

Valentina Magaletti Residency

Cafe Oto, London, UK

In lieu of the month-long carnival needed for a proper account of her practice, the three evenings of Italian born percussionist Valentina Magaletti's Cafe Oto residency make an admirable primer. First is a set from Marlene Ribeiro, her collaborator on oblique 2020 masterpiece *Due Matte*. That record's psychotropic vapours seep into Ribeiro's solo work as recorder tones emerge, hooded in Jon Hassell-like echoes given texture by tumbling starry tape crackles. Better Corners follow with a restrained jam content to chase its own tail, all runny shoegaze guitar and tea-toweled drums.

A quartet improvisation produces a chamber atmosphere whose prettiness and originality is difficult to overstate. A jazzy section sees Vanishing Twin bandmate Cathy Lucas work her violin as a bass alongside dazzling harp arpeggios from Miriam Adefris and brushed

drumwork. Later, there's a marvellous involuted passage – the group play in little gasps, the interval between each spasm filled by Marta Salogni's tape effects that feed on the sound in real time. Magaletti's partner and collaborator Fanny Chiarello dubs it "without a doubt the most magnificent concert I have ever attended" on her website and suggests a possible release on their all-female Permanent Draft label. The prospect ought to thrill you.

Night two begins with Alpha Maid, whose experimental pop radiates unaffected creativity as they hop from agile jangling to beating scuzzy torrents and back. Aided by Bristol artist Dali de Saint Paul, Magaletti and Chiarello then stage an interpretation of the latter's poetry as published by Permanent Draft. Chiarello delivers her lines with vim and character, sometimes acting in a dialogue with herself, as on the confused word cloud of *13 questions/13*

doubts/13 exclamations". On (*non-*) *binary assertions* she wryly stakes a post-dualistic politics in couplet form ("*There are ovaries/and not/there are fascists/and us...there are role models/and cis white males*"). Accompanied by glockenspiel/drum improvisations and de Saint Paul's contrastingly non-linguistic vocal contortions, the performance is the literal and thematic centre of the residency, desecrating the values immanent in Magaletti's own practice.

A furious rhythmic tête-à-tête between Magaletti and João Pais Filipe as CZN is the bpm high point as the two drummers dive in and out of co-ordination, matching one another's energy for three extended seances which leave Magaletti looking flushed with pride and exhaustion.

Laila Sakini opens the final night, pawing diffidently at the keys of Cafe Oto's piano in what feels closer to an intrusion than a performance. Her taps and scrapes are nervous, fiddling gestures, while the

mournful chill constraining her vocals intimates an interiority it feels crass to try to reconstruct.

Holy Tongue exhibit more focus this evening than on their recent live release, opting for multiple well-circumscribed jammy excursions over that record's 20 minute workouts. It suits a group whose uniqueness as a dub act lies in the momentum Magaletti brings, her every fill a spur in the flank. An all hands on deck flow state is reached as the bass hermetically fills the room and special guest Ben Vince's saxophone corkscrews into a trance, boosted by Wootton's immaculate sense for when to push the fun button and send fat zips reeling off into the mix.

They give Magaletti her moment and cede into a percussive section the crowd wills on deliriously. Her promised solo sets never transpire, but Magaletti's singular ethic, genius and grace emerge bright and unmistakable through collaboration. Alec Holt

Wilbury Radio

The Storeroom, Letchworth Garden City, UK

Founded in 1903 by the English urban planner Ebenezer Howard, Letchworth Garden City was the world's first purpose-built alternative to the overcrowded and polluted conditions of industrialised cities. The utopian project aimed to reconnect people with nature by combining the best aspects of the city (jobs, housing, amenities) with country life. Letchworth became a model suburb, but its size and proximity to London left the town culturally sidelined.

Wilbury Radio is a one day festival designed to redress the balance by bringing experimental music to Letchworth. The event is co-organised by the local net label Wilbury Tapeworm (run by Tony Venezia), Russell Walker of the Barlow Index gig series and curator Kristian Day's Playing Fields initiative. Eight acts perform in a modest room adjacent to a

local brewery. The space only holds around 30 people, but it's the perfect size for what the festival's curators call their "pilot project".

