

# Abstracts

Klaus Angermann: Sound – Body – Space – Sound. Control and openness in the work of Rebecca Saunders

Based on exemplary works, the text examines the relationship between compositional control and openness in the music of Rebecca Saunders. The crucial point is how the composer relates her conception of sound as a physical and spatial phenomenon to a pre-compositional sound space to which the composed sounds refer as a resonant background. The transition from imaginary sound spaces to installative and variable forms of work, which incorporate real space as a formative parameter, proves to be fluid and a formulation of a common sound concept, which understands the sounds, including language, as fragments of a totality of »sounding silence« beyond the composition, projected into audible space.

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Lukas Haselböck: »How Does Silence Sound?«. Sound Spaces and Dramaturgy of Sound in the Music of Rebecca Saunders

In her music, Rebecca Saunders is primarily focused on timbre and instrumentation which both define the way her pieces develop. Within the process of composing, she reduces the palette of sounds and condenses the material in order »to find something like its ›essence««. The resulting sounds are placed within a spatial framework: for the listener, the sounds are moving forwards and backwards, up- and downwards. However, these gestures of sound are not isolated: they are weighed against the surrounding ›silence« – a physical process which leads to a specific dramaturgy of sound. In this text, these strategies are exemplified by analyzing Saunders' works *Crimson* (2004–05) for piano solo and *Void* (2013–14) for two percussionists and orchestra.

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Lydia Jeschke: Outside and Inside. Talk with Rebecca Saunders about Spaces

»Räume«, that means: rooms, spaces, chambers and spheres, have become more and more important for Rebecca Saunders' work. The interview reveals some aspects of the composer's spatial thinking: What are the best working spaces? How is the relation between spatial composition and structural density? Does music discover a room similar to dance or theatre? What about the inner spaces of human beings as subjects of her musical works? And what is

their special appeal to the listener discovering his own listening area while following the music?

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Rainer Nonnenmann: Music for Nothing. Rebecca Saunders' Traditions, Routines, Demands and Contradictions

The music by Rebecca Saunders, which is internationally admired for its richness and sophistication in case of sound and timbre, is in the tradition of autonomous tone color composing. Closely musicological discussions with it have so far hardly taken place or have remained mostly descriptive. This is also due to the contradictory strategy of the composer to make her music appear contextless when speaking about colors, but at the same time to charge it expressively, semantically and spiritually from the outside through titles, texts, comments and associations. While on the one hand her works seem unhistorical and unrelated, so to speak »natural«, on the other hand they are based on well-known effect models, tonal elements and a repertoire of typical playing techniques, sounds, gestures and tension curves of new music that Saunders herself has long tried out. In addition, her sound surfaces are based on central tones and her physical-haptic understanding of sound shows strong close relationships with composers such as Giacinto Scelsi, Gérard Grisey, Wolfgang Rihm, Helmut Lachenmann and Edgard Varèse. Since a critical compositional examination of these characteristics and routines is largely absent, there is a risk of stylistic hardening.

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Martin Kaltenecker: Remarks on Rebecca Saunders' *Scar*

Drawing on a small number of preparatory sketches for *Scar* (2018–19) as well as on an interview hold with the composer in 2019, I try to describe in this paper Saunders' compositional method based on the preparation of different kinds of »sound objects«. In *Scar*, one can make out four types of such objects which I analyse before briefly describing their integration in the overall form. Turning to a more general approach, I confront the work with some typical features of art music since the 1980s, mainly the desire for continuity, the desire for corporeality, alliances with images, technophilia, a special attention given to the performance space as a place centred on presence, and a tendency to consider the listening experience as a completion of the work. This »constellation« may allow us to better understand the commentaries the composer offers of her own work.

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Tobias Schick: Sound, Dramaturgy and Presence in Rebecca Saunders' *Alba* for Trumpet and Orchestra (2014)

On the example of the trumpet concerto *Alba* (2014), the essay shows some central aspects of Rebecca Saunders' music. In particular, Saunders' conception of an almost organic, ever-changing sound is the focus of attention. The text examines how the setting of specific tonal shapes determines the structure of the work and how the transmission of tonal energy creates purposeful developmental processes that not only lead to expressive and dramatic moments but also influence the work's overall form. In addition, the semantic associations invoked by the title and comments on the work are questioned as to their meaning. Although these can facilitate access to the music by making it connectable to related experiences, their semantic determination appears to be of secondary importance. More important than this, the musically embodied presence proves to be a state of tense attention that arises through the transmission of energy.

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Jörn Peter Hiekel: Sound-Space-Drama. On Rebecca Saunders' Work Complex *Yes*, its Contexts and its Particularities

The composition *Yes*, which can be counted among Rebecca Saunders' most important to date, is in some respects related to substantial ideas and tradition lines of newer music. And yet this work, which refers back to the final monologue of Molly Bloom from James Joyce's *Ulysses*, is highly unusual in several respects. In it, the above-mentioned text becomes the impetus for a complex and enormously varied layering of different sections, most of which can also be performed as separate solo or chamber music works. Their combination follows a precise structural plan, which also includes changing positions of the performers in space (the subtitle »spatialised performance« refers to this important aspect). But the formative text can also be experienced in a listening way – not only in the part of the singer, but also in that of the instrumentalists. The result is an extraordinarily expressive composition, which is equally determined by obsessive, drastic and ecstatic moments as well as by unprotected emotionality.

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Yuval Shaked: InSideOutSideIn. About Rebecca Saunders' *Fletch*

A very unique structure – a complex sound-timbre texture amalgam – underlies the *Fletch* String Quartet. It combines sensitive, elusive volatility with irrevocable urgency. Each of its juxtaposed and compound variants proves to be

a constantly evolving sound. Determined by loud technical control mechanisms and compulsions, the sound variants liberate themselves on their own and become independent. The composition mediates between supposed flip sides of a closed world of sound.

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### Mark Barden: The Composer Rebecca Saunders Seen from Six Perspectives

Drawing on first-hand experience, composer Mark Barden offers a personal portrait of Rebecca Saunders and her work. Part anecdote, part analysis, and part correspondence, Barden traces a path from his first encounter with Saunders' music to the present, touching on her musical language, influences, aesthetic framing of »objects« and »resonances«, pedagogical approach, and issues of performance practice surrounding her spatial installation works *chroma* and *Stasis*. While largely conversational in tone, Barden also includes Lachenmann-inspired analyses of excerpts of *still* and *Ire* and a list of direct quotations culled from lessons and private correspondence.