

The background features abstract watercolor brushstrokes in vibrant green, orange, and blue, creating a dynamic and artistic frame. The strokes are thick and textured, with some overlapping and bleeding into each other. The green strokes form a large, irregular shape that resembles a stylized letter 'O' or a similar symbol. The orange stroke is a vertical, slightly curved line that intersects the green shape. The blue stroke is a horizontal, wavy line that also intersects the green shape. The overall effect is a colorful and expressive composition.

Other Music Academy

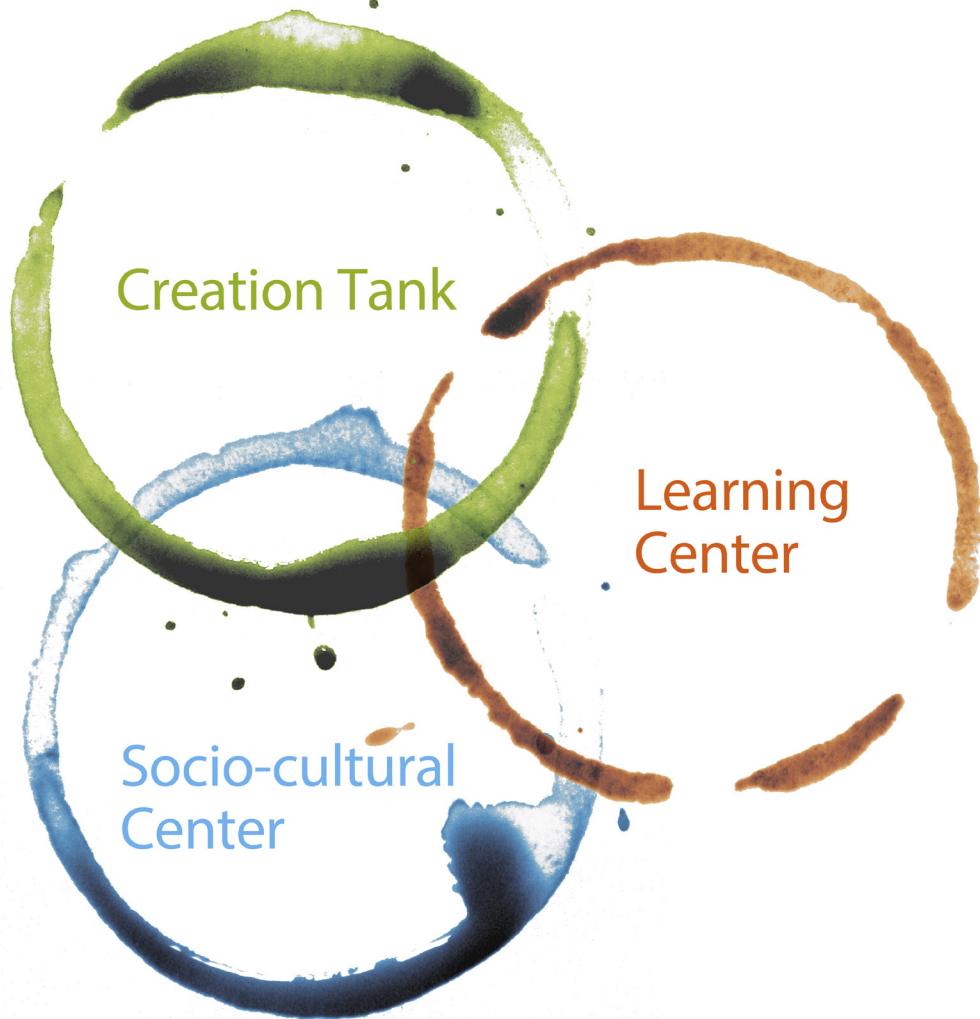
What is the OMA?

The [Other Music Academy \[OMA\]](#) is our vision of a new kind of institution – an Empowerment Center.

To us, “empowerment” means developing and strengthening the human potential for autonomy, creativity, efficacy, and social connection.

To reach that goal we also have to understand and overcome prejudices and structures that stand in its way.

The goal of the [OMA](#) is an open and inclusive society in which the most diverse kinds of people participate actively in the design of shared culture.



The OMA is structured by three, interconnected areas:

– CREATING-TOGETHER –

In the Creation Tank, experts and non-experts together design and carry out projects. All projects make use of both scientific and artistic practices and ways of knowing, inviting the most diverse kinds of people and groups to participate.

– LEARNING-BY-DOING-TOGETHER –

In the Learning Center, a constantly evolving curriculum for lifelong learning flows from the needs of the ongoing projects, thereby giving the participants new, practical skills and directly applicable knowledge.

– BEING-TOGETHER –

A new kind of Socio-cultural Center, the OMA provides the physical home for the projects and their participants. An open meeting place, it makes possible conversations, meetings and social exchange among the participants as well people from the neighborhood, the region, and from all over the world.

