

About her 2018 composition Seven Colours for amplified ensemble, Sarah Nemtsov writes:

Seven Colours was the first piece I composed after my mother died. My mother – Elisabeth Naomi Reuter – was a painter.

I composed five movements – all are connected (attacca: so it's one piece) – as a musical approach to colours that were important to my mother and had a special meaning. However, since I am not synesthetic it is a subjective and associative approach.

I umber, burnt sienna

II raw sienna, ochre

III sepia

IV carbon black

V caput mortuum

My mother liked cloudy, raw, “broken” colours and had developed certain techniques in her drawings by placing hatchings against each other, very fine and let colours with other colours “break” (as she called it), layers upon layers to add depth. Often at the end she went over the whole sheet of paper with a hard pencil and imperceptibly put a veil over it, often also on watercolors. In her oil paintings she worked with subtle glazes. In the last years of her life and creativity, she worked intensely, creating more than 100 paintings and drawings, focussing on the human being (whereas in her early work one would hardly find people, but many insects and bugs).

After 2014, she used oilsticks and chalks in her oil paintings to create outlines and contrasts and her paintings appeared (intentionally) more “incomplete”, open. She died of cancer in November 2017. She was and is a great inspiration for me as an artist, woman, mother, person. Seven Colours is a very personal work (at the same time very strictly conceived and structured!). While I was composing, I had to dismantle my mother’s apartment and studio at the same time. Colours in hands. Pictures, even unfinished. I found a piece of paper on which she had noted: Three things overcome death: courage, memory, love.

(<https://iscm.org/collaborative-events/sarah-nemtsov-seven-colours/>)