

**Christian Marclay/
Otomo Yoshihide/
Keiji Haino**
at: Tokyo Opera City

coincide with the opening of its new art
 ry, Tokyo Opera City killed two birds with
 stone when they brought in sound artist
 turntablist Christian Marclay. The gallery
 tion, *Releasing Senses*, got a Marclay
 lation of 13 500 CDs stuck to its floor;
 he was also here to perform in a line-up
 n had all the makings of an avant supertrio.
 show, it failed to live up to its promise.
 oyo Opera City is one of those multi-
 ose edifices to commerce and culture
 n Japan does so well: coolly minimal,
 tifully bland. Deep within it, Marclay,
 o Yoshihide and Keiji Haino literally
 d the tables, offering a sound that was
 free/postmodern and confined/
 spective. At times it was reminiscent of
 l or This Heat. The stage itself was a
 s, a playground of turntables (Marclay's
 ent versus Otomo's state of the art),
 ussion, shortwave radios, bits of metal,
 mbodied speakers, a guitar, cymbals,
 o's hurdy-gurdy, an array of old and new.
 e show was divided into three parts:
 ay first paired up with Yoshihide, then
 Haino, and finally all three played



her. The heightened crackle of Marclay's
 ymous slabs of vinyl, often played at a
 ling 16 rpm, provided an edgy foundation
 otomo's contrasting digital staps of sound.
 Haino things got more elemental:
 sionally he disappeared from sight,
 pling around on the floor, scraping tiny
 ers over a drumskin, then howling like a
 ee before attacking some indescribable
 contraption with a violin bow. But things
 took off when they came together as a
 gain, you couldn't take your eyes off
 . While the other two were trapped
 d their decks, the man in black flailed
 d centre stage, strangling his hurdy-
 and letting the moment take him.
 en as a whole, strangled was the
 tive word. Vinyl throttled to a crackle, a
 duced to half a second of signal, even
 's vocals seemed choked. On the one
 this was welcome — an exercise in
 int, forgoing the temptation to slide into

unsophisticated cacophony. And yet the
 concert could have done with a bit of entropy.

Although you could hardly say the evening's
 performance was minimal, it did conceivably
 reflect a current interest in paring music down
 to its most rudimentary elements, especially in
 Otomo's case (his sinewave fixated ISO trio
 with Sachiko M appears to be bent on
 draining the tonal colour out of music).
 Releasing senses? Perhaps not enough.

DAVID ELLIOTT

Lucerne International Festival of Music Switzerland: Lucerne various venues

Last year, Lucerne's International Festival of
 Music celebrated its 60th birthday by moving
 into its new concert hall, designed by French
 architect Jean Nouvel, on the bank of a lake
 called Vierwaldenstattersee. The building's
 extended roof shelters an interior that is
 something like a womb within a postmodernist
 puzzle full of right angles and industrial
 references. But the concert hall itself is housed
 within a warm, rounded wooden enclosure,
 and music, say romantics, is the beating heart
 within the machine. Inside, the hall has an
 acoustic most musicians would die for. Well,
 Nouvel did work — and fight — to get it right
 with an acoustician, Russell Johnson, who had
 previously served as a consultant at concert
 halls in Birmingham and Dallas.

Once it had moved into its gleaming modern
 home the festival's organisers set about
 modernising its programme so the music
 wouldn't feel out of place, this year bringing in
 the likes of The Kronos Quartet, Georgian
 composer Giya Kancheli, theatre producer
 Robert Wilson, all-American minimalist John
 Adams and the German Ensemble Modern.
 Not a bad update for a festival which began life
 shortly before the Second World War on the
 lawn of the house at Tribschen, where Richard
 Wagner once lived for six years. Gearing this

year's festival around the theme of Mythos, its
 new musical director Michael Häefliger
 smuggled the contemporary music inside the
 Trojan Horse of the stolid orchestral fare that
 constitutes the event's staple diet.

