



EDITORIAL: REAL TIME, RECORDED TIME

Christopher Fox

Time is the dimension in which music happens, so it is appropriate that it should be the title of this journal. Time is also the subject of most of the articles in this issue of *TEMPO*, as an aspect of musicians' practice, as something we experience as listeners, and in its historical sense.

In her article, 'Rehearsing Time', in *TEMPO* 308¹ Lea Luka Sikau discussed the 'hidden' time of rehearsal in new opera productions, and in this issue Thomas Moore and Maya Verlaak consider the additional temporal investment that many performers of new music are required to make as they perfect unfamiliar performance techniques. These are often unique to the piece that they are learning and Moore and Verlaak question how best to ensure that this investment is sufficiently valued, both by the composers who develop these techniques and by the promoters who present the resultant music.

Éliane Radigue's recent work enacts a beautiful variation on this taking of performers' time. Instead of creating scores whose realisation requires the acquisition of new skills, Radigue invites performers to collaborate with her in finding a soundworld that will become a piece unique to them. Nothing is written down, but a work is created. Douglas Osmun suggests that this is a process of both 'historicisation' and 'rupture', acknowledging the concept of the *Werktreue* and yet locating the work itself in the bodies of its performers.

Osmun's article and another on Radigue's aesthetic by Michelle Mackenzie are part of a project led by William Dougherty and Luke Nickel. Initially planned to celebrate Radigue's ninetieth birthday in 2022, the project has already resulted in the 'Radigue at 90' symposium, hosted by Columbia University's Global Center in Paris in May 2023, and a double issue of *Contemporary Music Review*;² the two articles published in this issue of *TEMPO* will be followed by two more articles in subsequent issues. Looping – both the analogue loop of lengths of magnetic tape and the sonic loop of Larsen feedback – are the principal techniques of the Radigue works around which Michelle Mackenzie's article circles, and she explains how desynchronising two tape loops can yield music of 'infinite variability'.

Something similar has been happening in Bryn Harrison's recent music. In an article that focuses on his *Dead Time* (2019) and *Towards a slowing of the past* (2023) Harrison explains how he has incorporated pre-recorded moments of these pieces within their live performance – sometimes just looping passages, sometimes processing the sounds too – to create an interplay between the 'real' time

¹ Lea Luka Sikau, 'Rehearsing Time', *TEMPO*, 78, no. 308 (April 2024), pp. 46–55.

² William Dougherty and Luke Nickel, 'Éliane Radigue at 90', *Contemporary Music Review*, 42, nos 5–6 (2023).

of live performance and the 'virtual' time of the recordings. In his 1971 poem 'Forget what did' Philip Larkin writes that 'Stopping the diary was a stun to memory, was a blank starting'.³ Recording, whether in a diary or on a digital device, is an aid to memory yet, as Harrison explains in his article and explores in his music, a live repetition by musicians who play a passage many times has a subtly different effect on our memories from playback of a recording of a single performance of that same passage.

Even the effect of live repetitions can be various, however. Füsün Köksal İncirlioğlu's article about 'repetitive models in twenty-first-century music' considers the way in which composers' manipulation of our experience of time can become an expressive device. She is particularly interested in the way that repetition can be used to arrest a sense of forward movement within a musical narrative, and the article proposes two different modes of arrest, 'dead-locked time' and 'frozen time'. Perhaps nothing about music is more paradoxical than this: in music that evolves continuously we forget about the passing of time; when the music starts to repeat itself we become acutely aware that our lives are going on but the music isn't.

Recorded time is the stuff of history and, in a departure from *TEMPO*'s usual editorial policy, this issue reaches much further back into music history than usual. As this issue was nearing its submission deadline Oliver Soden offered us the possibility of publishing a 'lost' letter, written from prison during Michael Tippett's detention as a conscientious objector in August 1943. It seemed an opportunity too good to miss, so in place of artwork this issue includes a fragment from the letter and an extract from the prison regulations about letter writing, alongside Soden's transcription of the letter. After a UK general election in which the Conservative Party's proposal of some sort of compulsory national service proved to be a vote loser, Tippett's brief imprisonment is a reminder that the ethics of civic duty are complicated: what was the point of locking up the composer of *A Child of Our Time*?

In another departure from editorial policy this issue includes an article on the poetics of Luciano Berio's music, as articulated in the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures that Berio gave at Harvard in 1993 and 1994. Stephane Crayton takes the third movement of Berio's *Sinfonia* as a starting point, which in turn requires him to reflect on the third movement of Gustav Mahler's Symphony No.2, the 'river' that flows through the landscape of Berio's music. In three steps we go from 2006, when Berio's Norton Lectures were published,⁴ to Harvard in 1993–94, to 1968 and the New York premiere of *Sinfonia*, to 1902 and the Berlin premiere of the Mahler. It's an exhilarating triple jump and, as Crayton concludes, it enables us to consider whether a 'fundamentally linear conception' of time and meaning and, its corollary, 'the obsession with newness for its own sake' represent existential threats to new music.

As regular readers will have noticed, a more contemporary threat has interrupted the normal progress of *TEMPO* publication. In June Cambridge University Press suffered a serious cyberattack and in its aftermath production work was halted for several weeks as the Press assessed the scale of the attack. Our July issue did not appear until late August and, as I write this editorial for the January 2025 issue, copy-editing of the October 2024 issue has only recently begun.

³ Philip Larkin, 'Forget what did', *High Windows* (London: Faber & Faber, 1974), p. 10.

⁴ Luciano Berio, *Remembering the Future* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).