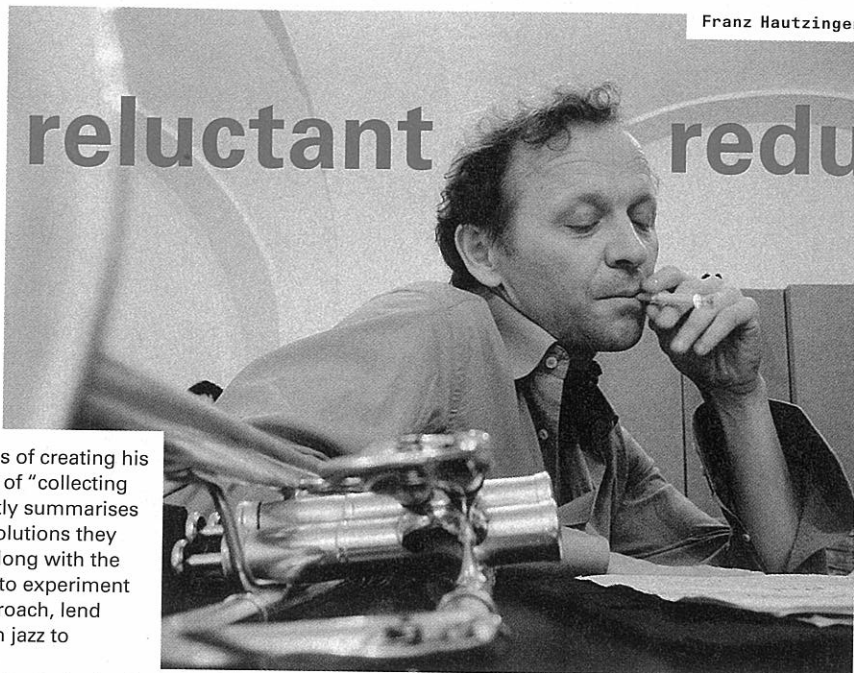


# Franz Hautzinger

By Nick Cain

## The reluctant reductionist



Franz Hautzinger

Franz Hautzinger describes the process of creating his solo album *Gomberg II: Profile* as one of “collecting small realisations”, a phrase which aptly summarises his career. The realisations and the evolutions they individually and cumulatively spark, along with the Vienna based trumpeter’s willingness to experiment with new styles and to rethink his approach, lend his CV an intriguing narrative arc, from jazz to improvisation to Reductionist Improv.

On *Gomberg II* Hautzinger discards Reductionism’s austere lexicon, multitracking soft trumpet melodies in overlapping patterns and complex lattice-like arrangements, using sustain and delay to explore the compositions’ harmonic possibilities. The album draws on a disparate range of sources. “Unken” is based on his childhood memories of the sound of frogs. The three discrete sections of “Sakke/Belga/Sophia” respectively allude to the ethnic musics of Serbia, Japan and Bulgaria. It dawned on Hautzinger after he had completed “Tonga” that its minimalist repetitions were “very connected to pipe organ. I realised that in my youth I was the organ player in a church. So it came back 30 years later.”

Both *Gomberg II* and *The Neubacher Blech*, Hautzinger’s soundtrack for a documentary by Austrian film maker Marcus Carney about the Carney family’s hidden links to Nazism, depart strikingly from the radically monochromatic vocabulary of his 2000 solo debut, *Gomberg*. Hautzinger developed new breathing and tonguing techniques for the album, emphasising the flow of breath through the trumpet’s mouthpiece, which close miking rendered as funnelled hisses, watery plosives and heavily muffled roars.

“Between *Gomberg* and *Gomberg II* there were of course lots of direction changes,” he explains. “*Gomberg II*, for me, was a real test: should I release this? It’s the opposite of the Reductionist attitude. But for me it’s important to see that I made mistakes – it’s much more exciting than not having made them. If I make mistakes, I’m able to develop.”

Hautzinger became involved in Vienna’s jazz scene in the late 80s, playing with Werner Dafeldecker and Helge Hinteregger, and making connections with musicians like Martin Siewert, Martin Brandlmayr, Christian Fennesz and Burkhard Stangl. He gradually

moved away from jazz towards improvisation, spending 1995 in London and collaborating with Steve Noble, Oren Marshall and Roger Turner, among others.

