

All About Jazz

By IAN PATTERSON



12 Points 2018
The Sugar Club
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Returning to its spiritual home of Dublin after back-to-back editions in San Sebastian and Aarhus, 12 Points 2018 marks one of the highpoints of the Irish musical year. Its appeal lies not just in the fact that it brings together twelve bands from twelve countries, after all, many festivals can boast similar geographical reach, but rather in its spirit of adventurous.

From over five hundred bands/artists that applied, the twelve selected to perform on The Sugar Club's stage offered an incredibly diverse cross-section of contemporary European music. A lot of the music was too one-of-a-kind to hang a label on, and it's this cutting edge character that broadly defines the 12 Points ethos.

Jazz/improvisation was the dominant common denominator over the four nights, but if the Improvised Music Company's flagship, award-winning festival purveys one clear message above all others, it's that today's contemporary jazz musicians draw their inspiration from myriad sources.

Nor is just a question of ever-evolving styles and the expanding vocabulary that comes almost naturally with each passing decade of jazz—if it even makes any sense to mark the changes in jazz in such units of measurement—but rather it's about an openness to all musical inspiration, and not least, technological innovations. Music in short, without borders.

It's no coincidence, perhaps, that the audience for 12 Points, this year as in others, was markedly younger and more gender-balanced than many more mainstream jazz festivals/concerts. Could it be that inclusivity and diversity in the programming effects the make-up of the audience?

The question of inclusivity in jazz, specifically the gender imbalance that generally persists on stages and in audiences, was the topic of a round table discussion held in the National Concert Hall. This was part of the Jazz Futures sessions, which also saw an equally thought-provoking session on music ecology and economy in a fast-changing consumer environment. The changing value of recorded music, its ever-easier accessibility and diffusion means that musicians today are dealing with a dramatically different landscape compared to, say, one or two decades ago.

The Jazz Futures sessions included valuable contributions from participating musicians, whose perspectives on issues of gender and jazz ecology/economy provided food for thought for the promoters, venue managers, festival directors, record label owners and journalists also in attendance.

Nightly jam sessions in the East Side Tavern, where everybody could let their hair down, provided a lively environment in which to socialize and network more informally. Three bands, Parallel Society, Sisacunda Collective and Ro'Shambo took the music into the wee hour with open jam sessions. All in all, it added up to four days of provocative and stimulating music, debate and, this being Dublin, good craic to boot.

Day One

Julie Campiche Quartet

It can't have been easy for Swiss harpist Julie Campiche Quartet's quartet to still be sound-checking with the audience filing into The Sugar Club, with its opening slot just twenty minutes away. In fact, Campiche took the microphone and very politely asked the chattering audience to hush a little while they finished the fine-tuning. Campiche took it all in her stride and already had the audience on her side when she led the quartet back out on stage a short while later.

It's safe to say that the harp is more firmly embedded in Irish national identity—this ancient heraldic emblem adorns pint glasses after all—than it is in jazz culture. Camiche's approach to the instrument was highly personal, eschewing the fiery bop language of the extraordinary harpist Edmar Castaneda, for example, in favour of more subtle narratives. On the opening number, "Peter Where Are You?," a chamber jazz aesthetic prevailed, with Manu Haggmann's bass arco, Camiche's left-hand bass ostinato and saxophonist Leo Fumagalli's gentle billowing riding Clemens Keratle's unwavering rhythms. Camiche employed electronic effects to woozy effect, but never really tore loose on either strings or knobs, instead inhabiting a suggestive middle ground.

"Onakalo," an ecologically-inspired piece on the seeds we sow, takes its name from the world's first spent nuclear fuel repository in Finland. With just saxophone mouthpiece and microphone, Fumagalli conjured eerie soundscapes, sympathetically supported by brooding bass arco, crying cymbals and Camiche's edgy string scratchings. Keratle's brushes lent rhythmic impetus, while Fumagalli's pedal-altered saxophone conjured keening textures. Against a constant drum and bass groove, Camiche improvised for an extended period, her unflashy approach favouring measured exploration over virtuoso display.

The music ebbed and flowed, with one of the most arresting passages coming in a duet between rustling percussion and harp, which evolved into a solo harp segment of baroque melancholy and music-box delicacy. Rumbling mallets and bass reanimated the chamber vibe, with Fumagalli's return steering the music into ethereal, Jan Garbarek-esque territory, but there was the feeling after a while that the music began to meander a little aimlessly in ambient terrain. Solid groove eventually returned, with Camiche striking her harp strings with a mallet as Fumagalli's exploration on tenor saxophone and a lively drum feature brought welcome pep to the prevailing dynamics.

