

MaerzMuzik

Various venues, Berlin, Germany

One of Berlin's most visible contemporary music festivals, MaerzMuzik's tagline has long been "Festival For Time Issues", and there is no shortage of time issues in the 2022 iteration of the event. Some of those issues aren't so much thought-provoking as annoying, such as the list of performers and schedule of the multi-part closing event Garden Of Forking Paths being announced just a couple of days beforehand.

There are also issues of time-driven exhaustion. This year's programme devotes generous space and time to the music of Éliane Radigue. 17 events dedicated to her electronic work are presented, with technical assistance of GRM artistic director François Bonnet, at the Zeiss-Großplanetarium, where comfortable seating, abundant space and a seemingly noise-free environment allow listeners to truly get lost in the subtle detail of the pieces. Each night three

events are stacked consecutively, so while it is wonderful that such a broad survey is being staged, hearing them all is both demanding in terms of time and attention, and also means missing much else during the week, including a performance of the magnificent 2015 orchestral iteration of her *Occam Ocean* series written for the Parisian juggernaut ONCEIM (Orchestre de Nouvelles Créations, Expérimentations et Improvisations Musicales).

The members of ONCEIM are joined by excellent Viennese ensemble Klangforum Wien – all conducted by Frédéric Blondy – filling the high-ceilinged Berlin Philharmonie with ravishing sound. Arranged in circular sections by instrument group, the undulating timbres of Radigue's piece move around the stage in piecemeal fashion at the start, with each grouping passing a sonic baton where stunning interplay generates sumptuous harmonic effects.

As the work unfolds, new, ever-thickening combinations emerge,

perpetually casting the composer's ideas in an endlessly shimmering light. As excellent as the 2019 recording of the piece on Shiiin may be, experiencing it in a space as vibrant as the Berlin Philharmonie is utterly remarkable.

Almost as impressive is the account ONCEIM gives of its violinist Patricia Bosshard's 2018 composition *Sillons*, for which she collaborates with each musician to develop a simple phrase or gesture. She weaves those micro elements into a rich, ever-changing fabric of sound and the performance brings out qualities missing on the recorded version, such as the way trumpeter Louis Laurain blows both unpitched and conventional sounds in a spatialised fashion, literally tracing the circular stage with the bell of his horn for a gripping lighthouse effect.

The Radigue and Bosshard pieces fit together aesthetically, but the festival extends the evening to three hours by placing Liza Lim's *Extinction Events And Dawn Chorus* at the start. While

Klangforum Wien does a fine job with the piece – last minute violin sub Sarah Savary is especially strong – its heavy new music vibe feels out of place with what follows.

Naturally, there is much more to the festival, including an impressive series of lectures and an installation devoted to Fluxus member, bassist, and composer Benjamin Patterson, as well as a dynamic discussion between composer George Lewis and writer Jeffery Renard Allen about an opera they're creating based on the latter's novel *Song Of The Shank*, about Black pianist and composer Blind Tom Wiggins. A performance by Les Percussions De Strasbourg at Gropius Bau reveals the ongoing invention and power of John Cage's 1985 piece for Jean Arp, which masterfully takes advantage of the space, but a rendering of Ryoji Ikeda's *100 Cymbals* is little more than a tedious performance piece, with a sonic experience vastly inferior to the vision of the cymbals neatly arranged in the hall. Peter Margasak