

Music review: Red Note Ensemble, Summerhall, Edinburgh



Red Note Group photo credit Wattie Cheung.

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Music

Red Note Ensemble

Summerhall, [Edinburgh](#)

Miranda Heggie

five stars

PARLOUR Sounds, a new piece by Red Note's Embedded composer Patricia Alessandrini, tells the tale of a 1960s housewife who explores and creates sound by utilising her standard, everyday surroundings. Presented as part of the Edinburgh International Science Festival, the staging, drama and sheer physicality of the work is crucial –it is most definitely a piece which could only work on a performative level. It's almost operatic in its dramaturgy: soprano Peyee Chen takes the central role, her pure tones lending a vulnerable fragility to the performance. Her close tonal dialogue with flautist Ruth Morley is particularly unnerving, as voice and flute begin to fuse with one another. While much of the piece is entertaining and fun (a Hoover playing a 'moothie' for instance), overall the work is deeply profound. The claustrophobia and sense of unharnessed potential energy is rife, leading the audience to question Chen's character, and her need to create art from the mundane.

Preceding this were two pieces from emerging composers Nicolas Mondon and Francisco Uberto. Mondon's *Daily Colotomy*, so called after the metric structure of Indonesian Gamelan music, had a driven, measured momentum, under the steady beat of conductor Simon Proust. Pianist Julien Blanc played a prepared piano, with blue tac, clothes pegs etc attached to the strings to affect the sound. My live encounters with such an instrument have either fully embraced the aleatoric, or, to adopt a more cynical point of view been little short of a mere gimmick. That is not the case here, where the effects of the instrument's preparation made full musical sense.

Exploring the physical nature of sound and music, Uberto's *Fluttering Zones* was scored for conventional instruments often played in unconventional ways, with the addition of everyday objects such as corrugated pipes and an upturned bicycle.