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Interview with Tomomi Adachi, Kanazawa

September 29, 2025, Kanazawa

Abstract

The interview with Tomomi Adachi focusses on the voice which appears neither as a neutral medium nor as a fixed expressive instrument, but as a field of ongoing negotiation between body, language, and technology. Adachi describes his practice grounded in processuality and situated experience. As an expert of Japanese *Sound Poetry* Adachi traces back historical vocal practice, from prewar futurist phonetic experiments associated with *MAVO*, through postwar figures such as Suzuki Shiroyasu and Niikuni Seiichi and Kanno Seiko. Recording technologies work here not only as tools of documentation but as a framework that reshape vocal articulation, authorship, and performativity. The text approaches Adachi's contemporary practices like live electronics, DIY instruments, 3D textual objects, and AI-generated voices.

Tomomi Adachi

born in 1972 in Kanazawa is a Japanese composer, performer, voice artist, and instrument builder known for his experimental approach to sound and performance. His work spans extended vocal techniques, sound poetry, live electronics, and the construction of original electronic instruments and sensor-based devices. Adachi frequently collaborates across disciplines, creating works that merge music, technology, theatre, and media art. He has performed internationally, composed for ensembles and multimedia settings, and served as a guest artist and lecturer in Europe, the United States, and Asia. His practice often explores the

intersections of notation and improvisation, body and technology, and voice and electronics.¹

Tomomi Adachi artistic trajectory began at the age of fourteen, during the late 1980s, he resolved to become a composer. Although he received piano instruction as a child, he was discouraged from pursuing a professional career as a pianist due to his comparatively late start. His teacher introduced him to the *Bastien Piano Library*,² an unconventional pedagogical framework that oriented him toward experimental curiosity from an early stage. Having missed the opportunity to become a pianist yet unwilling to relinquish music altogether, he came to believe that composition was the only viable path forward. At that time, the Japanese contemporary music landscape was marked by a tension between conservatory-trained composers and a long-standing ethos of autodidacticism among experimentalists such as Tōru Takemitsu. Within this climate, Adachi came to believe that the most authentic way to become an acknowledged composer in Japan was to remain largely self-taught.

Adachi enrolled at *Waseda University*, where he initially studied Eastern philosophy before shifting his focus toward Western philosophy, with a strong emphasis on the work of Jacques Derrida.

Already in high school, he encountered the works of Iannis Xenakis, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and broader continental avant-gardes, writing rudimentary computer programs to emulate stochastic and serial compositional approaches. His early experiments ranged widely from tonal and minimalist idioms to algorithmic systems.

DIY – in music

Growing up in Kanazawa in the late 1980s, Adachi had limited access to experimental music. He recalls, however, that he began listening to contemporary music early on, starting with composers such as Béla Bartók and Igor Stravinsky. Upon moving to Tokyo for university, Adachi entered a far more heterogeneous cultural environment that encompassed free improvisation, underground theatre, performance art, and emerging media-art collectives. During this period, he began working intensively with cassette recorders, using real-time manipulations to treat the tape machine not merely as a playback device but as an instrument in its own right. Already at eighteen, he gravitated toward non-standard forms of instrumentality. This orientation led him to construct his own devices – bricolage electronics and sensor-based

¹ See personal website of Adachi Tomomi: <https://www.adachitomomi.com/bio/> [accessed 13.12.2025]

² Jane Smisor Bastien et al.: *Bastien Piano Library*, San Diego: Kjos Music Press, 1985.

interfaces – anticipating a DIY materiality that would become central to his practice.³

During these years, Adachi discovered the expressive and conceptual potential of amplifying and electronically processing the human voice. He observed that relatively few artists in Japan at the time combined voice and electronics, despite important precedents in global performance and media art – Laurie Anderson being a key reference. His first performances integrating voice and electronics date from 1992.

Adachi's oeuvre now spans composed works, improvisation, installations, sound poetry, intermedia theatre, and instrument building. His scoring corresponds to the tradition of *Fluxus scores*,⁴ which offer 'conditions for something to occur' rather than prescribing a specific result.⁵ Asked about the importance of making recordings, Adachi responds that, for his purposes, recordings are not essential. If invited to release a recording, he will do so, but he expresses increasing disinterest in the medium itself. For him, recordings function primarily as documentation, while the proper way to experience his work is through live performance. At the same time, he uploads selected documentation to YouTube. Since he himself engages with artistic material on the platform, he considers it reasonable to make aspects of his practice accessible there as well.

Adachi's work thus remains fundamentally grounded in live performance. His commitment to performance is not merely aesthetic but also deeply practical. As he observes, recordings entail endless possibilities for revision – editing, mixing, correcting – whereas performance simply occurs and then ends. A performance has a time, a place, and a duration, its existence is bounded, and it is precisely this boundedness that grants it meaning. For Adachi, the irreversibility of performance – the fact that it leaves no perfect, reproducible trace – constitutes one of its most significant artistic and philosophical values.

In improvisation, Adachi employs language, whispering, and a wide range of vocal noises. His operatic timbre – he identifies as a baritone – developed gradually through practice rather than formal training. He is especially drawn to high registers and explores them extensively in improvisation. Improvising, Adachi does not orient himself toward conceptual frameworks, instead, he focuses on building structures, for example by combining vocal

³ For more on *The Infrared Sensor Shirt*, see: Instruments as Compositional Structure, pp. 8ff.

⁴ for *Fluxus scores*, see: Ken Friedman, ed., *The Fluxus Performance Workbook*, Performance Research e-Publication, 2002: <https://www.thing.net/~grist/ld/fluxusworkbook.pdf> [accessed 14.12.2025]

⁵ For example *Dream Events* comprises 32 imaginary events to be enacted in dreams. Event No. 1 is an invitation to a New Year's party on the night of 1 January 2014. Each event is to be performed mentally, within the dream state, see: <https://www.adachitomomi.com/conceptual-music/>

production with electronic sound. He writes his own programs, determining the parameters through which the computer interacts with, processes, or responds to the vocal signal.

For Adachi, the distinction between linguistic sounds and physiological sounds of the voice is largely irrelevant. Whether a vocal sound belongs to a linguistic system or exists outside semantic function does not concern him. After all, he remarks, a *click* may constitute a phoneme distinguishing meaning in some languages, while in others it is simply an arbitrary sound.

DIY – extended speech

Working with cassette tapes meant engaging with whatever heterogeneous material happened to be recorded on them, fragments of classical music, popular songs, radio broadcasts, and a wide range of spoken-word sources. Adachi does no longer recall the precise origin of these recordings, what mattered to him was the possibility of routing the line-out signal through effect units, creating loops, etc., and developing an experimental practice situated between sound manipulation and extended speech.

