

legno touches on the strings, and that same sult-pont tremolo create a texture upon which the clarinet and accordion pass melodies back and forth. Amidst the quiet rhythmic murmurings of the ensemble, the clarinet playing on this track (Vitor J. Pereira) is particularly beautiful. Concluding this set, a second Canon ('Canon in Hypodiapson') roars onto the scene. I again found myself thinking of the circus from American Horror Story, and again the faster music ended too soon. It left me longing to hear the other canons (of which Schöllhorn has composed two more), to find out more about this composer in general, and – I hope this will be heard as the positive comment it is – to immediately spend a couple hours with the music of J.S. Bach. I hope to hear more from Mr Schöllhorn and the Remix Ensemble soon, too.

Aaron Holloway-Nahum

10.1017/S0040298217001346

---

TERRY JENNINGS, *Lost Daylight*. Another Timbre at 10

JOHN CAGE, *Winter Music*. Another Timbre at 118

JÜRIG FREY, *Collection Gustave Roud*. Another Timbre at 115x2

Simon Reynell's Another Timbre label has been around for ten years now and has released 118 CDs (so far) of some of the most innovative present-day composition and improvisation. In addition to its regular new releases, it has started to reissue some of its older albums. Amongst the first is one of the label's most celebrated early releases, *Lost Daylight*, in which John Tilbury plays a collection of piano works by Terry Jennings and John Cage.

This is apparently Jennings's entire oeuvre for solo piano: five brief pieces written between 1958 and 1966. Because of his association with La Monte Young, Jennings is usually remembered as a minimalist, but if anything is minimal about these pieces, it is the presence of sound itself. The characterisation made of Morton Feldman's music at this time – 'organised silence' – is more particularly pertinent to Jennings here. While Cage and Feldman talked of letting sounds be themselves, Jennings uses sounds to create a space for listening. Each piece is slow and quiet, with the sustain pedal in constant use. Traditional

harmonies are repeated in varying patterns, distinct from the New York School's determined atonal abstraction.

*Piano Piece 1960* is made out of an A<sub>2</sub>, expanded into octaves, or clusters spread over three octaves, in the same manner Feldman used in his late works. Tilbury plays the piece's 17 chords or single notes in four minutes. Jennings's guidance in the score suggests it could even be played a little slower. Tilbury emphasises the coherence of the work as a single statement, small but clear, however isolated its constituent parts may appear.

It's pernicious to think of musical history as a lineage of influences. This CD's affirmation of Jennings's early music serves to show that contemporaneous composers such as Cage, Feldman and Christian Wolff were not outliers or exceptions to the rule who could thus be safely excluded from discussion of late twentieth-century music. Jennings's acceptance of the slightest of sounds, set in silence, as sufficient music is comparable to Cage's *Music for Piano* series, in which Cage used imperfections in the paper as noteheads, lightly scattered across the page. With music as ephemeral as this, the composer is not organising sound, but how people hear. Chance determines not just the content of the music, but that the music happens to exist at all.

John Cage's 1964 composition *Electronic Music For Piano* looks similarly slight on the page: a photostat of single sheet of hotel notepaper on which Cage has jotted down some comments referring to a piano performance given by David Tudor, using amplification and other electronic means of modifying the piano's sound. As with many Cage scores, realising the piece seems an unpromising prospect, offering so little opportunity for creative interpretation without lapsing into an indulgent free-for-all.

The choice of an electroacoustic piece by Cage at his most musically permissive seems an incongruous pairing with Jennings, until the piece begins. The track starts with the faintest of crackling, like surface noise or tape hiss, sound that would typically be considered as 'silence' in imperfect recording conditions. As the sound changes and augments, it immediately becomes clear that this is part of the music itself. The means may be different, but both Jennings and Cage composed with an understanding of music as activated silence.

Tilbury, in collaboration with Sebastian Lexer handling the electronics, have created a piece that is both bold yet hard to pin down, shifting back and forth between sounds that are piano and not-piano. Lexer has said that they wanted

to do more than simply add electronic effects to the piano, and they used computerised technology to extend Cage and Tudor's conceptualisation of the piano as a site in which sounds may be produced and observed. Taking cues from the score, the electronic processing follows a chance-determined score created from star charts for location of microphones and pickups, mixing and timing of events. Tilbury uses the piano to produce isolated sounds, drawing his material from Cage's *Music for Piano*.

