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MEER INFORMATIE   IK SNAP HET

Friday, January 17, 2025

## The Art of Feedback of Stefan Prins and Feedbackorchester

By [Eyal Hareuveni](#)

For most musicians, feedback is the ultimate nightmare. But not for Belgian, Berlin-based experimental composer and electronics player Stefan Prins whose recent collection of compositions, *inhabit*, has elevated feedback to a principal compositional method. He says that he is fascinated by feedback's uncontrollable danger and uses feedback as a metaphor for our interconnected ecological systems. Berlin-based, eight-musician Feedbackorchester (FBO) works exclusively with feedback and released a live album documenting its distinct aesthetics.

### Stefan Prins - inhabit (Sub Rosa, 2024)



Prins began his music studies after graduating as an engineer specializing in photonics. He envisions the musical art form beyond the safe confines of the 'scene', and his music reflects on contemporary technologies and new media, thematizing its relationship with the physical, performing body and the environments it inhabits. The double album's compositions, which combine traditional instruments with feedback, electronics, and field recordings, are large-scale.

The first, short composition, "Inhibition Space #1" (2020) is for an amplified bass flute, bass oboe and bass clarinet of the Berlin-based Ensemble Mosaik and feedback. The musicians produce a wide range of feedback nuances through subtle key manipulations, pedal usage, and by varying the distance between their instrument and the speaker, creating an elusive electro-acoustic ambiance filled with mysterious, resonant overtones. This composition demands a razor's edge precision to avoid getting too close to the speaker or too far with the pedal, so things would not escalate quickly. Prins imagine that kind of unpredictability as parallel with

the current ecological crisis. Processes like climate change and loss of biodiversity are also characterized by tipping points and feedback loops. If we cross a threshold, we may encounter the danger of creating an uncontrollable runaway effect. “Inhibition Space #1” transposes this looming threat into the sonic realm.

The 47-minute “inhabit\_inhibit” (2019-21) is for four spatialized quartets, six feedback soloists and live electronics for EnsembleKollektiv Berlin, conducted by Max Murray. This composition expands Prins’ feedback-based sonic palette, now with four feedbacking solo woodwinds (a baritone saxophone is added to the woodwind trio from “Inhibition Space #1”, all using special mouthpieces that produce noisier sounds), and a piano and harp that participate in the feedback process through a setup of contact microphones, transducers, speakers, and custom-built software, plus four quartets consisting of strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion. Prins asked the violinists and cellists to play with soda cans and key rings between the strings. The percussion section was equipped with electric toothbrushes and metal socket wrenches, and the trumpeters and trombonists used toy reeds and so-called ‘pizza mutes’. Prins also arranged the musicians in a spatial manner that is inherent in performing with feedback. The soloists and quartets were positioned along the walls and in the corners, with the audience interspersed among them. In the center of the space, the piano and harp acted as a feedback chamber for the sounds of the soloists that leaked into their resonating strings. Prins created a highly immersive yet unsettling web of living sounds that embrace the listener and force the listener to feel part of this fragile, resonating sonic fabric. This composition may serve as another warning call about the vulnerability of our ecosystems.

“Under\_current” (2020-2021) is for electric guitarist, Yaron Deutsch (who performs with Prins as the Ministry of Bad Decisions duo), and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Ilan Volkov. This provocative composition makes the orchestra perform as an acoustic meta-amplifier for Deutsch’s expansive electric guitar playing, enhanced by a range of effect pedals and extended techniques. The orchestra translates and reflects impressively on the unpredictable, raw and ear-splitting electric guitar feedback and other roaring outbursts.

The last composition, “Mesh” (2022-23) for the Belgian Nadar Ensemble (which Prins co-directs), with five musicians playing the bass clarinet, euphonium and trombone, percussion, electric guitar, and cello, expanded by an electronic layer of feedback, live electronics, and a soundtrack of electronic sounds and field recordings from Berlin and Italy and rainforest soundscapes from the Amazon and Borneo. Prins wanted this provocative, deeply illuminating composition to deconstruct the traditional boundaries between humans, technology, and nature and highlight their ever-evolving relationship. He enhanced the spatial effects on its premiere performance by dispersing the live electronics and the soundtrack through both speakers on stage and headphones distributed to the concertgoers beforehand, allowing the audience to be immersed in a sonic ‘in-between space’, where outside was simultaneously inside, distant was simultaneously near. In his idiosyncratic, unorthodox and thoughtful manner, Prins emphasizes the close interconnectedness of sonic spaces as a strong ecological symbolism and concludes the sonic mirages of this composition with a radically slowed-down ‘dawn chorus’ of forest creatures resembling a choir of lamenting human voices.