No surprise, then, that well-heeled crowds
 turned out for the more conservative concerts,
 such as The Berlin Philharmonic under Claudio
 Abbado and The Gotenberg Symphony under
 Neeme Jarvi. There might have been some
 empty seats, but the hall hummed with greater
 emotional commitment when the programme
 entered the late 20th century. A visibly ecstatic
 John Adams led the Ensemble Modern
 through a set of American music, performed
 with fervour and focus. To hear the homely
 cacophony of Ives's *Fourth Symphony* in this
 refined space, or the Glenn Branca-like
 machine gun bombast of Michael Gordon's
 Sunshine Of Your Love, was a rare, cathartic
 experience.

The centrepiece was Adams's own *Naive
 And Sentimental Music*, a 40 minute piece
 brought into revealing light by an expanded
 Ensemble. Adams's merging of elastic
 structural thinking, pan-tonal invention and
 post-Wagnerian textures kept in check by his
 minimalist tendencies may come to be seen as
 the finest American orchestral work to emerge
 in this last gasp year of the millennium.

But for some the festival's highlight came
 from closer to home. Hans Kennel is an
 innovative alphorn composer and performer
 from the nearby town of Zug. He filled the hall
 with the bizarre, earthy sonorities of up to a
 dozen alphorns, all playing in unison. Kennel
 has recorded some of his alphorn
 compositions for the Swiss Hat Art label, but to
 hear them at a midnight performance in this
 purpose built space with such sensitive
 acoustics was something else altogether.

The long instrument, synonymous with craggy
 mountainscapes and tourist-baiting folklore
 shows, is roughly trombone-like in timbre and
 very limited in range and harmonic flexibility.
 But Kennel has devised ways of exploring the
 instrument's alter ego, without compromising its

hoary tradition, either through mixing multiple,
 varied horns or drawing on their secret life as
 tools for contemplation — something like the
 didgeridoo.

By contrast, the dazzling UK percussionist
 Evelyn Glennie performed a Sunday morning
 solo recital crammed with crowd-pleasing
 antics at the expense of the more challenging
 20th century percussion music in her
 repertoire. But she did manage to force high
 and low culture into making an artful pact just
 once, with a performance of Mexican
 composer Javier Alvarez's *Temezcal*, a tour de
 force for solo maracas.

Robert Wilson staged his dance-cum-
 pocket opera version of *Persephone*
 downtown at the Lucerne Theatre, with canned
 music by Philip Glass (a somewhat redundant
 gesture) and a dollop of Rossini. True to his
 aesthetic, the work evoked a piecemeal
 dream, his production veering from abstract
 tableaux to elements of mime and slow-mo
 dance, scattered with shards of text by
 Homer, Brad Gooch and Maita Di Miscemi
 spoken or sung, Sprechstimme style. Even the
 cast's curtain call was heavily choreographed.

Stronger musical fibre in Lucerne came from
 the former Soviet Union, via composer-in-
 residence Frangis Ali-Sade, from Azerbaijan,
 and Giya Kancheli. Both composers featured in
 The Kronos Quartet's programme, which they
 performed in concert at the more intimate
 Lukas Church, giving assured readings of Ali-
 Sade's texturally inventive *Oasis* and Kancheli's
 masterful, elegiac *Night Prayers*.

In the same church a few days later, Dennis
 Russell Davies led his Stuttgart Chamber
 Orchestra through an all-Kancheli
 programme which illuminated the composer's
 unique way of mixing folk and Romantic
 elements, spun into an ear-twisting
 contextual confusion through drastic dynamic
 shifts. *Diplipito*, for cello, countertenor and
 chamber orchestra, relied on the muted
 drama of repeating single notes, which fell
 like dewdrops on a cool tin roof.

JOSEF WOODARD

Left: Christian Marclay. Below: Hans Kennel's alphorn ensemble