In addition to *Lost Daylight*, Another Timbre released four new CDs in November. John Tilbury is joined by Philip Thomas, Catherine Laws and Mark Knoop for a performance of Cage's *Winter Music*. The 1957 composition for 1–20 pianos may be heard alone, or in simultaneous performance with the orchestral work *Atlas Eclipticalis*. In the latter configuration, the piano(s) act as punctuation, with isolated chords articulating a context for the web of contrasting instrumental sounds.

Despite the greater complexity of the score, *Winter Music* sounds like an extension of the *Music For Piano* series. Cage insists that every aggregate of sounds on the page, no matter how simple or complex, must be played as a single ictus. The focus again is on isolated sounds, deprived of continuity. It is a music of stasis, harking back to Cage's conception of winter's role in the seasons, as heard in his ballet suite of the same name and particularly in the third part of his *String Quartet in Four Parts*, with its unvarying material.

The dry, forbidding qualities of the score are belied by Cage's reference to nature, and the recording by the pianists here comes across as fully mindful of this connection. Each prepared their own parts separately, and this recording captures their first performance together. There has been a recent tendency in many interpretations of Cage to focus on the quiescent, ambient qualities of the music, even verging on the new age, using him as a reflection of our own tastes and times. This new performance captures Cage's music as reflecting nature in full force. The succession of irregularly overlapping chords may at first seem tranquil, but can turn at any moment into something violent, ugly, shocking, then empty. Whether brutal or tender, each sound appears with the sublime indifference of a natural phenomenon. Ambient noise is present but does not intrude, giving greater depth to the detailing of space between the four pianos.

Another Timbre has dedicated a number of recordings to Jürg Frey's music and the new

double CD *Collection Gustave Roud* contains two of his most powerful recent works. The 40-minute piano piece *La présence, les silences* was written between 2013 and 2016. Here, it is played by the composer and Frey collaborator Dante Boon. In Frey's music, as with his predecessors discussed here, size does not necessarily imply significance: time becomes a dimension of the listening space. *La présence, les silences* feels like a successor to Frey's two pieces titled *pianist, alone* – the first about 90 minutes long, the second around 30, each equal in scope, a journey inasmuch as each piece wanders, explores with 'purposeful purposelessness'.

The new album collects pieces Frey wrote under the influence of the poet Gustave Roud: 'Every day he went out, not with an easel, but with his notebook, and he wandered through the landscape as a flâneur, observer . . . . For me his work constitutes a kind of "field recording", not with a microphone and sounds, but with his soul and body, recording his environment in the broadest sense'. The impression of landscape pervades *La présence, les silences*; spare, gently voiced cadences and harmonic progressions appear here and there, recalling nineteenth-century pastorals. At other times, the music is reduced to a single, repeated note, lingering before moving on.

These repetitions appeared in Frey's earlier work, giving him some degree of notoriety. At first, they seemed a provocation to the listener. In the first *pianist, alone* and *Klavierstück 2*, Frey's repetitions came with a sense of stasis, of impasse. In the later *pianist, alone* they provide a sense of continuity, working through affect more than dialectic argument. In *La présence, les silences* they are further developed, with the repeated notes gaining occasional harmonic colouring or articulation in the bass, enhancing the sense of movement.

Having been most closely associated with the Wandelweiser group, Frey's recent music is now imbued with a quiet sophistication – the sort that doesn't need to display its radical nature or its erudition. Where it was once necessary to make statements, it is now possible for these values to be affirmed as a given. Sound is now given the foreground over silence, but those silences remain equally important. It accepts, accommodates and transforms cultural heritage. *La présence, les silences* may well be Frey's *Hammerklavier*, or, more appropriately, his *Concord Sonata*.

If there's a parallel to be drawn between Frey and Cage, it's in the presence of transcendentalism in their music – moreover, that

it is expressed through the materials of their medium, sound and silence, over the literary or philosophical interpretation of those sounds.

