that draws inspiration from the quasi-absurdist plays of the English playwright N.F. Simpson (although I only learnt this later). There is also lots of play with modality, simplicity, irony, process and precision. The opening movement is written in unison, and this principle remains central to most of the other 12 (the three instruments also get a solo movement each), although by the end things have diverged into a sort of three-way counterpoint. More important, however, is that at points along the way Rogers had found quite spell-bindingly beautiful music; the slow and melancholy third movement in particular, when the first harmonies are introduced into the texture, was one of the most straightforwardly gorgeous things I've heard in a long while. A great deal of credit must go to the Danish SCENATET ensemble, who played absolutely exquisitely. At its very end, the piece concluded with the clarinet holding a long A while the strings tuned. Then stop: a humorous inversion of the usual order.

As is usual for Kammerklang shows, the evening began with a 'Fresh Klang', on this occasion a performance by Joseph Houston of Antonia Barnett-McIntosh's *The thing is, I think* for piano and electronics. In the foreground this was a mix of field recordings, voice overs and sonic ephemera (including late-night philosophizing about originality on the internet, and a game of 'I went to the moon'). In the background Houston added minimal (but not Minimalist) piano shadings, a sort of musical backdrop against which we could try to connect the disparate recorded sounds. Oddly compelling.

Tim Rutherford-Johnson

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London Contemporary Music Festival

Does intimacy have anything to do with music? Music – especially acoustic chamber music – is regularly, even unthinkingly, labelled intimate. The implications of this common-enough usage were the major preoccupation of the most recent London Contemporary Music Festival. With multiple images and varieties of intimacy foregrounded – bodily, sexual, aural, psychological, somnolent – Igor Toronyi Lalic's curation was masterful. By turns provocative, baffling, emotional and ear-averting, not without some irony, the concerts were held in a vast underground concrete room.

After a week of such a curatorial blizzard, I think I feel that music is not directly capable of intimacy, as opposed, say, to creating an 'image' of intimacy. Not that the music on show during the festival was alienating or distant – rather, it came to reinforce that music's capabilities seem peculiarly musical. Music is stubbornly and redolently itself.

To put it more explicitly: music is particular in being something simultaneously distant and interior. It happens both 'far away' (in space or time; or on the other side of an enormous room), and, at the same moment, 'within oneself': within the mental theatre of one's head. Intimacy – sexual intimacy – is conversely neither 'over there', nor 'inside the head', but more in the immediate vicinity: one person, dissolving into another person, a dilution of self as one approaches the other, a closeness. Is music capable of dilution in the same way? Often without meaning to, music can reinforce difference: between listener and performer, or listener and sound. Between one group of 'insider' listeners, and another group further away.

If music *can* dilute or dissolve, it's through the experience of collective listening. Music can dissolve the ego and make you one with the mass. Allegedly. Perhaps I'm a party-pooper (or an introvert with an allergy to crowds), but such notions and uses of listening are admittedly a little repellent to me. It doesn't seem much fun to be engulfed by a mass – and neither is 'being engulfed' all that great a justification for music existing, or for wanting to listen to it.

Suffice it to say, music is different from sex – though it can definitely feel sometimes rather like it. The moment during the festival that came closest for me was the striking impression of having music played not so much 'to', as 'on' you. As part of Neo Hülcker and Stellan Veloce's *Ear Action*, Otto Wilberg bowed and scraped a set of ear defenders on my head. This might have been the most chill-inducing, terrifying-yet-exhilarating aural experience I can remember. Otto is a great improviser and bass player and hence has both a good sense of pace, and beastlike bowing capabilities. But this wasn't beastly; it was gentle, yet firm and unrelenting.

This year, the London Contemporary Music Festival was ambitious, rivaling its last large-scale incarnation in 2015. That year had included a number of notable guest artists – Pauline Oliveros, Morton Subotnik, Otis O'Solomon. This year attempted by turns to match this, with guests such as Joan Le Barbara, Philip Corner and Yasunao Tone.

Following a sort of festival prologue, Ragnar Kjartansson's day-long expansion of Schubert's

An die Musik, the first evening concert was an exploration of the American composer Robert Ashley. A quite singular musician, Ashley is rarely heard in performance in the UK, possibly due to his music's reliance on his lugubrious Michigan idiolect. His pieces are also scored quite unconventionally, often very loosely, relying on much improvisation.

