

GÉRARD GRISEY

Upon completing his studies at the Paris Conservatory in 1972, having studied with composers Olivier Messiaen and Henri Dutilleul, Gérard Grisey (1946-1998) won the coveted Prix de Rome and founded, with fellow composers Tristan Murail, Michaël Lévinas, Hugues Dufourt, and Roger Tessier, a contemporary music ensemble known as l'Itinéraire. This ensemble, and the composers associated with it, became the driving force behind the establishment of an attitude towards composition that has come to be known as spectral music.

Any vibration, according to the work of French mathematician and physicist Joseph Fourier, may be analyzed as the interaction of a number of individual sinusoidal frequencies. In music, this property is evident in the phenomenon of overtones or partials that combine in particular ways to create a sense of timbre. Groups of overtones and their relationships (specifically their relative frequencies and intensities) are known as spectra, and translating these spectra into musical sonorities provides composers with tools for the isolation and manipulation of timbre as the basis for the interaction of musical forces. Spectral composers use these "spectra" along with the refined capabilities of sonic analysis available through modern technology to construct compositional models that are founded on the innate properties of sound.

Due primarily to the use of spectra as compositional models, the term "spectral" has come to be the standard label associated with this music. However, most of its founders have abandoned this term as an overly reductive characterization of a broad aesthetic preoccupation with exploring how the innate properties of sound may be translated into musical processes. Grisey was often at the forefront of this opposition, proposing instead the term "liminal" as a more appropriate label for this attitude towards composition.

Liminality, in the sense of the threshold between two perceptual phenomena, can be seen on every level of a spectral composition. Through its mimetic nature, spectral music in general, and the music of Gerard Grisey in particular, explores the regions between the conception and perception of one-dimensional timbre and multi-dimensional harmony, exact frequency and approximate pitch, precise duration and rhythmic subdivision, and the gradual evolution of musical processes and the precise articulation of musical form.

In order to refine and develop his particular attitude towards composition, Grisey pursued studies in acoustics with Emile Leipp at the Paris VI University in 1974 and further training in acoustic research at IRCAM in 1980. In 1982, Grisey accepted a position at the University of California, Berkeley as a professor of music theory and composition. In 1986, he left Berkeley to teach composition at the Paris Conservatory, a post he held until his death on November 11th, 1998 at the age of 52.

—Christopher Gainey



THE UNIVERSITY
OF IOWA

Center for New Music

Concert

7:30 p.m. Sunday, December 8, 2013

Riverside Recital Hall

David Gompper, Center for New Music director

Season 48 Concert IX



featuring guest composer

Anthony Cheung
University of Chicago

Ensemble *Concert*

Dec. 8, 2013, 7:30 p.m. RIVERSIDE RECITAL HALL

PROGRAM

Abiogenesis (2013)

Brian PENKROT
(b. 1978)

Emily Duncan, flute
Allison Offerman, oboe
Thiago Ancelmo de Souza, clarinet
Fabio Benites Felipe da Silva, bassoon
Jose A. Zayas-Caban, baritone saxophone
Russ Lenth, horn
Dee Bierschenk, trumpet
Nathaniel Lee, trombone
Adam Stevens, tuba
Andrew Thierauf & Tyler Swick, percussion
Casey Rafn, piano
Andrew Gentzsch & Rebecca Malina, violins
Manuel Tabora Deras, viola
Tom Maples, violoncello
Michael White, double bass
Zachary Stanton, conductor

Rebonds A pour percussion solo (1987-89)

Andrew Thierauf, percussion

Iannis XENAKIS
(1922-2001)

Time's Vestiges (2013)

Anthony CHEUNG
(b. 1982)

Emily Duncan, flute
Thiago Ancelmo de Souza, clarinet
Fabio Benites Felipe da Silva, bassoon
Kristin Thelander, horn
Casey Rafn, piano
Andrew Gentzsch & Rebecca Malina, violins
Manuel Tabora Deras, viola
Tom Maples, violoncello
Michael White, double bass
David Gompper, conductor

INTERMISSION

Vortex Temporum (1994-96)

Gérard GRISEY
(1946-1998)

- I. *Interlude 1*
- II. *Interlude 2*
- III. *Interlude 3*

Emily Duncan, flute
Thiago Ancelmo de Souza, clarinet
Casey Rafn, piano
Andrew Gentzsch, violin
Manuel Tabora Deras, viola
Tom Maples, violoncello
David Gompper, conductor

PROGRAM NOTES & BIOGRAPHIES

ABIOGENESIS

The concept of abiogenesis is that inorganic material came together and became living cells. These cells eventually evolved to become all the life that we are and that surrounds us.

