

Darmstadt 2008: Preface

In July 2008, Solf Schaefer announced that he would be retiring as Director of the Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music, one of the world's leading institutions for contemporary music. Since World War II, the Darmstadt courses have exercised, on an international level, a tremendous influence on the conception and practice of new music. Although this influence has undoubtedly weakened in recent years, the shape that the Darmstadt courses assume in their next incarnation is of great interest and concern to many participants in the new music community.

In view of the significance of this event, the editors of *Search* felt that it would be important to provide a forum for discussion of this festival among composers and performers who have attended the Summer Courses in recent years. Although numerous blogs and personal accounts of the "Darmstadt experience" can be found on the internet, the editors felt that space should be provided for serious, sustained reflection and discussion. The diverse perspectives that constitute this series of reviews will provide thought-provoking windows into the experiences of participants under the current and former administrations.

The two articles that appear in the present issue of *Search* both underscore the distinctions between the expectations/foci of performers and composers, and highlight the criticisms, both positive and negative, common to most participants. Niklas Seidl attended Darmstadt 2008 both as performer and composer and took an active role in the Young Composers Forum, a large-scale installation-project, and in studio concerts (on both sides of the stage). His article offers a well-rounded account of his experience and suggestions for facilitating the performance-process among students. Michael Spencer, a seasoned Scottish composer, musicologist, and teacher, has attended the festival since 2004, the last four years of the Schaefer administration, providing sufficient context for his review of concerts, lectures, and lessons in the 2008 Darmstadt festival.

It is hoped that this series will offer a multi-faceted critical assessment of the Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music, and will also lend insights into greater potentials for interaction and underlying conflicts within the domain of contemporary music.

The Editors