

Psyché-Cité/Transversales

A series for ensemble and electronics

Clara Maïda

2005-07



Photograph: Hauptbahnhof, Berlin © Clara Maïda, 2005

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1- Fluctuatio (in)animi (p.3)

for flute, violin, viola, cello, double bass and a 4-channel electroacoustic device
(13'42)

PRIX ARS ELECTRONICA 2007 - *Honorary Mention* (Linz, AT)

World premiere on November 25, 2006. AKADEMIE DER KÜNSTE (Berlin, DE)

Commissioned by the Berlin AKADEMIE DER KÜNSTE

Residency at the ADK and at the STUDIO FÜR ELEKTROAKUSTISCHE MUSIK of the ADK

KNM Berlin

Technical processing: STUDIO FÜR ELEKTROAKUSTISCHE MUSIK of the ADK

2- Ipso facto (p.4)

A 7-channel electroacoustic work
(9'34)

MUSICA NOVA 2008 - *Finalist* (Prague, CZ)

World premiere on September 21, 2007. *Fünf + 1* festival (Berlin, DE)

(KLEINER WASSERSPEICHER of Prenzlauer Berg)

Residency at the ELECTRONIC STUDIO of the TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT (Berlin, DE)

Technical processing: ELECTRONIC STUDIO of the TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT

3- Via rupta (p.5)

for flute, clarinet, trombone, violin, viola, cello, double bass and 8-channel electronics
(8'55)

World premiere on May 21, 2005. *Les Musiques* festival (Marseille, FR)

Commissioned by the FRENCH MINISTRY OF CULTURE and the GMEM-CNCM

Residency at the GMEM - Realisation of the live electronics: Léopold FREY (Marseille)

ENSEMBLE ORCHESTRAL CONTEMPORAIN - Conducted by Fabiàn PANISELLO

Technical processing: GMEM

This series is part of a project which refers to suburban spaces (subways, shelters...).

These three pieces aim at developing a sound system that works like a hybrid organism (an ensemble of terms and relations), at the intersection of psychic and urban matters.

Heterogeneous materials (instrumental and urban sounds - in particular those of the subway in this series) merge in a plastic fabric in constant evolution, which goes beyond categories and within which emerge a dialectic between the endless renewable potentialities of the paths of any structure and the beat, the inexorably fixed repetition which can trap any mechanism (alive or not).

Where is the breaking point located, between the possibilities of exploration offered by a mechanism and the captivity generated by the repeated use of the same paths?

1st part: **Fluctuatio (in)animi**

for flute, violin, viola, cello, double bass and a 4-channel electroacoustic device
(13'42)

The title refers to the notion of "fluctuatio animi" that Spinoza developed by linking it to the notion of affect.

The simultaneity of opposite affects induces a rearrangement, but also a conflict within the psychic dynamics.

The "fluctuatio animi" would be the zone where the shifting of an individual's psychic forces takes place, this suspended floating moment when an emotional cycle ends and could shift to one side or the other of the contradiction, i.e. towards the repetition or the beginning of a new cycle.

It is not the hesitation between several paths, since the movement is not actualised yet. It is an overlapping of all these paths, which remains virtual and in constant motion, and organises itself within a space where all the possible connections between the elements form a problematic field (in the mathematical sense of the word).

I imagined the title *Fluctuatio (in)animi* to evoke the difficulty of avoiding emotional alienation, a crystallisation on recurrent patterns of relationships or of behaviours (that can almost seem inanimate).

It would be this floating moment which can, either shift to a repetition creative of microdifferences within the structure and matter, or to a deadly repetition incapable of generating new structuring, i.e. to the magnetic attraction exerted by the poles of fixation present in the mechanics of affects.

It could also be the systematic inclination towards this mechanics (despite the opening to another possible field), Freud's Thanatos, which then would not indicate the death of all movement, but the death of a potentiality of renewal and the endless persistence of the same gesture.

A dynamic principle pervades the series of events, flows from one layer to another, continuously modifies their articulation and their outlines, thus inducing a superimposition of perspectives, intertwining points of view.

What matters is not the objects or the complexes of objects in themselves, whose identity is constituted and dissolved all at once, but the network that all of their trajectories suggest.