The concert began with two tape compositions of Ashley's from the sixties. *Purposeful Lady, Slow Afternoon*, an unnerving narrative of a sexual encounter, is sparse, extraordinarily tense. A baptism of frigid, alkaline water, and a provocative if not anxiety-inducing introduction to the festival. Given the eerily timely context (following revelations about Weinstein, Spacey, et al.) the atmosphere was fraught. Ashley's text is intoned slowly, with a kind of blankness, and many pauses:

> I remember one time he put his finger between my legs and got it wet and tried to put that finger in my mouth.
>
> I remember he put all of his fingers in my mouth and pushed down on my tongue.
>
> It made a lot of water come in my mouth, and he wouldn't let me swallow.
>
> I remember he had his tongue in my mouth and he opened his pants.
>
> It was awkward for him.

At the same time, slow, major-triad arpeggios from a glockenspiel, and occasional downwardly drifting pitch-shifted groans. The piece (originally part of Ashley's 1967 music theatre work *That Morning Thing*,[1] written after several of his female friends, unknown to one another, died by suicide) is one of few pieces I can think of that so heart-stoppingly convey the numb horror of emotional and sexual abuse.[2]

Ashley's son Sam was in town to give performances of two more recent pieces on the programme – the first was *World War Three (Just the Highlights)*, from 2010. What begins as a slightly cantankerous broadside about the San Francisco opera morphs into a disquisition on El Cid and Valencia, replete with ringing quasi-biblical phrasing. This against a background of lightly amplified vocal whooshing. Given Sam Ashley's dishevelled appearance, and the whole piece's vague association with growing older, the ending had some poignancy: 'Two thousand steps between home and the grocery store … equals five thousand feet, or almost a mile, to get beer (non-alcoholic) for reasons of health, and tequila, for other reasons'.

A highlight, and personal favourite of Ashley's pieces, was *Tap Dancing on the Sand* (2004). A kind of lyrical quasi-muzak, with musings on breakfast in the Holiday Inn and Cicero and other rhetoricians, against parallel major-seventh harmony and speech-like doodling in most of the melodic instruments. At the halfway mark: 'I think I understand that now', followed by another ten-or-so minutes of instrumental melodic 'speaking'.

Ashley's music is like no one else's. Its enigmatic musicality is greatly tied up in speech – a kind of speech that can be as lyrical as it is maddeningly difficult to pin down or even simply follow. The evening concluded with a showing of a part of probably his best-known work, *Perfect Lives*, his first opera designed expressly for television. (It was broadcast on Channel Four in the mid-eighties.) Ashley's 'operatic' speech, while often hypnotic, is not gratuitous stream-of-consciousness. At least in the case of *Perfect Lives*, his writing could be closer to Da Ponte for all its internal symmetry. And yet, *Perfect Lives* is effortlessly hallucinatory, prefiguring the television of David Lynch, while making it look a little tame in comparison.[3]

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The next day began with the barrage of unrelenting nineties-ness that is John Oswald's *Plexure*: a wild, acrid fever dream, with frenetic quotation and cascading backbeats aplenty. Oswald's is the kind of insistent 'fun' that is wilfully unendurable.

Anton Lukoszevieze's new piece *Dirty Angels* for Apartment House (who were shouldering practically all of the chamber music performance duties – with great skill) was also a highlight, with its innocence and glissandi and prepared piano and almost-inaudible clarinet. It was like a forgotten gift from some undefinable experimental-music past. Later, Sarah Hughes' new text score *I Stay Joined* seemed to come from a similar place, though maybe more dissolved. A mobile, featuring slow changing pitches and interruptions and chirrups from winds and horn, liable sometimes to occasional ill-judgment of pace from the musicians, with flute a little too obtrusive. Apartment House also presented (the previous day) Toshi Ichiniyagi's *Sapporo*, from 1962. A

[1] A 2011 performance of this piece, at The Kitchen in New York, can be seen here: https://vimeo.com/39447038. The section excerpted as *Purposeful Lady* begins at 28:20.

[2] See also Kyle Gann, *Robert Ashley* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012).

[3] A 2016 performance of Ashley's final project, *Quicksand*, is documented here: https://vimeo.com/157963715

(semi-)graphic score, it managed to sound both vintage in its pointillism, and sensuous, darkly glamorous, with vocalisations and slow glissandi, much in the same world as the other two pieces mentioned.