Jakub Rokita's cmykscum opens with interconnected samplers and a small modular rig. Field recordings of sheep and rustling leaves are looped and morphed into crashing waves of reverb, evoking subaquatic imagery. An ambient laptop set by Anna Peaker subconsciously mirrors the marine theme, answering cmykscum's sense of impending catastrophe by layering gentle drones on top of each other in a chorus of distant foghorns.

Karma Please employs an impressive combination of near obsolete tech with innovative software. An old Akai sampler that utilises floppy disks and self-made cassette loops emits drones fit for a cathedral. A granular synthesis app deconstructs the source sounds into decadent overtones, the stoic reveries of

which are occasionally shattered by the clunking four-track tape machine.

The drones are not limited to electronics alone. 3 Versions Of Judas, a sludgy noise rock trio formed specifically for the event, strive for obliteration. Featuring Venezia on bass, the band's half-hour set sees guitarists Xavier Marco del Pont and Hallvard Haug circling around a descending bass riff. The sound is embryonic but has apocalyptic potential. The duo Telepathic Visions, meanwhile, employ a more subtle approach. Verity Birt and Tom Sewell use loop stations and a web of effects to turn familiar instruments (guitar, recorder, keyboard, voice) into a beatific wall of sound.

The final three acts conspire to subvert indie tropes. Tom Hirst aka Design A Wave delivers deadpan lyrics over short backing tracks. The music, played from Hirst's phone, is reminiscent of James Ferraro. It's an entertaining set, floating somewhere

between stand up comedy and karaoke.

The Bomber Jackets, a trio consisting of Sian Dorner, Dan Bolger and festival co-organiser Walker, perform reticent synth pop that combines alienated vocals with ironically optimistic melodies. Drone pop collective The Leaf Library close the night. Kate Gibson's vocals and the band's dynamics nod a little towards Stereolab, but Daniel Fordham's infectious saxophone blasts keep the sound evolving.

Before returning to London, I ask Kristian Day why Wilbury Radio chose Letchworth for its first transmission. "Hertfordshire doesn't have a big city where scenes like this naturally gestate," he explains. "What you do find though are interesting artists working alone. They develop in isolation like marsupials. It's all about strength in numbers and collaborating in order to share ideas and amplify our reach." Iliia Rogatchevski

Decibel New Music Ensemble

Cafe Oto, London, UK

In the UK for a six venue concert series, Australia's Decibel New Music Ensemble bring a tantalisingly eclectic repertoire with them. This includes works by two Decibel members, Cat Hope and Lindsay Vickery, alongside outside composers Julius Eastman and Tansy Davies.

For Cafe Oto, they perform Lionel Marchetti's *Inland Lake (Le Lac Intérieur)*, a work consisting of a series of ensemble responses to what the French acoustical composer terms "partitions concrètes": while the phrase refers to musique concrète scores, underlying meanings that touch on sharing and division resound beneath it.

Inland Lake is a 35 minute work created between 2019–22 that consists of Marchetti's electronic concrète composition and a poem, plus soloist

responses from Decibel. Marchetti's compositional process involved building on his historic relationships with Decibel, both in terms of their entity as an ensemble and as a collection of individuals. He began by making a concrète recording which was then sent to Decibel musicians to respond to. Their responses were returned to Marchetti, whose second iteration was informed by Decibel's ideas.

In this way, they passed the piece backwards and forwards between them until a completion was reached. Each partition is capable of standing on its own or being combined in a collage of others. A composer and acoustician long associated with France's Groupe de Recherches Musicales, Marchetti represents a new form of concrète, one in which collaboration and additional art forms (in this case, poetry) offer significant ways of working.

There is a surprising delicacy to the unfolding of *Inland Lake* tonight. A rumbling of electronic noise and wind begins the work, from which a tone emerges. Placed on either side of percussionist Louise Devenish's set-up, two speakers project the electronic sound to an apex that forms in the centre of the musicians, in the process making the concrète backdrop very much a present member of the ensemble.

