

Susanne Kogler
Introduction to *Stardust* by Elisabeth Schimana

Compositions with live electronics have been a major part of the catalogue of works by the composer, performer, and radio artist Elisabeth Schimana for a long time.

Schimana's oeuvre is marked by communication and cooperation. Composed as a solo piece for live electronics in 2009, *Sternenstaub* (*Stardust*) is unique among her current pieces in that the composer does without collaboration of any kind, relies alone on her skills as a performer, and turns directly to the audience. This corresponds with her current main interest: attempting to accurately transpose finely nuanced acoustic concepts with the help of algorithmic structures. In this, she is guided by two basic ideas: to freely form time according to individually perceived visions regardless of technical parameters and to model sound like a physical body. In *Sternenstaub* both these aspects flow into the creation process.

The idea for the composition comes from natural science readings. In "A Brief History of Time," Stephen Hawking's famous book about the origin of the universe, the description of cosmic processes inspired the creation of evolving sonic occurrences. As can be seen in her work sketches, the composer generates sine waves and noise. From these she derives the material for six different modules, which she arranges live and differently for each performance. All modules are associatively coupled with cosmic events. The sound processes range from pulsing (formation of the stars) and their irregular rhythmical collapse (explosions) to different forms of noise (solar winds, explosions) to sounds generated by granular synthesis (particle dust). Only the sun is depicted as a looped sound sample (stable solar sound). Basically, the chronological order proceeds from module 1 to module 6, however, modules can also be used again. The main frequency ranges and the duration of the individual sound events are set for each of the individual modules, but the amplitudes and transitions from sound to sound can vary. The overall duration and overlap times of the modules are variable as well. The spatial disposition is adapted to each specific performance site. The basic concept envisions the performer surrounded by a ring of speakers (inner sound circle). A second ring of speakers forms the outer circle. The audience can sit or move around between these two rings, assuming various listening positions.

Taking on a specific new form with each performance, the space arising from this conception transforms the sentient hearing of the performer into the controlling instrument of formation. Embedded in the sound processes, the audience feels the resulting special quality as an invitation to open itself up to the sounds, to trace the specific qualities and emotional character of the sounds being controlled live by the composer. Through the live electronics a unique mood of tension is created that allows the listener to experience the act of composing first hand and, as it were, at the very pulse of creation.

Translation from German: Kimi Lum