

Order of release, border of relish

Triptych for four instruments

Clara Maïda

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Photo: Strings - New York City © Clara Maïda, 2012

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Triptych for four instruments

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1 - Holes and bones (p.2)

for flute, clarinet, violin and cello

(9'43)

Premiere on September 21st, 2002. *Musica Festival, Strasburg*

FRENCH MINISTRY OF CULTURE and ACCROCHE NOTE ensemble commission

ACCROCHE NOTE ensemble

EARPLAY DONALD AIRD PRIZE - Honorable Mention (USA, 2008)

SALVATORE MARTIRANO MEMORIAL 2nd Prize (USA, 2003)

2- ...who holds the strings... (p.3)

for string quartet

(8'10)

Premiere on March 17th and 18th, 2004. Opera of Rouen (*Les trente ans du quatuor ARDITTI*)

ARDITTI QUARTET

3- Repeats, defeats (p.4)

for oboe, clarinet, violin and cello

(9'38)

Premiere on July 19th, 2003. *Errobiko Festival, Biarritz (Itxassou)*

FRENCH MINISTRY OF CULTURE and INIJI ensemble commission

INIJI ensemble

The three pieces use the same harmonic material generated by the spectral analysis of multiphonic sounds of wind instruments (four from the bass clarinet and three from the oboe) and of the low C of the cello played with a maximal pressure of the bow.

Some sound objects and processes and some musical situations come back in the three pieces of the series which question the notion of form, of identity, of representation, continuously shattered by the work of matter, of any matter of all kind.

1st part: **Holes and bones**

for flute, clarinet, violin and cello

(9'43)

From a harmonic material derived from spectra of four multiphonic sounds played by the bass clarinet, I first elaborated a kind of latent structure (one cannot hear it in the piece), reticular and made of the superimposition of different variations of a micro-intervallic scale coming from one of the spectra.

This first extremely dense structure follows a course from one spectrum to another and progressively tears up. A slowdown process makes more and more gaps appear. Besides, once this structure was completed, I made openings in it by tearing down from the score some sections of the musical fabric, sorts of shreds, scraps, re-used in the piece as a whole.

These objects recycled from residues are subject to rocking movements that make them overturn. Fragmentation and alteration processes reveal in various parts the most audible frequencies of each spectrum (a kind of original and purified matter emerges).

The texture becomes more and more disembodied, skeletal. The skeleton disintegrates, divides into fragments ("bones"), the bones come to dust up to a total disappearance of matter.

The whole piece struggles against the death process of this original latent structure. The relationship between the holes and waste is at work. What remains of the frame of the structure when it disappears and how can one fight against this disappearance?

Expansion, contraction, dispersion, gliding, those micro-processes are rich with connections and are the expression of a matter which moves. A constant energy is at work to fill in the holes or to form them again, to destroy, rebuild and destroy again fleeting objects that yet insistently come back.

Birth and death merge in one and only vital process of never-ending transformations. Precariousness, instability, are the essence of the piece which vibrates with a febrile anxiety and makes its flaws and its swellings audible.

Clara Maïda, September 2002

2nd part: **...who holds the strings...**

for string quartet

(8'10)

In the second part of the triptych, *...who holds the strings...*, the title of the piece is playing on the word "strings" (which both refers to a piece of string and to the writing for string instruments) and the expression "the one who holds the strings" which means "the one who holds the reins", or "the one who pulls the strings".

In this piece, no one holds the strings. The string quartet is conceived as a global entity, a kind of object which moves alone, driven by its own mechanics. The strings are tangled in a mobile and fragile architecture made of perpetually transforming microscopic elements, which never have any fixed location and whose articulation suffers constant alterations.

Tears appear, new links are tied then torn again.

Various forces such as attraction, repulsion, combination, phagocytosis, govern the objects, putting them face-to-face, and thus create an ever temporary morphology.

All the sound objects of the piece have an invariable specificity. They overturn around a pivot, from left to right or up and down.

This oscillating gesture around an axis also governs the harmonic distortions (chords in a mirror-like relationship with the original chord), the melodic structures (repetition of a few notes around a pivot note), the melodic curves (motives which form an ascending-descending or descending-ascending curve around a horizontal axis), the registers (rocking between low and high zones of pitches), the dynamics (crescendo-decrescendo or the contrary), the rocking between two musical situations.

An antagonism between the musical objects or situations can appear. A situation, with its persistence, can drive away another one.

The articulation of very small and abstract objects, which are more principles of objects than objects (a simple gesture, the pivot around an axis, the rocking) raises the question of representation.

What can be perceptible when this representation is refused or impossible? What can be the variations of one same gesture, in which new perspectives can one make them appear? An envelope, a movement... Something runs along the sounds, at the border of what can be represented.

It is the insistence of the gesture that helps us to mark it out in a temporal course and attempts to draw the vague outlines of an invisible and inaudible real.

Clara Maïda, March 2004

3rd part: **Repeats, defeats**

for oboe, clarinet, violin and cello

(9'38)

In the third part, *Repeats, defeats*, each repetition produces a small difference, a small sliding, a shifting that inflects the form or the texture of the objects up to their disintegration. They lose their substance, their content. They become shadows of objects and remind of these dead and transparent skins of the insects after they got out of their shell. Things get undone.

In spite of the dissolution of the representations, a movement persists and draws dynamic paths that interlace and meet, pass again and insist always in the same place as if one was rubbing down a same surface until nothing more remains. All the objects, all the musical situations of the first parts of the piece lead to a two-pitch cell interrupted by a silence, a sort of gasping breath, a breaking point where the objects are deprived of their matter, depleted up to noise or a murmur, up to silence. Matter has disintegrated.

Something is worn out in this piece.

Everything happens as if the language was becoming inarticulate and was making way to a scream, a hoarse sound, which would remind of jammed mechanics.

Repeats, defeats... The mechanism is short of breath. Only the "beat" remains, this slight fluttering which indicates that an organism is still alive.

Clara Maïda, March 2004