What are the goals of the OMA?

The OMA is a frankly utopian vision. We believe that many people today are experiencing a crisis of meaning. Neither increased consumption, the embrace of religious or political fundamentalism, nor cynicism can offer satisfactory answers to this crisis. Rather, our society needs new frameworks in which people from all backgrounds can develop their autonomy and creativity together through social connection, inclusion and participation.

This is especially true for people whose opinions are usually not counted. To exclude them from actively shaping our culture is harmful not only to them, but to all of us. An institution that seeks to empower society must include everyone, not only those with the “right” kind of vocabulary and social prestige.

What would such a radically inclusive platform look like? The OMA is meant to be a place where just such innovations can be imagined, tested and continually improved. The goal is a platform for creative social reconfigurations, based not on “tolerance” or “co-existence” but on the vision of a profound and mutually enriching transformation and shared being.

What is the philosophy of the OMA?

All human beings are born not only with physical needs, but also with needs for autonomy, creativity and social connection and efficacy. Meeting these needs should be the highest priority of a genuinely caring society. Educational and economic institutions should be dedicated to developing this potential, not to their own efficiency regardless of the human costs. Recognizing and fulfilling these needs is what we mean by “empowerment.”

There are many kinds of human intelligence: verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, emotional, and still more. In a caring, creative and open society, every kind of intelligence would be valued, not only those that enjoy dominance and prestige.

In our society, cultural, religious, gender, and other kinds of difference are often felt to be threats and sources of conflict. But in an environment that is committed to empowerment for all, differences can be experienced as enriching, meaning-giving and indeed essential. We can only begin to imagine the enormous potential of such an environment.

>> The name of the OMA

The name “Other Music Academy” comes from

- the idea of “the Other” as a central concept for understanding issues of prejudice and exclusion as well as how to overcome them through empowerment
- music as a paradigm of non-verbal, inclusive communication

- the grandma (“Oma” in German) as an emblem of both care-giving and cultural transmission from one generation to the next

What are the origins of the OMA?

The origins of the OMA go back to 1999, when Dr. Alan Bern was invited by the city of Weimar to lead a 4-day workshop on Yiddish music. That workshop became the Weimar Klezmer Weeks, which evolved seven years later into Yiddish Summer Weimar – an annual, month-long, interdisciplinary summer institute and festival with participants from around the world. To manage Yiddish Summer Weimar and its offspring projects, the non-profit organization Other Music Academy e.V. (originally other music e.V.) was founded in 2006.

In 2009, the city of Weimar offered the organization a 33-year lease on a vacant, former school building. In response, Alan Bern envisioned the Other Music Academy. Soon, other visionaries found their way to the OMA and its projects, including Andreas Welskop, founder of Zughafen in Erfurt, the singer Clueso, artist and cultural activist Valentin Schmehl, musician and project manager Andreas Schmitges, cultural manager Katrin Füllsack and many others. Thanks to their work, the OMA quickly became a dynamic institution in Weimar, whose activities have been supported by the German Cultural Foundation on many occasions since 2013.

A growing network of local, regional and international project partners who have been inspired by the OMA idea constantly bring new impulses and project opportunities to the OMA team. Recently, these include Yasmina Budenz with her visionary children's projects and Jordan White with a genre-defying approach to concert curation.

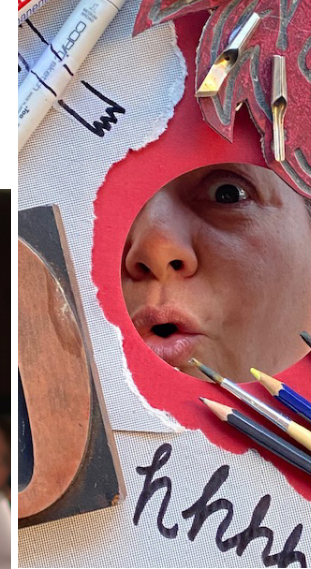
Meet the people who are involved with the OMA:
<https://othermusicacademy.eu/en/oma-people/>



>> Who runs the OMA?

The OMA is being developed and run by the Other Music Academy e.V., a non-profit organization based in Weimar, with some 120 members from around the world. It designs and runs projects that raise the awareness of intercultural identity and diversity as positive, essential social resources.

The Other Music Academy e.V. includes a 3-person board of directors, a 3-person supervisory council, a number of part-time employees in the office, several independent project managers, and numerous volunteers and interns. In addition, the OMA cooperates with a number of individuals and groups who use our rooms and resources for workshops, meetings, exhibitions and other short-term projects.



