

La Biennale di Venezia
70th International Festival of Contemporary Music
A Child of Sound
Director Caterina Barbieri
Venice, 10 > 24 October 2026
with the support of Regione del Veneto



La Biennale di Venezia /
Ceremony of Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement to Keiji Haino
and Silver Lion to Sarah Davachi

Sala delle Colonne, Ca' Giustinian
12 October h 12 pm

Motivation for the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement

In a 2002 interview with Alan Cummings for *The Wire*, Keiji Haino reflected:

“The universe is weeping, but there’s one fragment of it that wants desperately to block out those screams of pain. That fragment is me. I started to ask myself where these sounds came from, why I could hear them. That’s why I started to play music. Did the universe come into existence when someone started questioning its existence? Do we remember if we were already born? These questions are very important to me”.

I am very happy to be here today to award **Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement of Biennale Musica 2026** to the Japanese composer, musician and performer **Keiji Haino for his pioneering contribution to the languages of noise and radical experimentation**. Across a career spanning over fifty years and an intensive international concert schedule, Haino has established himself as one of the most distinctive and influential voices in contemporary music.

Haino’s aesthetics, which address the concept of freedom and radicalism as a natural condition of being, resonate deeply with the theme of the Biennale Musica 2026, *A Child of Sound*, which sees childhood as the ultimate expression of creative power, raw and unconditioned.

Among the founders of the Japanese noise and psychedelic scene, **Haino deliberately avoids any stylistic allegiances, ranges across diverse spheres – from noise to free jazz and blues, from rock to electroacoustic experimentation, from folk to drone music**.

This resistance to categorisation, which makes his music as indefinable as it is inimitable, is an essential feature of his artistic vision. The unrepeatable nature of his performances, which thrive off the ever-changing interaction between sound, body and space, elevates music to an embodied act of revolution.

Haino has often rejected the term “improvisation”, preferring instead to use the Japanese word *nazoranaï*, which literally means “not tracing”, arguing that sound has a will of its own and that the artist must simply go along with its expression rather than dominate it.

The music emerges and then disappears back into nothingness, that same inorganic matter of which we are made. In Haino’s universe, sound becomes an experience of searing, visceral intensity, which, with abrasive precision, strikes at the very heart of the musical question.

I’ll finish with one last quote from Haino’s wonderful interview with Alan Cummings for *The Wire*:

“Compared to other artists, musicians are immensely lonely. With paintings or words, you can always confirm what you’ve done, but music returns to nothing. It’s like seeing a part of yourself echoing away into nothingness. People who say that you can write music down just don’t get it. So, all musicians are lonely, and that means they want friends. Not just one, dozens and dozens. That’s why we perform, the psychology of musicians is that simple... I want to make friends with the universe”.

Caterina Barbieri

Motivation for the Silver Lion

The Silver Lion awarded to the Canadian composer and musician **Sarah Davachi** recognises **one of the most consistent voices on the contemporary music scene focusing on the innovative integration of electronic and acoustic languages.**

Over the course of more than a decade, Davachi has built up a body of work that **meticulously and rigorously explores the intricacies of timbral and temporal space, redefining the listening experience through a practice that combines historical research, the phenomenology of perception and electroacoustic experimentation.**

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 compositions, often involving long durations and based on natural tuning systems, render perceptible the slightest variations in intonation, harmonic texture and complexity, highlighting psychoacoustic phenomena and processes of gradual timbral transformation.

In an age dominated by acceleration, her music stands out as an absolute and unhurried listening experience, capable of reconfiguring our perception of the familiar.

Caterina Barbieri

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, Nijiumu, Ahiyo, 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, Sitar 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), Temppeliaukio 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.

Images from the Festival can be downloaded from <https://cloud.labiennale.org/url/dmt2026> (password: Biennaledmt2026).

Tickets may be purchased online (www.labiennale.org) and in the **ticket offices of La Biennale:** Ca' Giustinian (10am > 5pm everyday), Infopoints at the Giardini and the Arsenale (Tues > Sun 11 am – 6.30 pm), one hour before the beginning of the performances at the dedicated ticket offices at the Arsenale.

Venice, 12 October 2026

For more information

Ufficio Stampa La Biennale di Venezia

Tel. +39 041 5218886/776 dmtpress@labiennale.org

Sito: www.labiennale.org

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