At this stage, Adachi had no systematic connection to poetry or its history, his interest in language was awakened only gradually through the conceptual field of sound poetry. He was not interested in singing in the conventional sense, nor in traditional modes of poetry reading. The only historical reference point that gained genuine significance for him was Kurt Schwitters' *Ursonate* (1922–32).⁶ Adachi first encountered the work when *Hat Hut Records* released Eberhard Blum's interpretation.⁷ He purchased the recording and felt an immediate affinity. Seeking a deeper understanding, Adachi approached a university professor specializing in *Dadaism*. He was referred to the library of the *Goethe-Institut* Tokyo, where he first gained access to facsimiles and secondary materials related to the *Ursonate*. In retrospect, Adachi describes this as a practice in which correct and incorrect pronunciation were simultaneously relevant and irrelevant, what mattered was the performative and sonic quality of the utterance, not its linguistic conformity.

For decades, Schwitters' own recording from 1932 was regarded as the definitive – and implicitly the only authoritative – realization of the work.⁸ A major shift occurred with the release of Eberhard Blum's interpretation on *Hat Hut Records*, which demonstrated that the *Ursonate* could be approached as a performable score. Coming from a musical background and

⁶ Kurt Schwitters, *Das literarische Werk*, vol. 5, Cologne: DuMont, 1974.

⁷ Kurt Schwitters: *Die Ursonate*, performed by Eberhard Blum, Hat Hut Records, 1981.

⁸ Kurt Schwitters: *Die Ursonate – Original Performance by Kurt Schwitters*, Mainz: Wergo WER 6304-2, Mainz, CD, 1993, [41:29]

trained in reading notational scores, Adachi has always rejected the notion that only Schwitters could legitimately perform the *Ursonate*. As he observes, if a composer can perform a piece, then others can perform it as well. Consequently, he permits and actively encourages other performers to interpret his own works.

During this period, Adachi also discovered that Japan possessed a *Futurist-Dadaist* tradition with striking affinities to Schwitters' procedures of phonetic and material experimentation. According to Adachi, the earliest work of this kind was the poem *–X– kara hajimatta yūsei onshikei*, [*Voice Sound Poetry Form Begun with –X–*] published in 1924 by the futurist painter Hide Kinoshita (木下秀一郎).⁹ The poem appeared in the avant-garde magazine *MAVO*¹⁰ and is held by the National Diet Library, where Adachi was able to consult it.¹¹ Despite this discovery, Adachi did not develop a sustained interest in the broader futurist output of the period. Later did he encounter the work of Niikuni Seiichi,¹² who revitalized and transformed the tradition of visual and concrete poetry in Japan during the 1960s. Niikuni's fusion of visual form, typographic experimentation, and phonetic reduction offered a lineage for postwar language-based avant-garde practice.¹³

3D Language

A significant development in Adachi's artistic practice is his exploration of three-dimensional language, or 3D poetry.

While numerous artistic engagements with the alphabet – such as those of the *Lettrists*, who expand the alphabet by more than a hundred characters into a *Lettrist alphabet*¹⁴ and thereby construct a new catalogue of vocal sounds – Adachi shows no interest in producing such catalogues, nor in compiling systematic inventories of articulation. Repetition of identical sounds or gestures does not align with his compositional aims. For him, a catalogue would serve no artistic purpose. In *Letterist soirées*, performers presented one piece after another, with each performance differing in execution. Adachi's practice shares certain affinities, he frequently works with open scores, which allow each performance to vary while still taking seriously the

⁹ For more on Hide Kinoshita see page 17–19.

¹⁰ For more on *MAVO* see footnote 45)

¹¹ The poem is catalogued in the holdings of the National Diet Library.

¹² Niikuni Seiichi: *Niikuni Seiichi Zenshū* [*Collected Works*]. Kyoto: Kyoto Shoin, 1998.

¹³ For more on Niikuni Seiichi see p. 19–21.

¹⁴ *Lettristisches alphabet*, see: Dorothea Schürch: *Audioscoring & leere Stimmen: praxisorientierte Stimmforschung zu lettristischen und ultra-lettristischen Stimmexperimenten*, PhD, Universität Bern, S.124-131. [accessed 13.1.2026]

conditions established by the score – such as the relationship between tactility and sound in his recent 3D-language works.¹⁵

In the lineage of avant-garde attempts to ‘revolutionize’ poetic form, Adachi considers it a logical extension of earlier experiments that contemporary work with language might unfold not merely in two dimensions. His project centers on the creation of a three-dimensional alphabet, generated in part through artificial intelligence. The resulting characters are produced as tactile, three-dimensional sculptural forms that function simultaneously as objects and as scores.¹⁶



Tomomi Adachi's 3D Text Reading Performance¹⁷

Central to the conception of these works is their tactility. Adachi ‘reads’ the three-dimensional letters by touching them, translating tactile perception into vocal sound. In performance, he often wears a blindfold, thereby shifting the act of reading from the optical to the haptic domain. The tactile encounter with the letters becomes the generative source of the vocal performance. An early version of this project documents the use of existing Japanese characters – hiragana and related signs¹⁸ – before the fully developed 3D alphabet had been realized.

¹⁵ For more on 3D Language see: pp. 6f.

¹⁶ Adachi's tactile-score concept resonates with broader developments in multimodal notation, see: <https://www.adachitomomi.com/notations/>

¹⁷ Tomomi Adachi's 3D Text Reading Performance was recorded at the Aichi Triennale 2022: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBaapSEmFVs>

¹⁸ Hiragana is one of the three Japanese writing systems, consisting of a phonetic syllabary traditionally used for grammatical endings, native Japanese words, and sounds not represented by Chinese characters (kanji). Its curvilinear script foregrounds sound and rhythm over semantic meaning, making it especially relevant to experimental and sound-based poetic practices.

Adachi considers this project the most consequential development of his poetic practice. It extends his long-standing investigations into the interface between voice, notation, and technology, while also introducing a new material dimension to poetic composition. Parallel to this work, Adachi has produced pieces based on mathematical procedures, such as permutational transformations of Japanese text, which he regards as complementary experiments within his broader engagement with language.



Adachi Tomomi: *Preliminary Study for 3D printed text No.11*¹⁹

The photograph referenced here depicts a 3D print, designated as version no. 11. This object does not represent the final form exhibited at the Misa Shin Gallery, it documents an intermediate stage in the development of the three-dimensional alphabet.²⁰

Instruments as Compositional Structure – *The Infrared Sensor Shirt*

Among Adachi's many inventions for voice and electronics,²¹ the *Infrared Sensor Shirt* occupies a special place. It functions not as a conventional instrument but as an interface through which bodily movement is translated directly into sound. Although the shirt is worn on

¹⁹ Photograph from the author's archive.