Photos (from above left):
andreas schmitges (janina wurbs)
yasmina budenz (self)
jordan white (caspar leder)
katrin füllsack (pierre kamin)
valentin schmehl (hanna walter)
alan bern (yulia kabakova)
andie welskop (andi materiell) (bottom)

Dr. Alan Bern was born in 1955 in Bloomington, Indiana, son of Jewish parents. Considered a child prodigy, he began performing concerts on piano at the age of 10. At 15 he left high school to study Religion and Philosophy at Indiana University. In his early 20s he spent two years at the Creative Music Studio in New York, a place where the white and black music avant-garde of the day met, studying there with John Cage, Frederic Rzewski, Carla Bley, Anthony Braxton, and the Art Ensemble of Chicago, among many others. His lifelong interests in improvisation and aurally transmitted music as well as European and non-European traditional music were awakened there.

In 1983, Bern earned an M.A. in Philosophy and Cognitive Studies at Tufts University under Daniel Dennett. At the same time, he was active as a musician and performance artist in Boston and New York, and was the Assistant Editor of "Horace," the professional journal of the Coalition of Essential Schools. In the mid-1980s he taught courses in music psychology and sociology and traditional music at the New England Conservatory and at Tufts University.

In 1987, Bern moved to Berlin, where his concerts quickly led to a new interest in Yiddish music among musicians and audiences alike. In addition, he composed and directed music for theater and dance productions in Berlin, Essen, Dortmund, Basel, New York, Montreal and elsewhere. From 1994 to 1997 he was Music Director at the Bremen Schauspielhaus. In 2006, Bern earned a doctorate in Music Composition at the University of Cincinnati, where he also created a new method bridging improvisation and composition, **Present-Time Composition (PTC®)**.

Since 2009, Bern has dedicated himself to the development of the OMA while remaining active as a composer, performer, researcher and teacher, with projects such as Semer Ensemble, The Other Europeans and others. He has recorded numerous CDs and has been featured in radio and television programs as well as documentary films. He performs and teaches throughout Europe, North and South America and Japan as a soloist and with ensembles, including PTC® workshops at conservatories, music schools and with professional chamber ensembles and orchestras. He has also performed as a guest with Clueso, Joan Baez, Itzhak Perlman and many other important popular and classical musicians. In 2016, he was awarded the prestigious Weimar Prize by the city of Weimar, and in 2017 the Thuringia Medal of Service.

For more, please see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Bern



How does the OMA work?

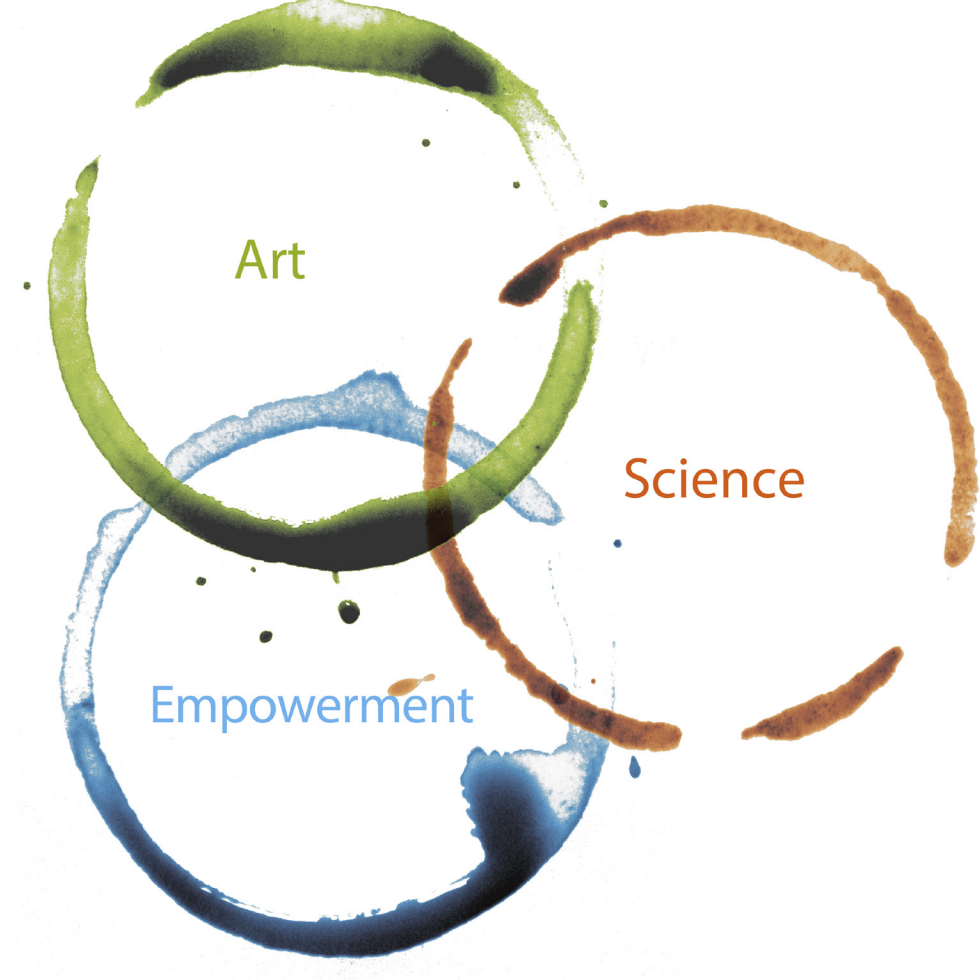
What makes our way of working special?
The “OMA-Project” concept.

