

# The Johannes Kreidler protest at Donaueschingen about the fusion of the radio orchestras at Baden-Baden/Freiburg and Stuttgart — a discussion

FACEBOOK, OCTOBER 25 – 30 2012

This formatted version of the discussion is based on that which appears on [Ian Pace's blog \*Desiring Progress\*](http://ianpace.wordpress.com) at <http://ianpace.wordpress.com>. I would encourage those interested to contribute to further discussion there.

**Ian Pace** *In October, following a link I posted on Facebook about Johannes Kreidler's protest at Donaueschingen against the merging of the two major radio orchestras at SWR, a long, involved, sometimes heated, but very interesting discussion ensued, involving Kreidler himself and various other prominent figures in new music with strong views on the subject and on protest in general. I will post on another occasion some material about the history of the two orchestras and their creation drawing upon my own research, but here, with the permission of all the individuals involved, is the complete discussion. This is essentially unedited – all that has been left out is the discussion about whether it was OK to put this on the blog or not, and a comment by one individual who did not wish their contribution to be placed on my blog (and another participant's response has the name blanked out). Otherwise it continues until the thread starts to diverge onto other subjects. I hope this will prove an interesting read for all.*

7 NOVEMBER 2012

This index of posts over time will hopefully help clarify the flow and continuity of the discussion below, allowing the reader to identify clusters of activity and also at what stage in the proceedings contributors entered the discussion.

The index is clickable and clicking on any initial will take you to the page upon which that post appears.

## Contributors

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Patricia Alessandrini	<a href="#">PatA</a>	<u>1</u>
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Rena Gely Widmer	<a href="#">RGW</a>	<u>2</u>
Benny C	<a href="#">BC</a>	<u>4</u>
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Michael Edwards	<a href="#">ME</a>	<u>1</u>

*This formatted version of the discussion was put together to help anyone who found reading it online — either scrolling through posts on Facebook or on Ian Pace's blog — a chore. Please feel free to distribute it as you see fit.*

[Chris Swithinbank](#), 11 NOVEMBER

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October 25  
10:26

**Ian Pace**  
4 🍷

is reading lots of stupid sanctimonious comments about Johannes Kreidler's protest against the merging of the two SWR orchestras (smashing a cheap cello on stage), using the usual epithets of 'childish' and so on. I'm somewhat in two minds about the rights and wrongs of the merger (and certainly think there are much worse things about which to protest), but have these people not heard of the smashing of the violin in Maxwell Davies' Eight Songs for a Mad King, or The Who smashing up their instruments at the end of a gig — or, for that matter, Paganini or Liszt deliberately over-tightening the strings of their instruments so that they would break during concerts, for spectacular effect?



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRMrujtd8CM>

**Brendan Ball**

The Beeb Symph once smashed up a cello at the end of a piece as a protest...

**Ian Pace**

Ah, yes, that was Timothy Hugh, I think, protesting about a piano concerto by Ernst Helmuth Flammer.

**Ian Pace**

4 🍷

But to me this was a much more meaningful and important protest:



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2HycLX2V0k>

**Daniel James Wolf**

2 🍷

Whether this particular action was useful or not remains to be seen, but the issue at root here — un-

11:06

necessary measures in the name of “austerity” — is very much a serious one. The fee income for public radio and television in Germany is stable, even rising above any inflation rate, but a political decision has been made that increases will be allowed in three areas, soccer (where they have failed to use their bargaining power to keep costs for rights down) , spoken word broadcasts, particularly news, and administration (the leadership of the stations almost inevitably comes from news reporters.) At the same time, it has been decided, if tacitly, that music will be the primary area to compensate for these increases, through reductions in musical personnel, up to and including whole ensembles, reducing recording activities (with the idea of monetizing existing libraries of recordings), and bargaining hard on GEMA fees.

**David Coll**  
1 🗨️ It appears that such actions need repeating until there is an opportunity to build off it in a meaningful way. Whether such anticipated momentum would be in the political arena or moreso the artistic one is something of a red herring: what is needed is more action, more often, all around

**Brendan Ball** That’s right; it was Tim Hugh and then the trumpets trampled all over it too...

**Ian Pace** I’m not sure whether one can say all action is good in itself. A protest is not a positive thing simply by virtue of being a protest. A protest by a far right group against immigration would be a good example of a negative action.

**Richard Barrett**  
10 🗨️ I think actions like this are probably useful in inverse proportion to how much they look like self-publicity for the person carrying the action out, which in this case is quite a lot. A collective action by ALL the composers present at Donaueschingen would have made more of a point than one composer making an ultimately individualistic statement. Where were the other composers? In fact I was in Donaueschingen for the entire weekend, though I didn’t attend the Friday evening concert, and I didn’t hear anything about this action until the Sunday evening. So there was no attempt to involve anyone else, to build something like a united front within that context against

**Richard Barrett (ctd)**

the cutbacks whose background Daniel describes. If there had been it might have looked more like a genuine statement of solidarity with the orchestra musicians and of protest against SWR cultural policy, and less like attention-seeking.

**Ian Pace**

Agreed, mostly. The sorts of comments which irritate me are from those who think it was sacrilege ever to disrupt the sacred space of music.

**David Coll**2 

Ian, if I take you literally, I can agree and say that I'm not sure either. I'd like to believe that things have a way of correcting themselves back and forth, but this is certainly problematic, laissez-faire, reinforcing the status quo- even Cageian/libertarian as you've described.

To be honest, my previous quick comment on 'more action' reflects my general preference for physical manifestations of events over, like you say, the 'sanctimonious comments.' Chatter, basically. I think if something of worth is documented adequately enough, then there is enormous potential for it to take off through online views. Richard, I don't think this event is good enough on its own, either. Too pre-meditated, and too 'straight to youtube', same spirit of a 'straight to home video' movie. It misses the point.

**Luc Döbereiner**4 

benjamin wrote that the way a theory or art declares itself to stand politically is not at all the way it effectively functions politically. this type of self-promotion is not politics. nothing servers the powers against whom he "protests" better than this kind of "protest". it functions in a kind of shostakovitch way, the "critical artist," who wins the stalin price.

**Richard Barrett**1 

Shostakovich never claimed to be a critical artist, that was a claim made by others on his behalf after his death. A very different situation I think.

**Ian Pace**

And I'm not sure that any note of Shostakovich's ever made a difference in terms of the continuation of Stalinist politics in the Soviet Union.

**Daniel James Wolf**1 

One caveat to Richard's remarks. While some form of collective action would be ideal, there is little or no

evidence that the new music “community”, as presently constituted in Germany (as elsewhere) would ever be capable of such action. In the mad scramble for a share of an ever-smaller pie, individual composers tend to imagine (and in many cases, recognize) a risk to their own livelihoods if they were to be viewed as rocking the boat. So we have the paradox of a more or less official career “avant-garde” who spend much of their compositional energies and organizational time covering their asses and playing safe, which is neither good for the liveliness of music nor, ultimately, for the livelihood of the larger community. And there is also a larger failure in the institutional structures ostensibly set up to support new music to respond to the decaying environment — GEMA, the Deutsche Musik Rat, and the radio stations have all failed to make the case for their best work and we have the theatre of a Reinhard Oehlschagel, for example, who can write editorial after editorial about the decline in new music on radio, for example, and never once mention soccer.

**Daniel James Wolf**

Ian wrote: “And I’m not sure that any note of Shostakovich’s ever made a difference in terms of the continuation of Stalinist politics in the Soviet Union.” Worse than that, the music was used by the USSR as an alibi in the west, as evidence of a fictive openness. There was a rare (or maybe not-so-rare) cooperation between the Soviet Union and private enterprises in the West, through which western record companies could press Shostakovich symphonies with a guaranteed profit via guaranteed advance sales quotas in the USSR. Whatever Shostakovich himself actually thought about this will probably never be recovered, and I’m not certain that it’s altogether relevant, as the competing images of him as either dissident saint or co-opted hack are certainly not very useful.