Arguably the most satisfying piece, however, featured guest saxophonist Remi Fox, rekindling a collaboration with Campiche after several years. On this slow-burning number the dual saxophones crafted harmonically arresting lines before plying separate, overlapping lines of controlled intensity. The musicians took their bows to generous applause, having clearly won over the majority of the crowd. A singular voice, Camiche is carving out her own path and her development will merit watching.

Susanna Risberg Trio

Swedish guitarist Susanna Risberg Trio has worked solidly over the past half a dozen years or so, earning plaudits in *Downbeat*, *Jazzwise* and *Salt Peanuts*, amongst other respected jazz journals, as a guitarist to sit up and take notice of. Risberg has two albums to her name, the most recent of which, *Vilddjur* (EhMM Music, 2018) formed the guts of her set. Risberg is an accomplished composer as well as a fine improviser, as this 12 Points performance demonstrated.

With double bassist Ale Sjöström and drummer Jonathon Lundberg providing intuitive support, Risberg laid out her stall with "Hasse & Gnutta"—a finely judged balancing act between collective groove and improvisational flair. Risberg follows a contemporary tradition that runs from ECM-era Pat Metheny to Kurt Rosenwinkel, her articulation precise even at speed, her phrasing inventive. What's more, there was never any sense that she was falling back on formulaic patterns. Instead, the twenty six-year-old seemed to mine a deep well of creative ideas.

On the slow-smoking, blues-tinged "Lotass," Risberg used pedals to effect an organ-like sound, but regardless of texture, it was her beautifully weighted, finely crafted solo that commanded the attention—leading the listener on a journey of discovery. Greater rhythmic impetus colored the mid-tempo, post-bop "Karika," carried from pillar to post by Risberg's linear melodic invention. Sjöström and Lundberg came into their own on Donny McCaslin's "Fast Proceed"—the only non-original of the set. Risberg lead the way on this straight-ahead reading with an impressively flowing solo, before comping as Sjöström took over. A vamp extended the invitation to Lundberg, whose solo preceded a tightly choreographed unison finale.

Risberg took it down a notch on "Leo," but even at this slower tempo the guitarist's every note carried weight. Following another guitar vamp-drum solo feature, Risberg returned to her pedal board, as before, to effect a distinct conclusion. Risberg's trio signed off in style with "Jubal's Jug," a contemporary sounding number that began, refreshingly, with an extended bass improvisation of spare lyricism. Risberg picked up the thread over a spacious groove, carving out a sinewy path, mostly in the guitar's upper registers, that teased and beguiled before gently petering out.

Risberg's star is in the ascendancy and it would be a surprise, not to mention something of an injustice, if this consummate guitarist doesn't go on to bigger and better things.

Nox.3 & Linda Olah

As the name suggests, this group is the coming together of an established trio with an established singer. The union of this Parisian band was effected in 2017, following a successful earlier collaboration, and the quartet's debut CD, *Inget Nytt* followed in early 2018. Blending elements of free-electronica, ambient, Noise and French chanson, this highly original, unclassifiable quartet left absolutely no-one indifferent, winning over some listeners as easily as they lost others, with those unable, or perhaps unwilling to invest in the whole hour, making for the exit. For those who remained, and that was the vast majority, there was plenty to contemplate and no little to enjoy.

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Matthieu Naulleau's electronic sci-fi drone announced the opening number, joined soon thereafter by Olah's noirish vocals, the low growl of Remi Fox's baritone saxophone. Drummer Nicolas Fox's meaty beat acted like jump leads sending a bolt of electricity through the band as Olah's voice soared over a punchy piano motif and saxophone that ripped and snarled. On the next number, prepared piano pizzicato delivered a handsome melodic motif, the first wave in a powerfully swelling collective tide, with Remi Fox' untethered alto saxophone its centerpiece. A thumping bass drum rhythm then ignited a dance-club groove, with riffing sax, ethereal, mantra-like vocals and swirling piano creating a heady mix. Olah's voice rose higher and higher as the music peaked powerfully.

An unrelenting low-end piano riff and bass drum oomph underpinned another rollicking dance number, with Olla's striking, spoken-sung lyrics punctuated by chirping saxophone. As a pulsating rhythm took hold, piano and saxophone engaged in vibrant call-and-response before locking into a spiraling unison motif.

Just when Nox.3 & Linda Olah's engulfing sound and infectious grooves seemed like the norm, the quartet revealed a more intimate side with a very delicate piano and vocal vignette in the after-hours, chanteuse mold. The final piece was a slower number of dreamy, noirish ambiance, again featuring Olah's hypnotic, spoken-sung lyrics and gently snaking alto lines. It was a powerful finale to a memorable concert.