Jack Sheen's new work *Slow Motion Romantics vol. II* was like a slice of Ives, though it chose to stay for a long time in its initial dense bath. Later it ended up in a sombre coda, full of striking combinations of distant horn and low flute, the piano skittling around like a broken cimbalom. Sheen is Apartment House's go-to conductor since last year or so: boyish, confident, full of appendicular fluidity, not understated, maybe overbearing or cocky; the music is like that.

What stole the show for me was Philip Thomas's performance of Ustvolskaya's *Sonata No. 6* (1988). Menacing fists have never been so lyrical, the piece being inspired programming in this giant concrete room. Stunning and unexpectedly quiet chords emerge in the middle, not offering resolution, so much as a different look at the same interiority. Only Ustvolskaya could do interiority with five *f*s. It dwarfs much else.

Elizabeth S. Clark's *Book Concerto*, also presented in this concert, rather passed me by. Standing on a platform with a book as if to give a sermon, Sheen demonstrated to the performers (made up of friends recruited at the last minute) when to open, when to turn pages. A crowd of people read from the collected writings of Robert Smithson. I couldn't quite see what the idea was. It rather turned those writings into gospel, or teffilah – or at least did so inadvertently. It was also, conventionally, in three movements (do not break i.e. three contiguous sections), with a cadenza at the end – of whoever happened to be reading the slowest.

The second day ended with the extraordinary spectacle of Yasonao Tone. Throughout the evening, he had been quietly wandering around the hall. When he emerged at the front, he was wearing a straw hat and smiling. Given his reputation for loudness – and our having been given earplugs – the tension was palpable. The music that followed – *AI Deviation v1* and *v2* – began not with a crash but with a whisper: for what felt to be an age, the heavily amplified noise floor, and the occasional isolated bloop. Then, finally, came snarling and wailing the most undiluted electronic caustic soda one could ask for, all issued smilingly, as Yasuano Tone showed us his laptop screen like a mad uncle displaying his recent holiday snaps. The computer, which was generating the sounds through some complicated process unseen, was using visual data from the audience itself to alter the sounds' development. As audience members waved, or jumped, or threw sweaters in the air, so occasional yelps and screeches would bubble up, or some marginal difference in texture introduced. Because the computer needed light, the house lights were turned up brightly – a contrast to much else at LCMF, typically conducted in a half-light with everyone looking more fashionable and attractive. Now, one could see everybody, all resplendent (or not, as the case may be) in their respective outfits. My ears hurting – and brain melting – I ended up listening on the gantry.

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I remember once after a concert in 2015 that Bryn Harrison had said the LCMF crowd was the perfect audience. Someone else happily agreed: it was exactly the sort of crowd one would be absolutely 'happy to have sex with'. Svelte and urbane, with great clothes and skin, it is not so old as to be discouraging, and not so young as to make one feel unwelcome. But then, even this cultivated gathering does have its pales for things to get beyond. It's possible that Carolee Schneemann's *Fuses* (1967, the opening item on day four) was one of these.

Fuses is an extraordinary film – not subtle, not short, but still remarkable. I was familiar with it, though only to the extent that I had seen the godawful digital transfer hosted on Ubuweb. This was a crisp and exciting celluloid projection, radiant in colour, its radical display of transcendent heterosexuality still as arresting as it must have been 50 years ago. For this roomful of composer-types, it was quite something to spend a long half-hour with (her then partner) James Tenney's not-inconsiderably proportioned penis – replete with hyper-closeups of scrotum follicles, twitching in the arc light. All the while the half-observant gaze of Schneemann and Tenney's stoic cat Kitch.[4]

Tenney's own composition *Saxony* (1978), for string quartet and resonance, followed. Richly coloured, though slow, it pales a bit compared to the Schneemann. Squaring Tenney's nerdish compositions with Schneemann's work is sometimes a puzzle. It's not as if Tenney couldn't make things that were sensuous – albeit sensuous-by-way-of Bell Labs – but there is a kind of extraordinary gratuitousness and abandon to Schneemann's pieces (cf. *Meat Joy*) essentially absent from the careful Tenney. Tenney's

[4] Carolee Schneemann discusses the making of *Fuses* here: https://vimeo.com/6399005.

world is a world of on-paper relationships brought to life. Schneeman's world is the world *out there*, brought indoors for a while.