**Ian Pace**




What you describe, Daniel, is the same thing inhibiting collective action in many other contexts as well. In times of austerity, unemployment, low pay, those capable of taking collective action fight each other to have the biggest share of the small pie available.

This is one reason why at the present time, lacking anything approaching revolutionary conditions (for which things would have to get very, very

**Ian Pace (ctd)** much worse), some time of reform and regulation of capitalism is the most I think we can hope for.

**Ian Pace** Following from Daniel's last-but-one comment - this is a reason why I think there is a case for some of the new music world being less defensive about preserving all of the existing institutions in their current form. And I wonder about the innate conservatism engendered by the central role played by the 19th century medium of the symphony orchestra in German new music - even though the radio orchestras tend to be more adventurous than their philharmonic counterparts.

**Richard Barrett**  
1  You're right, of course, Daniel, about people not wanting to rock the boat. I'm sure that if any attempt had been made to widen the protest there would have been plenty of mealy-mouthed excuses along the lines of "I don't really like to get involved in politics". But even making such an attempt seems not to have been considered, either because of an expectation of apathy (which would be a self-fulfilling prophecy or because it might involve sharing the limelight.

**Ian Pace** The other lame excuse you often hear in these situations is 'It's better for me to work for change from inside, rather than by alienating people.'

**Daniel James Wolf** Ian, you're absolutely right about challenging the preservation of existing institutions. Our interest is in optimal institutions, not preservation of structures simply because they are received, and it's a bit perverse of musicians supposedly interested in innovation to invest so much in received structures, however well they appear to have treated us in the past. If I have to accept the corporate personhood of CitiBank or General Motors, I refuse to accept that they are not mortal persons (their pension funds are something else), and the same goes for the Philadelphia Orchestra or Donaueschingen. It's striking to me how much more institutional innovative the 19th century was with regard to music than the 20th...

**Daniel James Wolf** Just for the record, there were at least two other protest actions at Donaueschingen this year, one was a "graveyard" with tombstones for dead orchestras and



the second was a performance by a single second violinist, playing a typical second violin part, with the title Ich war ein Orchestra.

**Richard Barrett**

1 🗨

Orchestras can be viewed in several different ways though. To many creative musicians they have become largely irrelevant as a musical medium, that's for sure. But there are at least two other aspects here which might be considered: (a) that the SWR orchestras employ a significant number of people (not just players of course) who now will presumably be out of a job, because (b) the orchestra merger has become "necessary" (as you point out, Daniel) principally for ideological rather than economic reasons, and thus represents a tendency which goes far beyond whether symphony orchestras are or aren't relevant to 21st century music. First they came for the orchestras, as Pastor Niemöller might have put it.

**Johannes Kreidler**

4 🗨


i cannot imagine something more narrow-minded than seeing here self-publicity. a) this action had to be done 'top secret', only this way it was possible to realize it. hence, no collective could do it. at the final concert, there was a collective action. b) i was asked for a idea, i delivered one (which obviously was not so bad). then i was asked to perform it myself. since there was no other performer available, i did it, even though i had huge trouble with my piece (and my installation) in donaueschingen at the same time. why did they ask me? maybe because in the last years i did some other succesfull political actions. richard, what do you think, why didn't they ask you..?


the goal of this action was to seek attention, oh yes. it worked, but it is inevitable that the performer also gets it. and maybe for this job it is fair. the stage was open for everyone else who has the courage to do something, and all other ideas what could be done in this situation. do it better, than we talk again.

**Richard Barrett**

I don't even know who "they" are. My point is that individual action like yours is very easy to be absorbed and neutralised as a self-publicity exercise, in a way that's much more difficult in the case of a collective action. As for top secret, plenty of actions (not just political ones of course) have been organ-

**Richard Barrett (ctd)** ised through FB for example and taken the authorities completely by surprise.

**Johannes Kreidler**  
1  “they” are the GNM - Gesellschaft für Neue Musik, german section of the ISCM. thus far, i didn’t encounter any absorbtion except from you. and there was also a collective action in the last concert. the best is to have all kinds of actions. But obviously i have to excuse now that this video was seen 5000 times in two days. Where is the solidarity?

**Richard Barrett**  
1  Now that you mention you were asked to make a protest by an official New Music institution, the whole episode comes to look even less like a political intervention on behalf of the orchestral musicians and the priorities of the SWR... I’m inclined to think that counting the number of views of a video isn’t the best way to measure the effectiveness of a protest, and that individual political actions are inherently reactionary (although not necessarily bad publicity for the individual), but let’s see what happens.


**Richard Wattenbarger** Reading this discussion from the other side of the pond, I have so many thoughts about what’s happening that I can’t out them all down at once. But, looking at the big picture--and this probably doesn’t address JK’s protest directly (although I have some thoughts on that as well)--I find the situation of many large art-music institutions in Western Europe increasingly distressing, not least because I fear that the landscape there will become the wasteland that I see in the U.S. The institutions here that are surviving seldom offer anything that seriously challenges to consider their *raison d’être* for fear of scaring off donors and audiences.

Comcast/Universal is headquartered in Philly (where I live): can anyone seriously believe that they’d step up to provide money for extra rehearsal time so that the local band could mount a performance of, say, Elliott Carter’s *Symphonia sum fluxae pretium spei*?


**Jonathan Hepfer** as an admirer of both of yours, i have to respectfully side here with johannes. i agree with richard that there is the potential to see this as self-publicity, but i think that since it is totally consistent with the rest

of what johannes has done, it seems to me to be an “authentic” action. obviously, one can and should be critical, but for me the promotional aspect here is a B product of the situation itself and not its root. i see the 10th thesis on feuerbach here as outweighing everything else.

**Johannes Kreidler** richard, i am sorry, but i am close to never talk to you again. ” individual political actions are inherently reactionary” — there were some individuals who tried to kill hitler.

**Sebastian Berweck** 3  I don't understand this. There's somebody brave enough to do something and then this. As if sitting and doing nothing, waiting for a greater cause and doing nothing, waiting for somebody to drum up a collective response whilst doing nothing and hinting on the quiet that he did it only for self-promotion whilst doing nothing is any better. It's so easy to sit on the sidelines and criticizing the actors whilst not making the own hands dirty. And probably thinking that the own private not-doing is even political.

I'm not the type to do a stunt like this. But I see the courage and the necessity to do it and think it's great that somebody had the guts.

**Mark Barden** 1  Well, Johannes you've certainly managed to dispel any doubts about the true motives behind your “protest”. In this thread, you have yet to talk about the orchestra, its members, or the consequences of the fusion, yet you have plenty to say about yourself and your YouTube views. I've been holding my tongue for a while out of basic civility (not just in this FB thread), but it's hard to see your actions at Donaueschingen as anything but those of a shameless, attention-starved opportunist whose primary concern is self-promotion. Richard's point about inverse proportionality and the less assailable/dismissible nature of collective action is right on the money. The fact is, when asked to design an event to protest the death of an orchestra, you chose not to create a collective action, but rather something that ultimately placed you in the spotlight grabbing microphones, shouting things, and breaking instruments. (Not to mention posting as many photos, articles, videos, and blogs about yourself as you can

**Mark Barden (ctd)** possibly find.) I am as schadenfroh as anyone at the reaction shot of the Verantwortlicher in the front row, but was there really no better messenger than the man who “protested” the unfairness of GEMA’s royalty collection policies, then accepted a 10.000 EUR Deutscher Musikautorenpreis from the GEMA paid for with those same unfairly collected funds? If this mic-grabbing, cello-smashing nonsense had any integrity, it would be a protest. As is, it’s a farce.

**Richard Barrett** Yes, Johannes, there were some individuals who tried that. Without going into the reasons why their efforts didn’t succeed (or mentioning Godwin’s Law – oops, there I go), there was no guarantee whatsoever that the whole Nazi system would immediately have fallen apart if they had. Sebastian, I’m not arguing with Johannes’ motives. I’m saying that such an individual action can very easily be neutralised by the institutions it opposes, while a collective action can’t be dealt with so easily. I think it was an error that things were done in the way they were, especially when there were dozens if not hundreds of people right there in town who could have been counted on to take part if they had known anything was being planned.