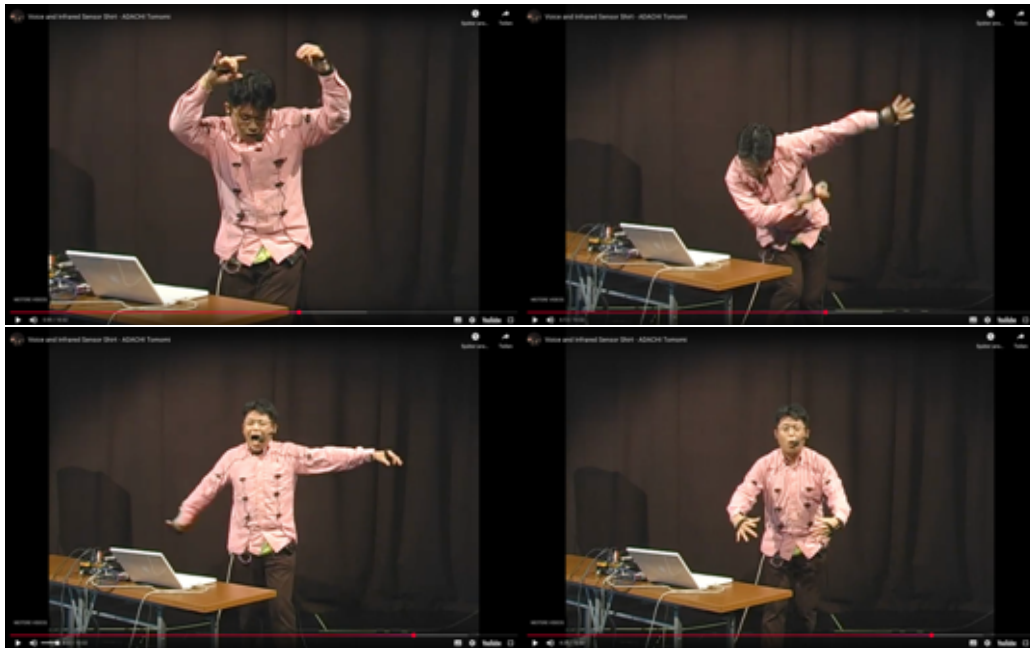
²⁰ Adachi Tomomi: *Old Instruments From the Future, New Instruments From the Past (and Characters)* ((by Artificial Intelligence)) Exhibition at Misa Shin Gallery, Tokyo, March, 2025
<https://www.misashin.com/en/exhibitions-en/adachi-tomomi-old-instruments-from-the-future-new-instruments-from-the-past-and-charactersby-artificial-intelligence/> [accessed 251219]

²¹ Tomomi Adachi: *voice and electronics*:

- *Voice and infrared Sensor Shirt* (2004-)
- *Voice and the Right Hand*
- *An old set-ups for voice and electronics*

See: <https://www.adachitomomi.com/voice-electronics/>

the body, it is designed explicitly to mediate the interaction between movement and vocal production, translating gestures and bodily orientations into modulations of sound.



Videostills, Tomomi Adachi playing the *Infrared Sensor Shirt*²²

For many years, Adachi hesitated to allow others to use the shirt – partly because only a single prototype existed, and partly because he regarded its use as contingent upon the performer’s simultaneous engagement with both voice and movement.

A turning point came when the British performer and writer Hannah Silva²³ approached Adachi and asked whether he could build a shirt for her. Recognizing the specificity of her artistic practice – Silva has long combined voice, gesture, and theatrical performance in highly original ways – Adachi agreed and constructed a second shirt. This collaboration resulted in a joint performance work, documented in a video *Pluto is a Planet!*²⁴ The *Infrared Sensor Shirt* funded through one of Silva’s projects, became her property, yet in each performance she credits Adachi for the invention. Adachi himself considers the shirt not merely a device but a work of art – an opus in its own right.

In addition to the *Shirt* Adachi has developed a number of electronic instruments. One

²² Tomomi Adachi performing with the *Infrared Sensor Shirt*, for video documentation see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Itexj3leSVw>

²³ Zu Hanna Silva. Biographie: <https://www.hannahsilva.co.uk>

On Hannah Silva’s vocal and performance practice, see Hannah Silva: *Opposition*, London: Penned in the Margins, 2014. Silva’s early works frequently integrated choreographic gesture and experimental vocality.

²⁴ Hannah Silva and Tomomi Adachi: *Pluto is a Planet!*, 2018, see: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Hanna+Silver+and+Tomomi+Adachi

of the earliest is the *Tomomin* (1994), a “one-transistor monophonic oscillator that covers the entire audible range through a single-knob operation.”²⁵ This was followed by the *Tomomin Synthesizer* (1998), *Tomomin II* (2004), and *TouchTomomin* (2009), to name just a few.



Tomomi Adachi playing the Tomomin II (2004)²⁶

Adachi’s electronic instruments relate to the tradition of artist-built sound devices and to the concept of the instrument itself as a compositional structure.

Unlike the *Infrared Sensor Shirt* these instruments are conceived as tools that anyone can use, regardless of training or disciplinary background. Their sonic concepts – their internal logic, physical affordances, and modes of interaction – are designed entirely by Adachi, who regards the instrument itself as a compositional work. In his understanding, the sonic architecture is built into the device, the instrument *is* the piece.

AI Voices

In recent years, artificial intelligence has increasingly been employed in the creation of new vocal forms. Among the various domains of machine learning, the voice has become one of the most intensively explored, not least because AI systems appear structurally ‘in need’ of a voice, they must speak in order to interact and respond. This technological drive toward vocalization – why AI must speak, and what it means for machines to possess or simulate a voice. It is in

²⁵ Tomomi Adachi: *Instruments*, see <https://www.adachitomomi.com/instruments/>

- self-made electronic instruments
- self-made electro-acoustic instruments
- collective instruments
- conceptual instruments

²⁶ Screenshot: <https://www.adachitomomi.com/electronic-instruments/>

this context that he developed an AI voice project together with Andreas Dzialocha and Marcello Lussana.²⁷

The AI technology in this project is adapted exclusively for personal artistic practice. Adachi's intense improvisational style already pushes the boundaries of music; how, then, can we evaluate the musicality of *tomomibot*? In performance, *tomomibot* behaves like Adachi, yet Adachi may simultaneously imitate the behavior of *tomomibot*. Is this a form of mutual collaboration between human and machine?²⁸

The work dates from 2019 and received the *Award of Distinction* from *Ars Electronica*.²⁹ Since then, developments in neural speech synthesis and predictive modelling have advanced rapidly, rendering contemporary results far more precise – and, paradoxically, in Adachi's view, somewhat more predictable and therefore more 'boring.'

