

Hochschule für Musik

Conlon Nancarrow's *Studies for Player Piano* : The Path to a Multimedia Critical Edition

Colloquium 48 mit Helena Bugallo

In Kooperation mit der Schweizerischen Musikforschenden Gesellschaft Basel

Dienstag, 15. Dezember 2020, 19 Uhr

Online-Lecture in English

Anmeldung via <https://www.musik-akademie.ch/de/veranstaltungen.html> oder
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I look at the score, and I see something different to all existing music; it is a piano piece for countless fingers. I want to listen to this music, so distinct from the European and American *avant-garde* [...].
György Ligeti

The American/Mexican composer Conlon Nancarrow (1912–1997) is widely recognized as a prominent figure in the history of twentieth-century Western art music. Remarkable is his exclusive devotion to the mechanical player piano for the majority of his productive life. Exclusively dedicated to this rare instrument between 1948 and 1984, he authored a vast collection of over fifty original *Studies*. Throughout this series, he explored musical time, sometimes up to the very limits of perception. He typically experimented with multiple simultaneous tempos, either underlining their coexistence through canons, or combining them to create complex textural or gestural results. He also implemented different types of gradual tempo changes and fully exploited the instrument's ability to perform at extremely high speeds. This experimentation, combined with the all-consuming demands of having to punch the player-piano rolls manually, contributed to shaping Nancarrow's musical thought and practice in decisive and unique ways.

The lecture introduces and discusses the first Critical Edition of Nancarrow's *Studies for player piano*, in its dual function of actual publication of selected works and general editorial

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model for the complete opus. The unique combination of written and acoustic sources related to the repertoire plays an important role in the discussion and leads to an integrative editorial approach, resulting in two complementary types of musical texts enhanced by an audiovisual supplement. Conceptual, philological, technical, and musicological concerns intersect in the lecture to portray the kinds of challenges and solutions that have contributed to shape this hybrid, multimedia Edition.

Helena Bugallo holds degrees from the Conservatorio Provincial de La Plata (Argentina) and the State University of New York at Buffalo (USA), where she obtained a Master's degree in piano performance and a Ph.D. in musicology. She presently works as a researcher at the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel, supported by a grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF), and leads a piano class at the Musikschule in Riehen. As a pianist, she specializes on twentieth-century and contemporary music. In 1998, she co-founded the Bugallo-Williams Piano Duo and between 2006 and 2016 she was a member of the Ensemble Phoenix Basel. Her recordings, including music by Stravinsky, Bartók, Ginastera, Varèse, Nancarrow, Feldman, Kurtág, Bauckholt, Oña, and Williams have been released by Wergo, Neos, Albany, Musiques Suisses, Coviello, and Boosey & Hawkes. Her edition of Edgard Varèse's *Amériques*, arranged for two pianos, eight hands is available on Ricordi. Her writings have been published by Music Theory Online, Soundings, the Paul Sacher Foundation, and Schott Music. Bugallo's doctoral dissertation, completed in 2004, focuses on the music of Conlon Nancarrow.