OMA-Projects are above all hands-on and practical. They provide a structure for all kinds of people to come together to achieve a common goal. Every OMA-Project is designed from the start with this in mind: diversity and cooperation.

OMA-Projects always make use of both artistic and scientific methods in the service of empowering their participants. A project can be successful only if each participant gains new skills and knowledge, not to be stored away for possible later use, but to be put directly into practice to achieve the projects’ goals.

Lifelong learning flows directly from this process. Projects not only create structures for new kinds of creative participation; they also connect people socially who would be unlikely to meet otherwise.

Although the OMA building in its current physical condition is not yet fully utilizable (see “What kind of building does the OMA need?”), many groups have already discovered it as a space for workshops, exhibitions, performances and other formats, representing an intermediate phase of development. In the future, we intend that OMA-Projects utilize most of the available space in the building. For the time being, opening the building to creative external users offers an excellent opportunity for grassroots development.



The OMA is already home to many large, ongoing projects, including Yiddish Summer Weimar, the OMA Improvisation Project and the #openpavillon. Every year, artists, scholars and participants from more than 20 countries come to Weimar to join in and to connect with local residents.

The OMA sees itself as an organization with local roots and an international reach, bringing together diverse participants in common undertakings.

Yiddish Summer Weimar is an intercultural, interdisciplinary festival that takes Yiddish culture and its oral transmission as a starting point for exploring questions of identity through immersive, holistic learning. More than 10,000 participants have learned about Yiddish song, instrumental music, dance and the Yiddish language in YSW workshops, and more than 100,000 people have attended its concerts, jam sessions and numerous other public events. With its fourfold mission to **research, transmit, create and present** Yiddish and related cultures, Yiddish Summer Weimar has been the incubator for many cutting-edge music groups, including The Other Europeans, the Semer Ensemble, Voices of Ashkenaz, the Kadya Choir, the Caravan Orchestra & Choir, Daniel Kahn & the Painted Bird, Forshpil, among others. /// yiddishsummer.eu

The **OMA Improvisation Project** is a platform for artists and scientists to research, transmit, create and present new approaches to improvisation in music, dance and other performance arts, in particular Dr. Alan Bern's Present-Time Composition (PTC®) as well as other traditional and contemporary methods. Week-long workshops in Weimar, Strasbourg and Berlin have taken place since 2007. Since 2017, a group of dancers and choreographers has researched the application of PTC to dance improvisation. /// othermusicacademy.eu/improv

The **#openpavillon** is an open-ended, socio-cultural construction site where arts and crafts meet. A highly diverse community develops methods for co-creation and projects involving building things together. International artists and craftspeople from many different disciplines instruct special students, international exchange students, senior citizens and established and recently arrived residents and learn from their broad experiences in return. Building projects have included an outdoor culture-kitchen made of peat and wood, a community garden and a portable stage, as well as a culture sailboat in 2020. Each year, #openpavillon grows in response to new impulses and opportunities that arise from within a growing learning community. /// openpavillon.eu



photos (from above):
YSW (adam berry)
YSW (felikss livschits)
improv workshop,
#openpavillon (jakob jurkošek)



The Caravan Orchestra & Choir, winner of the 2018 Shimon Peres Prize, was founded in the summer of 2017 as an exchange project between Yiddish Summer Weimar and the Department of Music of the University of Haifa in cooperation with the University of Music FRANZ LISZT Weimar. Every year, the Orchestra invites 28 young musicians of diverse cultural backgrounds to a 2-3 week residency in Haifa and Weimar, including an intensive rehearsal period and concerts in both regions as well as group-building social activities, workshops and excursions.

The Kadya Youth Choir is a collaboration between the Arab-Jewish "Voices of Peace" girls' choir from Tel Aviv/Jaffa, the "schola cantorum weimar" and other young singers from Weimar and elsewhere in Germany. Together, the participants from both regions created a program of Hebrew, Arabic and new Yiddish children's songs, including a song cycle composed by Yiddish Summer director Dr. Alan Bern based on poems by the Polish-Jewish author, Kadya Molodovsky.