**David Coll** wtf guys? i wasn’t there. but the main thing is what happens next. is this a collective action? is there to be something bigger and meaningful as a result? is anyone having meetings and discussing such things? And what power structure do these meetings have? i fear that either there is way too much confidence in the power of the internet, or that nobody is actually thinking of the very necessary steps that must follow an initial provocation.

**Sebastian Berweck** Johannes part is part of a bigger effort of many people. It was not a solitary action and there are many discussions and meetings. As he said: He was doing it on behalf of the German section of the ISCM, it can’t get much more collective, can it? In front of the Donauhalle were crosses symbolizing the orchestras that don’t exist anymore, and no, it was not Johannes who put them all there by himself. Nor are the articles about this action that have been written in the papers and published in the “new media” all been

planted by him. The only way to protest the fusion of the orchestras is to create publicity, and that has been done in numerous ways. Well, I retreat from this discussion, quite some bad blood here.

**Johannes Kreidler**

4 

Mark:

1. I've posted one photo, while there are dozens on the net. You've posted also quite a lot around Donaueschingen.

2. This action had to be top secret, no one from SWR must know it before, in order to protect them from consequences. The two orchestra members I took the instruments from were musicians with temporary jobs. But after the action, the steering committee of the orchestra thanked me on behalf of the orchestra (but not to forget to mention: there are also a few, it was said to me three or four people in the orchestra who approve the fusion).

3. My action, as well as the others in Donaueschingen, won't save the orchestra, the fusion is already decided. The goal is: To show all the guys who have the next fantasies of cutting cultural subsidies that there will be acrimonious opposition (except from you, Richard & Mark).

4. I work as a composer and performer like thousands of other artists are doing, and I am successful enough that I definitely don't need extra self-promotion. On the opposite, obviously I am risking quite a lot with actions like this.

5. The GNM (Julia Clout is the chief) can witness, I proposed the idea for that action, but proposed that someone else performs it, since I already knew that these silly reproaches come up. But unfortunately it was not much time left and no extra money, so they asked me to do it, and I agreed, feeling the necessity of doing something.

6. There are witnesses enough, the electronics of my piece the next morning in Donaueschingen was a hell of trouble, i didn't sleep a single minute the two days before. I would have been glad if someone else did that action in the opening concert. Mark, would you have taken the time and energy, even though you had a piece yourself at the Festival?

7. I didn't publish this video. I only wrote on my private blog and posted on FB one link to it and one link to an english review for english speakers. I

**Johannes Kreidler**  
(ctd)

cannot be blamed for the fact that it gets this attention.

8. “cello smashing nonsense”: The idea was to create a symbol depicting the situation: Two orchestras (“Klangkörper”) which are completely different, will be violently put together. In effect, the end result is that one orchestra is destroyed (even though the SWR authorities say the opposite). That’s what I showed with artistic means (it’s different artistic means than you use, Mark, but they are artistic means as well). It had to be drastic, that’s my understanding of a political aesthetics.

9. About the GEMA prize only briefly, this was already discussed exhaustively long ago: I always said (proofs are out there) that I am not completely against the GEMA. If they are open to new ideas, that’s fine. Maybe that prize was the beginning. Again, there are people who can witness that, in the discussion of the SWR orchestra prize, there came the idea up in the jury to give me that prize. But thanks god this didn’t happen, Mark, you would have killed me.

10. thanks Sebastian. I haven’t heard anything from all you guys since now against this fusion. The only thing coming into your mind is now blaming me. This is pure egoistic envy, that’s it.

**David Coll**

No Sebastian, thats great. And encouraging. I look forward to seeing whats next, and would love to know more and possibly act myself.

**Richard Barrett**

Sebastian: It’s the “on behalf of” that’s problematic there. That’s why it isn’t collective. How many people did the GNM approach? Who thought it was a good idea for only one person to stand on stage? Johannes: you are talking quite extensively about \*yourself and \*your situation, and when you’re criticised by others you accuse them of egoistic envy. I’ll just leave it at that.

**Johannes Kreidler**

Richard, when \*I am attacked, I have to defend \*myself.

**Richard Barrett**  
3 🗨

You aren’t being “attacked”, you’re being criticised, by people whose basic position on this affair you presumably share. And your response is to call them

egoistic and envious. This is an example of why collective action would have been a better strategy.

**Seth Brodsky** Fascinating discussion, though it's painful and annoying to see critique and counter-critique descending into shit-slinging. O well, feelings do get hurt. As much as I support the spirit (and sometimes the letter) of Kreidler's valuable interventions, I do think Barrett has a point, especially once it is surgically detached from any ad hominem aspect (which perhaps he didn't <attach> in the first place): confronted with a such an action, regardless of the actor's intentions, a resistant group will virtually always receive it in as <neutralized> a fashion as possible—from the anxious shoulder-shrug of “too-little-too-late” to the pseudo-apoplexia of “how dare they, if only they were civil I'd listen”. The neutralization-technology in this case: the claim that the action's by-product—yet another opportunity for Kreidler to hock his brand—exceeds its function. The pointing finger (intentionally) blocks the moon. I understand Barrett to be issuing this critique from a larger sympathetic standpoint, but he simultaneously articulates the critique of the professional misrecognizers: we needn't take this seriously because it was obviously a publicity stunt. <This> critique is the one worth disabling, the one deserving of actors' utmost cunning. We obviously can't control the way our messages will be read, better yet received; but I do think that the goal should always be <first> to precipitate about a robust ambivalence, <then> a changing of minds. Kreidler is now notorious enough (in the interplanetary air of EuroNewMusic) to have engendered an immunizing discourse around himself. It followed him to the Donau. How will the virus mutate? Hopefully, by involving the unlikeliest of others, as host or symbiotic partner.

**David Coll** Seth, you really have got it. But its just so damn analytical!

**Ian Pace** Maybe people can calm down? As far as Godwin's law is concerned (in which I don't believe, however), it could have been evoked on two occasions — one when Johannes invoked individuals who took action against Hitler, once when Richard mentioned

**Ian Pace (ctd)** Niemöller's famous quotation. In neither case do I think this parallel is really very productive (if we were talking about some of the German big businesses who sponsor new music and were directly involved in the actions of the Nazis, that would be a different matter).

I'm sorry, but I think the issue of whether we have one less German radio orchestra is not worth getting this worked up about.

**Richard Barrett** Don't contribute to the discussion then!

**Ian Pace** There is a discussion to be had, I just don't think it warrants this level of anger and feuding!

I'd like to ask anyone contributing here under which circumstances they could imagine that it *\*would\** be acceptable to close down an orchestra or other long-standing musical group/institution (or merge it with another)?

**Richard Barrett**  
2 🗨️ As I said it's not just about the music, it's also about musicians losing their livelihood, and it's also one symptom of a larger attack on all culture except pop culture which is of course not restricted to Germany. Not that any of this is a reason for feuding: telling someone in the course of a political discussion that you think their strategy is mistaken is not a personal attack (still less the result of envy) and shouldn't be taken as one.

**John Fallas** No, it shouldn't be taken as one, and I agree with most of what you've said in principle, Richard – both about the risk there always is of an individual action being 'absorbed' by the system it seeks to critique (I think it's worth emphasising that that risk has nothing to do with the intentions of the individual performing the action), and about the importance of being able to distinguish personal attack from disagreement about political strategy.

But I think you're asking for a kind of political/theoretical integrity where in fact a broad-brush, attention-grabbing approach might be more effective. I disagree with "an individual action can very easily be neutralised by the institutions it opposes, while a collective action can't be dealt with so easily", not because I think the first part of the statement's



wrong, but because I think the second part is a nicer idea than it is a reality. Of course a collective action can be dealt with easily: by ignoring it, the way thousands marching on Parliament against wars or cuts get ignored. Sure, an individual protest might not change anything either, but then you're simply arguing a question of taste between two potentially non-effective modes of protest.

