

ENSEMBLE MODERN
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Rabih Abou-Khalil's latest work was first commissioned to him by the German city of Duisburg. He was asked to write orchestral works for the "Traumzeit-Festival" and was given the choice of selecting his favorite orchestra for the interpretation of this project.

It had long been Abou-Khalil's dream to have the entire sound scope of an orchestra at his disposal, and he chose no lesser an orchestra than the Ensemble Modern, one of the most renowned contemporary music ensembles. Rabih Abou-Khalil integrated two of his long time colleagues, American percussionist Jarrod Cagwin and French tuba player Michel Godard.

The first rehearsal day proved Abou-Khalil's choice to have been the perfect one. The orchestra, specialized in the interpretation of the works of contemporary composers, enthusiastically took up the challenge. Playing individually and collectively at the highest level they interpreted Abou-Khalil's rhythmically and musically demanding language as passionately and elegant, as if they had done nothing else before.

The result is an equally intellectual and sensual music, complex as well as light-hearted, inspired and original, music that is very much alive, creating landscapes of surreal Oriental beauty and imaginal Occident.

"Unbelievably fine structured, irregular rhythms, masterfully formed into melodic chains that remain in a floating condition, never setting to land, and thus reaching a high level of charm that relentlessly pulls the listener into its magic." Dietmar Wiesner, the flute player of the Ensemble Modern, thus summed up his impressions from the rehearsal. "While working with Rabih Abou-Khalil, I was starkly reminded of a saying by Herbert von Karajan: 'Do not play the bar along with the music, but play across the measure'.

RABIH ABOU-KHALIL

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Since its foundation in 1980, the Ensemble Modern (EM) has become one of the world's leading orchestras specializing in the performance of contemporary music. It offers the perfect platform for 19 world class virtuosos from different nations to realise their musical ideal of creating a truly international and cosmopolitan group: Musicians from Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Japan, Poland and Switzerland, make up the core of this formation, that is flexible enough to grow into a full size orchestra through the addition of guest musicians.

The EM's programmes and concert activities are just as international and versatile as its structure. The orchestra engages in music theatre, dance and video projects, chamber music and orchestral works. The Ensemble Modern has toured the world, performing in the concert halls of Europe, North and South America, Australia, India, Japan, Korea and Taiwan with regular appearances at renowned music festivals such as the "Lincoln Center Festival" in New York, the "Salzburger Festspiele", the "Festival d'Automne" in Paris, the "Festival Ars Musica" in Brussels, the "Holland Festival" in Amsterdam, the "Lucerne Festival" and the "Berliner Festspiele".

In co-operation with the Frankfurt Opera a subscription series was founded in 1985 at the Alte Oper in Frankfurt that includes not only opera productions but also workshop concerts under the title "Happy New Ears". There, central works of contemporary composers are introduced. The EM works closely with several German organisers, among them the Cologne Philharmonic, the Konzerthaus Berlin, the Berlin Hebbel-Theater and the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden.

In close collaboration with the composers, the musicians work each year on about 70 new works, among them more than 20 premieres, performing and recording compositions by Frank Zappa, Wolfgang Rihm, György Ligeti, Steve Reich, and many others.

Biography