



La Biennale di Venezia / The Lions of Biennale Musica 2026
Keiji Haino Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement
Sarah Davachi Silver Lion

The Japanese composer and performer **Keiji Haino**, the poet of noise, is the **Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement** of **Biennale Musica 2026** for his pioneering contribution to the languages of improvisation and contemporary experimentation. The **Silver Lion** is awarded to the Canadian composer and organist **Sarah Davachi**, one of the most interesting and coherent voices in the contemporary musical landscape, centred on the innovative hybridisation of electronic and acoustic languages.

The decision was made by the **Board of Directors of La Biennale di Venezia** at the recommendation of **Caterina Barbieri**, Director of the Music Department.

The **awards ceremony** for the Golden Lion and Silver Lion will take place during the **70th International Festival of Contemporary Music** (10 > 24 October).

The Golden Lion

“Across a career spanning over fifty years and an intensive programme of international concert activity in which he has worked with many prominent musicians and visual artists, **Keiji Haino** has established himself as one of the most unusual and significant voices in contemporary experimental music. His work, deliberately free of any stylistic allegiance, moves across heterogeneous spheres – from noise to free jazz and blues, from rock to electroacoustic experimentation, from folk to drone music – forging a new and inimitable genre that redefines the boundaries between cultured music and underground practices.

In Keiji Haino’s musical poetics, extemporaneous performance takes on an essential value and sound is transformed into a bodily experience – primordial and cathartic. This sonic experimentation encompasses a wide variety of instrumentations and techniques, both compositional and performative, often unpredictable and idiosyncratic. Guitar, voice and percussions often accompany the use of electronics, synthesisers and sampling techniques while the hurdy-gurdy and other instruments from folk traditions often feature in his performances.

The unrepeatable nature of his performances, which draw life from the ever-changing interaction between sound, body and space, elevates the music to an embodied act of absolute freedom and presence. Within this horizon, Keiji Haino’s work invites the listener to renew their capacity for awe before the revelatory and revolutionary power of sound” (from the motivation).

Keiji Haino will be at the next Biennale Musica (10 > 24 October) with the world premiere in Venice of one of his special live performances, and with the presentation of the documentary about his career directed by Kazuhiro Shirao, screened outside of Japan for the first time.

Il Silver Lion

“Over the course of a decade and a half **Sarah Davachi** has built a body of works that meticulously and rigorously explores the close intricacies of timbre and time, redefining the listening experience in a practice that merges historical research, the phenomenology of perception and electro-acoustic experimentation. Her compositions, often founded on extended durations and of natural tuning systems, make the slightest variations in texture, intonation and harmonic complexity perceptible, foregrounding psychoacoustic phenomena and processes of gradual timbral transformation.

Davachi's work occupies a territory in which the structures of minimalism, early music concepts of intervallic relation and affect, and the experimental production practices of the studio environment converge, often centred on the use of analogue electronic instruments and the pipe organ.

Her works span solo, chamber ensemble and acousmatic formats, integrating acoustic and electronic instruments in a dialogue that is never decorative but profoundly structural. Her timbral research, supported by rigorous musicological training and a critical attention to organology, translates into a sound that is at once material and metaphysical, concrete and contemplative. In an age defined by acceleration and saturation, her music offers a listening experience that is absolute and unhurried, capable of reconfiguring the perception of the familiar.

Her compositions have been commissioned and performed by major ensembles and orchestras, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the London Contemporary Orchestra, and presented in contexts such as the Southbank Centre, Barbican Centre, Radio France, Elbphilharmonie, The Museum of Modern Art and the Museo Reina Sofia" (from the motivation).

For the **2026 Biennale Musica**, **Sarah Davachi** will present the world premiere of a new work for acoustic ensemble.

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In the past the **Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement** in Music has been awarded to Goffredo Petrassi (1994), Luciano Berio (1995), Friedrich Cerha (2006), Giacomo Manzoni (2007), Helmut Lachenmann (2008), György Kurtág (2009), Wolfgang Rihm (2010), Peter Eötvös (2011), Pierre Boulez (2012), Sofija Gubajdulina (2013), Steve Reich (2014), Georges Aperghis (2015), Salvatore Sciarrino (2016), Tan Dun (2017), Keith Jarrett (2018), George Benjamin (2019), Luis De Pablo (2020), Kaija Saariaho (2021), Giorgio Battistelli (2022), Brian Eno (2023), Rebecca Saunders (2024), Meredith Monk (2025). The **Silver Lion** has been awarded in the past to Vittorio Montalti and Francesca Verunelli (2010), RepertorioZero (2011), Quartetto Prometeo (2012), Fondazione Spinola Banna per l'Arte (2013), Ryo Murakami (2016), Dai Fujikura (2017), Sebastian Rivas (2018), Matteo Franceschini (2019), Raphaël Cendo (2020), Neue Vocalsolisten (2021), Ars Ludi (2022), Miller Puckette (2023), Ensemble Modern (2024), Chuquimamani-Condori (2025).

