

A large, bold, white letter 'A' is positioned in the upper left corner of the page. The background is a solid teal color, with a large, diagonal red shape on the right side that overlaps the teal.

**Age of  
Artists**

Interview With

**Daniel Prndl**

Mannheim/May 30, 2014

Interview was conducted by Hendrik Achenbach (Age of Artists, AoA) on May 30, 2014 in one of the study rooms of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Mannheim, Germany.

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## Introduction

Interview with Daniel Prandl, Jazz pianist and Composer  
Age of Artists met with Daniel Prandl in one of the study rooms of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Mannheim, Germany, where he teaches students of the piano. Daniel was born in Bavaria in 1979 and started to get involved in music at the early age of four. He now works and lives in Mannheim. Details about his art can be found at [www.danielprandl.de](http://www.danielprandl.de). What follows are excerpts of the conversation we have had with him.

## On the most important aspect of his work

Writing music and working on my own projects. I have my own quartet that allows me to realize my artistic values and do what my music is all about.

## **On the academic approach to composing music**

Transcribing or just studying music of others and then understanding the rules in it and trying to make songs with those rules can spark new ideas. There is this famous Stravinsky quote that says: Lesser artists borrow, great artists steal. It's all about checking out what other people did, see what you like, see what you don't like, abstract from it, understand the rules. Don't steal a melody, that's stupid, but you can deduct rules off formal aspects, from how a song is constructed.

## **On the intuitive approach to composing music**

I love the interview with Leonard Bernstein where he describes composing as a mental state where you are almost asleep, so it's a kind of meditation, and melodies come to your mind, and you sing them in your mind. Or maybe out loud and then something catches you, you know, something that hits the spot. That's the thing to go for and when you have that crucial moment, get quickly on the piano, and fix the idea.

## On creativity

You can't force creativity but you have to force creativity. I mean, if you want to write, you will say, I am now writing for a new album, so I have a deadline. So every day, when I have time, I write a couple of hours and on some days, you won't write one single note. But that whole process, even when you don't get to write something down, your brain starts working and the day will always come where you write a lot in a really short time and then it's just flowing.

## On manipulation

If you stick to an idea, pretty much anything can happen to it. I mean, you can change the meter, you can do anything. Manipulation of the material is one of the most important things, you know. It might be you write something down that is beautiful, and that's it. But I really love to manipulate my material, maybe add something, maybe delete something. Whatever. You find another part, you cut a part, you think of a new introduction and interlude section. I just like to play with forms.

## On epiphanies

Epiphanies mostly happen when I am at the piano, because then my mind is attracted to what I have to do and is focused on it.

## On research

When I work on a new project I first read a couple of books on the topic and don't write a single note but rather lots of descriptive comments such as, that's mysterious, that's odd, that's happy, that's pathetic, that's whatever, just like that. Naturally, I can only work like that, because I am using a highly programmatic approach for my own compositions.

### **On visualizing music**

I love the idea of layers, so I imagine the saxophone as a layer, the baseline is a layer, drums are a layer and they could be more intense or less, and those layers come together and form a structure. And I'd like to state: One layer is nothing - the combination of layers gives the music strength and keeps it together. Of course you might argue on that point...

### **On learning by watching performances**

I can learn more from a concert I dislike than from a concert I love.