In an important sense I think the intentions of the person making the protest are irrelevant, if it has its effect. It seems to me that the question of whether Johannes is publicity-seeking is a great worry for many of his colleagues (as witness this thread). For a broader audience to whose attention the protest might come, it won't seem to be about him at all, since they'll have very little notion of who he is, and very little interest in finding out. The "public" message of the action is certainly going to be its content as protest more than as fame-seeking.

(And for what it's worth, Johannes is not the only one who seems to have treated this thread more as an argument about his motives than as a discussion of the issues around the merger.)


**Richard Barrett**

1 

With regard to individual versus collective action, of course you can point at plenty of examples of when the latter has little or no effect, but if you look at political history you see that emancipatory changes in society (eg. rights for workers, women, racial minorities and gays) have overwhelmingly been brought about by collective action. What is striking to me about the particular episode under discussion is that the GNM, as instigators of the protest, would have been aware for months that in Donaueschingen last weekend there would be sufficient visiting artists from all over, sufficient of whom would have been sympathetic to this cause, to mount something that would look a lot less like individual attention-seeking from one of the "usual suspects"; but neither they nor Johannes thought this was a good idea, and I think they were wrong. I don't accept Johannes' excuse that it all needed to be kept secret; that once again seems to me to substitute the values of showmanship for the values the protest was supposedly upholding.

October 26

00:21

**Ian Pace** Maybe we could get back to the issues around the merger?  
1 

**John Fallas** But you're placing a lot of emphasis on the values the protest was upholding or failing to uphold, rather than the message it conveyed. The suspicion that Johannes is primarily interested in self-publicity seems to me to be potentially an aesthetic problem for his work, but not a political problem. It also seems to me, as I said before, to be primarily a concern for others within the profession who know him and therefore feel able to form an opinion on his motives. I really don't see why his motivation matters. There are plenty of examples of individuals – Gandhi springs to mind – whose personal motivations historians have shown to be less than pure but who accomplished, or helped to accomplish, immensely valuable work. In the end the work is what endures.

You're entitled to your opinions about collective action of course but it's not self-evident that an organisation which doesn't share them and invites an individual to instigate a protest is deliberately enabling that individual's narcissistic tendencies rather than simply taking a different view on how to achieve effective protest.

**John Fallas** Sorry, crossed with Ian. But I wasn't aware this thread had ever really been about the issues around the merger ...

**Ian Pace** There was a moment (some of the exchanges between Daniel, Richard and myself) where it was more about that.

I'd like to ask my question again about whether there are any circumstances in which anyone here would think it would be justified to close down an orchestra or other musical institution?

And to pick up on a point that Richard made, specifically 'it's also one symptom of a larger attack on all culture except pop culture which is of course not restricted to Germany' – how do we define 'pop culture' in this context? And (big question, I know, but fundamental), on what grounds do we make the case to ordinary people (taxpayers) to fund 'non-pop' culture?

**Richard Barrett** John: I was questioning Johannes' judgement, and the idea of giving himself the role of representing a body of opinion many of whose other representatives were or could easily have been present; not his motivation in doing so, although germane to my argument is what his motivation might "appear" to be, which is certainly borne out by some of the other comments.

As for closing down institutions, what I'm against is firing people when as Daniel has pointed out there's plenty of money to pay them to do their job.

And as for your last question, Ian, which of course you ask at every possible opportunity, it seems to presuppose that people are only prepared to pay taxes towards expenditure which directly benefits them, which demonstrably isn't the case, given that for example the government of the UK spends about two hundred times as much on its military as it does on cultural funding. What I call "the attack on all culture except pop culture" is once more ideological rather than economic in motivation. To imagine, therefore, that special pleading is required for the minuscule contribution each individual makes to cultural activities they might not themselves take any interest in is really to be taken in by that ideology.

**Ian Pace** I ask that last question often because I think such a case has to be made if a proper defence against major arts cuts is to be sustained – and as you know, those cuts are coming aplenty in several countries.

**Ian Pace** (and if Romney wins the election, he has pledged to abolish public arts funding in the US altogether – and I haven't heard much of a peep about that other than from artists. Not that what funding there is is exactly very plentiful, but it doesn't seem to be something that much of any population care about. That's why such cuts are easy to put into practice)

**Ian Pace** On institutions: can one almost ever close an institution down without putting some people out of work? But if one did not do so on that basis, would it ever be possible for newer institutions to take the place of older ones?

02:35

**Mark Barden**  
5 🗨️

Whether any of the protests will translate into meaningful action or policy remains to be seen. For what it's worth, there was a collective action protest, briefly mentioned above, at the closing orchestral concert. During a live radio broadcast, maestro François Xavier-Roth delivered a short, solemn message ("In was für einem Deutschland wollen wir leben?"), then asked the crowd to stand and observe a moment of silence. Following this, individual protesters shouted "for music! for culture! for the future!" in several languages in turn. The orchestra applauded, followed by the audience iirc. Hard to imagine a more powerful show of solidarity than a large mass of people standing in silence. It wasn't terribly sensational (and has been mostly ignored in the media), but was for me a powerful evocation of loss.

**Mark Barden**

[I'll refrain from a point-by-point rebuttal of Johannes's post above and just say that the photo he references depicts him on stage after his Donaueschingen première giving a BLACK POWER SALUTE à la 1968 Olympics (I verified with him personally that this association was in fact his intention)—an egregious example of the poor judgment, ignorance, and self-importance that, for me, permeate his work and irreparably tarnish whatever message might be intended.]

10:06

**Richard Barrett**  
2 🗨️

Presumably the main reason the intervention on Sunday was hardly reported was that it had already been trumped in the scandal game by Friday evening's event. Probably Johannes would see this as a vindication of his methods. I don't have as harsh a judgement of Johannes and his work as you do, Mark, although I find myself in sympathy with every point you make. The question I ask myself refers to the famous formulation of Benjamin: is this a politicising of art, or an aestheticising of politics?

20:53

**Seth Brodsky**  
1 🗨️

I wouldn't accept the choice. Both "options" are clearly working in cahoots here, and it's always casuistry which determines whether one wins out—but then, this "win" is itself often a consolation prize to the critics and celebrants, while the efficacy of the action happens along some other line of flight. On some level, a remarkable action should have some-

thing irrefutable about it, something “beyond taste”, outside any clear jurisdiction.

**Mark Barden** Seth, could you clarify what you mean by a “gross comparison”?

**Seth Brodsky** I guess I mean that the act of comparing the fusion of multiple orchestras (comprised of mostly non-blacks) who perform music of overwhelmingly non-black composers for overwhelmingly white audiences to the fight for Black rights in the USA in the 60s and 70s gross. Certainly mistaken. If in fact JK intended to draw such a comparison. Did he?

**Seth Brodsky** Perhaps he had some other such intention. But of course the heydays of radical chic often reveal on revisitation that charismatic leadership and activism are mutually entwined—separable, but entwined—in each other. They are born twins, so to speak, both there at the origin, and it’s (to me) pure fantasy to construct a narration where there was first some pure impulse and subsequently its corruption—or vice-versa. JK appears to me to have both impulses at work all the time, while others—for instance, the desire to write a “fucking perfect string quartet” (as a composer friend of mine put it)—are as seemingly alien to him as a middle-management desk job. That said, I’d friggin love to see him pull a Ligeti 2 or Lachenmann 2 out of his hat and plop it down on the stage at the next New Music Festival. THAT would constitute its own action, and would certainly satisfy the goal of first confounding a resistant base.

**Mark Barden** Kreidler’s black power salute came after his own première (the morning after the cello smash) and had nothing to do with the fusion. Apparently he felt it was an appropriate way to celebrate his accomplishment. And while I have my own suspicions as to why a simple bow didn’t strike him as sufficient, I’ll give voice to a friend’s perspective: “middle class white german male uses black power salute to advance new music career—is this sad or is this sad?”

**Mark Barden** Xavier-Roth’s speech + collective action protest at final concert begin at 6:17 of the first video here: <http://www.swr.de/swr2/festivals/donaueschingen/-/id=100794/7qls53/index.html>

21:44

**John Fallas** Mark: This is becoming embarrassing. I suggest you stop now if you don't want to give the impression that this is entirely about your dislike/disapproval of a colleague.