The Other Europeans is a large-scale, EU-funded project dedicated to discovering common roots in klezmer- and lautari music traditions. In 2010, the project received an award from the European Commission for "Best Practices for Roma Culture." /// theothereuropeans.eu

Bobé Mayses is a mixed-media performance and parade. The dazzling show is based on a 500-year old Yiddish bestselling story about knights and fair ladies, the Bovo Bukh. The production connects the story's many original meanings with contemporary themes around grandmothers, migration and gender-bending heroes. During a four-week international artistic residency at the OMA, an international team co-created the immersive experience that transformed the audience into grannies and led us to cross the Alps in a parade through the whole city. Bobé Mayses was performed in Weimar, Erfurt and at the Jewish Museum Berlin.



photos (from above):
 caravan orchestra,
 kadya (shndl copitman kovnatskiy)
 the other europeans
 (adam berry)
 bobé mayses (pierre camin)

Starting as a cooperation with the Jewish Museum Berlin in 2012, the **Semer Ensemble** researches and re-interprets for today's audiences the almost-forgotten recordings made in the 1930s by the Berlin-based Semer label, restoring to life a heritage that the Nazis had tried to obliterate. /// semerensemble.com

Yiddish culture has given the world a centuries-old, rich treasure of children's songs. But the majority of these melodies and lyrics disappeared with the destruction of the people who sang them, including the children for whom they were composed. **The Children's Song CD project "For the new generation!"** makes it possible once again to hear and sing these lovely and touching songs.

Creative Potentials, a project funded by the Thuringia Department of Commerce, aimed at understanding how institutions and creative individuals can best interact. A dozen successful, autodidactic artists were invited to give workshops and concerts and to be interviewed. The goal was to better understand how the OMA can give support to such individualistic paths of development.



photos (from above):
semer ensemble (adam berry)
kinderlieder CD (sonja pachonik)
OMA feiert! (ryo takeda)



What is the structure of the OMA?

Public institutions such as schools, training institutes, research- and cultural centers are typically separate from one another and aimed at different social groups. The OMA design combines these different functions into a single, new kind of institution for meaningful and mutually enriching exchanges that create lasting connections among the most diverse social groups. In this way, the OMA can be a model for social integration in general.

The fundamental principle of “empowerment” guides not only how projects are carried out, but their initial design as well. We envision a six-person Planning Group led by Dr. Alan Bern, with two rotating local members and three permanent members who are experts in arts, sciences and culture management, respectively. A 12-person Advisory Board with experts in education, economics and politics as well as the arts and sciences will assist the Planning Group. The projects will be managed by administrative structures of the Other Music Academy e.V.

With the support of the Advisory Board, the Planning Group will design and develop projects. One important goal of each project is to locate and invite both experts and laypeople to participate. At the end of this phase, structures will be in place for creating new impulses and ideas for follow-up projects coming from both inside and outside the OMA organization. These will then be channeled back into the Planning Group to initiate a new round of projects.



What is the role of the OMA role in Weimar?

Weimar is internationally renowned for its liberal, European cultural tradition known as “the Weimar Classic,” but the city also played a leading and enthusiastic role in the Nazi period. Today, Weimar is home to many prestigious and historically important cultural and educational institutions with international reputations. Although they greatly enrich the cultural life of the region and indeed all of Germany, their commitment to “high culture” often excludes many different kinds of people. The price of exclusion is social relevance.

In a small city like Weimar, filled to the brim with such historical and influential institutions, there is not much room left, neither physically nor intellectually, for cultural opportunities that are open to all. However, it is common knowledge that open cultural spaces are essential to the development of creativity and social innovation; they offer future-oriented and independent people a platform to experiment, to develop new ideas and new networks. They can also offer a much-needed common ground for established institutions, the general public and other cultural actors to meet.

By offering highly diverse groups a platform for meeting and working together, the OMA has already begun to fulfill this role on local, regional and national levels. Through Yiddish Summer, the OMA Improvisation Project, the #openpavillon, The Other Europeans, the Kadya Choir, the Caravan Orchestra and many other projects, the OMA has already earned an international reputation as an open and inspiring place for people of all ages, nationalities, genders and cultural backgrounds.



photos (from above):
pierre kamin
afs komitee weimar
ryo takeda
axel clemens



Photos from above

- > Dance workshop with Ilana Reynolds as part of #openpavillon 2018 (jakob jurkošek)
- > Lyrics workshop with Norman Sinn and young exchange students within the "July in June" festival for young literature (AFS Komitee Weimar)
- > Light installation by Saori Kaneko for the IDAHOT party (International Day Against Homo- and Transphobia) 2015 (ellen meyer)
- > "Future Hope" exhibition about the lives of refugees in Thuringia, OMA Café, November 2014 (franziska becher)
- > "Apocalypse/sound" at the street festival "When OMA dances", DJ Don Klarko (ryo takeda)
- > Young singer from Tel Aviv/Jaffa dances during the Kadya Youth Choir concert during YSW 2017 (p. 27) (shendl copitman kovnatskiy)

