

CLASSICAL

Classical review: Ives Ensemble; Philip Glass Ensemble; BBC Philharmonic

An ear-cleansing new violin concerto trumps a numbing evening of Philip Glass

Paul Driver

Modern music's diversity can be a touch bewildering. I experienced three substantial samples across a week in London and Manchester, and couldn't but feel the approaches to discourse were indeed many miles apart. At the Purcell Room, the Ives Ensemble, from Holland, presented an evening of mostly recent music by Richard Rijnvos (b1964). Then came the Philip Glass Ensemble at the Barbican, with a single early work by him, *Music with Changing Parts* (1970), making an unbroken 90-minute concert.

Rijnvos's three works, very distinct, attested an ingenious musical mind. *Riflesso sul tasto*, for three players (2007), and *Riflesso sulla spazio*, for seven players (2019), are respectively the first and latest of his series of constructive "reflections" on 20th-century classics. The first, 14 minutes long, is a commentary on Stockhausen's *Refrain* (1959) and deploys the same tintinnabulatory trio of vibraphone/glockenspiel, celesta and piano to felicitous, vigorous effect. The second was a 40-minute, darker, rather minimalist study on Schoenberg's *Op 29 Suite* for clarinets, strings and piano — an unusual septet scoring, now endowed with a completely new character.

In between was a still more minimalist reflection, not part of the so-titled series, called *Das Wohlpräparierte Klavier* (2018): an 18-minute accompaniment, for five players, to Adam Barker-Mill's video of the ensemble's pianist-founder, John Snijders, laboriously "preparing" a piano with nuts and bolts for a performance of John Cage's *Sonatas and Interludes*.

We were in truly experimental territory here, the music consisting somewhat nebulously of tones and overtones drawn from the letter-pitches of Cage's name.