**Mark Barden** You're free to have whatever impression you like, John. I think Johannes's black power salute was deeply offensive and am certainly not embarrassed to say as much. I can only hope that the reason he isn't being held accountable for it by others is because most people didn't understand what it was. Have a look for yourself and make up your own mind: 70:45 at second video (same link as above). Done now. =)

**Pavlos Antoniadis**  
1 🗨️ I must say: I am grateful to Johannes Kreidler for his action, even though it is not my cup of tea: regardless of its symbolic power or its ingenuity, which I judge as poor, (and yes one can criticize that: isn't that the fate of all forms of political "art", whereby the message cannot be considered regardless of the medium?), it obviously made us all think about forms of collective action and their utmost urgency in today's societies. If the medium is the message, and I think I know where Johannes's sympathies lie in this respect, then a poor medium -in the sense that it invites criticism as star-oriented narcissism- may have the opposite results for what is sought after. Nevertheless, and after much reflection (and a small fight with my girlfriend-an activist herself), I am happy it did happen.

**John Fallas** I struggle to see how he's (in the words of your friend) "advanc[ing his] new music career" with it if (in your words) the two options are being held accountable for it and people not understanding what it was. But I was referring more to your general attacks on his character and presumed motivations for the SWR protest. Anyway, I'm done now too. :-)

October 27

00:18

X *post redacted at author's request*

12:01

**Mark Barden** Personal attacks are distasteful, I would agree. This is why I've eschewed criticizing Kreidler openly up to now: the line between performance and person is ambiguous. While I've never had a problem with the person, I have massive problems with the work

(which, again, is often but not always clearly performative). It's not a matter of mere aesthetic differences or quibbles about compositional craft (= a whole other can of worms); I actually find quite a bit of the work morally reprehensible (the unreflected exploitation of "Fremdarbeit" and "Charts Music", to cite just two examples). Since the black power salute wasn't technically a performance, is it possible to criticize it as insulting and stupid without implicitly attacking Kreidler's character? (In this case, I actually don't think it is.) If one recognizes in several works a consistent pattern of calculated sensationalism with no broader analysis, coherent viewpoint, or ethical principles, when does it become germane to call the artist a "shameless opportunist" rather than work upon work "shamelessly opportunistic"? My critique \*does\* boil down to a core ethical problem I perceive throughout, but I have tried to ground that critique in concrete instantiations in the work itself. Given my assessment of Kreidler's other pieces, it's hard to treat the fusion protest as a hermetically sealed event. I see yet another instance of nihilistic self-aggrandizement, though I am sympathetic to the argument that the messenger's motives are irrelevant in terms of overall impact. It \*was\* more effective in terms of publicity and raising awareness than the collective action protest (perhaps largely a manifestation of the contemporary moment's obsession with celebrity and, as Dave put it above, "straight to YouTube" sensation—Richard's point about it failing to occur to either Johannes or GNM to involve a larger pool of artists deserves serious consideration). I think good faith and belief in a cause are prerequisites for solidarity. Frankly that's why I wasn't on board with the solo cello smash; it flagrantly defies those prerequisites imo. Zooming out a bit, this thread is proof that there is no paucity of careful thinkers deeply concerned with activism and the preservation of the arts. As cuts continue, I hope we develop and express in action ever more effective means of protest.

**Richard Barrett**

X, there's nothing new about such actions taking place in musical contexts. (See example below!) What maybe is a little bit new is the nihilistic aspect of this one. As Johannes said, "The goal is: To show all the guys who have the next fantasies of cutting

October 28

13:32

**Richard Barrett (ctd)**

cultural subsidies that there will be acrimonious opposition.” Opposition is all very well but on its own it isn’t enough. The “Notenkraaker” group of Dutch musicians active around the end of the 1960s succeeded in changing the direction of musical-cultural policy in the Netherlands for decades, not because they disrupted concerts (which they did, repeatedly, for example the Dutch premiere of Stockhausen’s “Stimmung” in 1969) and complained about what they didn’t want but because they were vociferous in stating what they DID want, what kind of musical environment they thought would be healthier than the stifling conservatism they were protesting against. Until very recently the supportive situation of contemporary music in the Netherlands, which that activism helped to bring about, was taken for granted; which I suppose is one reason why you seem to be completely unaware that such things ever happened before.

**Patricia Alessandrini**

Speaking from my own modest experience both in political action and as a composer, I would like to say that a line has been crossed here, which risks to discourage any musician less courageous than Johannes from taking future political action publicly. Criticism of the form of a political action is of course useful, but it is needless even to point out that attacking others’ motives, even by implication, and name-calling are so divisive as to negate the possible value of the intended critique, assuming that the critique was intended in good faith to strengthen the impact of future political actions. There is also a certain lack of rigour in some of the assertions (was Mohammed Bouazizi’s political action ‘reactionary’ as well?) As for use/appropriation of signs from other movements, there are no absolutes, and it is always possible to discuss these issues calmly.

Let’s face it, the atmosphere among composers is generally toxic. I second Johannes’ call for solidarity, and invite those of you who have made what might be construed as personal attacks to make your own show of courage by backtracking on anything which might be construed in this manner, and at the very least recognising that there is a shared cause.



**Richard Barrett** 2 🗨️ It would have been better had the “call for solidarity” taken place \*before the demonstration. Of course there is a shared cause. And “courageous” – well, carrying out a protest action in front of an audience which you can assume overwhelmingly shares that cause, the repercussions of which are hardly likely to be very harmful to oneself (in fact are more likely to be quite the opposite) is in no way on the same level as – since you’ve mentioned him – Mohammed Bouazizi. And yes, any action which substitutes an individual for a mass movement is reactionary. Bouazizi did not cause the Tunisian revolution, it was there waiting to happen. Dozens of Tibetans (to name only these) have similarly immolated themselves as a protest against Chinese occupation of their country, which carries on regardless because there is no serious chance at present of their being backed by a mass movement with a chance of success.

**Johannes Kreidler** if this action was “nonsense” and only “self-publicity”, why did hundreds of people applaud in the hall? why didn’t one single newspaper review share your opinion, guys? even the official swr statement, which obviously doesn’t applaud to me, doesn’t go on this low level of critique. why is it only composer colleagues who blame me? i am sorry, i only have one explanation: jealousy.

if you didn’t like my protest, do it better, make your own protest against this fusion, make it single, make it collective, make it anonymous, make it with your name, make it with artistic means, make it with proudness, make it with anger, with the help of institutions or not. it doesn’t have to be a great artwork, it only has to be a sign. (ian: it is probably the world’s best orchestra specialized on new music which is going to be closed). the best is to have all kinds of protests. the degree of ‘success’ of political actions can almost never be proofed, but that shouldn’t detain anyone when there are things to protest against.

**Richard Barrett** 1 🗨️ Hundreds of people applauded in the hall because disapproval of the SWR’s actions is pretty widespread, of course. And sorry but measuring the success of something on the basis of the amount of applause in the hall and of positive reviews in newspapers seems

to me a strange thing to do when you're supposedly protesting \*against\* the populist policies of the SWR. Whether the action actually makes any difference or not will depend on what plays out over a longer time. If jealousy is your \*only\* explanation for the criticism you're receiving here (which is intended as \*constructive" criticism, coming from people whose experience of political activism might even be more extensive than your own!) that says more about the limitations of your thinking than about anyone else. Once more: it isn't all about you!

**Ian Pace**

2 

The SWR orchestra in Baden-Baden & Freiburg may arguably be the finest orchestra in the world for new music, but those radio orchestras in Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Cologne and Munich are very strong as well (as, for a different type of new music, has been the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, formerly the RIAS Orchestra). And it is a merger between two very strong radio orchestras (whose much-vaunted differences in programming and style of performance may be rather less vivid to those not at the centre of the new music world), rather than simply the abolition of one. This is not ideal, certainly, but I cannot really see it as the calamity that some are making it out to be, not even compared to the arts cuts in the Netherlands, or those which are likely in the US if Romney is elected, let alone in comparison to much wider cuts to jobs, benefits and various else throughout the Western world, leading to new levels of unemployment, poverty and the growth of neo-fascist movements in Southern Europe.