Also performed by the Apartment House string quartet were pieces by John Lely, Tom Nixon and Jürg Frey. Nixon's *Digestive Music* from 1974 was an amiable double-duo, with half the ensemble being the inversion of the other. Mostly pizzicato, it repeated periodically, wandering. (Nixon was unknown to me.) John Lely's *Slow Movement for Strings* (2005) does exactly what it says: around five minutes of a single bow movement, with overpressure. Like Robert Ashley's string quartet (which does similar things, albeit heavily amplified), and like Lely's other piece *The Harmonics of Real Strings*, this is music that reveals the infinity of detail within a single gesture.

Jürg Frey's *String Quartet no. 2* was one of the highly anticipated moments of the night. The Bozzini quartet are the usual performers of Frey's quartets, and, as they rarely perform in London, this piece has previously been unheard live in the city. It is music that, like Lely's, has an infinity of translucent detail, as if looking at a quartzite crystal lattice. Distant even from as close as six feet away, it is simple, chordal music, yet somehow unfathomable. On this occasion there was a certain sense of dread and pessimism, much more than I'd heard previously on recording.

Also programmed on day three were a few more performative pieces. Pan Daijing's set (that actually ended this concert) involved a charged physicality, by turns muscular, solemn, playful and dark. Maya Verlaak and Andy Ingamells' *Tape Piece* – which requires performers to wrap themselves up in sellotape and then extricate themselves – also proved something of a hit. Full disclosure: I had performed this piece with Jack Sheen in Manchester a few weeks earlier; on that occasion it had been a kind of awkward if affectionate fumble. Here it was slicker, sexier, more professional even, though maybe less cute.

Kajsa Magnarsson's two performances were also sexually charged, the first (*Testet–Vinklar*, 2013) in a rubber burkha – or perhaps full body condom? Visually arresting, but sonically uninteresting, and long. The second performance involved her playing a guitar on the floor with a strap-on dildo. This kind of performance was suggestive of certain performance pieces of the sixties, such as Shigeko Kubota's 1965 *Vagina Painting*, or Nam June Paik's 1967 collaboration with Charlotte Moorman on *Opera Sextronique* (for which Moorman was arrested and made to spend a night in a cell). Magnarsson's performance has a kind of pedigree, then, where artistic expression comes directly from the sex organs (or a prosthetic), or the musical instrument becomes sexualised. Historically, in women's hands, most musical instruments were held to be at best immodest, if not sexually suggestive.

If music does have something to do with intimacy, perhaps it is the intimacy between player and *instrument* that is most vivid (and most easy to overlook). The instrument as a kind of artificial orgasming object, responding to fingering and stroking and blowing, yearning and whining and vibrating, requiring its partner to contort and comfort and tighten and loosen and wipe and clean and look-after. Magnussen's guitar-via-strap-on does something to reinforce the prosthetic sexuality already latent in almost all musical performance.

Day five consisted of two films. The first, *Somniloquies* (2017), directed by Véréna Paravel and Lucien Castaing-Taylor, was a remarkable montage of monologues by the prolific sleep-talker Dion McGregor, juxtaposed with always slightly-out-of-focus footage of sleeping people. If the footage was maddening, bordering on annoying, it was made up for by the sleeping genius of McGregor, whose surrealisms were completely real – for no one tells lies when they're sleeping. One narrative involved his advocacy of the 'fuck wagon' – something like a bookmobile, but for sex, that had apparently proved popular in his area. Though, as it turned out, it was only the most popular of a slew of such wagons passing through on different days: the 'suck wagon', 'masturbation wagon', 'tit wagon', the 'watch wagon' (for voyeurs), the 'twat wagon'.[5] (The sleeping McGregor caught the spirit of this year's LCMF admirably.) Other equally vivid sleeping essays concerned self-vivisection, outlined in glistening detail. The sleeping McGregor was eminently quotable: 'The present is squalid! I've seen the past – I hate it! I want the future'.

