

## RIFS-Blogpost

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[Dachzeile]

# Face the Music!

## 1 Report on a conference organized by RIFS and Potsdam Chamber Academy

There is growing interest in sustainability among orchestras, ensembles and concert halls in Germany. Does this signal the beginning of a broader transformation towards a sustainable concert industry? What must be done to lay the foundations for this change? Organised by the Research Institute for Sustainability and Potsdam Chamber Academy, the July conference "Face the Music! Developing the Orchestra Sustainably" brought together a host of actors from the German cultural and concert sectors as well as from sustainability research and politics to discuss these issues and more.

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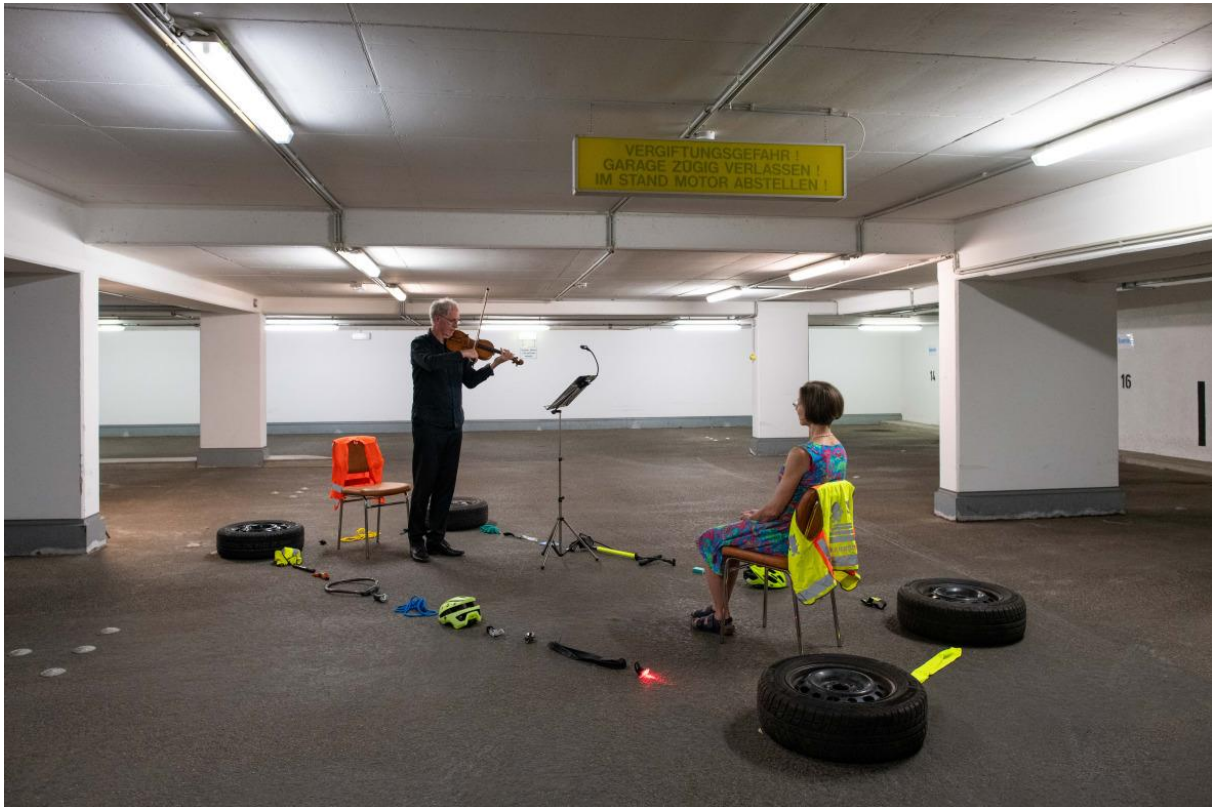


The rooftop terrace was one of several locations at the institute for the 1:1 concerts. Stefan Gloede

## **2 Redefining excellence**

A common thread running through discussions at the conference was the need to rethink notions of excellence in classical music – an undertaking that undoubtedly poses significant challenges for a musical culture that prizes artistic and technical achievement. But the logic of optimization that is inherent to excellence is out of step with the moderation that would define a more resource-efficient concert industry – this was the thesis of the keynote delivered by Professor Julia Glesner. In the ensuing discussions, participants suggested that if the concept of excellence were to be redefined, process-oriented work with local communities might play a larger role in orchestral practice and eclipse international travel as a measure of success.

A panel discussion looked at the possible synergies between diversity – especially with respect to the cultural-ethnic origins of staff and audiences – and sustainability, two pressing issues that are usually tackled singly. A variety of creative and community-building ideas were put forward by participants, such as offering unused rehearsal rooms to local musicians and ensembles of diverse cultures.



The underground car park offered a unique auditory experience and encouraged reflection on orchestral practice. Stefan Gloede

### 3 Decelerating orchestral practice

A lecture by composer Bernhard König put the topic of deceleration on the agenda. König argued that this practice could help to improve the working conditions and work-life balance of employees across the sector. He also suggested that musicians redefine their professional identity as part of a shift towards a more socially engaged orchestral practice.

As one would expect, there was plenty of music on both days of the conference. Alongside performances by the Potsdam Chamber Academy, so-called "1:1 concerts" were staged at RIFS, in which a single musician performed for an audience of one for ten minutes. While discussions continued in the conference room, individual participants and visitors from nearby could enjoy their own moment of musical deceleration on the roof-top terrace, in the underground car park or the institute's meditation chamber.



Visitors to the conference enjoyed 1:1 concerts in a former bank vault now used for yoga and meditation. Stefan Gloede