

GAKU-NO-MICHI

Press (English)

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Tuesday, July 11, 1978

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far beyond mere sounds

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"The ways of music"

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Paths of music

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NRC HANDELSBLAD

(The Netherlands)

Tuesday, October 21, 1980

Eloy risks it all

with Gaku-No-Michi

Ernst Vermeulen

UNO MÁS UNO

(Mexico-city)

August 21, 1981

Eloy: "Music: An East-West Conflict".

The composer will give a conference tonight at the UNAM

Patricia Cardona

1982 : 10th anniversary

AUTUM FESTIVAL IN PARIS, 1972-1982

JEAN-CLAUDE ELOY

A Path of Knowledge

Jean-Pierre Léonardini

NEUE ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR MUSIK

January 23, 1992

Solo Voices of Buddhist Monks

Berlin's "Inventionen" feature

Eloy's electronics and Cage's art of the violin

Werner Schönsee

LE MONDE DE LA MUSIQUE

Issue # 18 - December 1979

Meeting with Le Monde de la Musique

JEAN-CLAUDE ELOY

TOKYO

VILLE

ORCHESTRE

(TOKYO ORCHESTRA CITY)

Jean-Claude Eloy, Composer

Chris Marker, Filmmaker

GAKU-NO-MICHI

Press (English)

L'HUMANITE

Tuesday, July 11, 1978

The City against Meditation
Jean-Claude Eloy proposes a musical world
far beyond mere sounds

It was the main event of the Rencontres festival: two days devoted to Jean-Claude Eloy (born in 1938) and a broad panorama of the works of this maverick of contemporary French music who took refuge in the studios of Cologne and Tokyo and doesn't mind airing his grievances against French institutions. Let us state very simply that J.-C. Eloy is perhaps (as far as can be said) the only French musician of his generation to propose a musical world that goes farther than a mere exploration of sound. It is distinctive, an "elsewhere" that might be viewed as the essential music of the seventies...

"Equivalences" (1963) marks his departure from the post-serial positions of the Boulez school. Eloy was already feeling that music was none other than the organization of time, the composition of durations: horizontal values taking precedence over harmonics and counterpoint, that is, the vertical values that have always ruled Occidental music.

He started to become aware, particularly from his work in Berkeley, California between 1966 and 1970, of the vast possibilities offered by the exploration of so-called "Oriental" music, particularly in its complete immersion in the perception of time, wherein Eloy found affinities with his own compositional demands, his taste for large sound waves gliding over each other, diffracting, then developing into infinite streams. Devoid of rests or silences.

Sound texture

With the discovery of the infinite possibilities offered by electro-acoustic techniques and the analogies of basic structure between electronic materials and the acoustic notation of his orchestral scores, Eloy achieves two masterpieces of the genre: "Shânti" (1974 in Royan), obviously inspired by Indian modes, and "Gaku-No-Michi", which had its world premiere in La Rochelle on Sunday evening.

The latter work, masterfully achieved in the unfolding of immense musical rings, beautifully shaped, and revealing an imagination heretofore unheard of in electro-acoustics, came, in the presence of a handful of followers, as conclusion to two very full days which demonstrated Eloy's affinities with musicians from India (wonderful concert of the Dagar brothers) as well as repetitive Occidental music like the ensemble of 30 saxophonists "Urban-Sax", a sound continuum surging forth from everywhere and whose amazing sounds will be featured at the "fête de l'Humanité".

"GAKU-NO-MICHI" ("Paths of Music") is divided into two parts:

"TOKYO" (49 minutes) is undoubtedly the most tortured and fragmented music that we know of Eloy : all the sounds of the city of Tokyo, subway, factories, the street, etc. mixed with the sounds of traditional Japanese ceremonial chants, combine into an extremely original sound material in which one notes the violence of the city and its effect on the spirit of meditation. At the end, the work glides towards a synthesis of the two sound sources, towards an abstract sublimation of the city in music.

"FUSHIKI" (76 minutes) ("towards the unknowable") presents, on the other hand, the immobility of interior contemplation with sounds stemming from Gagaku, shouts from Nô theater and the flapping sounds of the priests' sandals, all of which is elaborated in such a way as to be unrecognizable, but possessing a very original sound "texture", such as the electronically fabricated Tibetan bells, which are more bewitching than real ones. They accompany and sustain the immense dimension at the work's conclusion through a turning, hypnotic motion until their echos reverberate long after the work is finished. Nightfall descended after two hours through the glass ceiling of the sports stadium, giving the metronomic scale of this work of another dimension, like an orchestra conductor marking eternal time.

JEAN-LOUIS MARTINOTY

LE MONDE

Tuesday, July 11, 1978

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC in LA ROCHELLE

Jean-Claude Eloy and the Oriental way

After the unfortunate, undoubtedly definitive closure of Royan, La Rochelle is the only remaining avant-garde music festival in France. Even so, the Encounters this year, in spite of Claude Samuel's ingenuity, do not bode well for the future: the number of concerts was reduced, the first hearings seemed disappointing and there were no new stars to discover. With the exception of high-level Indian music, only Jean-Claude Eloy marked these Encounters, bearing in mind that this "sure value" is forty years old and has been recognized for fifteen.

But to last, grow and influence the evolution of our times is doubtless more difficult than finding a brand new talent by enraptured talent scouts on the lookout for new geniuses. And Jean-Claude Eloy is one of the only composers of his generation who, with conviction and enthusiasm, takes us in a new direction (although preceded in this direction, if less systematically, by composers such as Cage, Pierre Henry and Stockhausen), a direction that he himself has named with some emphasis "systematic intercontinentalism".

In the beautiful text, almost a manifesto, which he submitted to the program of La Rochelle, he writes, among other things: "As, in all probability, the future global man will be of an Eurasian mix, of diverse backgrounds (from a black world for the greater part), so the culture of this man and thus his music will be an extension of various musical civilizations, inter-mixed in numerous degrees, even if expressed through a completely new musical technology." His evolution (1) continues in any case in this direction: the brilliant disciple of Pierre Boulez (*Etude III*, *Equivalences*) left his teacher, in whom he is surprised to see today the "Crusading Knight of Occidental Values", to seek the Ways of Music (translation of the title of his last work *Gaku-no-Michi*) in an integration of an Oriental potential that has been clear since *Kâmakalâ* (1971) and *Shânti* (1974), works that were heard once again in La Rochelle.

1) *Le Monde*, October 28, 1971 ; March 7 ; November 8, 1974.

Presented as a recording, Kâmakalâ seemed much more interesting and significant than in the first two performances in Paris - undoubtedly because this vast composition, based on an increasing sound continuum from the most elementary sound is a whole, from a composition mode akin to electronic music (the similarities of style with Shânti are striking) - whereas during the concert, attention is scattered in viewing the enormous size of the production (three orchestras and five choruses) as some of them didn't have much to do.