>> A selection of events in the OMA

- Yiddish Summer Weimar - summer institute and festival for the research, transmission, creation and presentation of Yiddish and related cultures
- #openpavillon - socio-cultural construction site in the intersection of art and crafts.
- Travel study in Weimar for international exchange students, in cooperation with the AFS intercultural programs e.V. and the Klassik Stiftung Weimar
- Bauhaus Essentials – final presentations of Bauhaus University students
- Future Hope – exhibition and book presentation about the lives political asylum-seekers in Thuringia
- OMA Spectacle – winter costume celebration with market, stories and spooky things
- ROMA day in the OMA - international day celebrating Romani culture
- Strangers for Strangers - development policy meeting of Itinerant Journeywo*men
- Sketch Festival - national meeting of illustrators
- Open Society Day - nationally coordinated event for neighborhood social encounters
- Radical Rainbow - 2019 Queerfeminist Action Month launch
- SUNDAYcafé - weekly event and networking for refugees and Weimar residents together
- OMAlive sessions: weekly concerts with regional, national and international musicians
- Bauhaus Agents - temporary workshop in experimental building for everyone aged 7 and higher
- Book Children – independent publishing house and visionary participatory project for kids



Future projects planned for the OMA

The following projects are planned for the OMA in the near future. They exemplify ways of working, potential co-operations and possible topics. Some have evolved from existing projects, while others are visions of follow-up projects that show the journey that lies ahead.

>> Projects planned for the OMA

PTC* (Present-Time Composition) Teacher Training Center Dr. Alan Bern's visionary method of composition in real time through collective improvisation in music, contemporary dance and other performing arts has been taught in conservatories, universities, workshops and to professional and amateur ensembles throughout the world. The OMA will be the first center in the world to offer training in the method leading to a teaching certificate.

Between the end of WWI and the mid-1990s, the OMA building housed several schools. In the **Heart of the OMA**, school children of today research and document in video the life stories of students and teachers from bygone years, applying artistic and ethnographic methods to personal and social histories. This innovative model project includes a continuously expanding permanent exhibition to present the research to the public.

Music both shapes and mirrors the culture that produces it. Music carries within itself tensions, contrasts and taboos, and also ways to overcome these. In the project **Music and Conflict**, musicians from regions in conflict come to the OMA to explore the separate and common dimensions of their heritages.

Anecdotes, jokes and folk songs are carriers of cultural knowledge. They respond to changes in society and they shape ways of thinking, humor and fears. In **Anecdotes We Live By** we research how people talk with each other today in Thuringia and how this frames life together. Together with scientists and artists, participants conduct ethnographic research, learn about how stories are told in

everyday life situations such as bars and living rooms, and devise new storytelling contexts in the OMA.

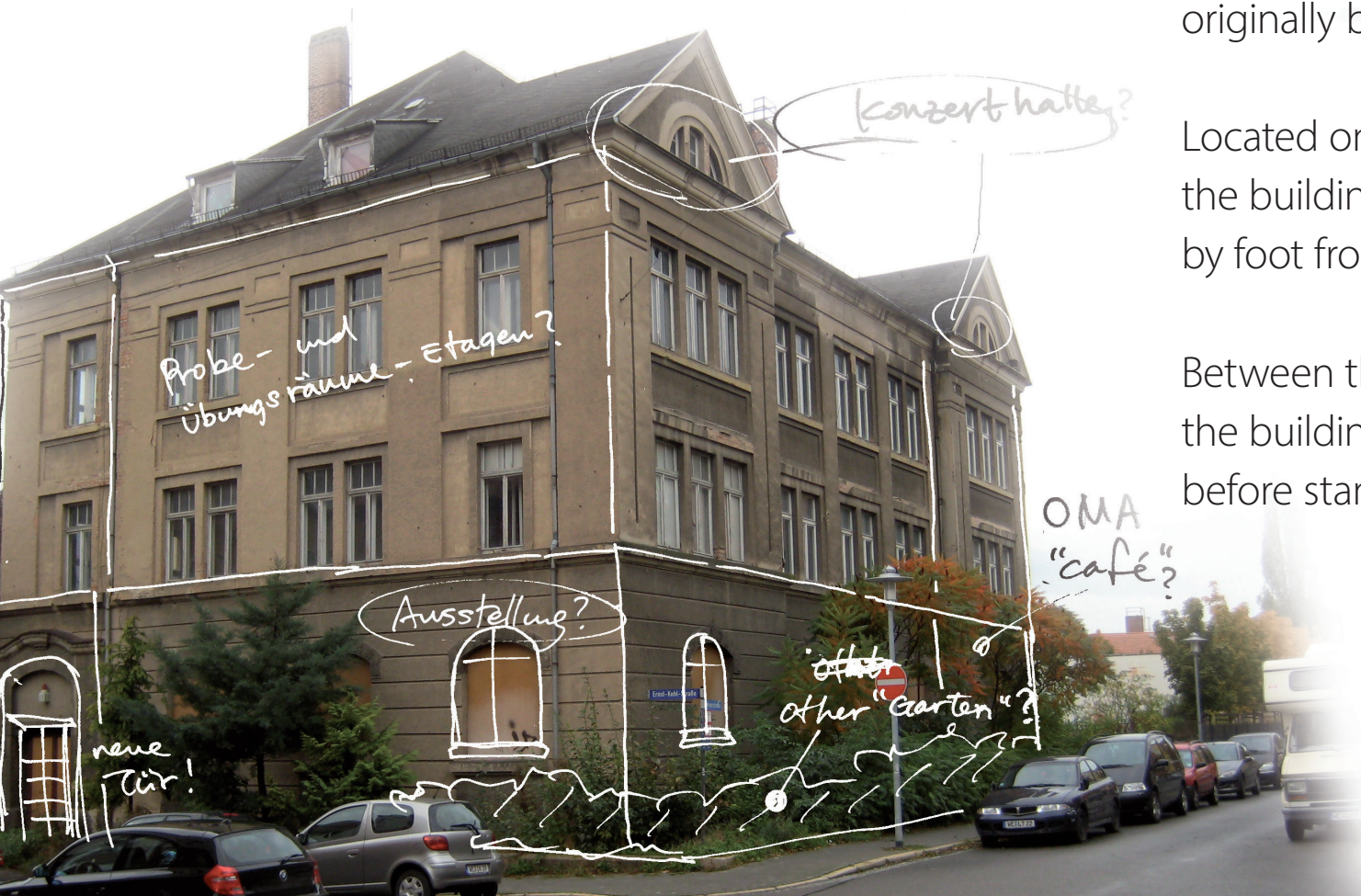
What is "play?" What kinds of movements are fun, what makes a toy a toy, what is the goal of play? In the **Playroom** project, parents and children explore these questions and design a playroom together with movement teachers and regional kindergartens. The OMA garden and courtyard are included in a design aimed at making the entire OMA space one that is welcoming, safe and inspiring for the whole family.

