



# University of HUDDERSFIELD

## University of Huddersfield Repository

Steinitz, Richard

Explosions in November

### Original Citation

Steinitz, Richard (2011) Explosions in November. University of Huddersfield Press, Huddersfield. ISBN 978-1-86218-099-4

This version is available at <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/11939/>

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: [E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk](mailto:E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk).

<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/>

# *Preface*

This book tells the story of how a modest long weekend of new music, in what the media continued to describe as an unlikely location, became one of the most important and highly regarded festivals in the world. From tentative beginnings, and far beyond my own expectations, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival grew into a major international showcase, at which over 330 of the world's finest new music ensembles have performed and most of its leading living composers appeared in person. For twenty-three years I was the festival's first artistic director. Having retired in 2001, I thought it important to document what we had done, and that the result would be published to celebrate the festival's twentieth-fifth anniversary in 2003. That it finally appears for the thirty-third is due to other obligations and more pressing projects, but also because of the sheer scale of the task. Perhaps, however, it is no less appropriate to mark the passing of a third of a century than a quarter; and the closing pages look ahead to the thirty-fourth festival which, as I write, will shortly begin.

Early on, I decided to organise the book both chronologically and thematically. I hope that this twin approach will not confuse the reader. An advantage has been to write more indulgently about individual composers – their characters, music, aspirations and foibles – in a chapter devoted to them; about the hundreds of international performers in another; and to focus specifically on such genres as opera and music theatre, venues and their history, unconventional formats, installations, education, marketing, partnerships and so on. A disadvantage is the frequent cross-referencing. But readers are welcome to turn to other references or not as they wish; and, to assist

orientation, the text is liberally sprinkled with dates.

I have tried to write a readable, entertaining and informative narrative, and to position the festival interestingly within its wider social, cultural and political context. A thread running through the book charts the astonishing growth of the festival's host institution, now the University of Huddersfield, which I joined in 1961 – half a century ago. Although intended to be objective, I realise that my account has also become deeply personal, with assessments that are often forthright and perhaps controversial. So I must stress that the opinions expressed are my own, and not those either of the festival, or of the University of Huddersfield and its predecessor, Huddersfield Polytechnic.

I am all the more grateful, therefore, for the sustained support and encouragement of key university personnel, as well as Graham McKenzie, the festival's current artistic director, and his team, during the book's lengthy gestation, and am proud and delighted that it is being published by the relatively new University of Huddersfield Press. The production brief has enabled the book to be designed in large format, and printed in full colour with numerous illustrations. They will conjure cherished memories for those who were present at the events and may intrigue readers who were not. Tracing, obtaining and selecting photographs has been an adventure in itself, especially choosing between literally thousands of digital images taken during the last decade. I would like to record my thanks to the photographers who have allowed their work to be reproduced, in particular Mark Bokowiec, John Bonner, Asadour Gazelian, Keith Glossop, Selwyn Green, Paul Greenwood, Paul Herrmann

and Brian Slater. Thanks also to Sophie Hannah, IOU theatre, Colin Rose, Anthony Sargent, Peters Edition Ltd London, Schott Music and West Yorkshire Archive Service for permission to reproduce poetry, documents, photographs and musical scores.

To friends and colleagues who have read drafts of the text I owe a special debt of gratitude. They include Michael Clarke, Lisa Colton, Paul Driver, Heidi Johnson, Mick Peake, Keith Potter, Colin Rose, Michael Russ, Bill Vince, Julia Winterson and Graham McKenzie. All have offered invaluable comments, corrections and additions, and, on occasion, rescued me from embarrassing errors. Many of them have attended the festival for many years, and some have known it from the beginning. Despite this, and having myself been at the centre for over two decades and close to the festival subsequently, it has proved surprisingly difficult to establish every detail with unerring precision. I believe that the final text is accurate and fair, but accept full responsibility for any errors that remain.

Working with the personnel of Jeremy Mills Publishing has been a privilege and a pleasure. In particular I am grateful to Hazel Goodes, publication manager and to Paul Buckley, the designer, for their excellent work, as well

as to Abi Bliss for her vigilant copy-editing and index. Within the university I have particularly appreciated the unwavering commitment and encouragement of John Lancaster, Director of Computing and Library Services, and of his successor, Sue White. For three decades the festival has attracted wide-ranging reviews from the press – at times critical, frequently glowing, mostly shrewd and perceptive. From some I have quoted at length, grateful to be reminded of details I had forgotten, and what it felt like to be at some remarkable performances, in language more elegant than I could muster.

Although not involved in the book's production, I wish also to express gratitude to the general managers, administrators and other festival officers who have ensured the smooth running of an exceptionally complex operation. Their dedication has been matched by that of the audience, including a large core of regular supporters, whose enthusiasm and loyalty, year after year, has made every effort worthwhile. It is to them that the book is dedicated. But it will also, I believe, interest anyone involved in, or simply curious, about the developing art of music, the composers who create it, the performing arts in general, and the social and cultural history of the last fifty years.

*Richard Steinitz*