

## EDITORIAL: TENTATIVE AFFINITIES

Welcome to the first issue of TEMPO of 2014, and to the first instalment of this long-running periodical under its new editorship. After more than forty years with the journal, including thirty-plus as Editor, Calum MacDonald has embarked on his well-earned retirement and has handed over the reins to me and to Reviews Editor Juliet Fraser. Happily he will retain a connection with the journal as Editor Emeritus, an acknowledgement of the devotion and good judgement he has sustained over the years in steering TEMPO through the turbulent waters of new music and guiding its transformation from house magazine of the publishers Boosey and Hawkes to the independent CUP journal it is today. 2014 in fact marks the 75th anniversary of TEMPO, and in this Editorial it seems appropriate to ask – in our world of instant connectivity, where information, attitudes and opinions are scattered online as freely as bat droppings – if the new music world still needs a quarterly periodical such as this.

Our answer is an emphatic yes. The internet offers an astonishing promiscuity of information, for which many of us are grateful. But it is less good at the curatorial task of sifting and sorting that information into coherent patterns so that we may see connections and causalities between (in the present case) different forms of music-making that may have seemed obscure. There is a need today, as there has always been, for the slowness of scholarship, a different virtue from the immediacy of the blog entry or the social media post. TEMPO embraces this curatorial role by documenting the international new music scene while contributing to, and stimulating, current debates: the part played by journals such as this in the grand eco-system of new music is much less passive than some practitioners assume.

The multiple morphologies of the new music world, and their evolution since TEMPO's founding in 1939, pose the question of exactly what sort of new music the journal should seek to cover. Our policy is to open the floodgates as widely as possible so that nothing vital is shut out, while keeping the focus firmly on music of recent decades. There has never been at any time in music history such a superabundance of composers and performers at work as now, nor such a fluent outpouring of new music. Paradoxically, however, the working assumption I have clung to throughout my professional life as a musicologist is that the world of new music is in the midst of a protracted crisis. I do not mean a crisis of marginalisation or loss of prestige – issues that must properly be viewed in a much broader context – but a crisis of language and signification. Whether we are living through a time of what psychologists call 'positive disintegration', where old ways fall apart and new things are born, or whether we should regard the current situation in altogether blacker and more pessimistic terms, is clearly beyond the scope of this Editorial. But it is a theme to which TEMPO has long returned, in one form or another, and will continue to do so. The crisis to which I am referring can be viewed variously, but is linked more broadly to the turbulence,

upheavals and chaos of the last century, across all the arts and beyond. We may see it as one manifestation of Jean-François Lyotard's famous theory of the collapse of the grand narratives, the 'incredulity' toward grand, large-scale theories and philosophies of the world such as the progress of history, the knowability of everything by science, and so on. Lyotard alerted us to difference, diversity, and the incompatibility of our aspirations, beliefs and desires; it seems to me that a similar condition pertains today in new music. Composers, performers and musicologists tend not to agree much on anything any more. Ours is a time that has seen the collapse of the belief in any single aspect of composition as essential, of the belief that the essence of music still contains absolutes on which all rational minds can agree. TEMPO seeks to let these discussions and disagreements resonate and, in Lyotard's phrase, to 'activate the differences'.

