



EDITORIAL: TIME, PLACE, ECOLOGY

Christopher Fox

One of the great pleasures of editing *TEMPO* is the opportunity it offers for collaboration. Heather Roche and I collaborate on the overall balance of each issue, particularly when the subject matter of reviews and articles overlap, and we both collaborate with our wonderful contributors, encouraging the uncertain, cajoling the tardy, celebrating the timely. Sometimes collaboration can also involve a partnership with a guest editor, as was the case with Ellen Fallowfield for *TEMPO* 291 in January 2020 and Louise Devenish for *TEMPO* 292 in April 2020; for this issue it has been a pleasure to work with Ed Cooper on the four articles that make up ‘New Liminalities: Beat Furrer at 70’.

Beat Furrer is a major figure within the continental European new-music scene, not only as a composer but also as the founding conductor of Klangforum Wien. In the 1990s, under Furrer’s direction, the ensemble established a reputation as one of the finest new-music chamber orchestras, and Furrer’s relationship with the ensemble continues to thrive: on 17 January 2024 he will conduct them in a portrait concert of his work in the Wiener Konzerthaus. Beyond the European continent, however, Furrer’s work is much less frequently performed, although this is not such an unusual phenomenon in an era when the headline for a 2016 *New York Times* review of a concert of Furrer’s chamber music announces a ‘Homage to a Central Figure of the Avant Garde’¹ or a review of the 2016 London premiere of his *FAMA* begins ‘Premiered in 2005 at Donaueschingen – how reassuringly modernist that sounds!’²

In US music criticism the term ‘avant garde’ may sound as dusty as the museum shelf on which it is kept, but there is indeed something reassuring about Furrer’s music: its version of modernity has an easy familiarity that allows his music to have an almost transparent quality. Perhaps because his musical language is so clear, Ed Cooper and his three fellow Furrer researchers focus their attention on what this music might mean, rather than on how it sounds. In Cooper’s introduction to the Furrer articles he explains how ideas about temporality, narrative theory, intertextuality, ‘dark’ ecology and liminality have informed their discussion of the ways in which the music may construct its meanings. Rather than reiterate that introduction I will only add here my thanks to Furrer’s current publishers, Bärenreiter Verlag, for their consistently generous cooperation. Some music publishers behave like asset strippers, demonstrably a self-destructive

¹ Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim, ‘Argento Ensemble Pays Homage to a Central Figure of the Avant Garde’, *The New York Times*, 27 April 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/04/27/arts/music/review-argento-chamber-ensemble-pays-homage-to-a-central-figure-of-the-avant-garde.html (accessed 2 September 2023).

² Mark Berry, ‘The London Premiere of Beat Furrer’s Remarkable *FAMA*’, *Seen and Heard International*, 18 November 2016, <https://seenandheard-international.com/2016/11/the-london-premiere-of-beat-furrers-remarkable-fama/> (accessed 2 September 2023).

strategy within an ecology that depends on the goodwill of the musicians and writers who bring new music to audiences; those music publishers who, on the other hand, understand the value of working cooperatively with promoters, ensembles and, yes, even journals may yet survive.

Ed Cooper argues that existing Furrer scholarship had left a lacuna that he hopes may be filled by the *TEMPO* articles he has curated. Liam Dougherty's fascinating examination of the work of Maryanne Amacher (1938–2009) fills another lacuna because, although the significance of Amacher's work is now widely recognised, it has never been the subject of an article in *TEMPO*. This is perhaps excusable – when Amacher was at her most active this journal was the house magazine of Boosey and Hawkes and usually focused its attention on music for the classical concert hall – but it is nevertheless about time that we put things right. It is notable too that Amacher's aesthetic preoccupations are as relevant today as they were half a century ago: as early as 1966 her *City-Links* project was addressing issues of site-specificity, virtual spaces and technological mediations. Amacher's work, argues Dougherty, 'has less to do with what the listener is hearing than with how they hear it'; the sounds in the *City-Links* are transmitted from their sources to quite other spaces and in this process they lose their site-specificity and become what Robert Smithson terms a 'non-site'; in 2023 almost every digitally mediated artistic experience is in some way a non-site.

Amacher's career is also a telling reminder of the fragile ecology within which many innovative musicians work. Because their work is unlikely to generate a sustainable income, their economic livelihood depends on having a day job or on patronage, most of which is relayed through grants from institutions. As Amacher discovered, it's easier to be a young artist whose encouragement makes grant-awarding bodies feel good, less easy to be an older artist with an established practice, much less easy to be any sort of artist when a right-wing politician decides to pull the plug on the funding stream, as President Reagan did in the US in the late 1980s. Liam Dougherty remarks in the conclusion to his article that Amacher spent the latter years of her creative life 'navigating institutional and financial hurdles' and, as the world of new music constantly reminds us, those hurdles can become an insurmountable barrier to artists who happen to be working in the wrong era, or in a hostile environment. Time, place and ecology; we ignore them at our peril.