



Conrad Schnitzler
Convex

9 January 2025
CD / LP / digital



“Convex” is one of a series of LPs that Schnitzler released himself in the 1980s. Some of the covers of these LPs contain useful information such as track titles, instruments, date of origin, et cetera. Sometimes the LPs also come with DIN A4 or other format sheets printed with text and artwork. “Convex,” however, is one of Schnitzler's LPs that convey virtually no visible information. Only the title is printed in large letters on the cover of “Convex,” and in tiny letters that are easy to overlook, it says: “Cover Conrad und Richard.” The labels on the original LP indicate that one side is called ‘Convex’ and the other “Concav.” That's all the information there is.

On “Convex,” as on many of his other albums, Schnitzler definitely used a sample-and-hold generator (S/H generator), a device that converts sounds stored as desired into random sequences of tones. This is important to know because this album is also non-keyboard music, i.e., it was not played ‘by hand’; instead, the experimental setup is: synthesizer – sequencer – S/H generator. Whether Schnitzler could foresee the respective results for each piece or whether he let himself be surprised is uncertain. But I believe he let himself be surprised and decided in each case whether to accept the result or not. Because one of the cornerstones of his artistic concept is controlled chance. However, it is not this method that makes “Convex” so special, but the slow tempo of the music. With one exception, the other pieces are almost sluggishly slow. Schnitzler certainly never had ambient music in mind, as his music is defined throughout by transparency and dynamic movement. However, “Convex” does meet some of the criteria defined by Eric Satie for “musique d'ameublement” and also the concept of “ambient” further developed by Brian Eno: its calmness and apparent uniformity – both of which require no attention and yet are a pleasant addition to the atmosphere of a room. A prerequisite for this, however, is a discreet volume level. Schnitzler would probably turn in his grave if he knew that I was placing his music in the vicinity of ambient. And of course it's not ambient. With “Convex,” Schnitzler remains consistently true to himself. The only unusual thing is that he experiments with “slowness” here. Schnitzler has carefully faded out some pieces, even though they are suitable for filling an entire LP side. If I were to stick with my thought experiment, this would be another characteristic of ambient music.

“Convex” raises questions that cannot be answered with certainty. But that is precisely why Schnitzler's music remains so interesting. No one has the authority to interpret it; every listener can and should let their imagination run wild, because Schnitzler never gave any listening instructions. And it's impossible to misunderstand Schnitzler: either you understand him or you don't. There is no in-between.

Asmus Tietchens, 2025

Tracklist

A1 Convex 1
A2 Convex 2
A3 Convex 3
A4 Convex 4

B1 Convex 5
B2 Convex 6
B3 Convex 7
B4 Convex 8

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