The voice generated for this project sounded almost like noise, yet it was entirely produced by a machine-learning system trained on approximately eight hours of Adachi's own improvisations. The system analyzed his voice through two interacting AI modules – one primarily engaged in listening, the other in prediction – which together attempted to anticipate what he would do next. From this process emerged a vocal avatar, a machine-generated extrapolation of his improvisational tendencies.

The program, titled *tomomibot*, is based on artificial intelligence algorithms and enables a voice performer – Tomomi Adachi (human) – to perform with an AI system that learns over time from his past performances.

The project is not only a musical experiment involving a non-human performer but

²⁷ Voices from AI in Experimental Improvisation is a project by Tomomi Adachi, Andreas Dzialocha and Marcello Lussana: <https://www.adachitomomi.com/ai-improvisation/> [accessed 19.12.2025]

Andreas Dzialocha is a Berlin-based sound artist, composer, and researcher whose work focuses on algorithmic composition, artificial intelligence, and experimental sound practices. He has collaborated with artists such as Adachi Tomomi on projects exploring AI-driven improvisation and human-machine interaction, situating his practice at the intersection of contemporary composition, media art, and performance research. See: <https://junge-akademie.adk.de/people/andreas-dzialocha/>

Marcello Lussana is an Italian sound artist, composer, and instrument builder whose work focuses on the physical and spatial properties of sound. His practice is characterized by the construction of custom-made acoustic devices that explore vibration, resonance, and the interaction between sound, architecture, and the human body. Lussana's work operates at the intersection of sound art, experimental music, and sculpture, emphasizing listening as an embodied and perceptual experience rather than a purely musical one.

His projects have been presented internationally at festivals and institutions dedicated to contemporary sound and media art, including Ars Electronica (Linz), where his work was featured in 2019. Lussana's contributions align with a broader tradition of experimental sound practices that privilege materiality, physical acoustics, and performative presence over fixed compositional structures.

²⁸ Quoted from: <https://www.adachitomomi.com/ai-improvisation/> [accessed 19.12.2025]

²⁹ Music Festival, Ars Electronica 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VexyC86F8o&t=11s>

AI generated voice from huge samples of Adachi's voice and meows of cats, following an improvisation model which extracted from Adachi's voice improvisations.

also an attempt to make computer culture *audible*. The performance raises questions about the logics and politics of computation in relation to human culture. What we hear is the result of human software design and computational logics, which carve out the limited agency of these machines as they listen, interact, and learn.³⁰

The project was realized in Berlin, working together with the sound engineer Andreas Dzialocha and Marcello Lussana. In performance, Adachi interacted with the AI system in real time, producing sounds that imitated the machine that was, in turn, predicting his own future vocal output. This reciprocal imitative relation – *who imitates whom?* – formed the conceptual core of the piece, staging a shifting interplay between physiological and algorithmic agency.³¹

For Adachi, the single-sided orientation of AI poses a problem. “AI is always working for humans,” he notes, “this is unfair.”³² He argues instead for exploring mutual or bidirectional modes of development – forms of collaboration in which humans and AI systems co-evolve, rather than one serving merely as an instrument of the other. Such reciprocity, he suggests, is not only conceptually necessary but also artistically possible and desirable.

The Singing House

In Tomomi Adachi’s recent installation, *The Singing House* an entire house is transformed into a resonating body through the use of audio transducers. He refers to it as a ‘transducer piece’, a term that highlights the role of architectural surfaces as active participants in sound production.

Adachi’s initial explorations in this direction began five years ago. The project originally developed from his interest in making furniture itself produce sound. An early iteration was planned for Moscow but was cancelled during the *COVID-19* pandemic, after which Moscow became an impossible venue. During the pandemic, Adachi undertook a related experiment at the independent art space *Liebig12* in Berlin, attaching transducers to the

³⁰ Quoted from: <https://www.adachitomomi.com/ai-improvisation/> [accessed 19.12.2025]

³¹ *tomomibot* is a software based on *LSTM (Long short-term Memory)* algorithms, a form of sequential neural networks, deciding on which sound to play next, based on which live sounds it heard before. The software was designed and developed by Andreas Dzialocha. Experimenting with AI sound synthesis algorithms (*WaveNet*, *WaveRNN*, *FFTNet*) the developer Marcello Lussana generated a large database of sounds which sound like Tomomi. These sounds serve as the sound vocabulary *tomomibot* uses to improvise with human Tomomi. (quoted from Tomomi Adachi: “AI Improvisation,” <https://www.adachitomomi.com/ai-improvisation/>)

Adachi no longer performs the AI-voice piece. The system exists only on the computer of the sound engineer, and Adachi cannot update or reproduce it independently (The printed program code is in the collection of FONDAZIONE BONOTTO). As technologies evolve rapidly, maintaining such a work becomes increasingly difficult. The piece thus remains tied to a specific historical moment – when Adachi was directly engaging with that generation of AI tools – and its continued performance, for now, is suspended.

³² Tomomi Adachi, interview with the author, Kanazawa, 29 September 2025.

gallery's large front window. In this configuration, Adachi performed inside while the audience listened from outside, separated by a pane of glass that functioned simultaneously as barrier and interface.

Utau-ie / The Singing House

Installation, Sunday, 28 September 2025, 15:00–18:00

Venue: Kado no Ie (Kakuno House),

Kikugawa 2-chōme 16–17, Kanazawa City

Performers: Kado no Ie, Tomomi Adachi³³

After relocating to Japan, Adachi was struck by the prevalence of unoccupied wooden houses, particularly in Kanazawa. This architectural environment made a distributed, whole-building resonance experiment possible, in which an entire architectural structure could function as a multi-modal speaker system.



Utau-ie / The Singing House, September 28 2025, Kado no Ie, Kanazawa City ³⁴

Rather than activating individual objects, Adachi sought to induce vibration across walls, floors, beams, and ceilings, effectively transforming the building into an architectural instrument.

Throughout the house, a series of audio exciters – small transducers that turn surfaces into speakers – have been discreetly installed. These devices set the surrounding walls, floors, doors, and even the ceiling into vibration, transforming the architecture itself into a resonant instrument. If you place your hand near one of the exciters, you

³³ Tomomi Adachi: *Programm Note*, *Utau-ie / The Singing House*, Installation, 28. 9. 2025.