But as far as German new music is concerned, I think the writing has been on the wall for some time – it was probably only a matter of time before questions were going to be asked about support for the highly extensive range of supported institutions, festivals, orchestras, concert series, and so on that still exist, not least as most of these were developed during a different ideological time, when there was a much greater perceived political value in modern culture, in opposition to Soviet Bloc censorship. Right now, most of the objections to cuts look obviously self-interested – I am not referring specifically to this protest here, but to a general sense that most of those who seem especially to care about the

cuts are those who have their own professional interest in the status quo remaining. There needs to be a stronger case made than this if any coherent opposition is going to win more widespread support.

Back to this protest, though: my measure of its success or otherwise comes about through asking three basic questions: (a) is it likely to lead to any rescinding of the decision to merge the orchestras?; (b) is it likely to deter future mergers, cuts or abolitions of a similar nature?; (c) is it likely to change the opinion of anyone who was not already opposed to this and other such cost-saving measures?

### Richard Barrett

3 🗨

In reply to Ian: firstly: the SWR cutback situation is not limited to the orchestra merger or to new music. Another symptom that came to my notice is that the broadcast studio in Baden-Baden formerly used by the SWR jazz department (among others) has been turned over to the production of “youth-oriented TV programmes” – I quote the account given to me by Reinhard Kager, the former head of that department, who earlier this year resigned his post as a result of his programming freedom being progressively curtailed. So there is more at stake than just an orchestra to service new-music composers. No doubt there’s even more that hasn’t come to my attention.

“There needs to be a stronger case made than this” – yes there does. As you say, all that financial support began at a time when there was a clear official-ideological reason for it. The case for continuing that support needs to include those whose jobs are on the line – not just orchestral musicians but all kinds of radio-station staff (and composers, somewhere further down the line!) – and the question of whether Baden-Württemberg needs two orchestras for contemporary music (although that isn’t all they play of course) can be turned around to take a form more like asking whether Baden-Württemberg needs another youth TV programme or another Tatort, which suck up a lot more money and pay far larger amounts of it to far fewer people, and have the eventual effect of turning culture into a (profitmaking) monoculture rather than supporting diversity, artistic innovation etc. I think these are subtle but crucial arguments, and, as you say, they need to include people who don’t have an obvious vested interest.

**Federico Reuben**

I've just picked up this thread and I have to admit that it makes me a bit sad. I admire both Richard and Johannes, but it seems to me that this discussion has mostly been driven by conflicting egos rather than a positive conversation about the problem. Do you honestly think that Johannes did this only for self-promotion? And that he thinks it is all about him? Also, one of the main criticisms that started this discussion was around self-publicity. My question is why is this such a bad thing in a case like this? For me it seems like this act of self-publicity (which maybe wasn't the most interesting one btw) has contributed to more visibility of the case at hand. The problem it seems then is that the main question is around a notion of purity and its relationship to ethics and politics. It seems that the main argument against Johannes is that his act is ethically dubious because of this act of self-promotion. I think we are corrupted one way or another, and I'd rather see someone like Johannes "getting his hands dirty" through an action like this, than the apathetic attitude of others that just criticise from a comfortable distance without taking any form of action. In my view, having people like Johannes – whose work does reflect a good level of critical engagement with music, art and culture – seeking publicity is only a fair thing. I think it is positive to have public figures and artists like Johannes seeking attention and visibility outside the small group they usually operate in. I therefore think that criticising this action in these terms is not really very productive, more productive would be fighting apathy and trying to do something about the situation. I also don't really understand the basic criticism to Johannes as his action also contributes to making the case more visible to a larger number of people.

**Rena Gely Widmer**

1 🗨

ohhh...so pity that my english is so bad..

**Richard Barrett**

1 🗨

Federico, I thought I had made it clear that I was not accusing Johannes of "only self-promotion" but somehow you seem to have missed that. For example, my "all about you" comment clearly refers to his response to criticism on this thread rather than to the action itself. With regard to "conflicting egos", I've been talking about the wider context within and outside the SWR, the need for collective action

and for broadening the base of any protest, while Johannes has been talking about how much applause and favourable notices in the press he received. And I don't see why this action should be above criticism whatever it may or may not have achieved.

**Rena Gely Widmer**

Sorry..Johannes, you are hurt now by so many negative comments, but I don't believe that Richard has ment to hurt you..I agree with Richard that a common action would have brought more..But also: where are the people to organize that? Where are the people to do that common action? I can only say that if I was a (quite) successful german composer I would have done something like this. Yes- an individual action, what can I do more? And I have a feeling that if I personally was at the concert at that time I would have stood up and would go on the stage and support his protest and protest with him(which would have been a real surprise even for myself I guess :-) )..I support Johannes at this issue. Ian , there are certainly issues that need more protests, but I guess everyone protests against that what touches him personally. Mostly. We can change nothing about that.....And at least again (I told it already to Arne: in my eyes if such a small individual action can be seen as self-promotion, then the whole NM scene is just miserable. Miserable! If no one is "aloud" to do SOMETHING, WHICH IS JUST A LITTLE BIT BRAVE!

**Federico Reuben**

Richard, sorry if I misread some of your comments. It is a long thread... I do believe that the criticism on him has been a bit unfair and that is why I wanted to voice my opinion. I think it is ok to criticise the action of course, but the basis in which it has been criticised I think has been on this argument around self-promotion and therefore I wanted to rise the questions I did in my previous comment. I do think that the thread is unnecessarily heated and that has distracted the discussion, rather than helped. Also, in your comments I believe you have restrained yourself of giving any credit to Johannes' action at all and have not acknowledged that perhaps there is something positive about it. I understand you have a lot of experience in political actions and so forth, so I would think you would appreciate this effort.

**Federico Reuben (ctd)**

I'm sure your criticism and experience could really help, but maybe the way in which the conversation has been framed in relationship to Johannes' action, hasn't been the most constructive.

**Richard Barrett**

1 

Well, I'm making no secret of the fact that I think the strategy was mistaken, and I've tried to give my reasons for saying that. To reiterate: I believe that a collective action would have been a far better idea, and I'm not at all convinced by Johannes' arguments as to why it wasn't. One thing that this sometimes heated discussion has thrown up is that it seems to be difficult for some composers to separate criticism of their actions from criticism of themselves. Proceeding from the starting point that collective action is more effective overall than individual action: collective action depends ultimately on submitting to the discipline of a political organisation of some kind, which means that one's own individualistic ideas \*within that context\* have to take second place. It seems to be a point of pride among many composers (and indeed artists of other disciplines too) that taking such a step is impossible. But I would say that taking that step is absolutely necessary if artists are going to play a meaningful role in political activism in a wider sense.

**Benny C**

My main problem with this whole thread is summed up in that last sentence. I just wonder how contemporary classical music (and its off-shoots) can have a role at all in political activism in a 'wider' sense. Isn't it all a little more insular than that? Please slap me if I've overstepped the mark.

**Richard Barrett**

1 

I wasn't talking about the music having a role, but the musician.

**Samuel Vriezen**

6 

Fascinating discussion!

Ian writes: "Right now, most of the objections to cuts look obviously self-interested". Spot on. Two years of utterly ineffectual arts protests in the Netherlands have taught me a thing or two about this.

Just as individual action can easily be construed & dismissed as the self-serving activism of an attention-seeking, collective action by a bunch of artists, certainly in the context of some subsidized

arts environment, can equally be dismissed very easily as the self-serving activism of a privileged clique.

So what matters in the end is less the form that action takes than the content. Whoever commits whatever action, if it looks like defending privilege, whether that of an individual or a group, it's ineffectual no matter what. The point will always be to hammer home why the institution you're defending is, in fact, valuable to the world at large and not just to those who happen to have an interest in it.

