



On the Work of David Hudry

Often enough, composing means juggling paradoxes, and sometimes trying to resolve them. Although the music of David Hudry gives an initial impression of stability, homogeneity and firm resolve, it does not take long to reveal a behaviour which is not so much peremptory and unambiguous as, in reality, a balancing act maintained by the precarious yet virtuosic equilibrium between a sum of opposing forces. The repetitions and transformations of the subtly differentiated musical figures constituting *Räumezeit* (2004) create a mosaic: continuous development and transition are banished to make room for situations characterized by contrast and rupture. The composer rejects linear narrative processes in favour of a 'moment form' inherited from Stockhausen via Emmanuel Nunes, who was his most important teacher. But for him, discontinuity means neither an atomization of the discourse nor a heterogeneity of material. The initial wandering presented by the solo viola in *Verwandlung I* (2006) rests on the successive metamorphoses of an 'obsessive musical idea'. The metamorphosis inspired by Georg Trakl in *Nachtspiegel* (2008) is that of the 'landscape of the soul' and is translated into music, within an orchestral environment, through the existence of melodic figures which are not developed, but rather presented in infinite declinations. Goethian organicism, transferred by Webern and then systematized by Boulez, here finds a new musical metaphor.

Despite constituting one of the foremost characteristics of David Hudry's musical poetics, the reconciliation of two historical adversaries – 'absolute' music and programme music – could almost go unnoticed. In *Impromptu pour un monodrame* (2007) one can clearly observe the idea of the 'musical personality', and with it the elaboration of a latent dramaturgy resulting from the confrontation between these personalities. This staging of the material does not result in any precisely articulable scenario, but it presupposes from the first stage of compositional formalization a consideration of dramaturgical categories. It is the rendition of sounds that dominates, and with it the images that can be provoked, and are capable of 'giving meaning' to the sonorous atmospheres created in this way. The polyphony resulting from the dialogue between the bassoon and its virtual, electronically-generated doppelgänger rests equally on narrative and combinatorial criteria.

Hudry's output tends towards an equilibrium between complexity of elaboration and clarity of musical discourse. While such works as *Räumezeit* and the string quartet *Verwandlungen* (2007) are marked by the density of their textures – and typical in this respect of the first phase in the music of a composer who, between 2004 and 2008, sought to condense

an entire universe into each work – *Nachtspiegel* hints at a first change of direction. This fundamental work simultaneously appears to be the synthesis and the perfection of a constructivist idea based on the interval, which dominates both the harmonic palette – essential to the work of the colourist – and the melodic profiles of the music. *Trois esquisses* (2009) for cimbalom and nine instruments, with its unmetred sections in which resonances are allowed to unfold, testifies to the evolution towards a musical discourse that breathes more, giving the sounds their own time to speak. *Störungen* (2011) seems to mark the beginning of a third phase in this stylistic evolution: it is an astonishing encounter between a small ensemble and two Baroque instruments tuned to 415 Hz. The dramaturgical background – a ‘schizophrenic’ confrontation that gradually glides towards attempts at merging – produces a very intelligible form, rhythmicized by an alternation between the relative stasis of forceful resonances and the driving force of an insistent pulsation evoking both a polyrhythmic swing and the obsessive repetitions of a jammed machinery. Likewise, the sextet *Intersections* (2014), disturbed by light microtonal dabs whose main function is to distort the harmonies in order to bring out their expressivity, give certain indications about the composer’s craftsmanship: all the pre-compositional work, however systematically and rationally it might be approached, means nothing until it has passed examination by the composer’s ear and judgement, improved in certain ways by intuition and creative subjectivity.

After the duo for bass clarinet and cello *Skizze I* (2007) and *Trois esquisses*, Hudry’s *Livre d’esquisses* marks the third appearance of a highly significant term. To the extent that they are sketches, all of these pieces demand a later reformulation. As formulated eloquently by Pierre Boulez, Hudry’s illustrious forerunner in the area of the work in progress, they are endowed with ‘an existence of their own between the incomplete and the finished’, and constitute a provisional totality. The material thus conceived as a potential for renewal circulates from one work to the next, weaving a fabric of connections between them whose ramifications can only be fully appreciated by examining the sketches. Such a self-referential practice remains beneath the surface, as it is based more on rewriting than quotation. Nonetheless, some very characteristic chords remain identifiable, just as the one transplanted from *Nachtspiegel* into ‘Ewigkeit’, the second piece in *Livre d’esquisses*, gains new radiance in the last of the five short pieces – likewise sketches – that form *Introduction á Iðavöllr* (2013), Hudry’s first work for large orchestra, in which the composer’s talent as a sonic goldsmith is revealed in timbral compounds and sophisticated playing techniques.

In the score of *Verwandlung I*, David Hudry includes an altered version of a line by Rilke: instead of *Mit allen Augen sieht die Kreatur das Offene* [With all its eyes, the creature sees the open], from the *Eighth Duino Elegy*, he writes: *Mit ganzem Gehör nimmt der Mensch das Offene wahr* [‘With all his hearing, man perceives the open’]. And so we too should listen with

all our hearing to each of the pieces composed since then as an open proposition, a fragment of an object that is yet uncertain but nonetheless unique, fashioned in the most minute detail by a sure hand with a full command of its craft.

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