



“Quo vadis, Teufelsgeiger?” [ABSTRACT ENGLISH]

At the core of this project lies the modern, highly trained classical musician, now confronted with new challenges as a result of drastic **changes in the current musical landscape**. “*Quo vadis, Teufelsgeiger? (Where to, Devil’s Fiddler?)*” is based on the most up-to-date findings from Europe-wide music/vocational research, pointing to a paradigm shift in the current music market that has changed conditions drastically for classical musicians and now demands new key skills from them (Gembris/Langner 2005, Mak 2007, Smilde 2009). Dissertations from the project partners (for instance “*Traumberuf Musiker?*”, Bork 2007) also show that the high level of musicianship to be gained from the traditional “*Meisterlehre*” principle of music education (instrumentalists learn from a single, experienced “*master*” musician) are now considered a basic qualification. However, a successful and rewarding career requires a wider range of skills which are scantily covered at the moment in classical education – if they are covered at all.

Critically-minded practicing musicians in the field have observed and experienced the advantages to be gained (especially for classically trained musicians) from a stylistically open-minded, nonidiomatic method of music making – the method of **free improvisation**. In the context of this project, this term describes an innovative way of making music beyond the realm of pattern- and scale-dominated improvising, based on an enhanced understanding of musical material – described in parameters such as pitch, rhythm, timbre, dynamics ... – and its direct communicative utilisation in the creative process of improvisation. The collaborators in this project have already developed individual concepts of free improvisation and the teaching thereof over years of artistic and critical consideration; in this context a hypothesis about the effects of improvisation on the everyday professional life of a musician has been established (Gagel 2008, Gstättner 2009).

There is a need for basic research at the meeting point of “*classical musician*” and “*free improvisation*” in order to explore new terrain: in a two-year artistic/scientific pilot project, “*Quo vadis, Teufelsgeiger?*” creates and examines an **experimental musical skill laboratory** where musicians’ individual power of expression will be augmented through free improvisation. Here they will be able to free themselves from the “*ballast of the learned*” and with joy and ease hear the calling which brought them to their profession once more: “*playing*”, in the truest sense of the word. The crucial question is what influence this artistic process – a process which seems able to get directly at the root and original childhood motivation of the musician – has on the musician’s current concept of self, his career motivation and also the acquisition of new key skills.

The intended project also sends a Europe-wide signal at the intersection of music and science with its establishment at the **University for Music and Performing Arts in Vienna**. The setting also allows access to the complex field of professional music at the most important levels of development. Young, highly talented musicians, bachelor and master’s students, freshly-graduated musicians in transition to the working life and experienced professionals (freelance as well as regularly employed) will be included in the project in various settings ranging from individual workshops to regular seminars, from spontaneous jam sessions to a fixed concert series.

Fundamental concepts of qualitative social research form the basis of the project design. The interdisciplinary team, consisting of an expert in music education, two researching artists and one artistically experienced researcher, will embed the research object in a **qualitative method setting** that, on the basis of the grounded theory approach, will not only observe from outside but will also work on the subject internally and interactively. Participatory observer, ideolectic in-depth interviews and the triangulation of complementary analytic methods are the most important key words of the project’s experimental, exploratory conception.

During the course of the project, intermediate results will be published regularly. At its conclusion, the analysed project, including an improvisation concert, will be presented to the public in an international scientific/artistic **final symposium**.