

Call for Papers

**50+ Years of Creative Music:
Anthony Braxton – Composer, Multi-Instrumentalist, Music Theorist**

International Conference
June 18th–20th 2020

Institute for Historical Musicology of the University Hamburg
Neue Rabenstr. 13 | 20354 Hamburg | Germany

In June, 2020, Anthony Braxton will be celebrating his 75th birthday. For more than half a century he has played a key role in contemporary and avant-garde-music as a composer, multi-instrumentalist, music theorist, teacher, mentor and visionary. Inspired by Jazz, European art music, and music of other cultures, Braxton labels his output ‘Creative Music’. This international conference is the first one dealing with his multifaceted work. It aims to discuss different research projects concerned with Braxton’s compositional techniques as well as his instrumental- and music-philosophical thinking. The conference will take place from June 18th to 20th 2020 at the Hamburg University, Germany.

During the first half of his working period, dating from 1967 to the early 1990s, Braxton became a ‘superstar of the jazz avant-garde’ (Bob Ostertag), even though he acted as a non-conformist and was thus perceived as highly controversial. In this period he also became a member of the AACM, the band *Circle*, and recorded music for a variety of mostly European minors as well as for the international major *Arista*. Furthermore, he developed his concepts of ‘Language Music’ for solo-artist and ‘Co-ordinate Music’ for small ensembles, composed his first pieces for the piano and orchestra and published his philosophical *Tri-Axium Writings* (3 volumes) and *Composition Notes* (5 volumes). These documents remain to be thoroughly analyzed by the musicological community.

Even less attention has been paid to the development of his work since the mid-1990s. During this period Braxton enhanced some of his compositional principles from the earlier period, and he partly redefined and reshaped some of his thoughts about music. Additionally, he worked on his twelve components of a holistic system called ‘Tri-centric Music’, ‘Tri-centric Thought Unit’ or ‘Tri-centric Modeling’. As a basic premise for this period he built up his Tri-Centric Foundation and founded a record label (*Braxton House / New Braxton House*). In the compositional array he developed the so-called *Ghost Trance Music* in order to creatively fuse elements of composition and improvisation. As of today he works on his not yet finished twelve-part opera, *Trillium*, and on other

projects such as, *Pine Top Aerial Music* (a choreography of sound and physical motion), and *Diamond Curtain Wall Music* (a study of interactive electronic sound). In *Falling River Music* the musicians are asked to intuitively interpret different shapes, graphics and symbols, whereas in *Echo Echo Mirror House* they are requested to play iPods containing Braxton's complete works. *ZIM Music*, one of his latest prototypes, operates with different sound dynamics.

It is the second of Braxton's working periods that the conference will focus on, albeit the presentations (45 minutes each) may need to refer to his older concepts as well. We encourage paper proposal dealing with the following three key topics:

1. *The composer:* Braxton's complete works comprise more than 500 compositions of incredible variety. Furthermore, his oeuvre contains performance directions for solo-instrumentalists (*language music*), piano pieces, works for 100 tubas, for flute- or vocal ensembles, for orchestra and a puppet theater as well as for four orchestras, duos for one instrumentalist and a stand-up comedian and many more. Every composition or compositional fragment may be combined with others. Right from the start, Braxton has been looking for possibilities to combine forms of composition and improvisation. During the last 20 years in particular, he has developed fascinating solutions and a smart notation system which contains both, conventional and unconventional signs, graphics and narrative-poetic elements. We especially welcome presentations that deal with his scores analytically, for instance by concentrating on individual works, smaller groups of works or certain musical parameters like harmonics, melody and rhythm. Also, projects that investigate similarities and differences to other composers or musical styles are kindly appreciated.

2. *The multi-instrumentalist:* Like many other members of the Afro-American AACM Braxton made a mark as a multi-instrumentalist. He not only masters the Alto Saxophone as well as the whole families of saxophone and clarinet instruments, but he also enjoys playing instruments of the very high and low registers, different kinds of flutes, the piano, percussion instruments and more. His style is unique, even though it changed over time. Concerning these topics, almost no scientific research exists. There is a general lack of analyzing his style, especially when it comes to differentiating between a) his roles as a soloist and as a part of an ensemble, b) his life- and studio-performances, c) interpretations of works of his own and those of others, and d) realizations of notated pieces and free improvisations.

3. *The music theorist:* "His rhetoric and writing alone make him a hugely influential figure in free music", musician and music theorist Joe Morris says. There is no doubt that Braxton's theoretical and philosophical writings about his own works – covering much more than 1000 pages – is outstanding in Jazz

history. However, neither his unique diction, his neologisms – both can be studied as well in his interviews and liner notes – nor his attitude towards creativity, Black Exotica, music journalism, Jazz Rock, western art music, World music, white music improvisators, nor his very unconventional (from an academic point of view) work analyses have been given much attention by the scientific community. The conference aims at filling this void.

We encourage German as well as English abstracts no longer than two pages. Please send them to one of the organizers. The deadline is *September 1st 2019*.

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