It would be a brave soul to put a name on Nox.3 & Linda Olah's eclectic sonic world, but suffice it to say, you could envisage the band seducing audiences at pretty much any open-minded festival worth its salt.

Day Two

Mia Dyberg

Danish alto saxophonist Mia Dyberg's debut album, *Ticket!* (Clean Feed, 2018) took its inspiration from the rhythms and poetry of William Burroughs' literature, not that this prior information was essential to appreciating this performance. With drummer Anders Vestergaard and double bassist —and co-composer—Asger Thomsen, Dyberg's trio vision was very much one of three equal parts in the equation.

Restless alto, bustling drums and insistent bass lines made for a dramatic intro, the three musicians seemingly following their respective muses. There was as much drama and tension, however, in an unexpected pocket of silence, from which Dyberg's susurrus, breathy alto articulations and bass arco entwined in grave meditation. The re-entry of drums sparked pronounced rhythmic drive, though Dyberg's alto cut a more somber path, stretching the notes out in sustained cries and braying. Silence, broken by a strong bass ostinato and lightly skipping drums seemed to signal a new tune, Dyberg's drawn-out notes occasionally tipping over into brief flurries before steadying again. Burroughs' speech patterns may have provided the seeds for this music but the free spirit of Ornette Coleman was not far away either.

A lengthy silence served as the intro to "The Party Is Over," the three musicians motionless as though locked in deep meditation. The audience too, seemed to hold its collective breath. A couple

who entered the room at precisely this moment looked around at the stage and at the audience, a little disoriented by the sepulchral silence that greeted them. Dyberg broke the spell with a tender rumination of gentle melodic arc. Thomsen's grating, creaking arco response, was wildly abstract by comparison, inviting a searching percussive fusillade from Vestergaard. Dyberg closed the triangle with a measured improvisation, followed by tumultuous drum solo that provoked fiery answers from saxophonist and bassist.

As virtuosic as the solo improvisations were, the real excitement lay in the charged trio dialogues, like three rivers converging into a beautiful torrent. There was risk aplenty in Dyberg's original proposal, and handsome reward.

Steiger

Belgium trio Steiger are firmly planted in the modernist school of the piano trio, harnessing equal measures of jazz, electronics, avant-garde pop and experimental rock. For this 12 Points performance pianist Giles Vandecaveye, double bassist Cobe Boon and drummer Simon Raman presented music from #Locations (SDBan, 2018), a conceptual album that responds musically to the particular atmosphere of various sites—urban and rural.

Moaning bass arco and rattling cymbals of industrial intensity set off the backdrop of filmed-cum-animated visuals that were a constant companion to the music. Vandecaveye combined a simple melody on electric piano and undulating, church organ-like drone before pounding the piano keys with mechanical precision. The music went hand-in-hand with fractured images of a craftsman working a hammer and anvil. Slightly trippy images of a church's interior was met with a drum solo, shimmering bowed bass and jangling piano, which, once in sync, swelled into an epic soundtrack.

From the urban to the rural, as images of a forest dappled in sunlight filled the screen. So many wires fed into Vandecaveye's prepared piano that it seemed as if on life-support, belying the simplicity of his minimalist elegy. Once more, vaguely religious organ provided the backdrop to Raman's quietly rumbling thunder. In Steiger's audio-visual concept there were suggestions of Philip Glass' musical response to Godfrey Reggio's film *Koyaanisqatsi* (1983), though with a more avant-garde twist.

The penultimate number stemmed from a striking melodic head before heading into dense polyrhythmic territory, the form gradually dissolving as stormy piano abstraction held forth. For the final piece, doomy minimalism—punctuated by stabbing chords of some gravitas—grew into a gothic-prog wall of sound. The minimalism returned in a brief, dark coda that was pure Hammer House of Horror. The audience showed its enthusiasm for Steiger's through-composed audio-visual project, which, for what it lacked in improvisational spirit, it compensated for with serious intent.

Kompost3

The second evening of 12 Points 2018 closed with a rollicking performance from Austrian quartet Kompost3. Trumpeter Martin Eberle's opening salute to The Sugar Club crowd mixed breathy exhalation, smooth-toned lyricism and blaring fanfare of wonderfully skewed logic. This avant-garde intro gave some indication of what was to follow, though did not prepare the audience for the range and power of the music that unfolded.

Benny Omerzell's spluttering keys, Lukas König's galloping drums and Manu Mayr's rumbling bass—that shook your entire body—suggested an experimental, not to say abstract, program lay ahead. However, Kompost3 was nothing if not unpredictable, and a head-bobbing War-esque funk groove soon evolved, with Eberle on slide trumpet droning hypnotically. König's drumming was central to the music's drive, and his heady workrate never abated as the music climbed and soared.