<https://www.nightkanazawa.com/2025/09/post-624.php>

³⁴ *The Singing House*: <https://www.adachitomomi.com/schedule/> [accessed 19.12.2025]

may sense these subtle vibrations (please refrain from touching the devices directly).³⁵

Crucially, the installation cannot be adequately documented. The work therefore insists upon situated listening, foregrounding presence, and embodied experience.

The sound you hear originates in the back room on the second floor, where electronic audio is generated from a combination of the artist's voice and computer-produced tones. Depending on where you stand or move within the house, your auditory experience will change dramatically. Over the course of three hours, the sound field evolves gradually. Visitors are invited to wander through the space, allowing the overlapping resonances and quiet interferences to unfold at their own pace.³⁶

This work extends Adachi's engagement with instrumentality as composition. In the *Singing House* the public stands inside the speaker. The speaker is no longer an object placed within a room, instead, the room itself becomes a diffuse and immersive sounding body. Consequently, the performer does not simply play an instrument, rather, the house plays.³⁷



Adachi Tomomi: *Utau-ie / The Singing House*, 28. 9. 2025³⁸

Each location within the house affords a different sonic perspective. Creating such multi-perspectival, non-hierarchical listening conditions is central to Adachi's artistic thinking.

The transducers impose certain physical limitations. At higher volumes, the house begins not only to sound but also to vibrate, producing tactile impressions – especially at lower frequencies. The resulting auditory field is unusual, the house emits sound without identifiable

³⁵ Adachi: *Programm Note*.

³⁶ Adachi: *Programm Note*.

³⁷ The program note lists the house as a performer, see page 13)

³⁸ Copyright Foto©CorneliaCottiati, Switzerland

point sources, producing a diffuse sonic.

The performance lasted three hours, a duration that approaches the limits of focused attention. Visitors may remain for the full interval or circulate freely. The temporal structure mirrors the installation's spatial one. Just as one can never apprehend the entire house at once, one also experiences only segments of the three-hour duration. As daylight fades and exterior light dims, auditory perception shifts, and the house becomes increasingly enveloping as an instrument. The chosen timeframe was therefore deliberate. Over the three-hour period, the work articulated three perceptible cycles, performed as three interconnected parts.

Following the discussion of his own artistic practice, the interview turned to Tomomi Adachi's archival work on Japanese sound poetry. In addition to his activities as a composer and performer, Adachi maintains one of the most extensive private archives dedicated to Japanese sound poetry and is widely regarded as an expert in this field.

Japanese Sound Poetry

Tomomi Adachi maintains a precious private archive of Japanese *Sound Poetry* and is widely regarded as an expert in this domain. His research and performance activities have significantly contributed to re-situating a lineage that remains only partially represented in mainstream histories. It presents a set of exemplary positions that illuminate different approaches to vocal experimentation, bodily articulation, and the materiality of language.

Within Japan, sound poetry constitutes a heterogeneous yet historically rich field that intersects avant-garde literature, experimental music, performance art, and intermedia practices. The field is marked by discontinuities, ephemeral practices, and highly individual trajectories that resist comprehensive documentation or linear historiography. Any attempt to address Japanese sound poetry must therefore remain necessarily selective.

Suzuki Shiroyasu – Oral Muscle Sensation Theory

The conversation initially addressed Suzuki Shirōyasu, whose *Lyric Poetry Based on an Oral Muscle Sensation Theory* is included in Adachi's repertoire.³⁹

Suzuki Shiroyasu (1928–2023) occupies a highly idiosyncratic position within postwar

³⁹ Suzuki Shiroyasu's *Lyric Poetry Based on an Oral Muscle Sensation Theory* (1959) was not published as a standalone work at the time of its composition. The poem circulated initially in manuscript form and became known through excerpts included in later anthologies of postwar Japanese experimental poetry.

Japanese literature as a poet, artist, and experimental filmmaker.⁴⁰ Rather than pursuing abstraction, formal autonomy, or linguistic refinement, Suzuki developed a radically personal poetics grounded in vernacular speech, corporeality, and everyday experience.

Lyric Poetry Based on an Oral Muscle Sensation Theory proposes a link between poetic articulation and neurophysiological as well as somatic processes. Written entirely in *katakana*,⁴¹ the text employs an almost *Dada-like*, seemingly nonsensical language. The field of what Adachi refers to as ‘nonsense–sense poetry’ differs fundamentally from the domain of *Sound Poetry*. Whereas the latter is rooted in historical and contemporary traditions of vocal experimentation, the former designates a category in which semantic fragments and non-semantic vocality coexist. Adachi’s own performance repertoire in sound poetry consists largely of contemporary compositions.⁴²

口辺筋肉感覚説による抒情的作品

Lyric Poetry Based on an Oral Muscle Sensation Theory

口辺 (kōhen)	mouth area, region around the mouth
筋肉 (kinniku)	muscle, musculature
感覚 (kankaku)	sensation, sensory perception
説 (setsu)	theory, hypothesis, explanatory concept
抒情的 (jojōteki)	lyrica, emotive, affective
作品 1 (saku hin)	Work 1 / Piece 1
ズズイーチョ:	zui-cho
メルメルメルメルメルメルメルメルメル	me-ru me-ru me-ru ...
リメーネ	ri-meh-neh
ネローヤ	neh-roh-ya
ヤルヘンチーカ	ya-ru hen-chii-ka
ノートヘルンデリウム	nohto herl n-deri-umu

These are the opening lines of Suzuki Shiroyasu’s *Lyric Poetry Based on an Oral Muscle Sensation Theory* (1959). The poem occupies a singular position within Suzuki’s oeuvre. It is