When listened to as an ever-growing unique sound phenomenon, Kâmakalâ takes on all the fullness of its mysterious, almost mystic dimension (with its Tibetan model) and appears as the first of Eloy's vast attempts in a world of mutation and transformation of man for he abandons the principle of "entertainment" which remains the "market product" of contemporary music that Eloy no longer wants; because, he says, "trying to listen in another way, until the discovery of unsuspected levels of listening, wider capacities, is actually helping human beings to understand in another way, to feel differently. Rejecting the power of sounds on the consciousness of man would be like rejecting the power of words, the vision, the elimination of the poetry."

The forum of "Carte Blanche to Jean-Claude Eloy" during these days did not correspond completely to this very intense, deep musical conception. To indicate the dimensions of his personality and present a varied program, the program planners brought together too many different sequences, from Eloy to Boulez, from a Sitar recital to Bartok, then over to Dhrupads by the Dagar brothers, making a detour through the group of repetitive music Urban Sax, only to land in Japan with Takemitsu (perfectly performed by Marie-Françoise Bucquet), etc.

This overly contrasted kaleidoscope, every fragment of which was very interesting in itself, destroyed a bit the concentration capacities of the listeners. The conditions were certainly not ideal for entering the vast meditation on peace of Shânti, performed late at night, although it was preceded by a pleasant Indian dinner and an excellent, well-balanced and brilliant concert of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Lorraine, still conducted by Michel Tabachnik.

The creation of Gaku-no-Michi (commissioned by the Ministry of Culture and the foundation Gulbenkian) benefited however from better conditions, all Sunday evening dedicated to it. This huge electro-acoustic work of more than two hours, realized in the studios of the Japanese radio, is even more abstract than Shânti. During scarcely ten minutes, one contemplates a sound landscape of Tokyo, sounds and noises from shops, buses, subways, train stations, city murmurs, bells, voices, dominated by very beautiful sounds of large bells, in a rather quiet tempo. This sound landscape, not at all tragic or obsessive, melts little by little into the abstract.

The meditation is then nourished only from the infinite variation of these sound vibrations, evolving ceaselessly through continually renewed electronic textures, which rise, glide, interweave, struggle in intensity, and slowly disappear behind new figures, mostly resembling the rumblings of engines in a sound spectrum of varying intensity.

Few events in all of this: sometimes a dramatic conflict, sometimes more characteristic noises, such as a crackling fire or a flying helicopter, sometimes a return towards some explicit allusions, as in bass rhythms of bells, full of majesty bringing forth larger sounds as in mysterious stained glass windows, the first part concluding on a sort of very impressive ceremonial. Or these immobilized voices rising imperceptibly in glissando, at the beginning of the second part, which yield their place to a gigantic variation lasting a quarter of an hour of octave sounds which deform and re-form through all the sound scale, the culmination of the work.

Towards the end are heard admirable bell tones, in very beautiful rhythmic figures mixed with the surprising noises from the priests' wooden sandals in the Kyoto temple.

But such a work can hardly be described. One can imagine, however, Eloy's talent capable of maintaining interest and sharpening expectation, throughout a sound process as radical as austere, even if the duration seems excessive, at least when taking place in an uncomfortable hall.

"In our profession (of organist)", said Jehan Alain, "beware of easy ecstasy!" With an half an hour less, Gaku-no-Michi would doubtless lose nothing of "its very gradual spell, the immersion in an unlimited duration" which is, for Eloy, one of the conditions of "the way of music towards knowledge".

JACQUES LONCHAMPT

LE MATIN DE PARIS

July 12, 1978

A work which goes beyond

The Festival of La Rochelle came to an end on two beautiful days dedicated to the composer Jean-Claude Eloy (last Saturday and Sunday). Nothing is more fascinating than a progression of this kind around a personality, his creation and the choices he proposes. Many of the musical events experienced during these musical encounters found their full meaning, as was the case for the traditional music of India and works by Japanese composer, Toru Takemitsu. Indeed, it is in Japan with the Japanese that Jean-Claude Eloy worked on his last electro-acoustic work, presented for the first time at the last "moment" by the Encounters of La Rochelle. Jean-Claude Eloy has a militant thought which presides over his creation: the liberation of duration. All his recent works already foreshadowed this: *Shânti*, *Fluctuante-Immuable* (Fluctuating-Unchanging) in particular, which were performed once again during these days. *Gaku-No-Michi* achieves this purpose. The work, built on sound material of very great beauty (both concrete and electronic sounds) engenders its own timeframe. Should one talk about length (two hours!) when it is actually another time during which Jean-Claude Eloy allows us to understand how he lives while perception becomes more and more refined, the abstract becomes broader and broader. By the end of this road, concrete sounds have thus totally disappeared !

In Jean-Claude Eloy's choices, one should retain Takemitsu's piano pieces, so well performed by Marie-Françoise Bucquet, that render the subtlety of the composer's interior landscape; and the magnificent tones of all the saxophones that ring out from the thirty young people of the group Urban Sax. But it is also the presence of India that marks these encounters. Another way also to experience duration ! Whether it be Kalyani Roy on the sitar or the singer Pandit Jasraj or the Dagar brothers, it is always the same emotion (a magnificent representation of the music of Northern India). Here, the term "Encounters" takes all its meaning: the duration was bound to the music, the gesture so important when bound to the hidden meaning of the musical phrase... And for the public fervently interested in La Rochelle, the encounter brings a very high quality from the unknown world of the Far East.

A last mention for these Encounters: the presence as much pulsating as musical of Katia and Marielle Labèque, who, day and night, were present in all the events; and the presence of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Lorraine, conducted by Michel Tabachnik who, from Mahler to Stravinski, to Eloy or Takemitsu proved that he could approach anything. An orchestra in continuous progress... The denizens of Lorraine are very lucky!

BRIGITTE MASSIN

LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR
Monday, July 17, 1978
MUSIC

Eastern wind blows in La Rochelle
When music is enriched by a glimpse from the daily East

The disappearance of the festival of Royan has not simplified musical life in Charente-Maritime. The Sixth International Encounters of Contemporary Art of La Rochelle, with Indian and Japanese influences dominating, take place on the same dates as the Seventh International Festival of Saints, with a Spanish theme: in all, around thirty events everyday for two weeks. It is true that each of these institutions has, as a rule, its specialty. But, in Aunis, it would be advisable for the Encounters to have an outcome of a permanent action following the Saintes' model (and it is moreover why the Community Arts Centre of La Rochelle has boycotted the Encounters this year). And, in Saintonge, where one would hope for polyvalence and audacity, the programs often leave ancient music in favor of the theater (with Peter Brook, notably) and contemporary music (with Luis de Pablo, Cristobal Halffter, Maurice Ohana, especially). What can be said, in fact, about an "Ohana Day" in Saintes that takes place at the same time as an "Eloy Day", in La Rochelle ! When the secular rivalry between the north and south of the department triggers this kind of aberration, it's time to rethink everything. The elected members of both cities have come to an agreement.

In the meantime, a great wind from the East has blown on the music of the Encounters. So many Indian musicians of this quality have not been heard in France for a longtime. In particular, Pandit Jasraj and the new Dagar brothers, singers of high tradition, remind us very conveniently that in India as elsewhere, the reference in art, the supreme art, is always the voice.

