

## Donaueschinger Musiktage 2010 - review

Arditti Quartet/JACK Quartet/Quatuor Diotima, etc (Neos, four CDs)

**Andrew Clements**

Thursday 15 December 2011 22.30 GMT

Each year, Neos releases a compilation of recordings from the summer school held in the Black Forest town of Donaueschingen, Europe's longest established and arguably still most important new-music festival. The 2010 programme, documented in the latest set, put a special emphasis on new works for string quartet, with the Arditti, JACK and Diotima quartets all in residence, and two of the four discs are devoted to their performances. One work, James Dillon's Sixth Quartet, was played by all three groups, and their three performances follow one another on the first disc. They are markedly different - the Arditti take almost three minutes longer over the quarter-hour piece than the Diotima, who give what is Dillon's most tautly compressed quartet so far a wispy, quicksilver intelligence; the harder-edged JACK performance comes in between. That disc also includes Philippe Manoury's first quartet *Stringendo*, played by the Ardittis, who also introduced Brian Ferneyhough's rather impenetrable Sixth Quartet at the Musiktage. As well as the Ferneyhough, there are pieces by Ondřej Adámek and Aaron Cassidy on the second disc, but the highlight is Alberto Posadas's *Del Reflejo de la Sombra* for bass clarinet and quartet (Alain Billard with the Diotima), which infiltrates the woodwind instrument into the string textures in a way that strikingly reconfigures the conventional sonorities of the clarinet quintet.

The second half of the set is made up of orchestral and ensemble pieces. Marco Stroppa's basset horn concerto *Let Me Sing into Your Ear* is yet another unremarkable work by the fiftysomething Italian composer that fails to show why he is so highly regarded in some quarters, while *Radiographie d'Un Roman*, for choir, accordion, ensemble and electronics by the veteran Vinko Globokar is a bit of a trip down memory lane, back to the anything-goes avant garde of the 1960s. Simon Steen-Andersen's *Double Up* for small orchestra and sampled sounds is memorable in a nagging sort of way, but Georg Friedrich Haas's *Limited Approximations*, a concerto for six pianos tuned in 12th-tone temperament (which divides each octave up into 72 equal steps) is the most ambitious, and in many ways most extraordinary, work in the set. Preceded by two pieces by the pioneer of microtonal music, Ivan Wyschnegradsky, Haas's half-hour piece is full of striking harmonic effects and shapes that constantly shift and evolve, sometimes occupying recognisable musical territory but often moving into regions that seem totally unexplored.

**Since you're here...**

...we have a small favour to ask. More people are reading the Guardian than ever but far fewer are paying for it. And advertising revenues across the media are falling fast. So you can see why we need to ask for your help. The Guardian's independent, investigative journalism takes a lot of time, money and hard work to produce. But we do it because we believe our perspective matters - because it might well be your perspective, too.

If everyone who reads our reporting, who likes it, helps to pay for it, our future would be much more secure.

[Become a Supporter](#)

[Make a contribution](#)

[More album reviews](#)

## Topics

[Classical music](#)

[Reuse this content](#)