A new number offered lulling melodicism via a circling keys motif and Eberle's lilting trumpet, but it was the calm before the storm. First squalling trumpet and pounding drums forged a free-jazz pact. Then electronic groove, driving drums and ambient trumpet waves steered the band into space-funk ecstasy in an extended passage whose tremendous energy dissipated gradually. The final number began with an unusual percussive touch as Konig rolled balls on a round tin tray. A slow-burning ambient groove with a rock underbelly then took hold. Driving drum 'n' bass rhythms took over and an infectious electronic motif burrowed deep. Tight, trance beats followed before one final shift towards trumpet-led, drum-busy, bass-heavy groove.

Kompost3's high energy groove music drew from multiple sources; funk, trance, space-rock, free-jazz and electronica. This and much more was distilled into a heady, intoxicating feast—a kind of Bitches Brew for the twenty-first century.

Day Three

Jazz Futures I: Why Is Gender Still a Thing?

An important aspect of 12 Points, and perhaps increasingly so, are the panel discussions and debates that focus on major issues—or neglected issues—in the world of jazz/improvised music. Improvised Music Company, is committed to greater gender balance, as the launch of its BAN BAM festival/conference—all female-led bands—in December 2017 demonstrated. Here at 12 Points, with promoters, festival directors, venue managers, journalists, and most significantly musicians, from multiple countries participating, these open-ended discussions offer an all-too rare, pan-European perspective on the major questions that need addressing.

This year, the Jazz Futures program saw two round-table discussions on salient themes. The first, held on Friday morning in Dublin's National Concert Hall, put the spotlight on the gender imbalance in jazz. Chairperson Ros Rigby, the outgoing President of the Europe Jazz Network, and veteran concert programmer at Sage Gateshead, began by summarizing the history and core values of the Europe Jazz Network, whose one-hundred-and-thirty-five member organizations—across thirty five countries—are driven by love of the music, and increasingly, a commitment to promoting greater gender balance.

"There's already a lot of talk about this issue" said Rigby, "but I think there's a lot of work still to be done." One organization that has rolled up its sleeves, Rigby acknowledged, has been PRS for Music Foundation, which, through its Keychange program is campaigning for a 50-50 gender balance in performing acts at music festivals by 2022. Over a hundred festivals have signed up to this manifesto, rock, pop and jazz festivals alike, and notably the BBC Proms, specifically for its commissioning.

Whether or not a target is the right way to address gender imbalance, Rigby recognized, is a question open to debate, because it's much easier for a venue/promotor putting on ten or twenty gigs a year to achieve gender balance than it is for a venue/organization staging hundreds of performances annually. Most would agree, however, that the intent and the drive for change is more important than reaching a stipulated quota. Fifty-fifty quite clearly will not work immediately for ever venue or promotor.

With the fifty-fifty manifesto there is also a danger of festivals/clubs embracing tokenism, which would be a slap in the face to any female artist striving to forge a career on her own terms. It's pretty certain that almost no female artist would want to be on a stage because of her gender as opposed to her artistic strengths.

As Rigby noted, progress Europe-wide on the gender balance issue varies greatly, with some countries ahead of the game and others lagging far behind. This, incidentally, is one of the

strengths of the Europe Jazz Network, to affect and accelerate change through its communal, democratic approach to initiating and implementing cultural practices.

In a wide-ranging, open discussion the delegates touched upon: the need to recognize one's own biases; addressing the image of jazz; the importance of role models, female and male; the essential role of education in breaking gender stereotypes regarding instrumentation.

Rigby projected some slides from the keychange website, and this quotation from Fernando Ladeiro-Marques of MaMA Festival & Convention stood out: "The major social transformation of the last hundred years, is the emancipation of women and their place in society. However, it is a revolution that is largely invisible, unfinished and struggling with multiple inertia. The new frontier of women's emancipation requires better reconciliation between family life and professional life of which the music industry is not exempt."

The challenges of balancing motherhood and a career, or indeed the stark choice between having children or committing 100% to a career as a professional musician was a subject that raised much discussion amongst the 12 Points delegates. Julie Campiche gave the example of how, having been invited to perform at the Ystad Jazz Festival in Sweden, she was amazed when the festival paid for another person to accompany Julie and her baby. Ystad Jazz Festival's progressive-minded act is an example to other festivals who are serious about gender balance. If such a policy were the norm, rather than the exception, female musicians might not have to make the choice between motherhood or a career at all.

Aisling O'Gorman, Music Programmer at The Ark—a wonderful children's cultural centre in Dublin—lent greater perspective to the issue when she said: "If we treat mothers separately to fathers we don't address the problem. Men also need support."

