

The Wire
(march 2011)

Giuliano d'Angiolini
Simmetrie di ritorno
Edition RZ CD

RZ more than make up in quality what they lack in quantity of releases, and have a rare knack of locating little-known composers of distinction. Giuliano d'Angiolini is one. All we're told is that he was born in Rome in 1960, and lives in Paris. No dates for his compositions are given, but the recordings date from the last decade. He's developed what he calls "impersonal music", that abandons the idea of development or form, and focuses on the surface and the present, as the sleeve-note comments: musical process and material are but one and are completely laid bare. What we are to hear is "non-discursive, deliberately lacking formal organization". This is a peculiarly modern artistic dream, and an unrealisable one. If music is produced intentionally, as it must to be music, there's inevitably a form.

But if the value of an idea is the art it produces, it's fully vindicated in the uncanny, gentle, yet quirky compelling pieces here.

There's repetition of ideas, but as the approach might suggest, little in the way of development. Larger ensemble pieces are performed by Ensemble 2e2m, beginning with "Simmetrie di ritorno" which presents "scraps of Tournai Mass" - an anonymous 14th century setting - through its haunting, pause-filled progress. "Orizzonte fisso, bordoni mobili" (steady horizon, floating drones") is more droning, pitching an instrumental ensemble against traffic noise, but d'Angiolini plays with the idea of noise as one of the voices (there's also some audience noise on the recording, which presumably isn't a "voice" like the traffic). The final ensemble piece, "Und'ho d'andà" for horns, is gently rambling, as cheerfully and seriously inane as Satie. There are two solo pieces. The fragmented and interrupted "Ita vita zita rita" for piano, performed by Monique Bouvet, draws on overtones in its sparse chording. "Ho visto un incidente" for vocalist (Barbara Morihien) is a Scelsi-like, pause-filled monody. The fugitive sounds of "Notturmo in progression", for string quartet, conclude the disc; Every piece here is a jewel that invites and rewards intense contemplation.

Andy Hamilton