So the point of collective action of composers & musicians only starts to make sense when you can make it together with, let's say, the position of illegal immigrant workers, the Greek economy, or people in the Niger delta who have to fish and farm in crude oil.

I'm intentionally mentioning rather extreme cases here that are far removed from the comfort of the concert hall just to indicate the size of the challenge. The good thing is that I believe it actually can be done, possibly through intermediary steps, possibly at a certain level of abstraction. But it requires a rethinking (again!) of the political character of music, and today, the orchestra may very well simply not be the field in which that is possible at all. Mere gratuitous expressions of solidarity (dedicating your noisy atonal symphony to the victims of the latest edition of capitalist evil) will not cut it. You've got to examine how the conditions of music making relate to those of living in post-fordist capitalist times in general, even before you start explaining why some fringe musical interest could be of importance, if you're going to do the politics right.

At least on that level a piece like 'Fremdarbeit' seems like a step in the right direction, though personally, I'm always very very suspicious of the ironical aspects of over-identification strategies – the irony of irony being that it tends to repeat what it is supposedly critiquing, with all of us ending up smirking with our own insight into our complicity.

Whether or not to take collective or individual action then is tangential; or, it's a matter of tactics. Personally, I favor mixing tactics. If we, artists, have a strong enough political message, let's just make sure it's everywhere, let's try to suffuse public space with it, which includes not just the media, both old

& new, but also how we deal with friends and neighbours. And within such multi-leveled tactics, there might certainly be a place for an individual creating a strong image to serve as a new fixture, why not? Primarily the messaging, the story, needs to be impeccable in its clarity and analysis.

In that respect, although I'm not entirely sure if the fate of an orchestra as such should be a central concern, there's one thing I did admire in Kreidler's message. His image addresses the \*musical\* problem of the merger. The argumentation derives from musical-historical material, the invented image of an unplayable instrument is bluntly powerful, and I just hope for the sake of people who love orchestras that it might have some rhetorical punch in the future. If I may have doubts about that, it's because I'm not so sure orchestras have much political-rhetorical punch at all right now except when talking to cultural conservatives.

The smashing itself seems to me to be the weaker part of the action, BTW – the two instruments tied together are saying enough. Also it doesn't look good, compared to, say, a really controlled performance of Nam June Paik's Solo for Violin. In the video that I saw, the smashing of the instruments looked a little undisciplined, and I would suggest that it is that hint of indiscipline that makes such an action most vulnerable to the kind of critique that it has been given here. But OK, I understand that the action was a bit of a rushed job here.

**Benny C** You mean the 'musician' in general? From any background? Does not their music affect their role?

**Richard Barrett** Yes, Benny, I mean from any background. I spent some years as an active member of a revolutionary socialist organisation in the UK. Some of my fellow members were vaguely aware that I was a musician of some kind; but there was no reason why that should have given me a special role any more than it would have if I'd been a firefighter or a nurse. This experience affected my music, rather than the other way around.

**Richard Barrett** And by the way: welcome, Samuel, and thanks for some thought-provoking comments.




<b>Benny C</b>	I suppose then I'm asking, how the music affected the political situation? I'm obviously asking in general, and it is in no way a loaded question.	21:01
<b>Richard Barrett</b>	I'm saying the music *didn't* affect the political situation but was affected *by* it, sorry if that wasn't clear.	
<b>Benny C</b>	my bad	
<b>Seth Brodsky</b>	Man alive, this thread continues. Marvelously. Very quickly, until I have more time: I second Richard Barrett's recent comments about the potential/in-avoidable rift in identity between music and musician, and more importantly between professional and activist. This is an extremely compelling point, not least because it sheds light on the question of whether an action ought address and <exist within and for> a professional discourse, or whether it seeks to interfere with or transgress this discourse. To some degree this offers another, perhaps more fruitful perspective on what was earlier (mis?)constructed as a tension between "personal" (as "professional") and "political" (as - social?). More to the point, it reveals the Borgesian-encyclopedian problem here: "composer" and "activist" are in no way necessarily related animals, better yet categories. Then again, activism, as it happens to intersect with any profession, intersects at an angle, and always problematically.	October 29 00:23
<b>Seth Brodsky</b>	Unless what we are potentially discussing is in fact a Composers' Union?	
<b>Mark Barden</b>	Many previous comments seem to ignore that there have been loads of fusion protests already; October 2012 is actually *very* late in the game. For German speakers, YouTube videos document numerous of these protests, both collective and individual. Most took the form of interruptions to public concerts in Feb-March 2012. Search "SWR SO" and any of these names: Pierre Boulez, Leo Siberski, Wolfgang Rihm, Tabea Zimmermann, Lothar Zagrosek, Jean-Guyhen Queyras, Michael Gielen, Jörg Widmann, Arno Bohn, Karlsruhe flashmob, Solidaritätskonzert, "Weil Kultur uns Zukunft gibt" (in which 1700 audience members sing to the orchestra). Notable	09:20

**Mark Barden (ctd)** protests in text form include the petitions from [orchesterretter.de](http://orchesterretter.de) and various op-ed pieces, e.g., from Bundestag President Norbert Lammert. I would emphasize that, tmk, all of these occurred before the fusion was final, i.e., when action was most likely to affect policy.


**Mark Barden** Returning to the thread's origin, several factors make Kreidler's action particularly vulnerable to interpretation as self-promotion rather than as an expression of a deep, selfless conviction to the cause: (1) it was inherently futile w/r/t saving the orchestra (unlike the protests above, the fusion was already official; one wonders why such a committed activist was silent when action might've affected policy), (2) flyers with his name prominently displayed were distributed swiftly and generously throughout the auditorium (I don't have this flyer anymore, but iirc it said only "Johannes Kreidler im Auftrag der GNM"—why was this paper not filled with arguments or statistics against the fusion...something—\*anything\*—focused on the message rather than the messenger?), and (3) the stunt came just hours before his première on the concert the morning afterwards, which is marvelously convenient timing.

Throughout this thread he has, despite ample opportunity and lively debate on substantive issues, repeatedly failed to provide broader analysis or contextualization. His unwavering focus on applause, YouTube views, press, and personal achievement speaks for itself.

**Luc Döbereiner** If I were in charge of budget cuts or some exploiting company and afraid of political protests/movements, I'd hire Kreidler to protest against it.

2 

**Federico Reuben** I think Samuel rose an important point. I think it clearly outlines why the simplistic notion that collective action is inherently more effective than individual action is not as relevant in our Late Capitalist society in the West as perhaps it used to be. We have seen how in recent decades collective action has been institutionalised in the West making it in many cases ineffective (think about recent protests in the West from the Iraq war protests to the student protests on higher fees in the UK, just to mention a few).

1 

The problem with the institutionalisation of collective protest is that it in the end asserts the status quo and the notion that people have the right to protest is somehow a reminder or a validation that we live in a “great democratic and free society” that celebrates and allows freedom of speech – the problem though is that collective protest has become ineffective as a strategy because it can be easily ignored by those in power. Therefore, maybe the question shouldn't be about collective vs individual action but about the radicality of the protest itself. Some individual actions I think can be more radical than many collective actions. Think for example about some of what the West usually and simplistically labels as “acts of terror”. Some of these are simple attempts for visibility and expressions of desperate protest from groups/individuals that sometimes are just lacking political representation (think of the Palestinian situation for many years). I'm not saying that they are necessarily effective in this case, but they do give visibility and sometimes that is what is needed. Going on, the reason that the arab spring was effective is perhaps because their protests were firstly, radical enough and secondly, their forms of protest hadn't been institutionalised like in the West. The problem for us in the West is therefore that we need to find new forms of protest, and again in that way I think Johannes' action is going in the right direction – the problem therefore I think is not about individual vs collective action, or about self-publicity and narcissism, but the radicality of the action itself. I am personally not interested in the attacks Johannes is receiving for his action based on his personality and character, they seem to me as futile as perhaps his action was. Maybe the main problem with Johannes' action was simply that it is not radical enough.