This piece treats distinct gestures as the organic material, with each voice initially occurring on its own. As the piece progresses, gestures become duets and trios as material collects, until the moto perpetuo of life processes turns on - the drums act as the nervous system and the bass as the circulatory system. Material continues to evolve, moving between various groupings until the ensemble is tutti, with each individual part now acting as part of the whole.

In addition to the steady increase of the number of simultaneous voices, the piece also explores the Gestalt law of proximity, which states that the proximity of objects to each other causes the perceiver to group them together. While the opening gestures are specific and individualized to an instrument, they are so short, fast, and close together that a larger melodic line takes shape. Organic material far apart from other organic material could not have bound together to be a part of a living organism; it would have to be close enough to other organic material to do so. The piece juxtaposes dissimilar material in varied proximities to make the perceptual leap from individual to unified entities, paralleling the leap from organic material to living cells.

BRIAN PENKROT'S music has been performed throughout the US, Asia, and Europe, including the La Pietra Forum and the SCI National Conference. Brian has attended numerous festivals and has had works performed by ensembles including ICE and ECCE. He is pursuing his PhD at the University of Iowa, where he studies with David Gompper. Brian is the SCI Iowa chapter president and teaches at the University of Iowa, Kirkwood Community College, and the Preucil School. He received his MM from UNLV and BM from Columbia College Chicago. Audio samples and a full list of works can be found at www.brianpenkrot.com.

REBONDS A

Written 1987-89, the work is the first of two movements for multi-percussion solo. It is scored for two bass drums, three tom toms, and a pair of bongos and follows a singular course of ever-increasing complexity and density. It is something akin to the flow of a river from its source to its final destination at the sea. Though not obvious at first, Xenakis uses the Golden Mean both in this movement and in the larger work. The ratio between the length of the first movement and second movement is the same ratio as between the first movement and the whole. Within the first movement, the busiest section is at the Golden Mean, about 2/3rd through the piece. With its rhythmic complexity and tour de force of drumming, Rebonds is a staple of the percussion repertoire.

IANNIS XENAKIS (1922-2001), a Greek composer and architect, had a tragic yet inspiring early life. His mother died when he was only five and his father was distant. During the late 1930s he fought with the Greek Resistance against German and Italian forces until its demise in 1944. At that point he enrolled in the Athens Polytechnic Institute and received his degree as an engineer. However, he was still known for his role in the resistance movement and was eventually forced to leave Greece in 1947. He fled to Paris where he found employment under the famous architect Le Corbusier. During his time in Paris he began studying composition, specifically under Messiaen and later joined the Groupe de Recherches de Musique Concrète - one of the first studios dedicated to electronic music. He left Le Corbusier's studio in 1959 and supported himself on composing, teaching, and writing about music. His architecture and music are highly influenced by the Golden Mean, the ratio at which two parts of the whole are in the same proportion as the larger part is to the whole. He uses the Golden Mean in both form and rhythm, giving his works a unique blend of mathematics and music.

TIME'S VESTIGES

"We find no vestige of a beginning, no prospect of an end."

With this famous conclusion drawn by James Hutton in 1788, modern geology took a decisive break from a linear narrative, and human history became disentangled from the geological record. Uniformitarian processes that have always existed will continue to do so, forming an unending chain of cyclical time. To paraphrase the opening lines of Eliot's Four Quartets, past and future are always present — in the present.

I'd like to think of this piece as representing some of the ways in which metaphors drawn from geological "deep time" and cycles of time can be made heard. There are never strict processes, and they do not repeat. Moments of directionality are followed by stasis, only to start up again. This is especially so in the first section, which gradually transforms a static structure with elements of "ceaseless motion" bubbling under the surface into a more active foreground texture. The final section of the piece is another slow transformation, in which the strings literally erode their tunings into new, strange forms. Anthony Cheung March, 2013

ANTHONY CHEUNG (born San Francisco) is a composer and pianist. As a performer and advocate for new music, he is Artistic Director of the Talea Ensemble, which he cofounded in 2007. His music has been commissioned by the Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Intercontemporain, New York Philharmonic, Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, Scharoun Ensemble Berlin, and also performed by Le Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, Linea, the Chicago Symphony's MusicNOW ensemble, the Minnesota Orchestra, and the French National Orchestras of Lille and Lorraine, among others.

