

L8Nite Performance

Circular compositions for saxophone solo**Following a composition's transformations through improvisation and collaborative creating**

This performance presents music that originates in artistic experimentation cycles in the framework of my current doctoral research project *Refiguring composition* at mdw, Vienna. I research artistically how composing, and improvising are entangled practices and investigate the different facets of their nexuses and cocreating. Part of my artistic methodology is therefore to explicitly entangle the two practices: through spiral working cycles of going back and forth between listening, playing/improvising, recording, and notating, both individually and together with other artists, I become aware of creation and collaboration processes that in my artistic community often are only tacitly known. Through my experimentation, certain interrelated topics have crystallized and guide my work, such as the fields of body – con-tact – world and language – notation. I ask about their affordances and how they shape the activities of creating (music) – and what kinds of knowledge and questions arise.

In the performance I improvise with pieces of music that result from these experimentation cycles, focusing exemplarily on a piece called *Kumbhaka* and its transformations. It originates in the third movement of my saxophone solo composition *Circular Composition II* that first had undergone an improvisational cycle with myself and the Birgitta Flick Quartet and then a collaborative cycle with singer and writer Chanda Rule who wrote lyrics to it. Through the lyrics she connected the so far only processual theme of the circular to the breathing cycle as the piece's new focal point. Her phrasing and articulating of the lyrics taught me new aspects of the voice leading I had written and changed e.g. what I previously had perceived as the principal voice.

These circular creation processes that we mainly did by ear and listening to recordings of each other highlight the importance of listening for creation and as precondition for learning from each other and getting new perspectives. The etymologic connection between listening and obeying that I perceived in German (Zuhören-Gehorchen) and in Swedish (lyssna-lyda) reinforces this: listening as an obeying to the musical happenings that are created individually or in the collaborative situation can be an important basis for approaching productive critical encounters. It can promote learning from each other and drive change through letting the emerging creative process or 'object' of creation shape the structure and progression of the creative work instead of automatically relying on preexisting methodologies – thus also reducing the impact of power structures between collaborators on the process. The above-described methodology also puts the constant intertwining of individual and collective creative processes into focus and underlines the relation of all our artistic activity on interaction between other beings/bodies and our surrounding, relating also to Alva Noë's (and others') understanding of consciousness as something active that is shaped by the interaction between the (human) body and its environment. Our awareness of this is again an important resource for learning from each other, especially in interdisciplinary contexts. Also, an awareness of the different kinds of knowledge that are produced through different ways of creating and reflection (such as Donald Schön's *reflection-in-action* versus *reflection-on-action*) provides effective tools to work on the development of the own practice and at the same time prepares for diving into artistic research.

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Birgitta Flick is a Berlin based improviser and composer. Educated as saxophonist at Jazz-Institut Berlin (UdK) and in composition at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, she works internationally as a freelance musician with her own groups based in a.o. Berlin, Stockholm and

New York City. As a composer she writes for her own groups as well as choir music and instrumental and vocal works for other ensembles such as LUX:NM (DE), Aulus Duo (GB) or the youth choir of Berlin's Staatsoper (DE). Her artistic work is documented on numerous CD productions and has been supported by e.g. the Berlin senate, the country of Berlin/UdK, Initiative Musik gGmbH, Musikfonds, JazzBaltica Förderpreis and the Goethe-Institut. In 2022 her choir piece Nocturne to words by Edith Södergran was published by Gehrmans Förlag in the series #swedichchormusic. Since 2021 she is a doctoral student in the artistic research program at mdw, Vienna.

Related recordings:

#1 Collective performance of *Kumbhaka*, June 2022:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7-Yc4OB4qO>

#2 Solo performance of *Circular Composition II*, March 2022:

<https://vimeo.com/743688078>

#3 Snippet of Birgitta Flick Quartet, June 2022:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqwpmWyhekg>