

**KHENG K. KOAY**

National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan

[kkhengk@mail.nsysu.edu.tw](mailto:kkhengk@mail.nsysu.edu.tw)

[orcid.org/0000-0001-7941-6559](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7941-6559)

## Broken-Continuity in Saariaho's *Terra Memoria*

### ABSTRACT

*Terra Memoria* is a musical piece that explores timbre, dynamic and texture, creating an unconventional formal design. Although discontinuity and interruption are experimented with to create a sense of unexpected development in the music's progress, there are various means by which Saariaho unifies the composition. Throughout the piece, she explores different musical styles, new musical expressions, and compositional techniques in her own unique way. The music shows threads of stylistic connection to conventional music of the past centuries, minimalist-like repetition, and electronic music. Vocal and operatic writing styles are also experimented with. The composition demonstrates Saariaho's challenge to traditional notions of form, giving her her own music vocabulary.

### KEYWORDS

Kaija Saariaho

*Terra Memoria*

21<sup>st</sup> century music

Kaija Saariaho (b. 1952) is a Finnish composer, whose compositions contain a very distinctive musical language and personal voice. Throughout the wide range of her output, she has had ways of organizing, building, and expressing her musical thoughts, carefully designing her music to achieve communication with her listeners. Saariaho's music is approachable, yet rooted in a modernistic tradition. Her interesting ideas and fundamental desire for musical design and unique voice can be heard in *Terra Memoria* (2009) for string orchestra. This study examines the musical approach in *Terra Memoria*, which demonstrates a diverse range of musical styles and ideas that not only display interesting musical sound effects, but also offer several challenging ways of compositional writing.

The paper will explore how Saariaho approaches and incorporates musical elements that shape the structure of the music, making her own contemporary musical language. The study also aims to reveal Saariaho's musical language as manifested in the creation of unique sound effects and colors through experimentation with a combination of traditional and contemporary musical techniques. Moreover, it is also worthwhile to explore what makes the piece unique, namely, her turning of vocal emotional expressions into an instrumental musical form, giving abstract imagery 'visual' effects, and making the music intriguing.

Much of the existing research focuses on the influence of computers and her development of electronic effects in writing her music. This can be read in the discussion by Katayoon Hodjati on Saariaho's *Laconisme de l'aile* (1982) and *NoaNoa* (1992) (Hodjati, 2013), and Dean Anderson on Saariaho's *Verblendungen* (1984) (Anderson, 2015), among many others. Howell, Hargreaves, and Rofe (2011: 178) also write that Saariaho's music "is highly continuous, acoustically-driven processes arising from her experience with spectral and computer-aided composition, often based around materials that are themselves notably fluid and continuous." There are also a number of studies addressing analytical discussions on the closer relationship between harmony and timbre in Saariaho's compositions. However, this study provides a different perspective on her instrumental music, exploring other musical possibilities in techniques and styles, through which Saariaho creates her own musical idioms and identity. Moreover, there has been little research of her works composed in the past two decades; rather, much of the research has focused on the works from the 1980s and 1990s. Thus, it is worth an

effort to explore and raise awareness of other possible aspects of her experimental composing styles in her later works, and thereby yield a deeper appreciation and understanding of her music.

My central approach involves a close inspection of obtainable scores and audio sources, taking every stylistic trait of the pieces into consideration for the study of Saariaho, and going through the available literature, such as scholarly books, theses, articles, reports and newspapers regarding the reception of her music. There are also several personal interviews and comments that are helpful in knowing the compositional approach and music perspective of Saariaho, as well as her approach to technology that leads her to incorporate electronic music. Websites and scholarly interviews, which discuss her music perspectives, and other scholarly works regarding Saariaho's instrumentals, are also consulted. This paper draws upon these textual and audio sources to explore what Saariaho has experimented with in her lesser-discussed works, and in particular, in *Terra Memoria*.

## **Background**

Saariaho received a solid Western art music education at a young age. As a young composer, she listened to Bach on the radio, attended concerts in Helsinki, and purchased LPs as they became available (Howell, Hargreaves and Rofe, 2011: 5). "I don't think much of my relationship with musical traditions. It is obvious that I come from the tradition of Western art music. I have no reason to fight against the tradition," she said (Moisala, 2009: 73). Among the composers who have been important to Saariaho are Bach, Sibelius, Stravinsky, Debussy, Ravel, Ligeti, and Messiaen; nevertheless, Bach is the only composer who has consistently remained a favorite (Moisala, 2009: 76-77). Despite these influences, her interpretation of music demonstrates a different approach from her predecessors, which makes her music unique.

Although several of the above composers commonly experimented with timbre — Messiaen associating timbre with time, Schaeffer in his long career employing *musique concrète* (Murray, 2008), while Debussy's uses modes and non-traditional scales, etc — Saariaho's compositional technique demonstrates a different approach of using all kinds of timbre, sounds, and expressive elements of music as potential material for her work, on which I elaborate in the following analysis.

Throughout her output, the association with past material can be heard in many of her compositions; for instance, her *Frises* (2011), of which she claims: “my piece has four parts. I focused in each of them on the idea of one historical ostinato variation form, using as a starting point carillon, passacaglia, ground bass and chaconne.” (Saariaho, 2012) She has also written genre music with titles that were commonly used in past centuries, such as *Nocturne* (1994), *Prelude* (2007) and *Serenatas* (2008). At times, one is reminded of Lisztian music in her *Prelude*. Nevertheless, Saariaho renews musical conventions with her own musical language, and the music is presented in a contemporary way, expanding our comprehension of those musical traditions. Such an aspect is seen in her *Terra Memoria*.

Like many other composers, Saariaho explores different musical styles, new musical expressions, and compositional techniques in her own way, without rigidly staying within one style. *Terra Memoria* shows the challenges in the composer’s musical styles; there are threads of stylistic connection to conventional music of past centuries, minimalist-like repetition, and electronic music. Not only does Saariaho tend to explore ways, in which instruments can create effects similar to electronic music, but traditional musical idioms are also presented in a non-traditional way, demonstrating a contemporary compositional style and musical language of the composer. The composition also demonstrates other musical influences; Saariaho experiments with aspects that derive from vocal and operatic writing. One often encounters an abrupt shift in moods and emotions in different moments that shape the formal structure of the music.

The repeating sound patterns and various musical ideas in *Terra Memoria* are employed to assist in creating an unconventional formal design. Although the piece is minimalist in texture, the music is presented without repeated, mechanical sound, yet accumulates an inner dynamic, developing musical energy and direction. While melodic ideas are introduced, developed, and reoccurring, she challenges musical convention by having themes take a far less active role in assembling the entire structure of the music, than in the compositions of the past centuries.

Throughout the composition many musical activities occur. In her perspective, form is inseparable from her use of material. “The form is not a cake mold into which you pour your dough but, rather it directly relates to the material” (Moisala, 2009: 62). Indeed,

Saariaho has her own approach in musical styles and language that challenge both herself and her listeners. "If you want to make personal music, you have to deal with the form anew," she said (Moisala, 2009: 88).

Moreover, one can perceive a range of richly expressive idioms and fascinating ideas in her music. Each of her compositions has its uniqueness, with a hidden Saariaho musical style in it. "Every piece of music must live its own life because each one is utterly its own. Of course, from one work to another, I might come up with similar solutions in form, given that it's my style" (Mao-Takacs, 2014).

Saariaho emphasizes sound color over pitch and has always been interested in experimenting with the interaction of timbre, dynamic and texture. They are essential in *Terra Memoria*, in terms of shaping the structure and creating moment-to-moment sound effects in the music. To Saariaho, music is in close relation to organized sound. "For me one possible – even if purely technical – definition can be 'organized sound'. I like this definition because from my viewpoint all sounds can be part of music" (Saariaho, 2011). Other than the experimentation with the timbral technique, such as glissandi and many others, the exploration of different overtone sonorities on string instruments is also included. Various ideas and strategies are also employed to distract the continuous sonorous flow of the music. One encounters an abrupt change of texture as well. Clear separation of different musical events is established. The music exhibits a tendency of shaping musical structure as a vehicle for expression.

In all of Saariaho's works musical material finds its own form. In *Terra Memoria* every musical moment is separated by a significant music event and is distinct in material, expression, and gesture. Discontinuity and interruption are experimented with, creating not only an absence of expectation of development as the music progresses, but also giving a sense that nothing really lasts, and everything is temporary. This has, in turn, created various self-contained moments of sound, with each moment often projected as a particular 'characteristic' in the music, which is reminiscent of the concept of 'moment form', developed by Karlheinz Stockhausen. Nevertheless, although it is designed with similar musical gestures and elements that occur within a self-contained moment, there are some familiar gestures that can be traced and are placed throughout the composition.

Indeed, despite contradicting musical elements and contrasting ideas heard throughout the music, various ways are sought to unify the composition, forming the relationship between the moment and the whole, as a musical quality for the entire piece. This has led to the composition having to be perceived as a cohesive whole, a unified work, rather than as moments of disruptions. This demonstrates how Saariaho constructs an interesting musical structure in her *Terra Memoria*, as well as her challenge to traditional notions of form, giving her own music vocabulary.

But this development has not always been easy. As a composer, Saariaho says, “throughout my entire life I’ve had to prove that I am, above all, a composer, and one who is as serious and as smart as any of my male colleagues” (Mao-Takacs, 2014). Gender bias was apparent during her study at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki in the early 1970s. “There were some teachers who actually would not teach me, because they thought it was a waste of time. ‘You’re a pretty girl, what are you doing here?’ That sort of thing... My femininity was so apparent...” (Service, 2012).

Despite her treading a difficult path of becoming a composer in her early years, today Saariaho has received world-wide recognition, and her music has been performed internationally. Throughout her composing career, her compositions have been commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Symphony, Salzburg Festival, and many others.

### **The Beginning of *Terra Memoria***

After composing her string quartet *Nymphéa* (1987), there was a pause of almost 20 years before Saariaho returned to the genre, writing her *Terra Memoria* (2006). Saariaho herself has remarked that “in writing for a string quartet she feels closest to the intimate core of musical expression” (Korhonen, 2016). She also claims that one of her interests in string instruments is “the enormous possibility in sound” (Saariaho, 2004).

Most of Saariaho’s music is given titles that help define the necessary musical material used in her compositions. Her pieces often reflect some extra-musical sources of inspiration. When it comes to *Terra Memoria*, she says that “the title of the work has a twofold reference: earth (terra) and memory (memoria). The ‘earth’ aspect has to do with

the material of the work, and the ‘memory’ aspect has to do with how this material is processed.

The theme of love and death is important to Saariaho and has been explored in several of her compositions, such as her *Oltra mar* (1999) for chorus and orchestra, operas *L’Amour de loin* (2000), *Adriana Mater* (2005), and many others. The work *Terra Memoria* is dedicated ‘to those departed’, and she further speaks of the work as thinking about “people who have departed, whose lives have ended. Their lives are complete and perfect: nothing more will be added to them. On the other hand, they live on in our memories, which can change even years after the deaths of the people remembered” (Korhonen, 2016).

Saariaho often rescores and rearranges her early compositions, turning them into new and different versions of ensemble and orchestra works. For instance, her violin concerto *Graal théâtre* (1994) was rescored for a chamber ensemble in 1997. Her *Quatre Instants* (2002) was originally written for soprano and piano, but she also wrote a second version for soprano and orchestra. Other rescored compositions include *From the Grammar of Dreams* (1988), *Miranda’s Lament* (1997), *La Passion de Simone* (2006), as well as others. She rescored her string quartet *Terra Memoria* (2006) for string orchestra in 2009 for Betty Freeman (1921-2009), an influential music patron who liked contemporary music and had commissioned pieces written by composers, such as Pierre Boulez, John Cage, Harrison Birtwistle, Steve Reich, and many others (Tommasini, 2009). Betty Freeman not only commissioned Saariaho’s opera, *L’amour de Loin*, but also paid for the entire production of its premiere. In the program notes for *Song for Betty* (2001), Saariaho wrote that she had arranged a vocal work taken from the last movement of her opera *L’amour de Loin* (2000), to celebrate Freeman’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday (Saariaho, 2001).

### ***Terra Memoria***

Unlike her other compositions where there are separate movements and wherein each movement contains a musical trait that is different from the other movements, *Terra Memoria* consists of one movement, with a series of disconnected events throughout the composition. The piece can be divided into two large sections, with the first beginning from measures 1 to 141, and the second — from measures 142 to 336.

The musical characteristics of the first section are designed as both complementary to in contrast with the second section, which is an interesting feature of the piece. Each section contains several subsections. Similarly, the two sections can also be treated as two big moments, and within the bigger moment, there are smaller self-contained moments. Different distinctive ideas and presentations are offered in both sections, giving them unique sound colors. The first section ends with the music gradually rising to a noticeable, extremely high, repeated harmonic pitch in *pianississimo* at measure 141. To assure that she catches the attention of her listeners, Saariaho purposely calls for a significant moment; the first occurrence of the extreme high pitch in the music ends the section and dissociates the material from the following section. No apparent climax occurs throughout the composition. No musical elements presented within a moment are more important than other moments; each moment catches attention in its own way. Nevertheless, structural balance is achieved through contrasting ideas, creating a complete whole to the music.

Contrasts occur throughout *Terra Memoria*. Saariaho exhibits a non-traditional way of opening: the music does not provide an apparent formal opening; instead, a sustaining melodic theme is employed as if it were already in progress for some time. Saariaho provides an instruction in the score, indicating: “as if the music had been continuing already for a while.” To project the effect, she begins the music with dynamic *pianississimo* (pppp). Such a music opening perhaps recalls and captures her experience of listening to the radio at a young age: “We had an old-fashioned radio at home, so I listened to music on that” (Service, 2012). On the other hand, towards the end, the music gradually ascends to a high harmonic pitch, and concludes on a down beat in violin 1. The dynamic also gently fades away to *pianississimo* in all instrumental parts, leaving a measure of silence to end the entire composition. This not only provides a complete ending to the music, but also creates a contrast between the opening and ending.

Saariaho’s fade-out ending (with the “*diminuendo al niente*” symbol) also creates a similar effect that recalls the musical trend that is often heard in radio stations, where the endings of pop songs are electronically controlled, creating a gradual fade-out effect. She seeks a new way of experimenting with electronic writing in *Terra Memoria*. The use of “*diminuendo al niente*” is also skillfully explored in the electronic parts of her instrumental compositions, such as *Petals* (1988) for cello and electronics, *Folia* (1995)



for double bass and electronics, and *Frises* for violin and electronics, among others. Through the use of electronic tools Saariaho is able to control and give the précised sound effect she wants.

For years Saariaho has experimented with technology and electronics pieces. Her work with computers broadened and deepened her methods and music. She began working at IRCAM in the 1980s, thus the influences of electronic music writing and sound colors are evident in her acoustic music. Indeed, not only does she mix live instruments and electronics in works, such as *Trois Rivières* (1994) for percussion quartet and electronics, *Vent Nocturne* (2006) for viola and electronics, she has also written electro-acoustic music, such as *Stilleben* (1988) and *Jardin Secret I* (1985). Moreover, since the early stages of her career, Saariaho not only composed tape music, but also combined tape parts with acoustic ensembles or works for solo instruments. In her *Verblendungen* (1982-84) she combines computer-produced and instrumental sounds. The tape material of *Verblendungen* consists of two violin sounds, *sforzato* bowing and *pizzicato*, prepared in the digital studio of the Groupe de Recherches Musicales (GRM) (Nieminen, 1997). In *Jardin Secret II* (1986) the harpsichord is accompanied by a tape background. Indeed, through her experience of working with tape and electronic equipment to produce electronic sound colors in many of her compositions, it is not surprising that Saariaho experiments with the idea of creating sound quality that is similar to electronic sound in her orchestra and instrumental compositions.

On the other hand, it is also possible that Saariaho may have been influenced by the idea of 'moment form' design to begin her piece. This is a compositional exploration and idea that demonstrates unique approaches in musical structure, which is found in modernist music. Jonathan D. Kramer provides an explanation of such a distinct compositional fashion in relation to the beginning and ending of a composition:

“... a true moment-form composition will not 'begin' and 'end' in a traditional sense, but rather simply 'start' and 'stop': it will 'give the impression of starting in the midst of previously unheard music, and... break off without reaching any structural cadence, as if the music goes on, inaudibly, in some other space or time after the close of the performance'” (Kramer, 1978: 180; as cited in Hutchinson, 2016: 107).

Contrast and contradicting ideas are introduced between the two main sections and self-contained moments. Saariaho prepares the occurrence of the musical events that are unpredictable, and the textural activity can also sometimes come to a sudden halt, after which something new begins. A variety of means and ideas play a crucial role in the musical texture. For instance, continuous flow is emphasized in the first section, whereas disruption occurs more often in the second section. The music is linear in design, which is especially obvious in the first section. Nevertheless, there are moments of chordal passages, including double-stops playing, in the second section, which creates a contrast in music texture and timbre between the first and second sections. It must, however, be added that the two sections do not compete with one another; instead, when taken all together, they become a meeting point, where both sections come to complement each other. The handling of contrasting ideas demonstrates Saariaho's musical thinking in terms of structure in *Terra Memoria*.

Similarly, within the first section, there are also moments where contrasts occur between more rhythmic activity and less motion. A clear example where the juxtaposition between thick texture with more rhythmic activity throughout can be heard at rehearsal 7 and in the following event, beginning at rehearsal 8, which contains less motion and thin texture. Saariaho carefully designs each moment and often emphasizes its rhythmic patterns, musical characteristics, and instrumental parts, separating it from other moments.

“My music does not necessarily lead to developmental progression in the same sense that it would in romantic music, although my music does have a sense of direction which is created by using unconventional methods. The musical dynamics arise from the directions, which can be heard so that the audience perceives the direction in which the music is moving” (Moisala, 2009: 74).

Indeed, Saariaho does not rely on traditional functional harmony to provide forward moving motion; instead, different non-traditional ways of handling music are used to create goal-direction in her work.

In *Terra Memoria*, typical of Saariaho's musical style, layers of different perpetual repeating pitch and a group of two or more repeating pitch patterns can be heard, which is reminiscent of the character of minimalist music. Nevertheless, it is fully integrated into her own compositional language. She uses minimalist techniques to create slow

transitions within a moment. No clear structural downbeat is audible within the different textural layers, though what is presented here does not contribute to a sense of unbroken continuity, felt throughout the composition like in a conventional, early type of minimalist music. Each minimalist texture in a moment has its own independent representative melodic gestures and characteristics, which become the primary focus of attention. This has also allowed Saariaho to create a clear boundary between different stylistic moments in her music. Moreover, different minimalist textures incorporate emotional shifts in separate moments, creating distinctive sound colors and generating a sense of forward motion. Unlike the stereotype of minimalist music, the different continuously repeating pitch patterns by Saariaho offer teleological aims and a forward-moving momentum from moment to moment in the composition.

The incorporation of various contrasting timbres achieves a palette of sound colors. Traditionally, trills are often treated as a type of ornament in music and are prevalent in Baroque music. Composers also explored vocal trills in their music; for example, Beethoven experimented with vocal trills in the vocal parts of *Fidelio*, the *Missa solemnis*, and the Ninth Symphony (Newman, 1976: 440). In *Terra Memoria* trills saturate the first section in a soft dynamic with different functional roles and sound colors. A trill-*sul ponticello* alternating with trill-*sul tasto* playing, and trills in harmonic sound, are often presented in the violin and viola staves. They can occur separately and simultaneously, adding a special timbral quality to Saariaho's music passages.

In addition, there are short distinctive moments that contain one to three measures, where all instruments simultaneously play trills with or without harmonic sounds, leading to a break. Not only do trills indicate the end of a music event, but also create a musical moment of sound color that differs from its previous musical passage within the section. The music is continuously eventful within each moment. There are also moments where trills continually occur one after another in different instrumental parts, giving a unique characteristic and sound color to the musical passage. Saariaho applies all possible means to enliven and enrich the tradition.

On the other hand, a whole tone in the soft dynamic tremolo also plays a role in shaping the structure of the composition, which not only gives a texture different from that of the first section, but also characterizes a musical feature within the moment. This musical

passage marks the opening of the second section. Saariaho often introduces a new musical form and ideas in different moments with an abrupt change of texture. Here, the sudden change of linear melodic line to a chord-like stack with all instrumental parts playing tremolo also creates contrast within a moment in the second section (Example 1).

The image displays a musical score for measures 142-151 of Saariaho's *Terra Memoria*. The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 142-146) is marked 'Più mosso' (♩ = c.96) and 'Leggiero (S.T.)'. It features Vln I and Vln II playing tremolos, while the Viola (Vla) is silent. Dynamics range from *p* to *ppp*. The second system (measures 147-151) is marked 'Meno mosso (Tempo II) Misterioso' (♩ = c.48) and 'Più mosso (Tempo I) Subito energico'. It features all instruments (Vln I, Vln II, Vla, and Vc) playing tremolos. Dynamics range from *mp* to *f*. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'Solo', 'Tutti', and 'N.' (Niente).

**Example 1.** *Terra Memoria*, measures 142-151

Another significant musical feature in Saariaho's piece includes obvious dynamic contrast, which not only differentiates between the two sections, but also between moments. Saariaho organizes the first section emphasizing softness, and the second section, loudness. Unpredictable and sudden dynamic change, from forte to pianissimo, appears, indicating the change in musical events. Saariaho challenges musical hearing in a different way. All kinds of timbre, sounds, and expressive elements of music are potential material for her work.

Saariaho's music is rich in challenging playing techniques, not in the sense of traditional virtuoso techniques, but in characteristic sonorities, to produce the richness of sound colors. In *Terra Memoria*, short *glissandi* with *sforzando* saturate the entire piece. There are other means of employing *glissandi* for a different quality of sound. It occurs while shifting and alternating between different sonic effects, such as *sul ponticello* (very close to the bridge) and normal, or *sul tasto* (over the fingerboard, far from the bridge) and normal, creating technical complexity. Her approach to *glissandi* techniques is not only used in instrumental works, but also vocal pieces, such as the soprano part of *Mirage* (2007), *Emilie* (rev. 2013), and others, in which she explores expanded vocal singing techniques and sound colors.

One also encounters musical events, in which Saariaho alternates between ordinary tones and harmonics, as well as natural and artificial harmonics, employed to enrich the texture, create different sonic effects, and to indicate a break in the music. There are also self-contained moments, when symbols are given to indicate the increase of bow pressure to produce a scratchy tone, changing the sound into a loud 'rough noise', as if to create an electronic-like sound color, which is particularly obvious in the second section. With such handling, Saariaho has used an alternative way to manipulate instrumental timbre, instead of employing conventions, such as change in dynamics or pitch, to create a contrast between 'sound' and 'noise'. In her music Saariaho actively seeks out ways to reorganize sound and expand the sonoric range of traditional instruments, creating a contemporary hearing experience.

Being a creative composer, Saariaho has her own ways of experimenting with sound, creating various moments in the music. Rests and pauses are used to create breaks in the second section, giving not only discontinuity and interruption in the music, but also introducing new musical ideas and musical character after the break. They are placed, at times, irregularly in the music within the moment, giving an abrupt pause in the flow of the music. On the other hand, the use of breaks and pauses provide a characteristic of a musical event that is distinctive from its previous and later passages within the section, particularly in the second section. Other than using the rests, a measure break also occurs after a short descent *glissando* that slides to a close grace note, creating a distinctive interruption to the flow of the music within the moment. This is especially obvious in the second section.

Each self-contained moment often, though not always, emphasizes a melodic theme. For instance, the opening theme begins with a long sustaining, static pitch in violin 1 playing D#4 (based on middle C as C4), slowly developing over a period of six measures. Beneath it, there is rapid rhythmic activity. Nevertheless, there is also a significant moment, when roles among different instrumental soloists present a melody in fragmentation. For instance, in an individual moment of an event, the flow of a melodic line is highlighted through the manner of 'hanging-over' from one solo part to another, in different instruments, creating the flow and forward momentum of the music. Nothing in the music presentation is easily predictable. Other musical features include different musical gestures, rhythmic patterns, and note-values that simultaneously occur in different instrumental parts to produce independent, distinct, polyrhythmic sound and gestural layers. At times, melodic line material is explored for its further development, creating familiarity within a moment of musical passage.

It is essential that the work be designed to deal with an incoherent and a coherent musical experience. Despite the employment of contrasting ideas, unity occurs in the composition, when the music brings back the meditative opening, sustaining the pitch of D#4 towards the end of the piece, and giving the composition a complete ending. Moreover, Saariaho holds together the entire piece by recalling a brief return of the first section's opening musical gesture, material, and the '*misterioso*' mood at rehearsal 32 in the second section. Similarly, the return of the opening material shows Saariaho carefully balancing the two large sections. Dynamically speaking, the music begins and ends with *pppp*, which also provides the music with a dynamic balance.

In *Terra Memoria* there are recurrences of stylistic writing and gestures, placed between the two sections, instead of the material merely heard in some moments in one section. For instance, each instrumental part enters half a beat later in a similar musical characteristic in either an ascending or descending motion and pitch register. They are often presented with loud dynamics, catching the attention of listeners. Although not always meant as an imitation, such musical fashion reminds one of the Baroque musical style, which is a way, in which Saariaho freely introduces a traditional musical style. Such musical writing can be heard in her compositions such as *Nymphaea Reflection* (2001), *Mirage* (2007), *Maan Varjot* (2013) for organ and orchestra, and others. Similarly, there are also imitative textures that are reminiscent of György Ligeti's compositional style

found in his *Atmosphères* (1961), *Requiem* (1963-65), and *Drei Phantasien* (1982), in which a melodic line gradually reduces the notes presented in different instrumental parts.

On the other hand, in *Terra Memoria* there are also times when familiar gestures are not noticeably presented in various moments. For instance, a leap of a seventh, which is preceded by a rising/descending semitone, is presented in different sound colors and dynamics that range from *pianissimo* to *mezzo forte*. An example can be heard beginning at measure 22 in the viola (Example 2).

The image shows a musical score for measures 21-24 of *Terra Memoria*. A box labeled '3' above measure 21 indicates the tempo and mood: 'Dolce, espressivo'. Above the Solo staff, there are dynamic markings: N, SP, and N. The score includes staves for Solo, Vln I, gli alti, Vln II, Via, Solo, Vlc., gli alti, and Db. Various dynamics are marked throughout, such as *mp*, *p*, and *p sempre*. Performance instructions like 'Solo', 'Sola arco (N.)', and 'pizz. (N.)' are also present. The score shows a complex texture with multiple melodic lines and dynamic shifts.

**Example 2.** *Terra Memoria*, measures 21-24

At times, a short, loud, dynamic, free imitative-like gesture that occurs in all parts ends with repeated pitches, gradually decrescendoing in dynamic and creating a delayed echo effect, similar to that produced by electronic digital processing. A clear example can be heard at measure 40 where a free imitation-like texture begins in the double bass and the

cello, followed by other instrumental parts, and ends with repeated pitches in decrescendo in violin 1. In her composition styles, musical progression often builds on changes in the sound color and ideas, which create new surprises and freshness in hearing her music.

Saariaho's orchestration and instrumentation are often creatively planned to enhance and portray human psychological tensions and emotions, adding a dramatic effect to her compositions, particularly in her operatic works. It can be said that "blending acoustic and electronic sounds, she [Saariaho] achieves an elevation of text that enhances its meaning musically and emotionally, rather than literally" (Wahl, 2017: 21). Such a musical technique is also employed in her instrumental pieces.

Indeed, although without a given text, in *Terra Memoria*, Saariaho is able to provide accuracy and senses of interpretation when her music is performed and heard. She allows performers and audiences to get closer to and deeper into the music. "In contemporary music," she explains, "interpretation is often very unemotional, and I've always wanted to do the opposite, to reawaken the interpreters by inviting their feelings and sensations; that's why I use words like misterioso, dolce, con violenza, and so on" (Mao-Takacs, 2014). With more flexibility in playing her music, Saariaho also allows some freedom in interpreting the tempo and expression. "It is important for me that the musicians can express themselves through my music, in that sense I feel I'm a 'romantic' composer," wrote Saariaho (Saariaho, 2010).

In *Terra Memoria*, different, contrasting expressions, such as *misterioso*, *dolce*, *calmo*, *energico*, *intenso*, and other expressive qualities are constantly changing, serving to project separate moods throughout the composition and to create distinctive moments. For instance, an individualistic and distinct moment occurs when the instruction '*Furioso*' is expressed in an instrumentally idiomatic way, bringing the instruments together with sound colors such as *glissandi*, *sforzato* (*sffz*), *sul ponticello*, and accented pitches with *fortississimo*, giving a forceful energetic quality. There is also a moment, wherein the music is constantly presented with drastic change between instructions '*expressivo*' (presented with melodies) and '*delicate*' (presented only with trills), creating not only conflict and rhythmic disruption in the melodic lines, but also differentiating the current moment of musical character from its early and following moments. Saariaho's search for



new timbres and expressions has provided her with the tools to create a new structure for her music.

On the other hand, what is designed here may also be seen as a collection of emotions, which are presented by different individual moments, and taken together, create a unified whole. Moreover, in such writing, it is as if Saariaho is depicting different stages of emotions found in opera and song, and every expressive musical moment reflects an act that captures the emotion of an imaginary 'role' or 'character'. She is creating the 'visual' through the senses and an abstract expressivity. Stresses and accents are placed in some moments, emphasizing and expressing the moods indicated in the score. They often occur in moods such as '*molto energico*', '*feroce*', and many others.

Saariaho's expression of a wide range of moods and emotions perhaps draws from her vocal and operatic writing; the vocal lines in her vocal works are full of human emotion. Throughout her compositional career she has written operas and theatres. It is particularly evident during the first decade of the twenty-first century, when she composed her *Terra Memoria*, as well as *L'Amour de loin* (2002), *Adriana Mater* (2005), and *Emilie* (2008). Moreover, during her early career, she showed affection for voice and had written many vocal pieces.

In addition, in *Terra Memoria*, instructions such as vibrato alternating with senza vibrato, which are commonly found in her vocal works, are provided in a violin melodic line, beginning at measure 10, providing a lyrical melody, as if she was writing for the voice. It is evident that Saariaho favors the use of vibratos in her vocal genre. She experiments with different symbols and desired types of vibratos, such as vibrato ordinary, molto vibrato, slow vibrato, 'from rapid vibrato to slow vibrato,' and many others, to reach the sound effects she wants, and as specific instructions for singers to explore a wide range of vocal timbre and to reflect the text in several ways.

## **Summary**

This study has examined Saariaho's musical approach in *Terra Memoria*, which highlights Saariaho's unique musical language and ideas in composing. Such an analysis reveals how Saariaho incorporates various elements, which shape the structure of the music. Moreover, she draws upon possibilities in techniques and styles that differ from her

predecessors and contemporaries. She uses all kinds of timbres, sounds, and expressive elements of music as potential material for her work, creating her own musical idioms, most evident in her later compositions.

*Terra Memoria* demonstrates her ability to create different approaches in sonic effects, expanding her sound world in a small string orchestra and giving freshness to the music. The entire work also emphasizes contrast, development, and dynamism, as a means of developing her music. Saariaho constantly seeks out new expressions to be included in her musical language. Not only is the sound effect carefully planned, but each sectional control is also crucial in designing the piece. It is clear from her compositional writings that she approaches a broader style of music. Other than the sonic effects, some musical techniques at times display an influence from her electronic research. Not only does she show that disparate musical ideas can be presented and joined together in many ways, she has also turned the vocal emotional expressions into an instrumental musical form. Different expressive musical emotions are created, giving rise to abstract, 'visual' effects imagery.