**Jim Aitchison** Is there an index-point of privilege and/or self interest set at zero? Is anyone on it? Can any of us really know others' motivation? Should we be commenting upon it? (Yes, of course, but...). What about our own?

**Johannes Kreidler** Mark, I strongly recommend you to stop posting on this thread, you make a fool of yourself in front of, as Richard said, potentially thousands of people.

Johannes Kreidler  
(ctd)

Your insults are as wrong as they can be:

(1) Already in march 2012 18 artists wrote a protest letter (you should have got this email too, on 27th march, check your box) and launched a website against this fusion. This is the website: <http://www.kultur-wozu.de/>, the letter I also posted on my blog: <http://www.kulturtechno.de/?p=7302>. The initiators were:

Mark Andre // Carola Bauckholt // Martin Baumgärtel // Michael Beil // Mara Genschel // Lorenz Grau // Michael Hiemke // Neele Hülcker // Till Kniola // Steffen Krebber // Johannes Kreidler // Nicolas Kuhn // Brigitta Muntendorf // Enno Poppe // Manuel Schwierz // Manos Tsangaris // Eleftherios Veniadis // Katharina Vogt.

The whole was under the leadership of Manos Tsangaris, if you have further questions, ask him about this initiative.

And of course, I've signed the petition (in march): <http://www.orchesterretter.de/>

(2) The flyers were there to show that is \*not\* a single action by J.K. I was not happy with it, they showed it to me only when it was already duplicated, I wanted to have more information on it, but the whole was managed by GNM. If you have further questions about the back ground of the action, you can ask Julia Clout or Sigrid Conrad from GNM who organised it.

(3) Why was it in Donaueschingen? Because all previous actions weren't successfull, because the SWR orchestra was playing there, because it was known that the main authorities will be there, because in Donaueschingen is big attention. It has nothing to do with my piece (and if, what should be the benefit? The concert was already sold out. This point is the most ridiculous one). In the end, it was only practical that I also had a piece there, means that I was there, it didn't cost extra money. As I already wrote (are you able to read, Mark??), I proposed GNM the idea and said that someone else should perform it. But for practical reasons, mainly because of money, they then asked me to do it, I agreed, sighing, having really already enough to do with my actual piece.

Ian, your questions are right, but unanswerable in most cases like this. There will be certainly

no headline soon: “SWR orchestra merge withdrawn because authorities saw action piece in Donaueschingen.”

I want to say thanks to Samuel Vriezen who points out for me the real striking problem, which is completely unsolved by almost all actions: That it is only those who protest, who have a professional relationship to the orchestra. I will think about this point for further activities.

**Ian Pace** OK – if my questions are unanswerable, then what exactly can such a protest achieve?

**Johannes Kreidler** to hope that they change the things you mentioned, even if we don’t get a direct proof for it.

**Ian Pace** So you mean the questions are unanswerable immediately, but may be answerable in the future?

**Johannes Kreidler** perhaps yes, perhaps not. i already said: it is likely that the orchestras will merge. but at least our protests maybe prevent further cuts. but this cannot be proofed then, things which don’t happen (which remain only fantasy in the heads of the authorities) are no evidence.

**Ian Pace** Well, the questions may be answerable in the negative, if indeed there are further cuts. Or if there are debated, it will be interesting to see if opposition like this appears to be filtered into the discussions at all.

**Ian Pace** It’s possible, say, to gauge the effects of certain actions or other phenomena in terms of cutting crimes, say – an absolute cause-and-effect explanation may not be possible, but a statistically likely one is. If this is possible in such a complex issue, then it should be possible to do something of the same in terms of arts cuts. But if we have no way of giving an answer as to in what ways certain protests are effective, then we should surely be rather more guarded before proclaiming their importance?

**Johannes Kreidler** Ian, when there is a threat like this, it is important that all means of defending are used.

**Ian Pace** That assumes all such means will have some positive impact – what if the impact was negative? What if (and I am only speaking hypothetically here) it was interpreted by others as a typical case of people getting angry when, and only when, their own vested interests come under question, which might firm up a resolve to proceed with such cuts?

How would you go about convincing a wider population, many of whom are likely to be unsympathetic to much about contemporary Western art music, at least of a modernist/avant-garde variety, that it is important to defend the existence of a specific orchestra who have especial renown for playing this type of work, when there are various other orchestras which do the same, including one in the same state? I'm not talking about convincing musicians or others involved in the new music world here, or even of convincing others aligned to the contemporary arts.

**Johannes Kreidler** yes, this aspect, like Samuel also mentioned, is a lack of the whole.

**Richard Barrett**  
1 ↻ Please excuse me for repeating myself, but: in terms of convincing a wider population it could have been pointed out that the minority interested in the work of this orchestra is not actually as small as might be thought (apparently the Donaueschinger Musiktage had 10,000 visitors over the weekend), and that it enjoys prestige on an international level, and the way of pointing this out would of course have been to call for as large as possible a collective demonstration. I think the possibility of this particular action having had a negative impact is worth considering. Did it make the work of the orchestra, and the SWR's role in promoting contemporary music, look important beyond the borders of Baden-Württemberg and indeed Germany, and supported by significant numbers of people drawn from an international musical community? Or did it (NB: whatever anyone's personal intentions might have been) look like a parochial and ephemeral kind of headline-grabbing act by one person who studied composition just down the road in Freiburg and whose own music just happened to be featuring in a concert the following day?

**Johannes Kreidler** I think we've reached the peak of absurdity, now the problem is that I've studied once in Freiburg! (I also studied in The Hague, amongst others with Richard Barrett)

**Richard Barrett** I'll shut up in a moment because I'm constantly saying the same thing, but it is not "absurd" to point out some reasons why it might be easy to perceive the direction of SWR cultural policy as a localised disturbance with no outside connections, rather than something with international significance.

**Michael Edwards**  
2 🗨️ Single or group protestations aside, if JK's piece had been for the SWR Orchester does anyone here think that a much more potent statement might have been to not write a piece for them but instead to have them sit in silence for, say, ten minutes, in order to underline what might be missing in the near future?

**Mark Barden**  
1 🗨️ They're not insults, Johannes, they're facts. Moreover, you actually agree (!) with nearly everything I said above: (1) your action at Donaueschingen was inherently futile in terms of saving the orchestra (which you concede), (2) flyers were distributed exactly as I described (which you concede), (3) the action came the evening before your première (which you concede).

However, I *\*do\** admit that I got one thing wrong: Johannes was not silent on the fusion before his solo action. (It's worth noting that none of these collective action protests resulted in suspicions of self-promotion, perhaps because they were collective.) That said, a factual inaccuracy in a parenthetical aside doesn't change the main point: his fusion protest came too late to affect the fusion itself. This inherent futility increased the likelihood that it would be perceived as primarily self-interested, which could negatively affect the cause (for reasons discussed exhaustively above). This is a discussion of strategy, not a personal insult.

Blaming GNM as Johannes does repeatedly (for the flyers and the choice of performer) makes it difficult to take seriously his calls for solidarity. That it is equally misguided to dismiss critics as jealous, illiterate fools should also be obvious. Readers can judge for themselves whether criticisms levied in this

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16:41

16:41

**Mark Barden (ctd)**

thread descend into baseless ad hominem attacks or whether they are justifiable, if harsh, criticisms of actions supported by logic, reason, and facts.

I am left with two specific questions for Johannes:

1. Were you paid for your protest at Donaueschingen? (You've said GNM's lack of funds precluded finding a different performer, implying compensation of some kind. If the issue were simply travel & hotel expenses, then surely it would have been possible to consult the wide pool of artists in attendance, no?)

2. As the issue arose earlier in the thread and you did not comment, could you explain your use of the Black Power salute after your première?

**Johannes Kreidler**

mark, i agree with all these banal and completely well-known facts, i disagree with your silly interpretations of them.

your question (1): the idea i gave GNM for free, for the performance i received a compensation. since it has nothing to do with self-publicity, it was simply a performance job (quite a difficult one, by the way).

question 2 is off-topic.

18:00

**Mark Barden**

Wow.

2 🍷