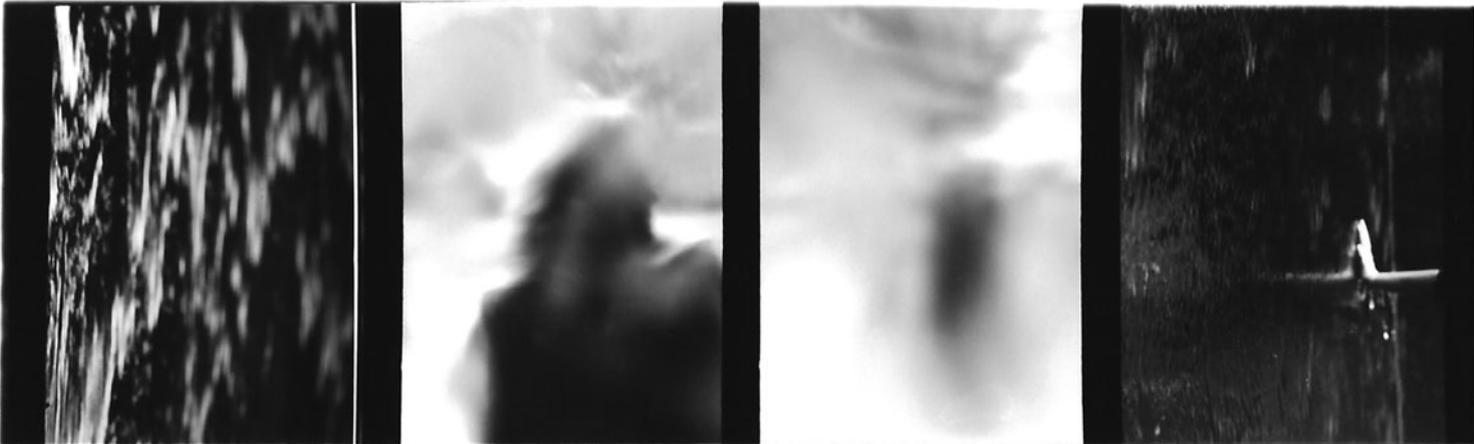
TEMPO 267 examines several aspects of new music in which these differences may be found. The systematic use of extended pitch resources in composition and performance is the focus, from quite different perspectives, of the articles by the young San Francisco-based Italian guitarist Giacomo Fiore (on the music of Larry Polansky) and the distinguished Norwegian composer Lasse Thoresen (on his Concrecence Project, training vocalists in the accurate production of microtonal pitch nuances). But for every composer today who believes that the refinement of our pitch vocabulary is one of the most significant and exciting areas for current musical exploration, there are as many who find microtonality of little consequence, too rarefied and unstable to be of value as the basis of a compositional grammar; these voices can be heard in a forthcoming issue of this journal. Parallel debates rage today about the place of improvisation in new music and its relationship to composition: some find improvisation merely an easy way of bypassing the complexities of notated music, a sort of cop-out, while others find improvised music the most exciting and radical form of music-making around. Still others see no essential difference between improvisation and composition. Canadian musicologist Jonathan Goldman's conversation with Vinko Globokar provides a context, by tracing the lines of development that led this apostate Stockhausen musician to his determined (and, in the UK, still underappreciated) 'double identity' as composer and improviser. And at a time when new music can attract sizeable audiences to venues as diverse as a multi-storey car park in southeast London, a cultural centre in Warsaw and a multi-million-dollar concert hall in Los Angeles, the English composer and conductor Mark Gotham speculates on the influence of environment on our perception of what we hear.

With this issue we launch two new series of shorter, informal articles. In the first contribution to On My Mind, composer Howard Skempton offers a think piece on the role of freedom and the question of 'What Next?' in music. New to the Reviews section, our first Profile features the outstanding Canadian soprano Barbara Hannigan. The Reviews section, its purpose now somewhat reconceived, documents events and releases by examining their meaning, perceived or potential, within broader contemporary music contexts. And this issue and subsequent ones this year are adorned by beautiful photographic work by cellist, composer and filmmaker Anton Lukoszevics, from a series of silver gelatin prints collectively entitled *Quartets*.

In short, TEMPO continues to 'activate the differences' and to explore tentative affinities in the vibrant world of new music.

*Bob Gilmore* is a musicologist and keyboard player born in Northern Ireland and presently living in Amsterdam. He studied at York University, England, Queens University Belfast and, on a Fulbright scholarship, at the University of California, San Diego. He has taught at Queens University, Dartington College of Arts and, most recently, at Brunel University, London. He is now a Research Fellow at the Orpheus Institute in Ghent. He is founder and artistic director of Trio Scordatura, the Amsterdam-based ensemble specialising in music using alternative tuning systems. His biography of the French-Canadian composer Claude Vivier is forthcoming from the University of Rochester Press in early summer 2014. He has published in a wide variety of international music journals, including TEMPO, but his becoming Editor of the latter (beginning with this issue) makes submitting further articles to them (i.e. himself) something of a moral dilemma.

Equally at home with Renaissance polyphony or the latest extended vocal techniques, soprano *Juliet Fraser* specialises in solo and consort repertoire and has given first performances of more than 150 new works, many of which have been written for her. She is principal soprano and Executive Director of EXAUDI, which she founded in 2002 with James Weeks; she has also performed with Collegium Vocale Gent, The Tallis Scholars, Monteverdi Choir, London Sinfonietta, Plus-Minus, Ensemble Intercontemporain, and musikFabrik, amongst others. Juliet read Music and History of Art at Cambridge University, and joined TEMPO as Reviews Editor in 2014.



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