We know, ever since "Kâmakalâ", for chorus and orchestra (1971), and "Shânti", for tape (1974), that Jean-Claude Eloy is one of the most serious and most authentic among the creators who have felt the imperious need to put the West in perspective. His "pilgrimage to sources", his "return to the obvious" was at first achieved through India. From it, he drew especially this liberated sense of time through which he can finally take up the great form. Somewhat following the example of Karlheinz Stockhausen, he passes now from India to Japan and gives us, with "Gaku-no-Michi" (literally: "the Ways of Music"), a new and gigantic electro-acoustic fresco of two full hours, filled with an everyday or ritualized Japan, immediate or timeless, which makes us feel the depth of his understanding and a real love and attachment.

But in this case, it is less a long and imprecise sound meditation than a vision in perpetual development, a "film without images", he confesses. This attitude, which rejects the pure combination of sounds for their own existence, is also - but with different results - the position of Luc Ferrari and François-Bernard Mâche. It is clear that the generation arriving today at the maturity of their forties has a clearer, straighter, more human vision of the world.

At least, one can note, in light of his recent experiences, Jean-Claude Eloy is not afraid of recovering a whole genealogy. Bartok, Mahler, the "Sommerwind's" adolescent of Webern, the abstract Boulez of "Structures", Varèse the seer, Takemitsu the poet of wet landscapes and even the repetitive group Urban Sax and its twenty five saxophones, of all sizes... there are indeed tender links if not relationships which are pleasant to note. It is always preferable to hear a musician who says what he likes rather than a musician who cries out what he does not like.

Finally, the Philharmonic Orchestra of Lorraine triumphed over all difficulties. Michel Tabachnik turns it into an instrument not merely docile and precise, but engaged, burning to bring out incredible tones. It is rare and beautiful.

MAURICE FLEURET

TÉLÉRAMA
LE MONDE DE LA MUSIQUE
January, 1979, n° 7

Eloy, salle Wagram, bring along your pillow

ELOY, the stateless one. Eloy, forty years old, confirmed talent (and beyond !). Eloy, always between two triumphs, two countries, two airplanes. Eloy, demanding, protesting, liable to leave in a huff, but not resigned, in spite of appearances, to play the part of the perpetual exile. After the Conservatory, after Darmstadt, after classes with Boulez in Basel, he launches his memorable "J'accuse", a denunciation that national institutions are still shaking from : no, musical creation in France is neither supported nor viable.

Ever since, he has traveled around. India, Japan, China, Indonesia, Brazil... a major journey into Oriental sound. He extolls - a grand idea - a "systematic internationalism" that could already be felt in works like *Equivalences* (1963) and *Kâmakalâ* (1971). In the inner sanctums and avant-garde festivals, some would like to hold onto him a little longer, as he often stays just long enough for a performance, a "special day" or a "carte blanche". He wouldn't mind. But he doesn't couch his terms either. Loud and clear he deplores the uncontrolled centralization of cultural powers : all equipment in the same basket, all researchers in the same ivory tower... sound familiar? No need to look too far. The sad fact is that he may be right, he knows what he is talking about. He himself has suffered from the ravages of French bureaucracy.

In 1972, in the Cologne studios, he works on *Shânti* and achieves one hundred thirty-five minutes of "meditation music" for 4-track tapes, his first electro-acoustic work. Then, the Japanese take him in. In Tokyo, he composes *Gaku-No-Michi*, a colossal voyage – more than three and a half hours – of concrete sounds going into abstract modulation and back again. He resigns himself to a westernized sense of duration to honor a commissioned work from the Orchestre de Paris they massacre the creation of *Fluc-tuante-Immuable*. Once again, he is angered. Recorded work decidedly has its advantages.

Taped recordings are unchangeable, they're lightweight, and can be carried in a suitcase : his music in his backpack, Eloy is the Woody Guthrie of electro-acoustics. He proposes his services of broad-minded, articulate composer to Goethe Institutes and universities. These international institutions jump at the opportunity, sending him from Sao Paulo to Djakarta and from Bandung to Rio de Janeiro. Everywhere, he observes the same thirst to listen and learn. Everywhere, discussions go on and on. Four hundred and fifty Hong Kong Chinese discover a completely foreign musical language when they hear his work, *Shânti*. In two days in Bandung, two thousand students hear his music. Admittedly, it is easier than in Ivry or Saint-Etienne.

Eloy came back from his travels, his head full of memories and rather optimistic. And he proves it. Collaborating with the Autumn Festival (which, for his sake, is adding an extension onto its program), he rents the salle Wagram for an evening and onto the ears of a totally

hypothetical audience, he launches the great mass of sounds and Japanese impressions that make up the two linked parts of Gaku-No-Michi (1). An opportunity to follow the "paths of music" (the meaning of the title) which are "the paths of consciousness through sounds".

"I hope in this way to meet a new audience, says Eloy. We need nine thousand francs to cover basic expenses. That represents quite a few tickets ! But people should know : although the acoustics in the salle Wagram are excellent, we don't have the means to make the place more comfortable. Everyone should bring a pillow !"

He also says : "I can no longer make music without integrating into it what I do, what I see, what I am experiencing, objects, colors, shapes." Is it so surprising that a musician of this kind surpasses the set limits of Occidental works and mobilizes entire evenings just for himself ? For his style is "opera: sound material organized around a dramatic and visual scenario".

Soon, he will perfect his lyrical art: he'll be adding sets, lighting, actor-instrumentalists. Soon, he'll be inventing images as well. But where ?

ANNE REY

(1) January 11, salle Wagram, 8 P.M.
A recording of "Shânti" is now available on
Erato STU 71 205/6

LE MATIN DE PARIS
January 13, 1979
SALLE WAGRAM

Gaku-No-Michi
By Jean-Claude Eloy

On the floor, people are ensconced in sleeping bags or blankets; others are politely sitting on chairs. Where are we ? In a waiting room at night during a train strike, or in a way station for refugees ? No, very simply, we are in Paris, a Thursday night, in the "salle Wagram" concert hall, for an exceptional concert proposed by Jean-Claude Eloy. There is only one electro-acoustic work on the program, but it lasts for four hours !

It took the involvement of a number of friends for the composer to take the risk of this gathering. And yet the recent Autumn Festival would have been greatly honored to officially incorporate such a concert into its program, all the more so because the work by Jean-Claude Eloy is, in its genesis, intimately related to Japan, one of the themes of the recent festival.

I had already heard Gaku-No-Michi (Paths of music) in a first version at the last Rencontres of La Rochelle. And, strangely, the work with an extra hour and a half added on, seemed shorter to me. "Not surprising in itself, says Jean-Claude Eloy, it is meant to trigger another perception of duration."

