

MARYANNE AMACHER. GRAVITY. MUSIC FOR SOUND

JOINED ROOMS SERIES

BY DANIELA CASCELLA

The Wire. Adventures in Modern Music, The Wire Magazine, London, no. 274, December 2006

For Maryanne Amacher, issues informing today's discourse in science such as the leakage of gravitons in string theory set up an imaginary field of forces from which many ideas radiate: *Gravity* is the title of her recent show at Singuhr – Berlin's outstanding venue for sound art, which celebrates two decades of activity this year and is about to depart the bell tower in Parochial Church for a new location in the water reservoir in Prenzlauerberg. For Amacher, referring to science is a means of deepening the sense of mystery in life, though contact with the search for truth. This was the first time she had worked in a vertically structured space – one room on top of another – and in a much smaller venue than normal. She didn't conceive her installation as a continuum sound which the public could access at any point: instead, she designed her sound with a very precise structural and narrative development in mind. Visitors were asked to walk through the 90-minute long piece from its very beginning to the end, in order to experience it completely. An expanded idea of gravity as leakage of forces and trajectories haunted the rooms, staircases and vaults of the bell tower. Starting in the lowest room, a subtle hovering texture of tones would slowly permeate the space. On climbing up the stairs the sound would assume a different character, and once at the top one would suddenly be aware of the difference in planes of sound and perspectives. Echoes from downstairs appeared and unexpected suggestion of shapes and figures – Amacher often refers to her sound visually, or as a presence - would dance ahead whilst one paced through the empty rooms. At times, a sudden jolt would shake the body. Something elevating and frenzied occurred in the upper part of the dome. Amacher's 'structure borne' sound – which propagates through space as it articulates architecturally, a definition opposed in acoustics to 'airborne' sound, ordinarily diffused through speakers – fathoms the abysmal and longs for elevation, and plays with the various degrees between those two. It may hover still in one point, appear with the force of a vision on turning round one corner, or move about swift and light through the venue's nooks and crannies.

Against any casual relation to sound, Amacher's art calls for dedication. By doing this, for over thirty years she has been leading the public to listen attentively, to discover kernels of meaning and knots of perception as sound takes shape. Distinction is what strikes most, and care: the distinction between those sound structures that can inform and change a space, and the flat humming of muzak-like sound – the care needed to pay attention to nuances, to experience even the most unlikely events. Mostly interested in the awakening of perceptual states, at Singuhr Amacher provided a range from the clattering to the hushed, the majestic and the detailed. She created a space where the mind could dance, reflect and recall.