

Shel(l)ter - später... () ...Winter

for clarinet, bassoon, cello, three percussions and electronics

Clara Maïda

[14'40]

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FRENCH MINISTRY OF CULTURE and GMEM commission

Residency at the GMEM, Marseille (realization of the live electronics)

and at the ELECTRONIC STUDIO of the TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT, Berlin (realization of the fixed electronic part)

PERCUSSIONS DE STRASBOURG and NOUVEL ENSEMBLE MODERNE - Direction: Lorraine VAILLANCOURT
Technical processing: GMEM

Shel(l)ter is a series of four pieces which refers to a very specific space, one of the atomic shelters in Berlin.

The reduplication of the letter "l" condenses in the title the words "shell" and "shelter", which both evoke the attempt to protect the body against any aggression. But "shell" means at the same time the protection of certain animals (molluscs, for instance) and a weapon. So the double polarization of this word underlines the absurdity, constant in Man, which consists in constructing at the same time objects of destruction and objects that would protect against this destruction. Placed in brackets, this reduplication of the "l" indicates both a stop and a junction or the transformation of a repeated element, a rupture, a mutation of the structure of a given material or situation, as well as a separation or imprisonment, the self-destructive perverse effect which all protection is also likely to induce when it leads to isolation.

In *Shel(l)ter*, one can talk of "nanomusic" (in reference to nanosciences which observe and manipulate objects on the atomic scale), since this mobility and this transformation of the properties of the musical fabric result from micro-processes that act on the sound particles, generate variations of masses, forms and paths, but also resistances and persistences. The atomic thus reminds us that everything is particle, everything is atom, the sound field being considered only as one of the possibilities of the infinite field of matter.

In this first piece of the series, the sub-title *später... () ...Winter* – which means in German "later... () ...winter" alludes to the hypothesis of a nuclear winter which would follow the explosion of several bombs.

According to the modelling processes proposed by scientists, in a situation of this kind, large quantities of smoke and ashes, generated by the combustion of plastics and fuel, would be released in the earthly atmosphere and would induce such a climatic condition. The formation of a layer of particles would greatly reduce the solar radiance. Thick black clouds would form and absorb the light thus inducing extremely cold weather conditions.

The piece is articulated around this dialectics between, on the one hand, an extreme disruption of the musical matter, phenomena which mimic the nuclear fusion, fission or chain reaction, and on the other hand – particularly with electronics –, an elastic coagulation of sound masses which slide as lava flows, and can evoke unsteady layers described by geology, or a collapse of the ground, as well as a state of psychic trauma experienced as a kind of temporal suspension, a freezing of mental faculties or the impression of an inner upheaval.

Nuclear fission is the phenomenon by which the nucleus of a big atom disintegrates into several smaller fragments, with an emission of neutrons which releases a great deal of energy.

In the nuclear chain reaction, each neutron emitted during the fission of an atomic nucleus can provoke in turn the fission of another nucleus, and this process will be able to multiply. An A bomb is designed deliberately to trigger a nuclear chain reaction.

Therefore, the musical writing is "atomic". It results from an assembling of infinitely small particles, which form compact objects and, while energy is accumulating, explode in sound space and disseminate their components.

It is also "genetic". The disruptions induced in matter call us to mind what can be described on the chromosomal level, with the possibility of errors of replication, breaks, permutations of microelements. All these small modifications thus generate distortions and new (or mutant) forms.

Clara Maïda, November 2010