Jean-Claude Eloy doesn't take the easy way out ; he doesn't choose to accumulate material in a demonstrative or illustrative scheme. On the contrary, although the sounds that compose the thread of his work are very rich, they could be perceived as slack, as poor in means. His exploration lies essentially in the domain of tone-colors, always very beautiful, whether they are obtained and re-created from concrete sounds or electronic sounds, and of researching the relationship of shape with material. Hence the slow moving of sound events and open spaces

where the proposed sound material is enriched and developed. Thus, the work triggers little by little, in its unfolding four episodes, this new approach to sound phenomena which, in its new perception of duration, aims more to help us reach a level of self-knowledge than the experience of a fabulous and fragmented world of sound.

BRIGITTE MASSIN

LE MONDE

January 14 and 15, 1979

"GAKU NO. MICHI" by Jean-Claude Eloy

Gaku-no-michi, Jean-Claude Eloy's concrete and electronic work, lasted two hours during its world premiere at the Encounters of La Rochelle (Le Monde of July 11, 1978); it lasted three hours and forty one minutes for the new performance on Thursday at Wagram hall.

The Japanese title means "the ways of music". From a concrete landscape, noises from Tokyo already rather blurred ("the way of everyday sounds"), one moves "from the concrete to the abstract", then "towards what is unknowable" ("the way of meditation sounds"), in "the incessant flow of all things", then it is "the way of metamorphoses of meaning", that finally leads to "the way of meaning beyond metamorphoses" and to a "sound of meditation" immovable, immortalized during a quarter of an hour.

These indications are only signposts, moreover rather vague, through a sound journey in the heart of the abstract which would like to be an oriental-type spiritual experience, though less explicit than Shânti, which was a contemplative situation of inner peace. Here, it is a question "of reaching through the power of sound experiences to the perception situated outside the ordinary, inviting us to widen the consciousness that we have of things and ourselves."

Jean-Claude Eloy reached a sort of dilation of time: one listens to these four or so hours of music without feeling any more difficulties of attention and physical discomfort than for the two hours of the previous version, as if it were a limitless, open-ended sound space, but also without absolute necessity. After the first ten minutes of the "film" about Tokyo, the sounds no longer have a recognizable origin, and the listener easily follows these vast electronic textures that unfold at leisure, engender each other, melodies and polyphonies, as the rumblings of engines, with often very different vibrations, dimensions, intensities and harmonious spectrums intersecting in phases of tension and relaxation that are rarely dramatic, but mostly contemplative and majestic.

Voices of children and women, a brief evocation of Hiroshima, some chanting of Buddhist monks and the sounds from their wooden sandals and ringing of ghostly bells come in at times to decorate or punctuate time and give it a religious meaning.

Eloy, like Stockhausen, Pierre Henry and François Bayle, has surely invented a form with great variation capable of structuring the unlimited field of electronic music. But at the same time, we are captivated and remain half-incredulous.

JACQUES LONCHAMPT

MIDI TV LOISIRS
1980
J.-C. ELOY
GAKU-NO-MICHI
“The ways of music”

The musical legitimacy of electronic music will continue to be debated for some time. Among the convinced (doesn't Marcel Landowski use it?) and the detractors, who, refusing to take the time, have eyes and ears only for the means and styles of the past, the gap is growing. It is, nevertheless, just common sense to accept the evidence of an art using, with the exclusion of all others, the means of its time. To accept that two procedures - with parallel roads, one favoring the means from the past and the other one deliberately turned towards the future. And expecting that a masterpiece will appear one day from the sound manipulation of electrons.

Under the aegis of Cultural Affairs, the foundation of the S.A.C.E.M. and in association with Radio-France, the publisher Adès has just recorded the most recent electronic and concrete work by Jean-Claude Eloy (1). Less than two years ago, at the time of Shânti's publication by Erato, I introduced this brilliant musician (born in 1938) and multiple prize-winner of the National Conservatoire of Paris, who, from the encounter he created in 1970 of musicians and Asian thinkers, abandoned the ways of serialism in which the education of Boulez had misdirected him. From then on, the investigation of the religious and musical universes of Asia, confronted with the thought and oriental “modus”, influenced him towards the use of electronics, which is decidedly a universe of prodigious possibilities.

Murmurs of the city

Gaku-No-Michi is the new route that Jean-Claude Eloy proposes to us. The listener must open himself to it with a total availability of the ear and the spirit. Gaku-no-Michi means “The Ways of Music”. We are engaged by multiforms and distant, strangely fluid murmurs of the immense Japanese metropolis (Tokyo) that snatches the fragments of words, more imperceptibly than the quotations of Shri Aurobindo or Mao in his previous work, Shânti, and which trace wide coils (routes of urban traffic, journeys of cosmic particles?). Bit by bit, sound threads of the metropolis shed their identities without completely losing them, transmute into a vast cosmogony among which elements, sound dusts, fragments of bells of the temples of Kyoto, drums and gongs still belong to the concrete and grounded universe.

Bit by bit, from the still recognizable sound world of the human town, the “Way of everyday sounds”, we are led to what Jean-Claude Eloy calls “essential knowledge”. It is the “Way of meditation sounds” (Fushiki-é) which, situated at the level of pure electronics, is not without shades of Messiaen. This sound journey recalls obsessive forms - vast diffracted spirals that re-gather only to be diffracted once again in an insatiable game of alternated states between fear and ecstasy – that inhabits the sleep of operated subjects taking barbiturates.

The Way of the sounds of meditation is the longest part of the work. Evolving in a universe of very different sound-colors from “Tokyo”, the very abstract sound materials contain concrete elements borrowed from traditional music, noises from the Nô theater and Buddhist music. The parts “Contemplation” (real electronic pause) and “the incessant flow of all things” are not reproduced in the recording.

Reminiscence

From the high spheres of meditation-contemplation, Jean-Claude Eloy returns us to the grounded world, but in the "reminiscences" state (events commemorating every year the apocalypse of Hiroshima, Japanese national anthem). This part sensitizes us to the duality of fear and enjoyment that memory fragments impose.

Jean-Claude Eloy has reduced Gaku-no-Michi which, in the concert, lasts five hours (only an Asian audience for whom time does not have the same dimension can "receive" it) into two hours of recording that respects a great balance between concrete sounds and abstract sounds. The Sound of introduction (Pachinko) does not appear; as for the "sound of continuation" (Han), which allows the listener to gradually detach from the sound action, it does not exceed two minutes in the recording.

Realized in the studios of the Radio of Tokyo two years ago, Gaku-No-Michi is a homage to Zen philosophy and the Buddhist mystique. This electronic symphony, which through its dimension of the infinity evokes our Gregorian, aims to join the power of sounds in oriental music leading to knowledge-illumination. One should enter it as one would enter a celebration because it is indeed a cathedral where, through the means of the future, we join a culture and ancient thought. Gaku-no-Michi is a work - perhaps a masterpiece? – that enlightens our times.

R.-A. LACASSAGNE

(1) 2 Adès 21005

LE MONDE

Tuesday, January 8, 1980

" GAKU - NO - MICHI ", by Jean - Claude Eloy
Paths of music

The most recent contemporary music can scarcely be heard outside short-lived auditions in specialized concert halls. The infatuation of record companies, some ten years ago, vanished rapidly when confronted by timid sales. So we are very pleased to note that Adès records, under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture and the SACEM foundation for musical communication, along with the collaboration of Radio-France, had the courage to publish one of the most important works of recent years, "Gaku-no-Michi", by Jean-Claude Eloy, which will now make it possible to carefully examine this most extraordinary musical world.