Oscillating between this process likely to mobilise new circuits and a blocking movement which revolves around itself and cannot escape from the return to the same centre (and here, the metaphor of the machine takes its full meaning), the piece raises also the question of the difficulty of a true freedom which would be characterised by the capacity of continually inventing new ramifications, avoiding all automatism.

Clara Maïda, November 2006

2nd part: **Ipsso facto**
A 7-channel electroacoustic work
(9'34)

"ipso facto" is a Latin expression meaning "by the very fact", "therefore, automatically". But what occurs automatically in that piece, paradoxically, is the absence of automatism. Therefore, sound events are articulated with one another, following their own logic, carried away in a kind of whirl which also contains a few stases.

In the first piece of the series, *Fluctuatio (in)animi*, the musical discourse was based on a dialectic between the possibility of ramifications, the creation of new paths and inversely, the irresistible attraction, at times, to a fixed polarisation which traps the sound movements within a mechanical reiteration and induces a return to the same axis over and over again.

In *Ipsso facto*, there is no longer any opposition between elasticity and rigidity. We are inside a space filled with vibrations, circular and fluid, and the venue of the premiere of the piece played a role in the choice of such a space (the water tank - Kleiner Wasserspeicher - in Berlin Prenzlauer Berg).

I tried to evoke a confined space, cut off from the exterior, empty and made up of galleries (a little like a sewerage system).

The sound movements mimic the way sounds can echo on the walls, whirl around, ricochet from one surface to another, diffract by engendering multidirectional trajectories or, on the contrary, extend, lose their contours, merge together within a place where the reverberation is very important.

The distinction between proximity and distance becomes difficult. Some sounds seem to be very accurately drawn. Others are more blurred, as if they appeared behind a veil, or distorted, reminding of the sound perception we have when immersed under water.

Musical gestures recur insistently (a slippage, a whirl, a rebound), and draw ever more rapid abstract curves and twirls.

Like in the other two pieces of the series, my aim was to elaborate a hybrid sound evoking both an urban space and an organic entity, the world of objects and the living world.

Rubbing, scraping, creaking, groaning, chains dragged along and mechanisms set in motion, rebounds of metal objects, all these sounds compose a space which undergoes numerous torsions and about which it cannot be told whether it is inside or outside the body.

Clara Maïda, September 2007

3rd part: **Via rupta**

for flute, clarinet, trombone, violin, viola, cello, double bass and 8-channel electronics
(8'55)

The title of the piece is a Latin expression from which the French word "route" ("road") is derived. For Roman people, the construction of a road implied the breaking ("rupta") of the obstacles that were arising. The meaning of "via rupta" was a broken, cleared, or opened way.

The whole piece is pervaded with this ambiguity between the breaking of matter and the opening of all the possible ways.

As in my previous pieces, I tried to develop musical processes whose articulation would evoke the mobility of unconscious psychic processes, affects and impulses. The sound body would reflect the unconscious image of the body, developed throughout our life experience and sometimes in conflict with the limits of the real body image. It is a kind of virtual, abstract body, since it appears only in dreams and fantasies in which it can suffer many distortions.

The sound topology of the piece has several aspects.

On the one hand, it reminds of the functional and structural complexity of psychic topology and presents the same web-like articulation, the same kinematical nature. The numerous trajectories, the series of links between the musical objects develop a network of interlacing, crossing, ramifications, junctions which outline abstract and fleeting cartographies.

The musical matter thus undergoes distortions, atomising and reappearances similar to those that can modify the shape of the body in dreams.

On the other hand, the sound material of the piece is derived from sounds recorded in the subway. I chose the subway because it can be perceived as a kind of intrusive object whose paths make holes in matter ("via rupta"), and its reticular structure also reminds of a psychic associative process. The merging of the two sound worlds (the subway and instrumental sounds) generates a sort of mutant sound, half-technological, half-organic.

Moreover, the connection between the psychic and body experience and the urban world is underlined by the rapidity and this proliferation encountered in mental connections as well as in the structure of a town.

Urban body or imaginary body? Urban space or mental space? *Via rupta* is a psychogeography, an architecture of fleetness and mobility. It is a space-fabric whose matter is flexible, with varying dimensions. Its form is a state of flux, an endless process, a series of short materialisations which result from extremely fast and trans-generic sound paths.

Clara Maïda, May 2006