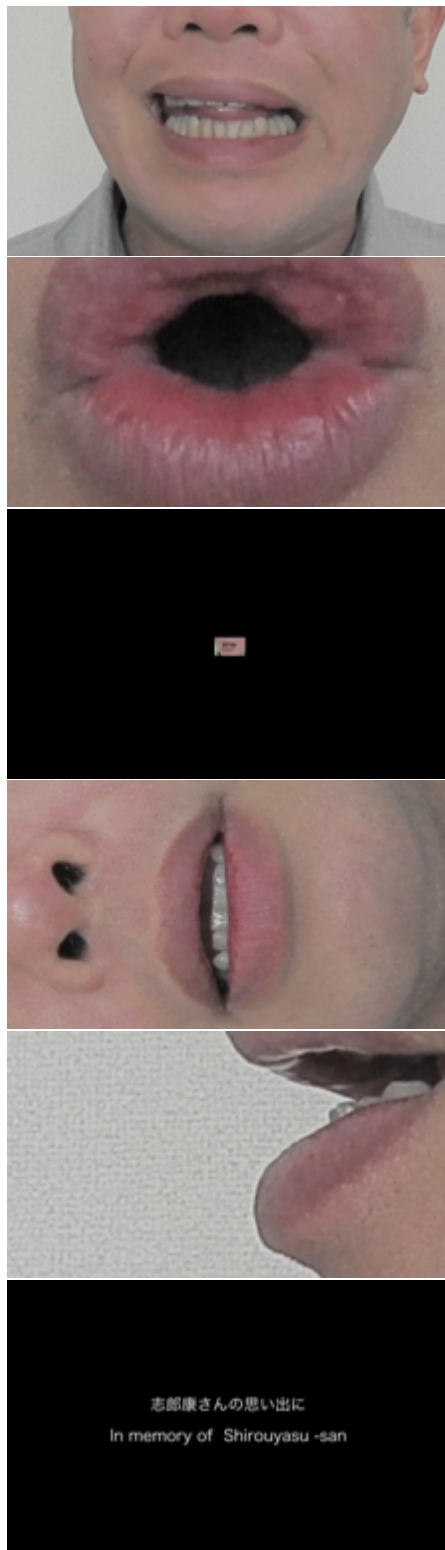
⁴⁰ Suzuki Shiroyasu (1928–2023) studied Japanese literature at Meiji University and later worked as a teacher of Japanese language and literature, while pursuing an independent career as a poet, artist, and experimental filmmaker within postwar Japanese avant-garde culture.

⁴¹ *Katakana* is a phonetic Japanese script traditionally used for foreign terms, sound effects, and technical language. In modern and avant-garde poetry, its visual uniformity and phonetic clarity have made it a favored medium for experiments with sound, vocality, and non-semantic language.

⁴² Tomomi Adachi’s Repertoires:

- lists of *sound poetry*: his own sound poems, selected repertoire, Japanese *Sound Poetry* <https://www.adachitomomi.com/sound-poetry/>
- selected *visual poetry*: <https://www.adachitomomi.com/visual-poetry/>
- *Berlin Sound Poet Quoi Tête*: <https://www.adachitomomi.com/berlin-sound-poet-quoi-tete/>

often regarded as his early *opus one*, yet no comparable work followed, and Suzuki never returned to a similar experiment.



Adachi Tomomi: In memory of Shirouyasu-san, nov.12th. 2022.
Lyric Poetry Based on an Oral Sensation Theory, Videostills⁴³

According to Adachi, Suzuki explained that, after studying various foreign languages, the piece originated in a moment of radical linguistic disorientation, he found himself in a public bath filled with voices and suddenly lost his sense of language itself – not of individual words, but of language as a system of meaning. This experience became the impulse for writing the poem.

The title *Lyric Poetry Based on an Oral Muscle Sensation Theory* does not denote a poetic metaphor but rather a quasi-scientific experimental framework, lyric poetry understood as the result of muscular sensation rather than semantic meaning. As Adachi explains, the most effective way to read the poem is to focus – as the title itself suggests – on the muscular activity of the mouth instead of semantic interpretation.

Although Suzuki acknowledged that the poem could be performed, he emphasized that it was not originally conceived as a performance piece. According to Adachi, Suzuki later expressed reservations about Adachi's interpretation, criticizing its high tempo and virtuosic articulation, which he felt exceeded the poem's intended pace. Adachi's performance is available to view on YouTube.⁴⁴

Hide Kinoshita – *Voice Sound Poetry Form Begun with –X–*

Hide Kinoshita is the author of one of the earliest known examples of Japanese sound poetry, *Voice Sound Poetry Form Begun with –X–* (1924) published in the Dadaist journal *MAVO*.⁴⁵ Adachi has worked with the piece over many years. Within Kinoshita's oeuvre, the poem occupies a singular position, as no comparable works by him are currently documented.⁴⁶

Hide Kinoshita (1896-1991) was a painter and avant-garde artist associated with the radical currents of Japanese modernism in the 1920s. Active within the circle surrounding the Dadaist journal *MAVO*. Kinoshita pursued an experimental practice that crossed visual art,

⁴³ Tomomi Adachi: *Lyric Poetry Based on an Oral Sensation Theory*, by SUZUKI Shirouyasu.

Video-Performance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UEB8nImoj_U

Performance-Documentation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsJ_ZcM3A9U&t=10s [00:35–00:58]

⁴⁴ Tomomi Adachi: *Lyric Poetry Based on an Oral Sensation Theory*, by SUZUKI Shirouyasu.

Video-Performance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UEB8nImoj_U

Performance-Documentation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsJ_ZcM3A9U&t=10s [00:35–00:58]

⁴⁵ *MAVO* was published between 1924 and 1925 in seven issues. In issue no. 5 (1924/1925) a work by Kinoshita featuring the word 詩型 (shikei, “poem type” or “poetic form”) is reproduced in the *MAVO* facsimile edition. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mavo> [accessed 19.12.2025]

⁴⁶ Archival documentation of Kinoshita is extremely fragmentary, beyond the *MAVO* contribution, virtually no primary sources survive.

typography, and poetry, reflecting a broad engagement with international avant-garde movements.

