His characteristic atonal music and innovative recitatives made it a key work of musical modernism. Claudia Barainsky will perform it for the “Bauhaus Music” festival.

Kurt Schwitters also incorporated novel linguistic elements – though far more radical – in his famous “Ursonate” (Sonata in Primal Sounds). In his sound poem, created between 1923 and 1932, he reduces language to its primal sounds and blurs the boundary between music and poetry. Schwitters recited his “Ursonate” at one of his guest performances at the Bauhaus. On Saturday evening Gunnar Brandt-Sigurdsson will be reciting excerpts from the Dada poem.

The evening will conclude with Ruth Crawford Seeger’s “Music for Small Orchestra”, a work of the American avant-garde. Her study of acoustic timbres and atmosphere is one of the few works by this radically modern composer who withdrew from the public eye after some initial success and devoted herself to studying folk music. Seeger composed “Music for Small Orchestra” shortly before she visited the Bauhaus Dessau – an experience she found especially freeing. It is this sentiment that inspired the 2024 “Bauhaus Music” festival motto: freedom.

Festival finale with the Bauhaus Orchestra

Jazz and bebop at the Bauhaus

Saturday, 19 October 2024, 8:30 pm – 9:30 pm, Villa Elisabeth (free admission with prior registration)

The festival concludes with a concert by the Bauhaus Orchestra which – like its historic namesake – will gather for a special performance at the “Bauhaus Music” festival. Conductor Karl-Heinz Steffens presents danceable jazz and bebop, inspired by Stefan Wolpe and his diverse contacts in the New York music scene of the 1940s and 1950s. His pupils included such jazz greats as Gil Evans and John Carisi. Wolpe is credited with founding the “Contemporary Music School” which taught composition based on the pedagogical methods of the Bauhaus.

Workshops with pupils

Various workshops are being offered to school-aged children in the lead-up to the festival. For example, composer Cathy Milliken will have the pupils tell their stories and make them audible using very simple

means. In another project, artists Alexandre Decoupigny and Claire Fristot will work with 11th-graders from the Carl von Ossietzky comprehensive school to grasp the principles of the Bauhaus by means of musical composition. Here, too, the focus lies in exploring how music relates to the lives and reality of the young participants. The results of the various projects will be presented at the festival.

Artistic directors of the “Bauhaus Music 2024” festival: Kai Hinrich Müller, Michal Friedländer and Karl-Heinz Steffens

“Bauhaus Music 2024” is made possible with the generous support of the Capital Cultural Fund.



Further information on the programme and tickets at bauhaus.de/en/music

Press images and further material available to download at bauhaus.de/en/presse/aktuell/

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Event venues:

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Tickets and prices

Tickets available for purchase via [Eventbrite](#)

Advance booking until 31 August 2024: € 15 / € 7 (reduced), plus fees

Advance booking from 1 September to 19 October 2024: € 20 / € 10 (reduced), plus fees

Box office sales: € 20 / € 10 (reduced)

Programme

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Venue: St. Elisabeth

Concert with works by Béla Bartók, Alban Berg, Johann Sebastian Bach

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Venue: Villa Elisabeth

3 pm – 5 pm: Moderated concert „Portrait of Stefan Wolpe“

Free admission with prior [registration](#), event language: German and English

6:30 pm – 8 pm: Concert with works by Kurt Schwitters, Arnold Schönberg, Ruth Crawford Seeger

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8:30 pm – 9:30 pm: Jazz and bebop at the Bauhaus

Free admission with prior [registration](#)