After a few minutes, Aaron Wyatt's viola and, subsequently, Tristen Parr's cello pick up the tone which, in turn, begins to rhythmically shimmer. There's a subtlety that makes it hard to hear the exact moments when Hope's flute or Vickery's bass clarinet come in, but the effect is of a body of sound sliding unobtrusively into a greater body – the lake itself, even. In this quietness, small percussive events – Louise Devenish on bowed crotales (tuned

metal discs), gong, some river stones and a big bass drum – are markers that signify transitions between the partitions.

At one point or another each musician plays a singing bowl and flicks through the stations on an AM radio, but these sounds operate as layers that float atop the depths of sound that Marchetti and ensemble have built up. Gestures here reverberate – string glissandi, some drum rumbles, held clarinet tones – to create a crafted richness swarming with sound.

Towards the end of the last partition, the musicians raise their volume to match that of the concrète component and then it's brought downwards again. Some tones from Devenish – bowed metallic objects and the stroked skin of the drum – signal a return to the "*heart of the immense*" that Marchetti describes in the short poem accompanying this composition.

Louise Gray

On Site

Exhibitions, installations, etc

Shinro Ohtake, *Scrapbook #71/Uwajima* (2018–21)



MON CHERI: *A Self-Portrait As A Scrapped Shed* (2012)



Shinro Ohtake

National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan
Decommissioned neon from Uwajima railway station in southern Japan, where the Tokyo born artist Shinro Ohtake now resides, watches over his current retrospective at Tokyo's National Museum of Modern Art.

On display are more than 500 works spanning four or more decades of photographs, etchings, installations and sculpture, from the oldest painting, *Black Shiden-Kai* (1964), to the most recent, *Mnemoscape 0* (2022), all coursing through the museum like ships squeezing through a canal. Some are fragments of an old boat. Others are cast from the mould of a fibreglass vessel. But these vehicles are less prominent, seen alongside the places he's travelled, like a recurring dream throughout the exhibition. Hokkaido, Uwajima, Morocco and Nairobi all leap from

his 71 scrapbooks, begun in 1977 with a collection of old matchboxes and ticket stubs found at a London flea market.

Born in 1955, Ohtake spent a year living in London from the spring of 1977, when the city was in the throes of punk. It had ended by the time he returned. But that flea market find seeded the idea for scrapbooks that would record/remodel each day by remembering them in abrupt collage. The year before he had formed the band JUKE/19 with three friends. Acting on impulse and unfathomable confidence, their abruptness was not that dissimilar to his making scrapbooks: the sound of the city combined with the rhythm of everyday things. Painting while recording music simply made separating the two impossible. But why should he?

Come 1980, friend and artist Russell Mills invited him to appear at London's Notre Dame Hall (now Leicester Square

Theatre) alongside Wire members Bruce Gilbert and Graham Lewis, then performing as Dome, and DAF. Ohtake even played with Mills as Only Connect, opening for Wire when they reformed in 1985. But Ohtake is first and foremost a painter who has never tired of using sound. His sculpture *Teaching Of Islam III* (1985–87) is awash with world music and city noise. The three dimensional painting *Rubbish Man* (1987) carries a ream of magnetic tape fed through a tape player to produce a crashing beat on repeat. Even the slight figure of the sculpture *Radio Head Surfer* (1994–95) belts out its own cacophonous rhythm.

The centrepiece is *MON CHERI: A Self-Portrait As A Scrapped Shed* (2012) – a giant scrapbook housed in an old shed attached to a caravan-cum-speaker playing old pop and found sound; and at the show's heart is Ohtake's stage

of band-less instruments, *Dub-Hei & New Chanell* (1999), controlled from a booth carrying the sign "Sweet Factory". Dub-Hei the lead guitar stands centre stage, while New Chanell features Eizi the rhythm guitar, Bobu the bass, a drum kit known as Adamu, a turntable nicknamed DJ-Ko, cymbals called Pete, and amps either side of the curtained stage.

A world tour in 2002 visited London and Ambleside. Support from Mills and Gilbert expanded the autonomous line-up. Back home, Ohtake and Boredoms' EYE are releasing *PUZZPUNN*, their first album together in 26 years as the duo Puzzle Punks, the mechanical sound of Dub-Hei and New Chanell evolved into sampled chaos.

David Lynch once said, "I would like to bite my paintings." Ohtake prefers playing his, devouring the noise they make. Stuart Munro