He has received awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and ASCAP, and first prize in the Sixth International Dutilleux Competition (2008), as well as a Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome. His music has been programmed at festivals such as Ultraschall (Berlin), Cresc. Biennale (Frankfurt), Wittener Tage, Helsinki Festival and Musica Nova Helsinki, Centre Acanthes, Musica (Strasbourg), and Nuova Consonanza (Rome).

As a writer and scholar, he has completed a dissertation on György Ligeti (on the Hamburg Concerto, 2010), as well as articles on contemporary music for both specialists and a general readership. Primary musical interests include notational aesthetics, jazz improvisation and transcription, microtonality and alternate tunings, rhythmic polyphony, and temporal perception, and his music also engages poetic imagery, syntax and rhetoric, natural phenomena, and the visual arts.

Anthony received a BA in Music and History from Harvard and a doctorate from Columbia University, where he taught and also served as assistant conductor of the Columbia University Orchestra. He was a Junior Fellow at the Harvard Society of Fellows, and is currently an Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Chicago. [acheungmusic.com]

VORTEX TEMPORUM

The title Vortex Temporum indicates the beginning of the system of rotation, repeated arpeggios and their metamorphosis in various transient passages. The problem here is to enter the depths of my recent research on the use of the same material at different times. The three basic forms are the original event - a sinusoidal wave - and two continuous events, an attack with or without resonance as well as a sound held with or without crescendo. There are three various spectra: harmonics, 'stretched disharmonics' and 'compressed disharmonics'; three different tempos: basic, more or less expanded, and more or less contracted. These are the archetypes that guide Vortex Temporum.

In addition to the initial introductory vibration formula taken directly from *Daphnis et Chloe*, 'Vortex' suggested to me harmonic writings focused around the four tones of the diminished seventh chord, a rotational chord par excellence. Treating each of these tones as leading ones, we obtain the possibility of multiple modulations. Of course, we aren't dealing here with the tonal system but rather with considerations of what might still be relevant and innovative in this system. The chord about which I'm speaking is thus a common part of the three previously written spectra and determines other displacements.

The piano used in the work is tuned a quarter tone lower, which changes the sound of the instrument, at the same time facilitating the integration within microintervals, which are essential in this work. In Vortex Temporum the three archetypes described above revolve around one fragment and the other in temporary intervals, differing among themselves as among people (the tempo of speech and breathing), whales (spectral time of sleeping rhythms), and birds or insects (extremely contracted time, whose contours become obliterated). Thanks to this imagined microscope, the notes become sound, a chord becomes a spectral complex, and rhythm transforms into a wave of unexpected duration.

The three portions of the first part, dedicated to Gérard Zinsstag, develop three aspects of the original wave, well known to acoustic engineers: the sinusoidal wave (vibration formula); the square wave (dotted rhythm) and the jagged wave (piano solo). They develop the tempo, which can be defined as 'joyful', the tempo of articulation, rhythm of human breathing. The isolated piano section reaches the boundaries of virtuosity.

The second part, dedicated to Salvatore Sciarrino, approaches the same material in expanded time. Initial Gestalt appears here only once, spreading throughout the entire part. I tried here to create the feeling of the confused speed inside the slow tempo.

Part three, dedicated to Helmut Lachenmann, introduces a long process allowing the creation of interpolation, which appears between the various sequences. Continuity gradually establishes, and expands, finally becoming a kind of widely conceived projection of the events from the first part. The spectra originally developed in the harmonic discourse of part two expand here to an extent degree, enabling the listener to detect the structure and entrance into other time dimension.

Short interludes are planned between the parts of *Vortex Temporum*. A few breaths, noises and discrete noises colour the awkward silence, and even the discomfort of the musicians and listeners, who hear their own breathing between the parts. Treating waiting time this way, linking the time of the audience with the time of the work, refers to some of my earlier works, for example *Dérives*, *Partiels* or *Jour*, *Contrejour*. Here, of course, these tiny noises are allied with the morphology of Vortex Temporum.

Overthrowing the material in favor of pure endurance is a dream, which I have been carrying out for many years. Vortex Temporum is perhaps only a history of the arpeggio in time and space - from the point of view of our ears.

Vortex Temporum was commissioned by the French Ministry of Culture, Ministerium für Kunst Baden-Württemberg and the Westdeutsche Rundfunk Köln, at the special request of 'Ensemble Recherche'.

—Gérard Grisey