—X—から始まつた有聲音詩型
ヒデ・キノシタ

—

X,,
 Xa bp BBRU AAA Bae PIK.
 KKK kkk—DA K, Die KE
 —GOcarT.....!!!
 OR OR PUR SUKai
 x x x x x x x
 — ? —
 MN MNNn ma DA DA Di—
 Ps PU LA lE ~~~~~
 XXX.....YYY.....T.....o! OH !
 „ Co co Co cO co —
 Ho.....Bup—Wil
 Ev
 TTT—t. t. t. mm mm
 ZZZZZZZ " " " " "
 !!!

~~~~~

Hide Kinoshita: *Voice Sound Poetry Form Begun with -X-*<sup>47</sup>

With the political shift of the 1930s and the increasing pressure of state ideology and censorship, Kinoshita withdrew from public artistic activity. He subsequently trained and worked as a medical doctor, practicing in Fukui and Kanazawa. His retreat from the art world marked a decisive break rather than a stylistic transformation, and he did not return to avant-garde production thereafter.

<sup>47</sup> Kinoshita, Hide (Kinoshita Shūichirō): —X—から始まつた有聲音詩型 (*Voice Sound Poetry Form Begun with -X-*), originally published in *MAVO* 2 (August 1924). Reproduced from the facsimile edition published by the Museum of Modern Japanese Literature, 1991, with permission of the Museum of Modern Japanese Literature (Bungakukan), Tokyo.

The sound poem usually cited under the English title *Voice Sound Poetry Form Begun with -X-* is attributed by Tomomi Adachi to the futurist painter Hide Kinoshita and is said to have been printed in the Japanese Dadaist magazine *MAVO* in 1924. To my knowledge, there is no freely accessible digital facsimile of this text. However, *MAVO* scholarship confirms the presence of a poem-type text (詩型) by Kinoshita Shūichirō (木下秀一郎) – alias Hide Kinoshita – in the periodical *MAVO*, and the piece is reprinted in the facsimile edition 「『マヴォ』複製版」 issued by the Japan Modern Literature Museum in 1991 (issue 5). Until this facsimile is systematically analysed, all references to *Voice Sound Poetry Form Begun with -X-* rely either directly or indirectly on Adachi's mediation.

The work is deeply informed by *Russian Futurism* and *zaum*<sup>48</sup> poetry – mediated through the Russian expatriate community active in Tokyo in the early 1920s – particularly in its rejection of semantic language in favor of phonetic and articulatory experimentation. Notably, the poem is written exclusively in Latin characters, a highly unusual choice in Japanese poetic practice of the time, underscoring its deliberate break with linguistic and cultural conventions. It anticipates later postwar explorations of voice, articulation, and non-semantic sound. The work stands as an early and distinctly transnational contribution to the genealogy of Japanese sound-oriented poetic practices.



Adachi Tomomi: *Voice Sound Poetry Form Begun with -X-* (Videostill)<sup>49</sup>

While Hide Kinoshita's early experiment remains largely isolated, later developments in postwar Japanese poetry show a more sustained engagement with the materiality of language. Tomomi Adachi's archive contains interesting documents related to the work of Niikuni Seiichi.

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<sup>48</sup> *Russian Futurism* emerged in the 1910s through figures such as Velimir Khlebnikov, Aleksei Kruchenykh, and Vladimir Mayakovsky, advocating a radical break with literary tradition and emphasizing phonetic experimentation, neologism, and the materiality of language. Central to this movement was the concept of *zaum* (from *za* = beyond, *um* = mind), a form of "transrational" language developed by Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh that deliberately abandoned semantic meaning in favor of sound, rhythm, and vocal energy. *Zaum* poetry is widely regarded as a foundational precursor to later developments in sound poetry and experimental vocal art.

<sup>49</sup> Tomomi Adachi: *Voice Sound Poetry Form Begun with -X-*, see:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsJ\\_ZcM3A9U&t=10s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsJ_ZcM3A9U&t=10s) [extract: 00:00–00:34]

Performance together with Jennifer Walshe: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwQQBcvTsSM&t=11s>

### Niikuni Seiichi – *poésie spatial*

Niikuni Seiichi (1925–1977) was a Japanese poet, visual artist, and theorist, widely regarded as one of the most important figures in postwar Japanese concrete and visual poetry. Born in 1925 in Sendai, Japan, Niikuni came of age during and immediately after the Second World War, a period that profoundly shaped his artistic and linguistic concerns. He studied literature and became active in experimental poetry circles during the 1950s. Niikuni died prematurely in 1977, but his work left a lasting impact on both Japanese and international concrete poetry.<sup>50</sup>

Niikuni is best known for his radical rethinking of the relationship between language, image, and material form. Rather than treating words as vehicles for semantic meaning, he approached written language as visual and spatial material. His poetry frequently dissolves the distinction between reading and viewing. Unlike avant-garde figures such as Hide Kinoshita or the *MAVO* group, Niikuni did not seek provocation through noise or performance. Instead, his work is analytical, restrained, and structural, reflecting a sustained investigation into language as a system. While Western concrete poets – such as Eugen Gomringer<sup>51</sup> or the Noigandres group<sup>52</sup> – often emphasized typographic clarity and universal readability, Niikuni insisted on the untranslatability of the Japanese writing system as a productive constraint rather than a limitation.

His international significance was cemented through his close collaboration with the French concrete poet Pierre Garnier.<sup>53</sup> Together, they developed what they termed *spatial poetry* (*poésie spatiale*), a poetic practice that treats the page as a field rather than a line-based structure.

A major retrospective of Niikuni Seiichi's work was held at the National Museum of Art, Osaka, in 2009,<sup>54</sup> marking a renewed scholarly and curatorial interest in postwar Japanese

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<sup>50</sup> Niikuni Seiichi: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seiichi\\_Niikuni](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seiichi_Niikuni)

<sup>51</sup> Eugen Gomringer (1925–2023) was a Swiss-Bolivian poet and a pioneer of Concrete Poetry, known for his minimalist, visually structured poems and for the public controversy surrounding his poem *avenidas* (1953).

<sup>52</sup> *Noigandres Group* was a Brazilian collective of poets, founded in 1952 by Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos, and Décio Pignatari, central to the development of Concrete Poetry, emphasizing visual form, linguistic experimentation, and the materiality of language.

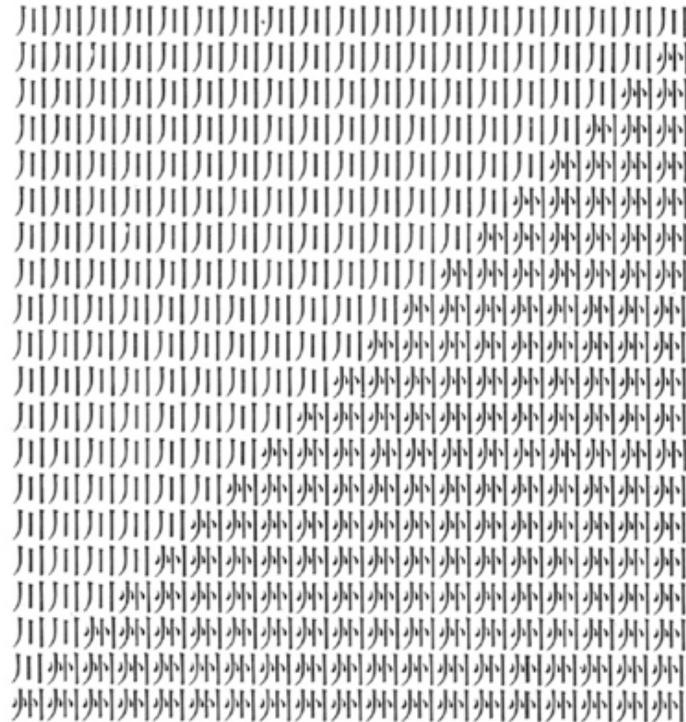
<sup>53</sup> Pierre Garnier see pp. 25–27.

<sup>54</sup> Niikuni Seiichi. *Retrospective*. The National Museum of Art, Osaka (NMAO): “The Concrete Poetry of Niikuni Seiichi: Between Poetry and Art”, 6 Dec 2008 – 22 Mar 2009.

Publication in conjunction with the retrospective: <https://aaa.org.hk/en/collections/search/library/niikuni-seiichi-works-1952-1977>

Catalogue: *Niikuni Seiichi works 1952–1977*, edited by The National Museum of Art, Osaka. Tokyo: Shichōsha, December 2008, (with 1 CD).