For those connoisseurs of the electronic productions of Stockhausen, Pierre Henry, Berio or François Bayle, Eloy's work lies within a framework that is already well-frequented. However, those who approach it without preparation will find themselves pondering a fundamental question : what is music ? This powerful attack, this faraway murmur of Tokyo city noises, this dense sound thread to which vestiges of inaudible speeches and long curves of hissing meteorites cling... does this deserve our undivided attention for two hours, immobilized in front of our speakers ? (For that matter, the recording had to abridge the work for economical reasons, the original score can last up to five hours, more than "Parsifal").

The listener of good faith should persevere and in so doing, will rapidly realize that this world of sound apparently made up of noises, is actually captivantly rich, that time passes very quickly and that a musical awareness and intuitive logic are at work, from the beginning to the end.

In pursuing our attentive listening, we discover that the echos of Tokyo become less and less recognizable, melting into an overall thread that progresses slowly. Abstract events come to punctuate the discourse, like echos of bass horns, crackling trails, squealing, harsh sounds, motors turning on. The music develops continuously, sometimes into a cloud of multiple sounds, sometimes into a mass of elements combining into an expressive density, at times faraway concerts of low-pitched bells, as if swept by violent or majestic winds.

"Gaku-no-Michi" means "paths of music" and, for Eloy, this first part represents "everyday sounds, from the concrete to the abstract", a "transsubstantia-tion-oblivion" which, based on our surrounding sound environment, leads us to "essential knowledge" through meditation, immersion in the sounds. Thus bathed by the music, and led by Eloy in the same way as Dante by Virgil, we might succeed, through reading sounds, in discovering something about ourselves and the universe ; isn't that what defines all music ?

Let us quickly examine other parts of this music, literally indescribable: "the path of meditative sounds" is a journey through low-pitched octaves from where a long electronic iridescent spiral rises, which then diffracts into divergent lines eventually joining together into a grand chord, a fixed moment which, in turn, evolves and expands with new colorful events resulting in other masses or sound groupings, like the stages of contemplation that drift back and forth, immobilized for a moment in time, only to take other steps towards other paths.

At turns calm, then eventful, unified or rich in independent sound particles of very different natures, passing from reverberating depths to unheard of twinkling sparkling sounds or violent percussion, such a musical respiration leads us towards a kind of timelessness akin to "ecstasy".

The last part, "Réminiscence, the path of meaning, beyond metamorphoses", brings one back to a sort of dramatic awareness of the world; conflicts, still abstract, evolve into large harmonious structures : heartrending themes melt into vast syntheses; the national Japanese anthem slowly unfolds through this calm and solemn vision and at last is stilled on a long timeless chord.

In this abridged version made for the record, Jean-Claude Eloy has deliberately excluded the most concrete and most recognizable elements, as if to signify that the essence lies in the heart of sounds themselves. From this rather secret homage to Japan, to zen philosophy and Buddhist mysticism, he has composed a great symphony, worthy of the Occident, whose immense, abstract architecture pays tribute to the guiding principle which inspires Oriental music: the "power of sounds" which leads to knowledge, indeed to enlightenment.

JACQUES LONCHAMPT

* Adès double record, 21 005. The preceding electronic work by Eloy, Shânti, was recorded last year by Erato (double record, STU 71205/206).

NRC HANDELSBLAD
(The Netherlands)
Tuesday, October 21, 1980

Eloy risks it all
with Gaku-No-Michi

Concert: Gaku-No-Michi (The Ways of Music) 1977 – 1978, an imageless film for electronic and concrete sounds by Jean-Claude Eloy, produced in the electronic music studio of Tokyo's NHK Japanese Radio. The first electronic concert of the Combinatie van Utrechtse Muziekbelangen Foundation series, Monday night in the Geertekerk.

By ERNST VERMEULEN

UTRECHT, Oct. 21. – The Eduard van Beinum Foundation in Breukelen recently organized an international composition workshop (featured on November 21 by KRO on Hilversum 4), to which French composer Jean-Claude Eloy was invited last Sunday for a closing presentation around the theme "The perception of time in Eastern and Western music: an introduction to his recent work Gaku-No-Michi".

A work of over four hours of music on tape arranged like an imageless movie, this fantastic piece indeed fully reproduced the sensation of time. We went to listen to it. The memory of Shanti talked us into it without difficulty. That work (Shanti) was produced in 1972/1974 in Cologne. It is a monumental composition that was also presented under the patronage of the Foundation in the Geertekerk, in Utrecht (1978).

Eloy sure knows the subject. Born in 1938, he studied with Milhaud and Boulez but has been influenced by Messiaen to a greater extent– the central part of Gaku-No-Michi is a clear example! He taught at Berkeley in the sixties – which one can hear in Shanti –, where, for the first time, he fully opened up to Eastern aesthetics generally speaking, and to the passage of time in particular. Currently working in Paris, he produced a composition for percussions, synthesizer and tapes in the Studio of Sonology in Utrecht last summer. He is working on a book called Music without Borders.

Gaku-No-Michi progresses along a spiral pattern to reach a climax, and then extracts the subsequent fragment. The work is divided into four parts: after the introduction comes the Tokyo part (sounds of everyday life in the form of sound metamorphoses going from recognizable concrete sounds to the musical abstract world) followed by a second part, the longest one, entitled Fushiki-e (a deciphering of "what is not knowable", the Way of meditation sounds, which reversely develops from the abstract to the concrete), attaining a static contemplation that can be stretched at will.

Coffee

Then the composer let us have coffee before hearing Banbutsu-No-Ryudo (the flow of all things, from the concrete to the concrete following an alienating direction, the emphasis being laid on the contradiction born by sound objects – a purely political debate can thus grow into a buzzing of bugs with rich tones), and, at last, Kaiso, which features reminiscences from the preceding parts, moving from the abstract to the abstract through the ways that enter our emotions beyond metamorphoses. Moreover, this fourth part evokes the tragedy of Hiroshima.

All this sounds fantastic, and is indeed. Unfortunately, some promises were broken. There are also fragments with no real signification, much too static: a rest without tension. It is the risk

of this type of composition where no fragment makes sense as everything has merged into the main lines.

The concrete material is nonetheless very rich. Descending bell sounds can for instance be replaced by the beautiful declaiming voice of a woman followed by prayers: this is reminiscent of Berio's language. Nevertheless, Eloy is less refined, less structured, broader, and somehow much too European to really get close to refined Asian images mentally speaking.

There is a lack of synthesis. Eloy provides a comment, however without merging into Eastern aesthetics. His bold Mahler-style attempt deserves our respect. Eloy is a one-of-a-kind character who dares to take every risk. It is a shame that several listeners did not stand dragging passages because the sound of chairs on the tiles of the Geertekerk did not suit the atmosphere. Yet, the atmosphere is essential to Eloy.