There is much to be done, as Rigby began the session by saying, and there is much that can be done. Just before the delegates left, IMC's Kenneth Killeen provided food for thought: "We're all influencers," he said, "and with influence comes responsibility."

Dowry Dowry, a.k.a. Éna Brennan, had the distinction of being the only solo performer at 12 Points 2018. A multi-instrumentalist and composer, Brennan has written choral music inspired by the work of W.B. Yeats, composed for small and large ensembles, including concertos for symphony and string orchestras, and collaborated with some of Ireland's most progressive contemporary musicians. The worlds of classical, folk and experimental music are all grist to her mill, as this performance in The Sugar Club, drawing from her CD *In E* demonstrated.

Loops, undulating drones and poetry were the staple of Brennan's music, which was, broadly speaking, meditative in nature. On the opening number Brennan layered dreamy guitar arpeggios and hazy echo effects, before switching to violin and sculpting orchestral melody of melancholic hue. Her spoken-word poetry delivered as a mantra imbued the whole with a powerful, dream-like quality. As the layers dissipated like morning mist, gently cantering pizzicato violin lines intertwined to create another launching pad for a waltzing violin motif, which was the backbone for a series of eddying melodies carried on see-sawing rhythms.

On the next tune, gently lilting violin melodies dovetailed in airy alliance, tantalizingly adrift between the folkloric and classical realms. Trilling flute like lapping waves, and a softly voiced poem gradually took over, fading out on a lullaby-esque repeated line. Even in the folds of the music's densest layers, an essential minimalism prevailed. On one track, characterized by a strong violin line over a shimmering rhythmic foundation the footprints of Steve Reich and Philip Glass could be discerned in Brennan's approach.

Yet for all the primordial elements in Brennan's music—the embrace of simple melodies and pulses that chimed with the body's inner rhythms—her performance, like all the others at 12 Points 2018,

relied on technology to conjure her ethereal soundscapes. This was momentarily harshly underlined when Brennan at one point accidentally hit the wrong pedal, shutting everything off to jarring effect. It was a small blip, however, on an otherwise engaging performance that was lulling and uplifting in turn.

Elliot Galvin Trio

Making a return to 12 Points following his appearance as part of Laura Jurd's Quintet in 2015, pianist Elliot Galvin has established himself as a leader in own right, as three critically-acclaimed albums have proven. This performance showcased music from *The Influencing Machine* (Edition Records, 2018), Galvin's most progressive album to date, and featured bassist Tom McCredie and drummer Jay Davis.

From the striking opener, "New Model Army" Galvin demonstrated the invention and wit that has marked him out as one of the most arresting performers of his generation. When applause begun to flare up Galvin effectively smothered it with an outrageous percussive attack on the keys that was more MMA than jazz. The terrifically buoyant groove of "Red and Yellow" framed a light, dancing solo from the pianist, who then handed the baton to the impressive Davis while maintaining a rockish vamp.

A quickly shredded sheet of A4 supplied the material to dampen the piano strings for the baroque-tinged intro "Bees, Dogs and Flies"—an arresting mixture of stately procession and sly, improvisational probing. A rewired child's toy served as a musical sampling tool for Galvin on the intro to "Planet Ping Pong." McCredie, on guitar, plied an African-sounding motif before returning to bass guitar, falling into the groove on this rhythmically dynamic, extended vamp-cum-piano variations. Whether pounding out tight, rhythmically shifting riffs or soloing with courageous abandon, Galvin's playing was never less than engrossing. The piano owners may have been less enamored of Galvin's repeated slamming of the piano lid against the body like a cheap clapper, but it was, for the audience at least, a rush to behold.

This was, above all, an impressive trio performance, the guile and intuitive craft of McCredie and Davis providing the scaffolding on which Galvin constructed his wildly imaginative musical edifices. The run-in saw Galvin draw psychedelic sounds from a plastic, toy guitar before unleashing an avalanche of chiming piano chords, like a bell-ringer gone mad. Thereafter, a collective calm descended, punctuated by spare piano notes, wispy guitar and unanswered bird-call. It was a curiously low-key, eccentric ending to an energized, trio performance that for its invention and refreshing wit provided an absolute highlight of 12 Points 2018.

Container Doxa Slovenian audio-visual seven-piece Container Doxa stood out from all the other bands at 12 Points 2018 for its highly original conception. The performance began before the artists had taken the stage; whistling, clucking, hissing and other such animalistic calls bounced back and forth from the artists, positioned as they were around the side walls and back of The Sugar Club. They then made their way onto the stage. That four of the musicians/artists were sat around a table, with several laptops and electronic gadgetry as their musical weaponry, provided further evidence that this was to be a concert out of the norm.

Pia Podgornik, the narrator, opened with the line: "Everything under heaven is in utter chaos, the situation is excellent." It set the tone for an intellectually challenging hour, where recited text merged with dance-club beats and a vibrant visual narrative—projected on a large screen backdrop—that ranged from an oil refinery electrical storms, nebulous space-scapes, reams of computer data, primary-color footage of helicopters unleashing napalm fire on tropical forest, and much more besides.

At the table, Ziga Murko alternated between electronic manipulations and much earthier trombone phrasing; Domen Gnezda worked modular synths, and, below the sightline, electric guitar; Domen

Bohte played electric bass almost as much as an ambient tool as a rhythmic influencer; Matic Skusek operated the visuals, which whilst thematic, at times seemed disconnected with the text— itself a somewhat random sequence of statements. It was to Podgornik's credit that she delivered the texts with such clear articulation and subtly theatrical rhythm. To the far left of the stage, pianist Dre Hocevar, the project's artistic director, worked the keys abstractly and rhythmically in turn, adding to the edgy, experimental feel of the work.

Themes of information overload, relentless visual stimuli, ecological exploitation, war, capitalism and cultural dislocation suggested themselves, while the music—brooding, edgy and futuristic— seemed to operate on a subconscious level, a sympathetic aural tapestry to the somewhat dystopian images. Podgornik's brief saxophone interjections brought an acoustic, human touch to the technological interfaces of electronics and artsy visuals, but for a fair number in The Sugar Club, the demands of Container Doxa's presentation were too much, with a fair number making an early break for the exit.

There was no denying the boldness of the audio-visual conception, but perhaps a different space— an abandoned warehouse, a gallery or some such locale—and a total immersion, surround-sound experience with visuals projected 360 degrees might produce a more dramatic setting in keeping with the band's artistic vision.

Container Doxa, on the surface so far removed from the musical aesthetics of all the other bands at 12 Points 2018, seemed like an unusual, even provocative inclusion on the programme, but 12 Points is in essence a celebration of the widest possible representation of contemporary creative music, and in that regard the Improvised Music Company's willingness to take risks and challenge audience perceptions is to be applauded.

Certainly, few remained indifferent to Container Doxa's performance, with animated discussions afterwards amongst the crowd revealing that it had provoked at the very least, varying emotional responses.

Day Four

Jazz Futures II: Revolution in Evolution

If the previous day's round table discussion on gender had looked at ways to shape the future then the second Jazz Futures discussion, based around the economy and ecology of jazz, was more about imagining the future, and specifically the value of music—both recorded and live.

The discussion was held in the Kevin Barry Room of the National Concert Hall—one of the most historically significant spaces in Irish history, as Nigel Flegg, Head of Education, Community and Outreach at the NHC explained by way of introduction. Against the backdrop of the 1916 Rising, when the Irish Republican Army sought militarily to drive out the occupying British forces, Nigel described the failure of the uprising, the execution of its leaders and the subsequent political wrangling over the future of Ireland.

With a compromise to occupation on the table, it was in this very room that Irish leadership signed up to the partition of Ireland. A treaty was eventually ratified with twenty six counties remaining in the Republic of Ireland and six counties becoming Northern Ireland, which remains part of the UK as of 2018. The simple stroke of a pen would set off a bitter civil war in Ireland and has been the source of much bloodshed, sectarianism and political division on the divided island ever since.

It was then over to IMC's Kenneth Killeen, who proceeded to give a fascinating PowerPoint presentation on the ways in which technology is changing consumer behavior, specifically with regards to music, and how it is changing the value of music for consumers and for artists. How will people consume music in twenty years' time? What value will people put on creativity and art? Will

copyright and the notion of intellectual property have vanished altogether? These were the main sort of questions that Killeen's presentation raised.

Killeen described the rapid technological changes as "disruptors," because, he said, they are changing the fundamental models that held sway in music for so long. The potential transformation that music faces was summed up in a very prescient quotation from David Bowie from a New York Times interview in 2002: 'Music itself is going to become like running water or electricity.' Music for the vast majority of people, Killeen observed, is now free, or presented as free. Monthly subscriptions to download or streaming sites have, Killeen said "replaced the fundamental notion of ownership."

We live in an increasingly "on-demand" culture, Killeen said, illustrating how where once radio was the norm now we have podcasts, for television think Netflix, for vinyl there is downloading or streaming. Of course, vinyl is making a comeback, but this is mainly, Killeen emphasized, an exercise in nostalgia. Conversely, as the majority of listeners are less engaged with recorded music they are, posited Killeen, discovering more, as algorithms constantly suggest other artists/songs you might like.

It is inevitable, Killeen stated, that Virtual Reality (VR) technology will become more and more sophisticated—perhaps giving a whole new meaning to streaming a live concert. Already we live in a world where, as one of the delegates in attendance pointed out, bands tour with a holographic singer, as has been the case with Roy Orbison. [tours featuring holographs of Frank Zappa, Ronnie James Dio, and Abba are currently in the pipeline]. Interestingly, added Killeen, the first album created by Artificial Intelligence, Hello World, a fifteen-track album, was released in 2018.

What do these new technologies mean for the future of recording artists in the minority field of jazz? Will VR and AI, streaming—and the inevitable technologies yet to be invented—pose a threat to recorded/live music as jazz musicians, promoters and fans understand it now?

Killeen's presentation provoked a lot of feedback, though interestingly, the starting off point for practically all those present was the inviolability of the live music experience. Jazz record sales, one delegate opined, will probably never match the sales figures of bygone days, resulting in the primacy of the live performance to generate income.

This notion was reinforced by Pedro Alves of Rite of Trio, who also echoed David Bowie's quotation when he said: "I start my career already with the expectation that I don't really own the music that I record. Music just flows. If I create it, it's instantaneously everybody's. I really see my value as a creative artist, where I get money back, is from live music...that's where my real ownership lies."

Kjetil Mulelid Trio The Norwegian trio led by pianist Kjetil Mulelid is just starting to climb the hill, though its debut album, Not Nearly Enough to Buy a House (Rune Grammofon, 2017), which was released to general acclaim. Like outstanding Norwegian pianists of the modern era such as Dag Arnesen and Tord Gustavsen, Mulelid draws more perhaps from Europeans folk and classical sources than blues and swing, though that said, there was no lack of emotional heft or improvisational élan in this performance.

The opening number was a case in point, with Mulelid's faint, folksy melody and quiet, Chopin-esque mediations elements of a bolder conception, where shifting tempi created a tense ebb and flow, and where rhapsodic passages flourished from patiently chiseled improvisational steps. Bassist Bjorn Marius Hegge's earthy linear playing and drummer Andreas Winther's dramatically percussive polyrhythms contributed greatly to musical communication that whilst tight, felt free of constraints.

The contrast between form and freedom was encapsulated in "Fly Fly," whose clearly defined rhythmic head gave way to slightly dissonant harmonics, with bass and drums sitting out. When all three reconvened, Mulelid pursued a classically tinged exploration, his early left-hand counterpoint—baroque-like in its logic—taken up by Hegge as the pianist's improvisation grew in intensity. As Mulelid eased back on the throttle the music began to breathe more, and it was these mid-tempo dynamics where the trio's dialogue was at its most persuasive.

On "A Cautionary Tale against a Repetitive Life," the music oscillated between gently coursing lyricism and looser abstraction, though melody prevailed in the end. The more circuitous "Folk Song" grew from restless stirrings and start-stop dynamics via a slow-grooving trio stroll that Mulelid commandeered with a liberating improvisation. The final number, "You Stood There In Silence, Having No Words," embarked in style, with an elegiac piano opening, probing bass pulse and washing cymbals; a change in pace signaled opened-ended trio improvisation, driven by Mulelid's fearless lead. Courage, however, did not mean throwing all caution to the wind, for free-jazz this was not, but rather harnessing rhythmic energy and liberally interpreting the spaces that arose in through-composed frameworks.

With a follow-up album in the works, the Kjetil Mulelid Trio is on an upward trajectory. Mulelid's music demands concentration, but for those who invest the dividends are considerable.

The Rite of Trio

There was a beautiful story surrounding The Rite of Trio's participation at 12 Points 2018. In 2012, when 12 Points was held in Porto at the Casa Da Musica, guitarist Andre Silva, drummer Pedro Alves and double bassist Felipe Louro were first-year students at Porto's music academy. They were sat in the audience then but were inspired by what they saw and vowed that one day they would make it to the 12 Points stage. So it had been a long journey, and as the three musicians embraced before taking the stage, an emotional one.

The Rite of Trio play what they describe as 'jazzjambacore,' and if nobody in the audience knew what that meant, then they were in no doubts by the time the sweat-drenched musicians left the stage an hour later, having played music from Getting All The Evil of The Piston Collar! (Carimbo, 2016)

Jazz-style progressions played with the intensity of a rock band alternated with more delicate, swinging passages; groove bled into knotty time signatures; the straight-ahead guitar, at the flick of a pedal, made way for echo-drenched, woozy psychedelic soundscapes more akin to a space-rock outfit; air-tight rhythmic lines giving way to eruptions from the drum kit where Alves' intensity was evocative of Ginger Baker or John Bonham. And that was just the first song.