experimental poetry. The retrospective emphasized Niikuni's role not only as a poet but also as a theorist of language and space, positioning him alongside international figures in *Concrete Poetry*.



Niikuni Seiichi: 川 または 州 - 川 (kawa) river or 州 (shū) sandbank<sup>55</sup>

Niikuni Seiichi was not a public performer. Despite his prominence within experimental poetry, he was known to be a reserved and private individual. Rather than appearing on stage, he limited his engagement with sound to studio recordings, reciting his poems specifically for tape. These recordings reflect a controlled and intimate approach to vocalization, distinct from the performative ethos of live *Sound Poetry*.

The tape recordings of Niikuni's readings are preserved in the *Musashino Art University Museum and Library*, where they constitute an important archival resource for the study of Japanese postwar sound and visual poetry.

## Kanno Seiko

Following Tomomi Adachi, special attention must be drawn to the contribution of Kanno Seiko to Japanese sound poetry. Kanno Seiko (1939–1988) is a painter, Japanese poet and

<sup>55</sup> Niikuni Seiichi: *river or sandbank*, in: *Niikuni Seiichi: Niikuni Seiichi Works 1952–1977*, edited by The National Museum of Art, Osaka. Tokyo: Shichōsha, December 2008 (with 1 CD), p. 207. The editor has made every effort to identify and contact copyright holders and rights owners. If any rights have been overlooked, please contact the editor so that appropriate arrangements may be made.

experimental performer associated with the postwar Japanese avant-garde.<sup>56</sup> She studied at the Tokyo University of the Arts (Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku), from 1968 onwards she was an official member of the *Gutai Art Association*,<sup>57</sup> After moving to Tokyo in 1965 she composed semiotic poems, a highly visual poetry and *kigō shi* (code poetry). Her practice is frequently situated within the broader context of Japanese sound poetry and intermedia art, though she remained largely independent of any single movement or formalized group.

### Ilse and Pierre Garnier

Beginning in the early 1960s, Niikuni entered into an intensive correspondence with the Garniers, grounded in a shared commitment to non-semantic, material-based poetics and to the spatial organization of language.

Ilse Garnier (1943–2024), born in Germany in 1943, was a poet, artist, and theorist whose work expanded the scope of spatial poetry toward intermedia practices. After moving to France, she collaborated closely with Pierre Garnier. Pierre Garnier (1928–2014) was a French poet and theorist and one of the central figures of postwar concrete and spatial poetry. In 1962, together with Ilse Garnier and Niikuni Seiichi, he formulated the concept of *spatialism*,<sup>58</sup> a poetic practice in which words, letters, and sounds are organized in space. His work was deeply influenced by international developments in concrete poetry, including Eugen Gomringer, the Brazilian Noigandres group, and Japanese experimental poets.

### Conclusion

*In conversation with Tomomi Adachi* examines Japanese Sound Poetry as a field shaped not only by aesthetic experimentation but by materially grounded, often explicitly DIY-oriented

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<sup>56</sup> Kanno Seiko <https://awarewomenartists.com/en/artiste/seiko-kanno/> and [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seiko\\_Kanno](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seiko_Kanno)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seiko\\_Kanno](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seiko_Kanno)

<sup>57</sup> *Gutai Art Association* founded 1954 by Jirō Yoshihara: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gutai\\_Art\\_Association](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gutai_Art_Association)

<sup>58</sup> *Spatialism* [spatialisme] was a French poetic movement active roughly between 1962 and 1975, closely associated with Pierre Garnier (1928–2014), a poet and key theoretician of Spatialism, and Ilse Garnier (1943–2024), its central representative and later developer, whose work expanded the movement toward cosmic and ecological themes. Related to Concrete Poetry, Spatialism conceives the page as a spatial field in which typography, layout, and empty space function as essential elements of poetic meaning. Beyond the Garniers, the movement maintained exchanges with poets of visual, concrete, and sound poetry, including figures such as Julien Blaine and Bernard Heidsieck.

- Garnier, Pierre: *Manifeste pour une poésie nouvelle, visuelle et phonique*, Paris, 1962
- Entretien avec Ilse et Pierre Garnier - *poésie spatiale*:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=csp7t9dBNdE> [accessed 19.12.2015]
- Pierre & Ilse Garnier – Seiichi Niikuni – Phonetic Poetry on Spatialism:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pO2tXhQHLg8> [accessed 19.12.2015]

practices. The interview with Tomomi Adachi and the archival materials discussed here foreground cassette recording (K7), self-built instruments, improvised electronics, and informal modes of production as central conditions of voice-based experimentation. These practices position sound poetry in Japan in deliberate proximity to non-institutional, anti-academic, and autodidactic traditions.

Rather than treating recording technologies as neutral tools, the use of cassette tape, homemade devices, and unstable media formats emerges as an epistemic strategy, one that privileges process, immediacy, and contingency over fidelity, reproducibility, and academic standardization. DIY instrument-building and tape-based practices function not merely as technical solutions but as compositional structures. Particularly evident in the conversation is Adachi's consistent commitment to performance as an irreducible event and to the impossibility of complete documentation. Recording technologies, while an indispensable component of his work, do not function as means of preservation but rather as active agents that fundamentally transform vocal articulation and modes of listening. In this sense, Adachi does not understand technology as an external tool applied to the voice, but as an integral condition through which vocality becomes thinkable and audible in the first place.

The interview also makes visible Adachi's rejection of hierarchical distinctions – between composer and performer, human and machine, instrument and body, notation and improvisation. His work with open scores, haptic reading, AI systems, and participatory instruments points toward a broader aesthetic and ethical stance, artistic practice as a shared and mutable field rather than as a closed work. Rather than advancing a comprehensive account, the interview affirms the necessity of constellation-based approaches that take discontinuities, marginal practices, and ephemeral gestures seriously and resist canonical closure.

Adachi's works resist conventional forms of musicological research. The archive appears not as a systematic repository but as a partial and selective assemblage shaped by informal networks, personal initiative, and the survival of low-tech media – as critical artistic practice.