Biographical notes

Keiji Haino (1952, Chiba – Japan)

Initially inspired by Antonin Arnaud, he was drawn to work in theatre, but an encounter with music by The Doors led him to undertake a journey into sound in which he assimilated and explored a wide range of expressive languages: from early blues, especially Blind Lemon Jefferson, to European medieval music, to popular song from many geographical and cultural articulations. In 1970 he joined the group Lost Aaraaf, named after a poem by Edgar Allan Poe, as a vocalist. At the same time, he began an intense recording activity and taught himself guitar and percussion. In 1978 he formed the rock band Fushitsusha. Starting in 1988 Haino began an international career, working in various formats: as a soloist, in groups such as Fushitsusha, Nijjumu, Aihiyo, Bajra, Sanhedrin, Seijaku, Nazoranai and The Hardy Rocks, and as a DJ under the name "experimental mixture". His practice extends to collaborations with artists from different backgrounds, in performances that push the possibilities of guitar, percussions, hurdy-gurdy, string and wind instruments, as well as traditional instruments from different cultures and electronic DJ gear to the extreme, using highly distinctive techniques.

He has released more than 200 recordings and held over 2000 live concerts internationally, collaborating among others with Tony Conrad, John Zorn, Thurston Moore, Peter Brötzmann, Fred Frith, Bill Laswell, Faust, Jim O'Rourke, Oren Ambarchi, Stephen O'Malley, Merzbow, Z'EV, the *tsugaru jamisen* virtuoso Michihiro Sato, Sitaar Tah's sitar orchestra; and with visual artists including Christian Marclay and Cameron Jamie.

Sarah Davachi (1987, Calgary - Canada) is a composer and organist, active in the area of electroacoustic and experimental music. She has worked with the National Music Centre of Canada from 2007-2017, where she taught, developed content and archived data regarding musical instruments and recording devices.

She earned her bachelor's degree in philosophy from the University of Calgary in 2010, a master's degree in electronic music and recording media from Mills College in Oakland California in 2012, and a doctoral degree in musicology from UCLA (with a dissertation on timbre, phenomenology and critical organology) in 2025. She is based in Los Angeles, California.

Her recordings include: *Barons Court* Students of Decay (2015), *Dominions* (JAZ Records, 2016), *Vergers* (Important Records, 2016), *All My Circles Run*, a work made of five compositions each of which centred on a single acoustic instrument, (Students of Decay, 2017), *Let Night Come on Bells End the Day*, recorded with a Mellotron and electric organ (Recital, 2018), *Gave in Rest*, a more orchestrated work inspired by cathedrals and ancient music (Ba Da Bing, 2018), *Pale Bloom* (W.25TH, 2019), *Cantus, Descant*, an album that focuses on the organ (Late Music, 2020), *Antiphonals* (Late Music, 2021), *Two Sisters*, which won the Libera Award for Self-Released Record of the Year, presented by the American Association of Independent Music (Late Music, 2022), *Long Gradus*, a commissioned string quartet for Canada's acclaimed Quatuor Bozzini (Late Music, 2023), and *The Head as Form'd in the Crier's Choir* (Late Music, 2024). In 2020 she founded Late Music, an imprint within the partner labels division of Warp Records.

Her work has been presented in institutions such as the Southbank Centre (London), Barbican Centre (London), INA GRM (Paris), Elbphilharmonie (Hamburg), Organ Reframed (London), The Museum of Modern Art (New York), The Getty Museum (Los Angeles), The Academy Museum (Los Angeles), The Broad Museum (Los Angeles), Orgelpark (Amsterdam), Honen-in Temple (Kyoto), Église Saint-Eustache (Paris), Église du Gesù (Montréal), Temppeleaukio Church (Helsinki), Grace Cathedral (San Francisco), Museo Reina Sofía (Madrid), and Teatro Cultural Artística (São Paulo), among others.

Her commissioned works and collaborations with ensembles include compositions for The Los Angeles Philharmonic, The Brussels Philharmonic, The London Contemporary Orchestra, Quatuor Bozzini, Harmonic Space Orchestra, Apartment House, Ghost Ensemble, Wild Up, Yarn/Wire, Chamber Choir Ireland, The BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Radio France, Contemporaneous Ensemble, Cello Octet Amsterdam, and The Canadian International Organ Competition.

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For further information

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