UNO MÁS UNO
(Mexico-city)
August 21, 1981

Eloy: "Music: An East-West Conflict".
The composer will give a conference tonight at the UNAM

By PATRICIA CARDONA

Considered the most independent of French composers of the second half of the 20th century, Jean-Claude Eloy defines the approach of the public as regards his music as a "psychophysical acoustic" contact, whereas, according to him, the experience felt by the listener hearing contemporary music has so far been mostly cerebral. Tonight at 8 pm, in the Carlos Chávez Hall of the Cultural Center of the University, the maestro will talk about the architecture of musical time in his work at a conference entitled "Unidirectionality – Multidirectionality: the limits between Asia and the West".

Convinced of the influence of music on the psychological and neurological state of man, Jean-Claude Eloy will go further into the issue of the nature and the effects of secret ritual music falling under his work of creation and interpretation of the relations between the Eastern and Western cultures.

"Computers, Eloy said, allowed music to reach a post-alphabetized" phase marked by a more direct character and more organized, which distinguishes it from the old Western tradition." The composer was able to get closer to the primitive universe through electronic music. That of Tibet, for instance, represents a point of contact between the most advanced musical approach in this genre and the ancestral tendency that man has to communicate organically with sounds.

Eloy will facilitate a workshop organized by the Compañía Musical de Repertorio Nuevo, on August 24-29 around the theme "Practicing electronic music". The composer gained his experiences in that area in the biggest centers in Germany and Japan and on the UPIC music computer system at the CEMAMu of Paris.

In addition, this close contact with Eastern music, which already turned into a "second nature" in his compositions led him to define the future of music as a conflict to be solved from cultural influences. The mix of cultures will be the basis of a new project; it will be about a meeting between past and present, between East and West. "In that regard, our generation is

going through a difficult transition. We are at the same time the bearers of a tradition and the bearers of future approaches", he commented.

He notes that this music must still enter a phase of stability, which will be perceived, in the history of music, as another classical period in the natural evolution of the genre. Not only does Eloy know the classical methods of conservatories as well as lab techniques, but he is also famous as an expert in traditional Hindu and Japanese music.

"The mastery of the sound material is a prerequisite to the development of a theoretical method", the composer declared. "The rapid evolution of electronic music has been marked by a succession of phases characterized by radical metamorphoses in sound management", explained Eloy, who taught as a composition professor at the University of Berkeley for several years.

According to Eloy, the duration of the piece "Gaku no Michi" (four hours) was determined by his instinct, by the maturing of his psychological relation with music. His creative process has an objective origin.

"Sufficiently open-minded listeners who let themselves carry by the music will face the sound just like they will face a film devoid of visual images", he commented. [...]

1982 : 10th anniversary, "Autumn Festival in Paris, 1972-1982"

(publisher "Temps Actuels").

JEAN-CLAUDE ELOY

A Path of Knowledge

By JEAN-PIERRE LÉONARDINI

Most people, when they think of the Orient, still conjure up images of the "Spice Road". Jean-Claude Eloy is among the few who don't (as evidenced by a penetrating study, published later in this book). Though incorporating both practical and theoretical bases of integral serialism, he has endeavored to create a cross-breed of musical forms. His work is shaped by an uninterrupted dialog between elsewhere and yesterday, here and today. In Shânti, for example, on the program of the Festival in 1974, the sounds and the texts at work emerge from a dialectical interplay, triggering an autonomous duration where revelations abound for those who are able to capture them. In Shânti, Mao Tse Tong and Shri Aurobindo overlap, the " sound of meditation " follows a cry, the whole of the work fusing into one common and vast respiration. "Shânti – says Eloy – is a fabric of intertwining elements that both oppose and complement each other, while progressing from the most "abstract" of sounds to the most realistic " raw " material. But it also proposes a sound never before heard. Identifying with the sound, losing oneself in it. Integrating into this sound all of the implosive forces of consciousness, becoming one with a multiple, inner, serene pulsation." It is not surprising that in a letter addressed to the composer of Shânti – itself a Promethean gamble, given its electronic means of expression - Karlheinz Stockhausen made this suggestion for the sound-projection in public : "One should listen with closed eyes.... In my opinion, in this particular work, seeing is not necessary." What could be more accurate ? Here, the awakened dreamer should receive, through his sense of hearing the tumult of a merciless struggle against an entropy of sound taking place on a worldwide scale.

Gaku-no-Michi (the paths of music), with concrete and electronic sounds, constitutes another experience, beyond the concert. It takes place on January 11, 1979, in the "salle Wagram" in collaboration with the Autumn Festival. The work is comprised of four parts. The first one, "Tokyo", has its source in city noises, daily sounds that rise up in a spiral, from the concrete to the abstract. "Fushiki-e" calls on a majority of abstract material (electronically produced from the start), incorporating barely recognizable elements from Gagaku, from Nô theater and

Shōmyō religious chants...ending on a constant "sound of immobilization", like "an immense organ point". The third movement, "Banbutsu-no-ryudo", manipulates concrete sounds – political speeches, the nationalistic chants of fighter pilots, television commercials, hollow bamboo as it strikes a stone – in such a way that the original meaning is transformed ("violent speeches become insects in nature"). "Kaiso", in concluding, condenses the memory of the three preceding movements and ends on a "lamento". The Japanese national anthem, filtered and clouded over, closes the work.

Gaku-no-Michi, in four hours, suggests (but does not impose) an invitation to embark on a philosophical journey, where the voyager is accompanied by an endless construction of sound that engages him in his very fiber on what can only be called a path of knowledge.

JEAN-PIERRE LÉONARDINI / Autumn Festival in Paris, 1982

Neue Zeitschrift für Musik
January 23, 1992

Solo Voices of Buddhist Monks
Berlin's "Inventionen" feature Eloy's electronics and Cage's art of the violin

One must not be short of imagination ("Inventionen") to organize a New Music Festival under that name gathering once again forty-odd proposals for this tenth year of the Berlin Jubilee. This applies to thinking heads. Moreover, concert attendants are recommended to have plenty of free time. Indeed, a few concerts are entirely devoted to one composer, and for some of them it is only a work or a series of works lasting the whole evening; the attention dwindles relatively easily, and one delightfully sits back to experiment something akin to culinary – or at least meditating – thought. As a matter of fact, the present goal of New Music is not – and should not be – to simply offend, give a feeling of insecurity, shake, even though these functions have remained.

Sound in Space under a Star-Spangled Sky

Sitting in the soft seats of the large Zeiss Planetarium – which has already hosted contemporary composers several times since the Biennials upon musicologist Gisela Wicke's initiative among others –, as it provides ideal technical conditions and a true spatialized hearing experience, it is even possible to bend one's head backwards (since, and this is new, the Berlin Workshop – Werkstatt Berlin – associated it with the Planetarium's star-spangled sky). Sounds carry you elsewhere and the work lasts four hours, so be patient.

