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**HUDDERSFIELD**

Matteo Cesari

*The relation to the source*

## a brief interpreter's experience of Darmstadt 2008-2010

The **Darmstädter Ferienkurse für Neue Musik** is a kind of obligatory step for those with a burning interest in that which can be described with the (purely chronological) category *contemporary music*.

The reasons for participation in such an event can be multi-faceted. Personally, I was driven by my circumstances as a young interpreter who, having found a repertoire I wished to dedicate myself to, desired to learn as much as I possibly could about this new world of music. Darmstadt offers the possibility of bringing together, within a limited space, well-known interpreters and composers, allowing participants to take advantage of various masterclasses, concerts and conferences scheduled as part of this historic festival.

One of the primary roles of the festival is to increase the visibility within the contemporary music panorama of a number of remarkable interpreters and composers, re-inviting them to the next edition of the festival and awarding, in some special cases, the **Kranichsteiner Musikpreis**, an historical prize that has been awarded to some of the most renowned composers and interpreters in the current international contemporary music scene.

There are only really three competitions open to interpreters that are exclusively devoted to contemporary music: the **International competition of Interpretation of contemporary music** in Krakow, the **Gaudeamus** competition in Amsterdam, and Darmstadt.

The Krakow and Gaudeamus prizes are first and foremost 'real' competitions in every respect, while Darmstadt is not. Rather, it's envisaged primarily as a forum for the exchange of different thoughts and personalities.

Despite Darmstadt's essence not being one of competition, I had certainly approached it this way when I first attended in 2008. I suspect that this desire to be heard, and to receive the sort of prize and recognition with which to help launch a promising career is a familiar one to many interpreters.

But I discovered that the opportunity offered by Darmstadt was not just the coveted award but, more importantly, the possibility of meeting and sharing ideas with the younger generation of composers along with some of the most important composers of our time. Principle among these was, for me, Brian Ferneyhough.

My initial attraction to Ferneyhough's music arose from a desire to approach this repertoire which, even though absolutely idiomatically composed for the instrument, retains an aura of technical 'impossibility'. Furthermore, it has still only been approached by a limited number of interpreters. More than this 'simple' interest in extreme situations of performance, though, my affinity for Ferneyhough's music comes from its engagement with the perception by interpreters and listeners of complex musical objects and its deep musicality, even though this arises through extremely highly-developed structures.

In 2008 I attended the flute classes given by Carin Levine. For 2010, Levine was replaced by Eva Furrer, due to the change in the Director of the Festival (Solf Schäfer in 2008 and Thomas Schäfer in 2010). It was through this class that I was able to develop a deeply fruitful collaboration with Fer-

neyhough, which has continued to be a defining factor for me as an interpreter. This collaboration has resulted in a close knowledge of his works for solo instrument (which will eventually end up in a recording), as well as other benefits, such as the invitation to deliver a paper during a symposium on Ferneyhough's work hosted by the University of London, a day-long symposium – including concert – dedicated to the music of Brian Ferneyhough, and held in the same week as the Barbican's *Total Immersion: Brian Ferneyhough*, resulting in a sort of mini-festival.

As part of the work of interpretation, which can be assisted by meeting directly with the composer, the performer has the chance or, even better, the *duty*, to deeply understand the central concerns in the composer's employment of a specific language. During Darmstadt, this is emphasised through its dedication to the conceptual aspect of music through seminars, lectures and meetings. However, in 2010, participants were allowed to take part directly in a day's programming. Called the *Open space* project, this programme allowed participants to use almost an entire building to organise different sorts of events, including performances, presentations, round-table discussions and lectures. It's important to understand how this is envisaged to assist interpreters, though: it is not simply an additional space to give performances, but rather a venue for verbal and musical exchange to take place. In this way, interpreters were encouraged to start a number of series of discussions about interpretation concerning a repertoire that doesn't yet have a performance tradition.

A place of such historical importance as the Darmstadt festival is a reference-point for the sharing and dissemination of the musical sense of our time. Understandably for an event so charged with history, the festival needed to reinvent and renew itself: not simply through increasing the number of invited artists, but by restoring the origins that made the festival so important in the first instance. Regardless of whether one is an interpreter or a composer, participants must take advantage of the opportunity and welcome the responsibility it offers: a relationship to the source of musical thought is essential to the aim to share, to understand and to develop our heritage, our present and our future.

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**Matteo Cesari:** Following flute and university studies in Italy and in Strasbourg with Mario Caroli, Matteo Cesari is at present a doctoral student at the Conservatoire de Paris, studying with Sophie Cherrier and pursuing research on perception in the works of Brian Ferneyhough and Salvatore Sciarrino.

Matteo Cesari has won numerous awards including the *Kranichsteiner Musikpreis* in Darmstadt. M. Cesari has performed extensively as a soloist and as a member of the ensemble *Itinéraire*. He has worked side by side with leading contemporary composers giving premières of their music; among them Salvatore Sciarrino, Ivan Fedele, Brian Ferneyhough, Bruno Mantovani, Stefano Gervasoni and Michael Finnissy.