inhabit\_inhibit (Stefan Prins, 2019-2021)

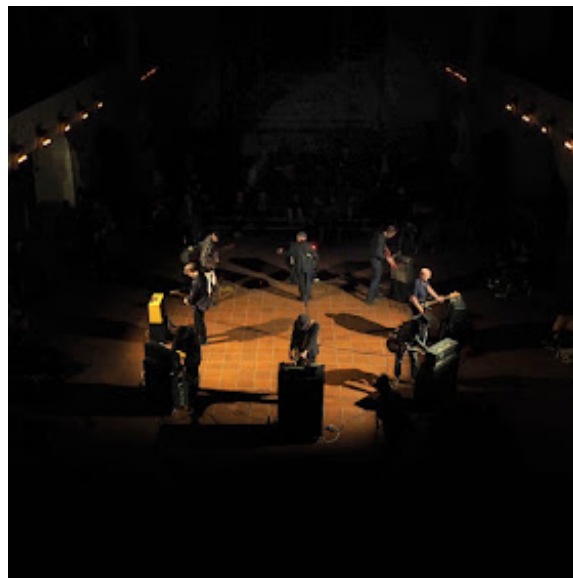


Stefan Prins: Under\_Cur...



[inhabit](#) by Stefan Prins + Ensemble Mosaik, En...

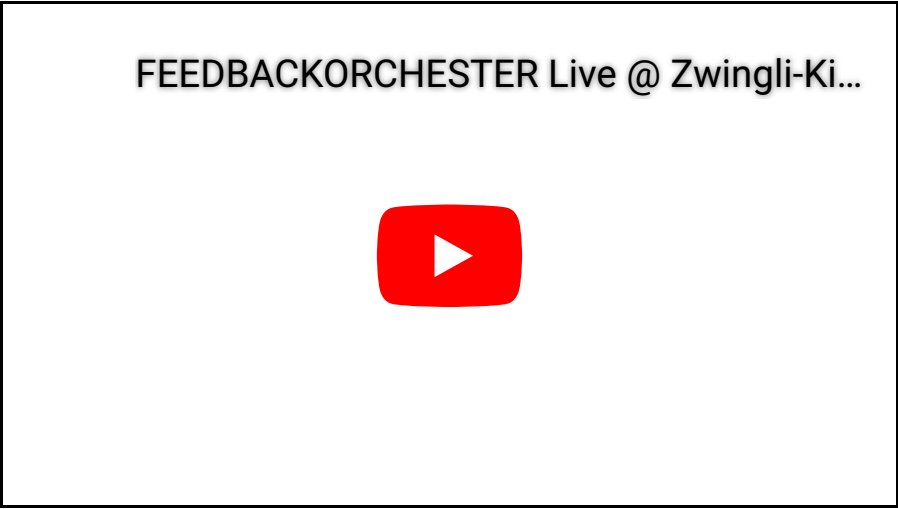
**Feedbackorchestra - Live at Zwingli-Kirche (MirrorWorldMusic, 2024)**



Feedbackorchestra (FBO) was founded in 1999 and consists of 7 electric guitarists and one bassist and focuses on the meditative but physical and massive sonic presence. The eight musicians - guitarists Herman Herrmann, Günter Schickert (who alternates on conch), Zeppy

Haus, Giles Schumm, Hendrik Kröz, Dirk Dresselhaus and Ansgar Wilken (guitar) with bassist Kerl Fieser, are arranged in a circle to ensure close dynamics while the audience can move freely and listen to the music from different positions.

*Live at Zwingli-Kirche* is the third album of FBO and it was recorded at KulturRaum Zwingli-Kirche, now an art space, in August 2020, using the unique acoustics of this space, as another kind of feedback. FBO produces minimalist walls of sounds, a powerful stream of vibrations and frictions that methodically accumulate power and volume. It is quite an experience to surrender to the massive waves of feedback caressing your most stubborn cells, even in the safe environment of your home.



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|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  <a href="#">Live at Zwingli-Kirche</a> by Feedbackorchester |
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Paul on Friday, January 17, 2025

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Flake said...

This is awesome. Super cool article shedding some light onto an experimental, conteporary sound artist. This is right up my alley. Thank you, Eyal! Great stuff.

January 17, 2025 at 8:41 AM

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