

Wolfgang von Schweinitz

- Biography -

Wolfgang von Schweinitz was born on 7 February 1953 in Hamburg (Germany)

After some early compositional attempts since 1960, Wolfgang von Schweinitz studied in 1968-76 with Esther Ballou at the American University in Washington, D.C., with Ernst Gernot Klusmann and György Ligeti at the music academy in Hamburg, and with John Chowning at the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA) at the Stanford Artificial Intelligence Laboratory in California. There he composed the orchestral Mozart-Variations, which made his name in Germany in 1977.

Returning from travelling Mexico and Guatemala, he first lived in Munich (1977-78), and then on scholarship at the Villa Massimo in Rome (1978-79). In 1980 he was invited to lecture at the International Summer Courses for New Music in Darmstadt. Having stayed for two years in Berlin, he moved out to the countryside of northern Germany in 1981, where he spent twelve years in quiet seclusion. In 1993 he returned to Berlin. From 1994 to 1996 he worked as a guest professor for composition at the music academy in Weimar. Then he lived in Berlin again, and since September 2007 he is based in southern California, in the western tip of the Mojave Desert, about 30 miles north of CalArts (California Institute of the Arts), where he was invited to assume the succession of James Tenney (Roy E. Disney Family Chair in Musical Composition).

During 1977-96 he composed chamber music for strings and winds as well as a piano trio (Franz & Morton), a number of songs (Die Brücke, Papiersterne, O-Ton „Automne“ – Linguistikherbst), a concert-mass, a large-scale piece for music theatre (PATMOS, after the Apocalypse of John) and a symphonic cycle for cello and orchestra (wir aber singen). Since 1997 some digital live-electronics are occasionally incorporated in his works, which are concerned with developing new microtonal ensemble playing techniques allowing an extended just or natural intonation (Helmholtz-Funk/Alefbet; JUZ, ein Jodelschrei; KLANG auf Schön Berg La Monte Young; des Himmels Höhe glänzet; DIE KANTATE oder, Gottes Augenstern bist du, a radio play by and with Friederike Mayröcker; Plainsound-Symphony; Plainsound-Litanei; Plainsound Glissando Modulation).