Both musicians and athletes are masters of complex movements, individually and in teams. They have to coordinate their actions with others, follow rules and patterns and make instantaneous decisions. Both competition and coordination are central to music and sport, albeit in different ways. In the **Performing Arts & Sports** project, artists and athletes together explore how these dimensions go into group decision-making and mastery in their respective disciplines.

Many carriers of cultural traditions live largely unseen among us. Great musicians play in the streets or teach in small music schools. Glassblowers demonstrate their craft in elementary schools or work behind closed doors in restoration workspaces. Their skills get too little social recognition, but they can open new horizons. **The Others Among Us** locates such artists, craftspeople and small businesses and works together with them to create opportunities for their work and their live stories to be seen and valued.

Rural Thuringia is home to a colorful variety of initiatives and networks. Often, however, they remain unseen in the cities where culture is conducted. Following up on the sociocultural cabaret "The New Human," a 2019 production of the OMA Cabaret Workshop, handworkers, artists and friends of the OMA bring a mobile stage and a set of creative impulses to rural Thuringia. In cooperation with village-based organizations and institutions, they create a **Traveling Salon**, inspired by pressing questions about our future and by the playful, scientific spirit of the Bauhaus Stage Workshops.

>> the OMA in 2009



What kind of building does the OMA need?

Since 2009, the OMA has occupied a long-term lease on the former ducal customs building in Weimar, originally built in 1907.

Located on the city's north side, the building is only a few minutes away by foot from the main train station.

Between the end of WWII and the 1990s, the building was home to several schools before standing vacant for almost 20 years.

In 2010, the ground floor was partially renovated thanks to a construction grant from Thuringia. Between 2010-16, the architecture firm StudioCE designed and supervised the renovations, led by Libeskind students Christian Dengler and Holger Schwarz. Since 2017, a city construction grant has enabled further renovation, led by Jörg Kuppermann and the GKL Planners. From the beginning, central design concepts have been recycling and upcycling: the discarded but historic door to the National Theater opens the way to the OMA chamber music room, floorboards from demolished buildings have found re-use in the Café and brightly painted doors to former elementary school classrooms have been upcycled as modular tables.

Thanks to funding from the New States Fund program of the German Federal Cultural Association, the OMAcafé opened its doors in 2014 and provided an infrastructure for events, co-operations and rentals. The spaces next to the building are also used by the Café, and a garden is cared for by neighbors and neighborhood schools.