Frenchman Jean-Claude Eloy (born in 1938), a student of Milhaud's, then of Boulez' at the Master Class of the Basel Music Academy, has never stopped returning to Japan since 1976. He is presently in Berlin where he is a guest as part of the German University Exchange Program (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst), and was thus properly considered. That exchange program, along with the Berliner Künstlerprogramm, was the true instigator of the festival. The public will be able to hear *Libérations* (1989-91) by Eloy on February 7, and the composer in person during a conference scheduled on January 30. A hundred minutes of *Anâhata III* were already heard during a live electronic music show [...] [...]

I listened to the following composition, *Gaku-no-Michi*, a work lasting 240 minutes. There is only one sound coming from a magnetic tape: electronic, however very much of a concrete music. The whole piece melts into one unit that arouses the listener's interest, mesmerizes and

fosters pleasure. One can hear the sound of an aerodrome and the announcements pronounced in local means of transportation, bells of various sizes, instruments of the No Theater. The sound increases, decreases, falls in harmony and calms extraordinarily. One even starts feeling a little Asian...

Another concert performed in the Otto Braun Hall of the Westberliner Staatsbibliothek, was also dedicated to one composer only – its impact was the same albeit the difference in style. John Cage, the 80-year old composer to whom four programs have been devoted this year, was featured solo for the whole evening with his Freeman Etudes for violin. That is a total of 230 works composed between 1977 and 1980.

Cage, a "Neutöner", a creator of new sounds. Certainly. However, he sounds quite classical here. [...] [...] Such an old-age piece allows the most neophytes to enjoy New Music. Besides, Cage was already invited to Berlin in 1972 by the Exchange Program and thus took part in the first Inventionen.

WERNER SCHÖNSEE

LE MONDE DE LA MUSIQUE

Issue # 18 - December 1979

MEETINGS WITH LE MONDE DE LA MUSIQUE

JEAN-CLAUDE ELOY
TOKYO VILLE ORCHESTRE
(TOKYO ORCHESTRA CITY)

Jean-Claude Eloy, Composer
Chris Marker, Filmmaker

You ride Yamaha, you are on Seiko time, you listen with Sony, you are already Japanese. Fair game: the Far-East takes the most of our vices as consumers. What about the trading of ideas? In that area, the blockade persists! Europe, which has built cultural forts throughout the world, still has no desire to seriously rub shoulders with foreign knowledge. When it comes to music, what is Japan? Jean-Claude Eloy went there to live. He is the only French composer of his generation - he is 41 – who has continuously tried to be acquainted with the great Eastern musical traditions, and the only one who has been able to learn from them. Chris Marker met him in Tokyo. He interviewed him on his way of apprehending Japan, on his contact with daily life, with Japanese sounds and the roads he has invented to lead them into his own music.

J.C.E. : - Japanese composers can no longer be considered as European by-products. I am neither saying that the situation here in Japan is ideal, nor that creative power is overflowing. It would be exaggerating, however I am saying that Asia as a whole is currently moving towards a state of independence vis-à-vis the European model: the old Japanese composers all used to gaze at Paris or Berlin. As for the young ones, they have been rediscovering their past, their culture. Not like the Soviets, who took a theoretical stand and, one fine day, declared: "We must tap into the roots of national folklore." No. They do it naturally.

In Japan, there is not one type but many types of music. This town houses the most varied styles of music. In daily life, one can hear an unbelievable amount of background music. You bump into loudspeakers everywhere, in the streets, on the beach, by the lakes...

C.M. : - Why this flight in the face of silence, which has always been so important in the Asian world?

- I do not know. I am just stating a fact. Those are phenomena that go far beyond the individual aesthetic conscience. However, business considerations obviously exist behind them.

- Have you discovered Japanese sounds or did you already have an idea of what you were looking for when you came here?

- I was fairly familiar with Japanese musical culture through records. But my ears were not trained to street sounds. That chorus of loudspeakers is very lively! Plus there are voices, screams. It all ends up creating a fascinating urban sound environment.

People in Paris still see Japan as the land of kimonos and Mrs. Butterfly... And what aggravates me the most is to see how those who are interested in the traditional cultures of Asia, or worse, those who, like Takemitsu, reintegrate their own culture in their work are accused of "exoticism".

There are amazing bridges and contemporary musicians here cultivate the old traditions without exoticism nor contradiction. Take an instrument like the shakuhachi, which is a famous recorder. When you compare it with electro-acoustics, you think that they form two worlds that have nothing to say to each other. What is interesting is to see, beyond the visible distance, how the shakuhachi, through the natural means of human breath in a bamboo, is able to produce acoustic phenomena that are very complex through the differentiation of breaths, of attack and play modes. For a very long time, Japanese music has been used to cultivate the acoustic body in its beauty. In Nô Theater, percussions are incorporated, screams are incorporated. Learned Western music rejected percussions and screams because they are overly complex acoustic bodies to enter the punctual relation of polyphony. All of this acoustic complexity in Japanese traditional music finds an echo in contemporary music.

After the Kabuki Time for Tchaikovsky

To a Japanese composer, trying to create a bridge between his own style and his country's tradition is a really natural attitude. It happens every day on the street, on TV or on the radio. You turn on the switch and you hear a kabuki (1) or a voice singing a minyô (2) with strange vibrations, and if you tune in to the next station, you hear an electronized Tchaikovsky!

When I first arrived here, I was supposed to work on a production in an electronic studio. It was almost a "commission" but I enjoyed working in Japan. Of course, I tried to open my eyes and ears. The city sounds appeared so loud and so present to me that I could not resist the pleasure of recording. Little by little, I asked myself: Why not? It is a material even though I did not invent it. So was that urban Japanese life my first source. Then I went to Kyoto, I listened to the shômyô (3), I attended traditional ceremonies, among which the water and fire ceremony that takes place every year in March and lasts 12 days. I attended the last night. Everything I heard was so much more beautiful than what I had heard on records! Eventually, this material was integrated in my work in progress, and suggested, through its presence, new developments in the electronic circuits I was composing daily. I can say that that work – Gaku no michi – is linked to my discovery of Japan. All in all, everything you do at a time of your own creative activity is linked to what surrounds you.

- Yes, although there is a tradition of solitary work where everything happens within the musician's mind...

- Yes, I know. However, that is abstract music, that is writing, isn't it? In electro-acoustics, you do not switch on the same things, and I think that is what brought us closer to

filmmakers. You evolve among the sounds of life and reality that traditional written music ignored.

When I use street sounds I do not think about integrating the anecdote into the work at all, but instead about playing on the meaning of things. For instance, there are quite characteristic sounds here, namely political speeches. Every one comes up to give a speech with loudspeakers set in a city square, and sounds resonate high up; the Japanese style yields a rather rough tone. I recorded a few of them. I used this material, which was metamorphosed through the magic of electronic circuits. A nationalistic speech turned into an insect buzz. There was also a small piece of nationalistic chant that is often heard, a fighter pilot chant, which I only processed electronically and which grew into a huge and very slow track, of the utmost quietness, the utmost peace. You do have metamorphosis powers. It is a fairly fun game for a musician to have such control over reality.

- Supposing you had the required technical infrastructure, what would you like to do?