Ben Harper

10.1017/S0040298217001358

---

FRANCO DONATONI: Chamber Works. Ensemble Adapter. Kairos 0015021KAI

Composer Franco Donatoni was something of an enigmatic figure among post-war Italian modernists, and his work has remained somewhat marginalized as a result. In an interview with Andrew Ford (published in the book *Composer to Composer*), Donatoni maintained that he had experienced 'several crises' during his career. These challenges were heightened by major bouts with mental illness. Several curtailments and cessations altogether of musical activity occurred at various points in his lifetime. These were demoralizing to be sure, but his steadfast determination to conquer each successive experience of creative block resulted in re-emergence full of vitality, with compositions that explored new directions. Ford later remarked (in his other seminal work, *Illegal Harmonies*) that in the twentieth century, Donatoni and Stockhausen were the two composers who most frequently changed direction in their work. Indeed, Donatoni frequently identified with Stockhausen's concept of 'moment form', crafting music full of wit and surprises.

It is precisely these traits – inscrutability, creative vitality, mercurial changeability and indomitability – that have attracted Ensemble Adapter, a Berlin-based new music group, to adopt the further promulgation of Donatoni's music as a long term project: they plan to record several compact discs of the composer's music. The first recording was released this past September on the Kairos imprint. It contains two sets of pieces that, while created separately, ultimately accumulated into cycles of work.

Donatoni often remarked that he didn't imagine his pieces in advance, but instead worked through them to come up with each successive composition's material. Essentials were preferred to a wide swath of reference points, with winnowing down to the bare minimum necessary to create a work being a preferred technique. For instance, in several of the pieces on the Kairos CD, Donatoni begins with a cell of just three pitches, very gradually expanding the harmonic field through the use of permutation (transposition, inversion, etc.)

of the original cell and the interpolation of intuitively derived additional material. Another approach frequently found in Donatoni's music is his reworking of pieces into new contexts. Thus, a pair each of solos for harp (*Marches*, 1979), piccolo (*Nidi*, 1979), and clarinet (*Clair*, 1980), are chopped up and reframed as the trio *Small* (1981).

The composer had a penchant for piccolo, and both movements of *Nidi* are impressive displays of virtuosity on the instrument. Donatoni suggested birdsong as the inspiration for the piece, saying, 'It sounds like a little bird making her nest'. The nest, built out of strands of those three-note pitch cells, is followed by sounds that much more resemble a bird aloft in flight than carefully building a domicile. Kristjana Helgadóttir, bearing in mind Donatoni's extra-musical inspiration, moulds phrases carefully, allows runs to flow ebulliently, and keeps the stridency of the piccolo's upper register to a minimum. Harpist Gunnhildur Einarsdóttir is given a difficult task, making fast arpeggiated music 'march'. However, the incisive attacks she employs manage to give heft and metric stress that supplies the requisite martial illusion. To provide a third layer of gestural types, *Clair* includes klezmer-style riffs, dynamic shifts, and widened vibrato, performed with characterful zest by clarinetist Ingólfur Vilhjálmsón. The three musicians together interpret *Small*, a recombination of solo elements into an ensemble piece. Somewhat surprisingly, the disparate characters of each instrumental part often collide and commingle in unexpectedly organic fashion. This is no cut-and-paste piece, but instead a very effective recomposition of preexisting material into an altogether convincing new incarnation. The piece's climax, a pile-up of the trio's most emphatic gestures into a dense polyphony, is particularly stirring. What's more, one would be hard-pressed to describe it as sounding like nearly anyone else: this is Donatoni at his most original.

A similar process is undertaken in Donatoni's earlier *Estratto* triptych. *Estratto* (1969), a brief work based on a motoric ostinato of dissonant lines in equal note values, is played with scrupulous rhythmic integrity by pianist Elmar Schrammel. *Secondo Estratto* (1970) explores the same percussive texture, but here Schrammel is joined by harpsichordist Peterri Pitko and mandolinist Seth Josel. This version is significantly extended to ten-and-a-half minutes in duration. The trio overlaps the material culled from the original *Estratto* in an elaborate game of musical tag.