The music has a sense of direction, which is created by using unconventional methods. Unlike stereotypical minimalist perceptual repetition, Saariaho's repeating pitch and rhythmic patterns create dramatic energy and forward-moving momentum. Nevertheless, the repeating patterns never remain constant throughout the entire piece; they often occur within a moment and differentiate one moment with particular musical characteristics from another, attempting to create structural divisions within a section. This has also led to hearing the development of the music with a sense of not knowing what the next musical event will be. Similarly, there are other ways of creating separate and distinctive moments in the composition. Other than employing different sound timbres, such as trills and tremoli to play an essential role forming different individual moments, breaks between moments are also heard through the use of rests and pauses. Contrast in dynamic and texture also serve to differentiate between moments.

Saariaho's freedom in associating with past compositional techniques provides her with an individual way of approaching traditional styles. She introduces melodies in her music, yet the melodic lines are no longer to be seen as the most important aspect of the composition, as it might be in conventionally theme-driven compositions. Traditional

musical idioms are not presented according to the expectations of convention. Various musical styles are brought together into the piece, giving uniqueness to her music. Indeed, the experimentation with different kinds of music allows for the possibility of multiple moments to occur in her composition.

The material varies greatly between the two sections, creating distinctive characters of the piece. The music is designed to allow more variety in character and style in each moment. Although each moment retains its own distinct characteristic, a very subtle balance is achieved, and a sense of cohesion is palpable. Some familiar musical gestures are recalled in different moments. Similarly, unifying techniques are employed, allowing each individual moment to be understood as part of a wider whole. The composition offers a rather different perspective on the 'moment' design. The returning of the opening material at the end of the composition projects the typical style of a traditional closing. Indeed, disruption and coherence are displayed, giving a new way of creating musical unity. Saariaho's musical language shows a combination of the conventional and the innovative, that is, familiarity and novelty. Her creative search for a new palette of sounds directs her musical path and keeps her faithful to her own musical idiom. *Terra Memoria* demonstrates distinct compositional approaches by Saariaho and also provides a different type of listening experience.

## REFERENCES

Anderson, Dean. (2015). "The Conductor's Role in Electro-Acoustic Orchestral Music: Performance Practice Problems in Kaija Saariaho's Verblendungen" DMA dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles: USA

Hodjati, Katayoon. (2013). "A Performer's Guide to the Solo Flute Works of Kaija Saariaho: Laconisme de l'aile and NoaNoa" DMA dissertation, Arizona State University, Arizona: USA.

Howell, Tim; Hargreaves, Jon and Rofe, Michael. (2011). *Kaija Saariaho: Visions, Narratives, Dialogues*. Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Korhonen, Kimmo. (2016). [Liner Notes] In *Kaija Saariaho: Chamber Works for String Quartets, vol. 2* [CD]. Germany: Ondine.

Hutchinson, Mark. (2016). *Coherence in New Music: Experience, Aesthetics, Analysis*. New York: Routledge.

Mao-Takacs, Clément. (2014, September 25). "A Conversation with Kaija Saariaho" *Music & Literature*. Retrieved from <https://www.musicandliterature.org/features/2014/9/22/a-conversation-with-kaija-saariaho>

Moisala, Pirkko. (2009). *Kaija Saariaho*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Murray, Christopher. (2008) "The Timbres of Timbres-durées: between note and objet musical." Retrieved from <http://www.ems-network.org/ems08/papers/murray.pdf>

Newman, William S. (1976). "The Performance of Beethoven's Trills" *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 29(3): 439-462.

Nieminen, Risto. (1997). A Portrait of Kaija Saariaho [Liner notes] On A Portrait of Kaija Saariaho [CD] France: BIS production.

Saariaho, Kaija. (2001). Song for Betty [Liner notes] In *Song for Betty*. London: Chester Music Ltd. Retrieved from <https://saariaho.org/works/song-for-betty/>

Saariaho, Kaija. (2004). Works for Cello and Electronic [Liner notes]. In Works for Cello and Electronic [CD]. USA: Albany Records

Saariaho, Kaija. (2011). *The Music of Future*. Roger Reynolds and Karen Reynolds (Eds.). San Diego: University of California, Retrieved from <http://www.rogerreynolds.com/futureofmusic/saariaho.html>

Saariaho, Kaija. (2012). "Frisés" [Programme note] *Frisés* (2011). Retrieved from <https://saariaho.org/works/frises/>

Service, Tom. (2012, July 9). "A Guide to Kaija Saariaho's Music" *The Guardian*, Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/tomserviceblog/2012/jul/09/kaija-saariaho-contemporary-music-guide>

Tommasini, Anthony. (2009, January 7). "Betty Freeman, Patron of New Music, Dies at 87" The New York Times,  
Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/07/arts/07freeman.html>

Wahl, Alison. (2017). *Timbral Intention: Examining the Contemporary Performance Practice and Techniques of Kaija Saariaho's Vocal Music*. DMA diss., Northwestern University.