The former classrooms on the first floor have been converted to workshop rooms, and the offices of the OMA and our partners are located on the second floor. Small apartments for Artists-in-Residence help bring the international network of the OMA to life. In the near future, the third floor (roof) will be a stunning, multifunctional ballroom with a gym floor and a rare, antique wooden beam construction. Large rooms in the basement offer space for woodworking, painting, metal and clay workshops.



fotos: schmott



photos: Studio CE (above), samuel walter (right)



photo: jakob jurkosek

>> Long-term infrastructure plans

- Artistic Director
- Management Position: Program Development
- Management Position: Infrastructure Development
- Event Manager Position: OMAcafé
- Building Maintenance Position
- OMAcafé Personnel (team coordination, basic budget for volunteers)



The Other Music Academy



EMPOWERMENT CENTER

photos: dance (moritz küstner), clarinet (feliks livschits), yard (skizzenfest), woman (olivia vieweg), OMA street festival (ryo takeda)

Who supports the OMA?

- The city of Weimar, represented by the Lord Mayor
- The State Chancellery of Thuringia
- The Thuringia Ministry for Economy, Science and Digital Society
- The Cultural Foundation of Thuringia
- Weimar Summer
- The Bauhaus-University, Weimar
- The University of Music FRANZ LISZT Weimar
- The Sparkasse Foundation, Weimar Land
- The Small Synagogue (Kleine Synagoge), Erfurt
- The Dance and Folk Festival of Rudolstadt
- The Castle and Cultural Agency of the Royal Residence Castle, Altenburg
- The Paul-Gustav-House, Altenburg
- The Sparkasse Cultural Foundation of Hesse-Thuringia
- The Protestant Adult Education of Thuringia
- Zughafen Erfurt, represented by Andie Welskop
- Action Mensch
- The Robert Bosch Foundation
- The Socio-cultural Foundation
- The German Federal Cultural Foundation
- The Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin
- The Jewish Museum Berlin
- The Berlin Exploratorium
- The National Association of Socio-cultural Centers
- The House of Yiddish Culture, Paris
- The German-French institute
- The AFS Intercultural Programs
- TANDEM for Culture
- The Borderlands Foundation
- The Marek Edelman Dialogue Center, Lodz
- The University of Haifa
- The Arab-Jewish Community Center of Tel Aviv/Jaffa
- and many more

text:

alan bern

valentin schmehl

design & collage:

sayumi yoshida

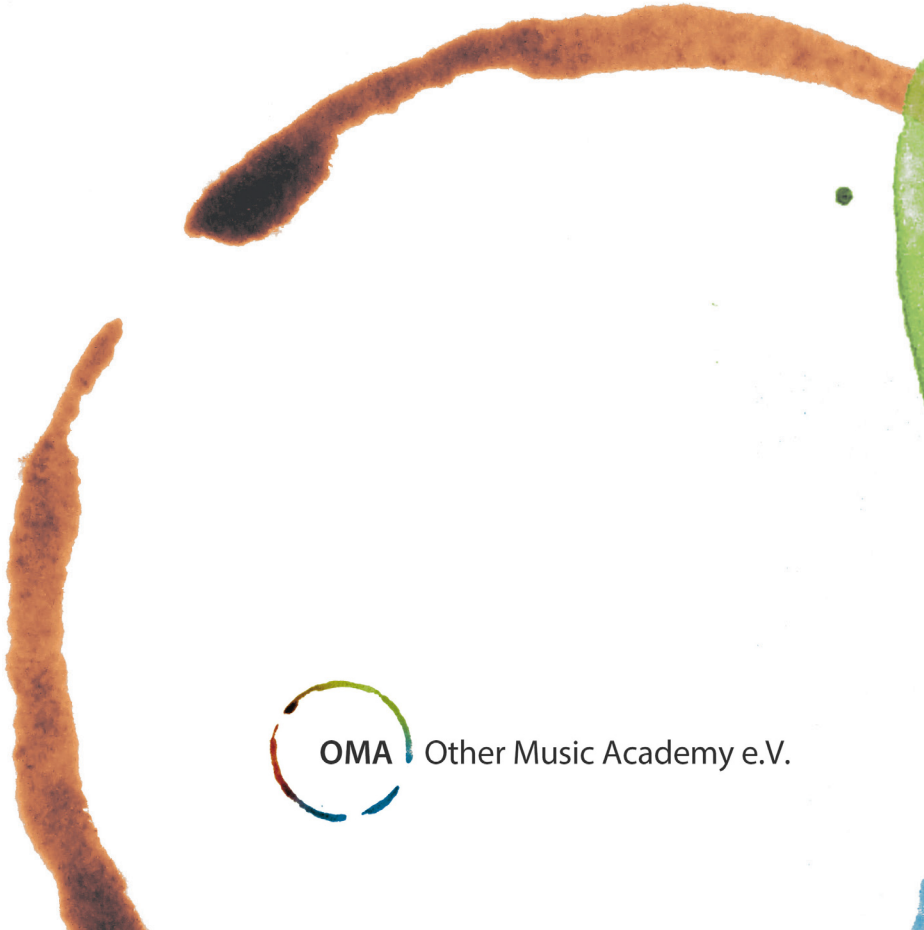
supported by
the New States Fund of the

**KULTURSTIFTUNG
DES
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