After acquiring a quartertone trumpet in 1997, Hautzinger took a hiatus from recording, completely rethought his methodology and began work on *Gomberg*. “At the time I could recognise how unclear my music was, and how much I didn’t know,” he says. “I was known as a jazz guy who was experimenting, which wasn’t what I wanted. I wanted my musical personality to be free. *Gomberg* for me was the end of this journey because at that moment I was free because the *Gomberg* music was not connected to jazz. I felt separate, influenced by the right things.”

*Gomberg* also reflected Hautzinger’s engagement with Reductionism, in particular the music of its figurehead, Radu Malfatti. Hautzinger recalls fondly the creative intensity of the period. “If you have five events of five seconds’ length in a performance of two hours, it’s intensely psychological for the audience and the players – it’s heavy. If you have just one note, you have to be ten times more precise in the timing, the dynamic, the timbre – all these things were 100 times harder.”

Hautzinger recorded a handful of albums with several of the genre’s more recognisable names (as well as a gritty duo with pianist Manon Liu Winter and an unlikely face-off with Derek Bailey), but soon felt compelled to escape its strictures. “I realised I was on a line of development which crossed Radu’s and found a meeting point. I crossed this point and continued on, still totally excluding the old parameters like rhythm, harmony, melody. But after a while I thought no, I can understand why pitch and melody are not over. You can see it in the development of painting – after Mondrian, a lot happened. Different possibilities.”

Reluctant to be pinned down, Hautzinger avoids recurring groupings in favour of one-off or shortlived collaborations: on 2004’s *Soundchambers* in a trio with Ekkehard Ehlers and Joseph Suchy as well as on Ehlers’s 2006 album *A Life Without Fear*; performing “Not Yet Titled” on Phill Niblock’s *Touch Three*, and popping up on releases by Patrick Pulsinger, Rechenzentrum and Thiages.

The exceptions to the rule are his membership of the Zeitkratzer ensemble (currently inactive); a longrunning duo with Hinteregger; and Regenorchester, operative since 1995. Like Günter Christmann’s Vario, it’s an ongoing project rather than a group, whose successive incarnations are sequentially numbered. The 12th and most recent, a quintet with Otomo Yoshihide, Fennesz, Luc Ex and The Necks’ Tony Buck, is the first to be documented. *Regenorchester XII* betrays a surprisingly strong 70s jazz rock influence. “I’ve known that music since I was a boy. I grew up close to Nickelsdorf, all those guys played there. We wanted to play jazz rock, but with less jazz, to make the music free from jazz. It’s always coming at me from behind, so I have to push it away,” Hautzinger laughs.

A longtime fan of Arabic as well as Oriental music, Hautzinger worked for several years with Marwan Abado, a Palestinian oud player and vocalist resident in Vienna. He met Lebanese trumpeter Mazen Kerbaj while in Beirut with Abado in 2003. They recorded *Abu Tarek* as a duo, and Kerbaj featured in Hautzinger’s *Oriental Space* along with Hinteregger and guitarist Sharif Sehnaoui. The group’s loose aim was to explore its members’ experiences of Oriental music, though their sole CD bears little trace of anything Oriental or indeed Arabic. “I didn’t realise until later that Mazen and Sharif are more European than Europeans,” Hautzinger chuckles wryly.

He happily concedes that such retrospective realisations are common occurrences. “When I was playing jazz it was not what I wanted, but I didn’t know it at the time. I came from a farm, I had no musical or artistic inclination, just to grow corn,” he remarks laconically of his childhood, spent near the Austro-Hungarian border. “With my music it’s more or less always the same – something develops, and eventually when it’s ready I can understand what it was. I have a delay of ten years, always,” he adds, laughing. “There are still a lot of questions, I like questions. I don’t need many answers, but I do need good questions.” □ *Gomberg II: Profile* is on *Loewenhertz*; *The Neubacher Blech* is on *Extraplatte*; *Regenorchester XII* is on *SWR*. [www.franzhautzinger.com](http://www.franzhautzinger.com). To preview a new track by Franz Hautzinger, go to [www.thewire.co.uk](http://www.thewire.co.uk)