This was followed by Annie Sprinkle's instructional-video-as-artwork, with music by Pauline Oliveros, and directed by Maria Beatty. Deliciously of its time, Sprinkle's sex-positive philosophy and spirituality betrays the contentions of that period – one can almost sense her contemporary, anti-porn feminist audience. As an artist, porn performer and intellectual (she has a doctorate in

[5] From liner notes to *Dion McGregor Dreams Again*, Tzadik Records, B00000I0FN, 1999, www.songpoemmusic.com/dion/chapters/wagon.htm.

human sexuality), Sprinkle was enormously groundbreaking. Her *Post Porn Modernism* performance from 1989 involved the audience being invited to shine flashlights into her vagina, into which she had inserted a speculum. This film – *The Sluts and Goddesses Video Workshop: Or How To Be A Sex Goddess in 101 Easy Steps* – was replete with bluescreen demonstration sequences, in a vibrantly nineties Kodachrome colour scheme, demonstrating the varieties of gender play, or how best to finger a clitoris, or how to flagellate with birch leaves. The (literal) climax of the film is an extraordinary sequence where Sprinkle and two other women demonstrate the 'mega-gasm': a rolling orgasm, diagrammed in real time using an animated line graph. While the orange line wiggles up and down according to orgasmic energy, Sprinkle screams gutterally while being doubly finger-fucked. All the while underlaid by Oliveros' whining sampled voices and skittering electronics. Extraordinary, it has to be seen to be believed.

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'Was that it? I thought it was supposed to be 15 minutes?!' So blurted-out Philip Corner after seeing a small boy, no more than six, adorably perform Alison Knowles' *Child Art Piece* (1964). For all of maybe 30 seconds, he waggled his leg in the air behind him. Corner and his partner Phoebe Neville made up the main act of the first half of day six, enacting their 'ritual' pieces, including *Reverence to the Piano (Namaste)*, bowing to and rotating the piano, *Buddha's Flower Sutra*, adorning it with flower petals, *Petali Pianissimo*, dropping the petals on the keyboard and playing with the emergent pitches. A new work *BowwoW* explored the richness and granularity of friction on the piano strings and innards. Corner also framed unrelentingly lugubrious music of Erik Satie (as *Until You Can't Take It Anymore*) ending with a deathly slamming of the piano lid. At times Corner and Neville felt like creatures from another age, air-lifted from sixties California – though in fact they have lived outside of America (in Italy) for decades. LCMF occasionally feels curiously retro, even old fashioned. While this isn't by any means a bad thing, it occasionally catches one off-guard.

Elaine Mitchener's set, which made up the second half, was a musical tour-de-force. Accompanied by luminaries of the current UK jazz scene – Byron Wallen, Jason Yarde, Mark Sanders, Neil Charles, Robert Mitchell, all quite remarkable musicians – the set ranged from spoken word, featuring poet Dante Micheaux, to often-strikingly chaotic and angular improv. There was much to take in. Highlights for me included Archie Shepp's *On This Night (If That Great Day Would Come)* (1965), abject in its evocation of W.E.B. Du Bois: 'Justice is our avenging angel … Behold the blood from my brothers' veins …We cannot bend down, we must all be as one'. Alongside Mitchener's invocations was an angular, almost dodecaphonic melodic unison from the ensemble, the piece ending with a chorale and a poignant flute solo. The more surrealistic language of Joseph Jarman's *Non-Cognitive Aspects of the City* (1966) was also striking: 'Gravestones, or ginger cakes? … The Church pronouncing the hell of where we are'. The set ended with Dante Micheaux's voice echoing 'Doom!', alongside a particularly apocalyptic improvised barrage. Throughout this emotionally charged set (especially given the year that was 2017), the musicians showed stellar musicianship and inventiveness; a standing ovation followed.

Moor Mother's (aka Camae Ayewa) set, which closed, was also quite extraordinary. A mix of apocalypse, darkness and desperation, as well as afrofuturist anticipation, Moor Mother's music is a revelation: 'We disappear, losing ourselves, or find ourselves murdered. … The end of the world has already happened, and every day, somebody else figures it out.' Possibly the highlight of the whole week.

The final concert of the festival also featured vocal music, beginning with songs of Chris Newman, backed up by Apartment House. (With no cello required, Anton Lukoszevieze sat on a sofa to the left of the stage reading a book.) Newman – usually cantankerous, bordering on Beethovenian misanthropy – was on this evening in high spirits, despite looking battered and bandaged, having walked into a door, or a fist (he couldn't remember). Newman's songs date from the eighties, and have that kind of low-rent punkishness redolent of the period; at the same time they are resolutely square and unhip. (His band was called Janet Smith.)