"It's a beautiful thing when a festival can influence and inspire people into creating music..." Silva told the crowd before launching into the second number. A slowly pulsing bass ostinato, rustling metallic percussion and rumbling mallets were soon joined by pedal-altered guitar loops in a brooding opening. The stielthful choreography was shattered soon enough by Silva's visceral riffing—which seemed to signal a shift in gear, but The Rite of Trio was nothing if not unpredictable and an extended bass solo followed over a guitar-and-drum vamp. Unfortunately, Louro's solo was muffled in the guitar's excessive volume, rather nullifying the effect.

In the complex rhythmic weave of the next track there were elements of progressive rock—of the leaner variety, that is—but at least Louro's explorations were better served this time by more subtle guitar comping. Silva's own sinewy improvisation echoed the explorative nature of Jerry Garcia at his most expansive, though with a coarser edge. The title track of the trio's album featured Alves from the outset, the drummer, drenched in sweat, working his kit feverishly over a sustained vamp. A twisting passage of tight interplay gradually wound down into more ruminative domain, followed by a very curious piece of theatre, when for a full minute all three musicians remained utterly motionless, in total silence as though preserved in aspic.

Nervous laughter, a few shouted comments, an isolated whistle and some shushing from the audience provided the soundtrack before Alves slowly wound up the trio's clock again with a funereal beat. A bass pulse foreshadowed an eruption of free-wheeling guitar dynamics and pounding drums, climaxing in a drum solo of searing intensity. The Rite of Trio took their bows to enthusiastic applause, well-merited indeed for this memorable performance. Perhaps there were musicians in the audience, inspired by Rite of Trio's performance, who vowed to make it on the 12 Points stage one day in the future.

Dominic J Marshall Trio

The honor of closing 12 Points 2018 fell to Scottish-born, Netherlands-based singer-songwriter, pianist and electronics musician Dominic J Marshall, supported by drummer Jamie Peet and bassist Glen Gaddum. Marshall has several albums to his name, with *The Triolithic* (Challenge Records, 2016) already bringing comparisons to neo-soul of Robert Glasper and the rhythmic sensibilities of J Dilla. The guts of this performance, however, showcased compositions from *Compassion Fruit* (Inner Ocean Records, 2018).

A delightfully laid-back bass groove introduced "Mean to Me," a soulful composition brightened by Marshall's lightly dancing piano embellishments. A graduate of the jazz program at Leeds College of Music and the post-graduate course at the Amsterdam Conservatoire, Marshall has chops aplenty, though virtuosic displays were rationed in favor of sunny, soulful vibes. The pianist could, however, blend both chops and easy vibes as on the instrumental "Ella Feeling"—a tribute to Ella Fitzgerald. A big part of Marshall's sound was down to the rhythmic foundation laid down by Peet and Gaddum—unspectacular perhaps, yet full of funk and soulful levity. This was feel-good music played by consummate musicians.

As a singer, though, Marshall's delivery could come across as somewhat flat and lacking range, though with singers, as with saxophonists or guitarists, taste is inevitably subjective, and plenty in The Sugar Club audience warmed to both his personality and his music. It would be easy to imagine Marshall enjoying broad commercial appeal, as his generic R&B was never overly challenging and his sunny, jazz-inflected piano and electric piano playing falling somewhere between Bob James and Bruce Hornsby.

The final number, a slow-burning, neo-soul vocal ballad, featured an impressive, bubbling solo from Gaddum, and a lightly sparkling reply from Marshall, with a brief nod to Nick Drake's "Riverman." Marshall has talent no doubt, but it would be a surprise if more adventurous, risk-taking vocalists hadn't applied to participate in 12 Points 2018. His inclusion suggested that 12 Points is not only about presenting the most cutting edge contemporary music, but presenting the widest possible spectrum of contemporary, jazz-related music. Jazz of course, whether some care to admit it or not, means very different things to many people.

Wrap-Up

Twelve Points 2018 wound up with a jam session in The Sugar Club, though for many musicians and delegates alike it was a gig too far in what had been an intensive musical feast, with most preferring instead to socialize on the venue's outside terrace. This informal networking is an important part of any festival, often setting in motion future collaborations, and 12 Points is particularly good at bringing together the various players that combine to make, promote and disseminate the music.

Twelve years and one hundred and forty four bands down the road, 12 Points continues to deliver some of the very best creative music in Europe. There were certainly more pedal boards, laptops and MIDI keyboards on stage in 2018 than there were a decade ago, indeed, more gizmos in general. Who can tell what the instruments will look like—and be able to do—a decade from now?

One constant through the years has been the originality of the participating bands and their willingness to take risks. It's what 12 Points is all about and it's what makes every edition of this festival such a unique event, beloved by audiences and musicians alike. 12 Points 2018 was no exception.

Photos: Courtesy of John Cronin / Dublin Jazz Photography