

fret tapping rhythmic patterns of the guitar meet with the texture of the melisma-like texture created by the constant contact of the rubber bands with the strings. Such sonic combination is delivered through the sensitivities of Rykova's score, thanks to the coexistence of her notational character and the instrument's peculiar idiomatic nomenclatures.

This is why her graphic achievements are not separated at all from the sonic ones, but rather two mutually enriching sides of her sonic and artistic language.

1 www.eleenarykova.rocks/notation

Varun Rangaswamy

For poet and philosopher Gaston Bachelard, imagination is also material. Chaya Czernowin's *Black Flowers* for solo electric guitar (2018) takes its title from Bachelard's strange characterization of the materiality of the "inner imagination": "In the depths of matter there grows an obscure vegetation; black flowers bloom in matter's darkness."² If imagination and material spill into each other, then Czernowin's piece allows us to hear what that spillage sounds like.

Recorded in 2018 by Ruben Mattia Santorsa in Darmstadt, *Black Flowers* makes audible the idea of blooming yet dying at the same time. Constructed in short, disconnected phrases, *Black Flowers* is not structured as a line or as an uninterrupted blooming of sound. Rather, the short piece always doubles back on itself. Each phrase dies into silence, a silence that is also absence, "matter's darkness," before sound reemerges for the next phrase. And yet, the silences do not act as mere gaps between sounds. Rather, they are active expressions of non-sound; they are also presences. Just as "black flowers bloom in matter's darkness," silence emerges (blooms) as both absence (darkness) and presence (black flowers). The sound dies, but the silence blooms. In this way, *Black Flowers* meditates on the coexistence of material deterioration and earthly generation.

Black Flowers uses only a handful of playing techniques, the most pronounced of which include: bottle neck sliding, scraping the pick on the strings, extended glissandi, muted finger-sliding, muted plucking, and standard plucking. The form cycles through short phrases that highlight each playing technique, distinguishing each phrase from the next, resisting a sense of connectedness. This tendency for the phrases to remain disconnected amplifies the silence. The isolation of these mini-vignettes of electric guitar playing allows the silences between them to speak. In this piece, which is also an act of imagination, sound and silence beget each other in an act of materialization.

2 G. Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, Dallas 1983, p. 2.

[III. 15]

Workshop with composer György Kurtág (standing on the left) and guitar tutor Reinbert Evers (Darmstadt, 1998)

[III. 16]

Guitar tutor Yaron Deutsch (standing) with students (Darmstadt, 2023)

[III. 17]

Guitar tutor Tom Pauwels (seated on the right) in a lesson with Primož Sukič, attended by Hessian Minister for Culture and Science, Boris Rhein (Darmstadt, 2014)

[III. 18]

Guitar tutor Reinbert Evers (standing) in a group lesson. Seated on the right:

Christoph Haffter

"hot guts is about stretching sound to explore organic and inorganic distortions and searching for the traces of a warm animal body."—Kelley Sheehan

It is indeed a strange animal that undergoes this musical autopsy in Kelley Sheehan's *hot guts*. The strategy of the piece is reduction: an electric guitar, a violin, each with an amplifier. The opening: one sustained note each. It is not a reduction to the essential, to the core of the instrument. Rather, Sheehan listens to the edges of the instrument to discover what's hidden there: at the beginning, the lowest string of the violin and an e-bow glissando into the highest possible pitch of the electric guitar. But within this seemingly poor material, nuances abound. Microtonal tweaking, changing the speed and pressure of the bowing, slowing down and accelerating tremolo effect of the guitar with the pedal—this is the level on which the music plays.

The middle section of the piece introduces new material: a frantic glissando gesture in the highest possible harmonics of the violin that explores the organic distortion of the violin—"wild, erratic, bird-like" as Sheehan writes in the score; and a stretched, almost unison line of quarter tones in which the two instruments generate a melody of beatings. The sudden appearance of the guitar's ring modulation stops this melody and opens a long section in which the guitar's static electronics serve as a background to the violin's explosive cadenzas. The piece ends with the violin's sustained harmonics approximating a high tremolo on the guitar.

The guitar amplifier transforms the violin into an instrument that demands a new compositional logic. Timing and intonation cannot be completely fixed in the score because they depend on the interaction between amplification, room acoustics and the nuances of the instrumental inputs. The resulting beatings and distortions, feedback and interferences have to be shaped by the performers on the spot. Sheehan leaves room for this finetuning in real time, knowing that this sonic body is electrically alive.

[III. 19]

Workshop with violinist Irvine Arditti on Kelley Sheehan's *Hot Guts* (Darmstadt, 2023)

[III. 20]

Jürgen Rück (left), Elena Casoli (center w. guitar) and composer Annette Schlünz (right) in a group lesson with guitar tutor Magnus Andersson (Darmstadt, 2022)

[III. 15]



[III. 16]



[III. 17]

[III. 18]



[III. 19+20]