

Gave in Rest

Sarah Davachi

Ba Da Bing

14 September 2018

Add an extra "e" to the end of "Auster", and you've got a perfect description of the first track on Sarah Davachi's second album of 2018, *Gave in Rest*. It's almost comically characteristic of the most ascetic of ambient artists, vibrating in dead space, unadorned, denying listeners the pleasure of either a psychedelic texture or some amniotic sound design to swim in. If we've heard a Davachi album, we already know what we're in for.



And then it does something incredible. It stops. Then it starts back up again in a different key. It does this often until it peters out for good after eight and a half minutes.

It's astonishing no one's thought of this trick before, and it's startling, imbuing a stationary drone with an eerie sense of momentum. Philip Sherburne at *Pitchfork* described it as the track "breathing". I see it more as individual, grainy shots from a security camera capturing different angles of the same place. That's the difference between *Gave in Rest* and her past albums. Things happen, and they're fascinating.

Paradoxically, this makes the monkish aesthetic that's central to Davachi's appeal stand out even more. Davachi albums are often conceptual, centering around one instrument (or, in the case of 2016's *All My Circles Run*, one instrument per track). The tracks here aren't united by anything except their obstinate refusal to give up their secrets. Even when she unearths a full-fledged song—"Evensong", with a chord progression and a vocalist and everything—it sounds of a piece with everything else she's done because of its mystery. It feels obscured, its mixing shying from the treble and crouching ominously in the low end and mid-range as if heard from behind ancient stone walls.

Davachi says the album was inspired by the sacred spaces at which she often finds herself performing. Churches and temples inspire such awe because even though they're just constructions of stone and glass and wood, they feel like something more: containers for the divine to occupy. That sense of "something more" is essential to Davachi's music. Her pieces are often made on a single instrument, which makes them feel more spiritual because the

extra-musical quality, the presence it evokes, is so much greater than the actual sum of the sound being made. Look at the garden on the cover and the stately column behind it. There's no one in the photo, but doesn't it feel like there's a presence—what the Romans would call a *genius loci*, or the Jews *shekhinah*?

This is the Davachi album with the least involvement from computers and the most involvement from actual recording studios and other musicians, most of them from the Canadian avant-garde scene. Thierry Amar of Godspeed You! Black Emperor plays acoustic bass, Bird on a Wire's Terri Hron plays recorder, Vestals' Lisa McGee sings, Thee Silver Mt. Zion's Jessica Moss plays violin—leaving Davachi to lead the séance with keyboards and organs.

These decidedly non-rock instruments make these tracks feel like age-old folk songs raised from the dead in incorporeal form. It's the same feeling as walking into a moldering ruin or a used bookstore or, yes, an old church; it's the chatter of ancient secrets. We know intellectually it'd be impossible to make this music without modern recording technology, but it's still hard to believe this music came from the mind of someone with a car and a cell phone and a Twitter account. It feels like it's been floating around for eons in one form or another, waiting for someone to bottle it up.