Wearing his uniform of white suit and socks, every song was insistently counted off with a wonderful lack of innate musicality. 'Come away sweet love', belted out in a strangled falsetto, quickly turning Newman a deep puce; or 'Art!', sung repeatedly. Newman's lyrics and music have a lopsided, sometimes alarming, innocence: 'I have dandruff in my hair / I would like to know who put it there'. 'I know a mentally handicapped person, and he never goes to the toilet by himself'. 'Mushrooms on toast / is the most I can boast. … When I close my eyes, I can't see very far / I can't see you or me, I cannot see a car'. And the quite

inspired 'My wife is French. (She's French, she's French.) And I always know, wherever she goes, she's French wherever she goes'. Newman also read a selection of recent poems, all in rhyming couplets, most quite autobiographical. In an alternative universe, where Chris Newman is a famous person, he would have his own reality show and celebrity memoir.

Joan Le Barbara's set followed, and sadly passed me by a little. Her recent piece, *Solitary Journeys of the Mind* (2011) wavered between yodels, warbling, fry with changing formants, babbling, harmonic singing and low-octave multiphonics. It sounded a little dated, if not troublingly exoticist. She also presented her 1980 piece *Erin*, prefacing it by mentioning that it had been recently featured in Johann Johannssen's soundtrack for the film *Arrival*: fast layers of babbling, low multiphonics, with ambient drones bare and fragmented at the end. The other piece she sang, *Windows* (2013–17) utilised tape too, with animal sounds, drones, water, bells, and breathing. It was a little new age-y for my taste.

The final set of the festival featured Yeah You. Their brand of noise pop has a vaguely adolescent, shouty quality, thanks in part to the singer Elvin Brandhi (aka Freya Edmondes). The father–daughter grouping, especially given the surrounding melee of wiring and patchboards, couldn't help but bring to mind teams from Robot Wars. This is vicarious, even vicious stuff: menacingly chromatic midi organ, percussive stabs, screeching and shouting, heavy distortion – and somewhere an EDM track buried in the midst of it all. But this is uneasy music, refusing straightforward digestion. Such was the whole festival.

Lawrence Dunn

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Ultraschall Berlin

In an industry where the brand new and the first performance are fixated upon, Ultraschall Berlin is to be applauded for being less interested in presenting a glut of premieres than in cultivating a twenty-first-century tradition. At this year's festival, its twentieth edition, only a quarter of the 69 works performed were world premieres, with just four of them commissioned by the two organisations presenting the festival, state broadcasters rbb and Deutschlandfunk Kultur.

The programme of the 2018 festival covered just over half a decade of music history, with most works dating from the last 10 years. It is therefore useful to reflect on the kind of canon that we are tuning into from the white noise of the recent past. On the face of it, it is broadly international, with composers at Ultraschall hailing from 26 countries across four continents, although many of them have studied at German-speaking universities. The gender ratio, however, is disheartening: just over a fifth of composers performed are female. This just about hits the average for European contemporary music festivals.[1] But on gender equality, hitting the average is no longer good enough. Numbers don't tell the whole story, but here the facts are stark, the conclusion unavoidable.

The festival was bookended by large-scale orchestral repertoire in two performances by the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin at the Haus des Rundfunks. In the first, Heinz Holliger – who has now swapped his oboe for the conductor's baton – led the orchestra and soloist Thomas Zehetmair in his own Violin Concerto (1993–95, rev. 2002); actually more a concerto grosso for violin, harp, marimba and cimbalom, a smart way of finding new niches in an over-familiar genre. The work is both an act of homage to and musical biography of Swiss painter Louis Soutter. It begins at the turn of the twentieth century, when Soutter was a violinist and student of Eugene Ysaÿe; the opening movement is a refraction of post-Romantic style, with echoes of Debussy and quotations from Ysaÿe's third violin sonata threaded into disparate ensemble gestures coagulating around the violin. Soutter's deteriorating mental health is reflected in the middle movements by a deepening musical complexity, with intricate harmony and tricksy rhythmic figures matched by a fragmented orchestration. The high intellectualism of Holliger's musical language was often alienating and at times came across as artifice, compounded by a performance which lacked clarity, with the orchestra struggling to unpick the knotty instrumental writing. Yet in the final movement, added to the piece a decade later, Holliger offered something arresting and unique. A murky wind chorale stirs in the depths, upon which the violin spins ghostly fluttering figures, evoking the haunted monochrome figures of Soutter's startling late paintings, and pointing towards a less artificial, more naturalistic musical style.

[1] See www.newmusic.report for a comprehensive analysis, or rather a wall of shame, of the gender balance at major European festivals.