- I very much want to work with Japanese instrumentalists; they are incredible. I would like to create "mixed" pieces, that is for soloists and electro-acoustics. In this field, every dream can come true, sounds know no limit.

I would also like to work towards the opera, however I would alter the situation of the show entirely, by integrating video or film elements for instance. My whole evolution these past years has led me towards the opera because there is a drama dimension in sounds: the abstract electronic material and the concrete material taken from life are like two poles standing against each other, fighting against each other thereby implicitly creating a dramatic situation. All there is left to do is to verbalize them.

Speeches turned into Insects

- Have you already undertaken something?

- I have thought about many things, but I prefer to keep quiet regarding it. Anyhow, you may very well have your utopia but actually you can only plan on transforming it the day when you feel you have all the means. I am not there yet.

- In an opera, would you remain a French musician?

- It is one of my issues, and I still have not resolved it. I cannot fathom something that will purely be French... it would irritate me... I would find it ridiculous... no, it would not work. Generally, an opera text is not really understandable. Instead, I am thinking of a multilingual text...

- A multilingual thus multicultural musical piece intended for an audience whose interests will need to be manifold, don't you feel you are working for a society that does not exist?

- Well, yes ... very much ... all the better! That is what creations have always been about, and there is nothing doing.

- Earlier on, you were talking about the metamorphosis power of the composer. Don't you think that contemporary music composition is trying to find a fundamental role for music again?

- Indeed, you have put the finger on something essential. To me, composing and listening to music are an important and serious action. Then again, there is a function to music, a very old one, which is that of entertainment: unfortunately, it has often become an excuse for glorifying an orchestra conductor, a singer, a violinist... The public awards prizes, nobody can really be deeply affected, and people are entertained. No spiritual dimension... I dare not say that word. Usually, people jump in the air and slip a priest's cassock on me.

No. I simply think that a communication is established through music. When I perform an electronic concert, people often say that there is no life, that my presence is not necessary. If I

were not there, I swear that what you would hear would not sound like the original at all. I spend hours fine-tuning a set-up before a concert.

Electronics allows to integrate music where it could never go. I have performed concerts in the heart of Indonesia, in Bandung, in front of audiences of young people who had never heard anything like that. I discussed with them for two to three hours: there was a definite communication between them and me. I was happy to meet other people, to be confronted to other reactions.

- Wouldn't you have a similar contact with a European audience?

- No, and in Paris less than anywhere else. The Parisian audience is completely blasé, dead. They have seen it all, heard it all.

- Perhaps concerts are no longer adapted to this kind of music?

- Yes, of course, that is what everybody is saying but, unfortunately, there is no practical solution. The music world is terrible; it is a world that is absolutely destructive, negative to the last degree, small... First, there is this very small surface of audience, so small, so ridiculous; naturally, everybody covets the same two hundred or three hundred listeners... Secondly, music in France has been brought up under the control of the State and ultracentralized. There are no hatching points left. Paris. Paris. Paris. History is the one to blame...

- There are festivals though...

- No, they are unable to generate a decentralization process. Take the recent failure of La Rochelle. Towards the end, there were about 50 people attending the concerts; the local people are not interested. You have to admit that regarding this issue composers are not so innocent. And to tell the truth, some contemporary creations are so boring that it is enough to put off the audience. Pretentious and woolly abstractions that do not belong to any kind of sound reality. No communication is set, and eventually you are cut off from the people.

- Couldn't television and the radio help prepare the public?

- Of course they could. In this area too, Japanese composers live on the fringe, the good composers I mean. They suffer from it too. The minds are so subject to the pressure of the media clichés that they become stereotyped regarding everything. It may be even more difficult to instill a new idea in minds like those. However, on the other hand, every composer lives on thanks to television and the film industry. They are asked to produce commercial music. Takemitsu composed 50 original scores!

- In this case, do they sometimes express themselves in their own language or do they think that it is not accessible to the masses?

- They quite obviously make compromises, which, however, are not overly excessive. They are still trying to make something different from the "cliché industry", while in France, as far as I know, so-called serious or hardly interesting composers are completely cut off from any commercial creation. Commercial music is made by specialists. That system is very unhealthy.

- The Japanese system is positive to the extent that it helps composers make a living. Nevertheless, it does not help promote their real music. There is some kind of a fate pattern: on the one hand, the same technology provides them with instruments to widen their music language, on the other hand, it closes doors to public art.

- Yes, it is a spiral... However, I do think that the situation will still be debated. How long have televisions been around? Thirty years? That is nothing.

- That is nothing, except that within that short period, it looks like the situation is getting worse! Japanese television is now worse than when I was here last time!

- That is possible! It is very odd. Take a channel like NHK: it broadcasts very interesting cultural programs, language courses, music courses... I have seen very well designed piano lessons showed at prime time.

- Do people watch them?

- I do not know the statistics. But it must be like mostly anywhere else: the Samurai movie broadcasted at the same time must get a bigger audience... However, these programs do exist, and that is already a reason not to say that the spiral is inevitably heading to nowhere. Some reactions show that the trend could be entirely reversed.

I asked a young Japanese composer: "Where do you see your future?" He answered: "On the radio or on television because a composer can only express himself through the media."

- You admit that contemporary music is in a marginal situation nearly everywhere. In the end, what is missing to this music is almost being the support to a religion: with its temples, its worshippers, and, consequently, ways to be heard.

- What you are saying is quite cruel.

- Not at all! But religion, in the negative meaning of the word, may have only stirred still insufficient approaches to something more deeply necessary to human breath. There are certainly other ways.

- Certainly, indeed. That is when it becomes closely akin to metaphysics, after all. Man's question on the why of things, the why of his existence and the universe in which he lives is actually that of every scientist, it is that of man who is trying to pierce through the limits of the universe with radiotelescopes. To eventually know... what? Religions have always tried to give an answer. Getting rid of religions does not get rid of the questions nor metaphysics.

It is not without a reason that today we all – I in particular – are inclined to be keen on so-called magical music. That of Tibetan monks for instance. Indeed, it is a more than religious type of music. It is magic music, and monks are sound magicians. They consider that sound carries power. They create those sounds with their voices, but not only to act as celebrants; they are convinced that vibrations have an effect on things.

I know that there is a great part of legend around. Nevertheless, these things are real. Magic music exists in Africa, Latin America, everywhere. And haven't musicians always had the deep desire to hold powers?

Interview with CHRIS MARKER

(1) First popular form of Japanese theater blending chanting, dance and game.

(2) General term to refer to popular chanting.

(3) Buddhist chant.

Full press documentation realized by Usha Levingstone

For all works :

- *The translations from German to French, Brazilian to French, Dutch to French, Indonesian to French, Mexican to French, Polish to French, have been realized by the translation office "Par l'éclair".*

- *No translation from the Chinese and Japanese languages have been realized until now - at the exception of the text by Wataru Uenami devoted to the work; "A l'Approche du Feu Meditant..." ("Approaching the meditative flame...").*

- *The translations from English to French and French to English have been realized by : **Hélène Demortier and Meredith Escudier.***