

## Hotel Boltanski



Some time ago, at a market stall, I found these two postcards: a soldier on leave (for this reason very content and satisfied...) letting someone take a souvenir shot of him to send to his family and friends. In the first image, the photographer, to make the subject sweeter, has prepared a beautiful bouquet of artificial red flowers. In the second image, the flowers are still there, but they are withered and strewn across the bench, lifeless. Magically whitened. The result is surreal and if it were not clearly staged, a *mise-en-scène*, it could suggest fantastic interpretations and hidden, subliminal, messages. This double image symbolically shows the meaning of the art of copying. On this recording, as I have already done in the past, I appropriated music that belonged to other instruments to create apocryphal versions of it (sometimes with license) and then delivered them to the final and resolute judgment of the author. Hotel Boltanski is a place for the soul, a small museum of wonders, my Wunderkammer. Here experimentation and pop, freedom and rigor, order and disorder, memory and future, numbers and clouds, all co-exist. Its rooms are inhabited by composer friends, people I've never met, travelling companions, tutelary deities. It is a sincere and passionate tribute to a great artist who has accompanied my work for years with books, postcards, catalogues, photographs, exhibitions, and discussions: Christian Boltanski. I take this opportunity to create a list, one that perhaps my beloved Georges Perec would have liked, where all experiments that, with no apparent form, have come and gone over the years according to a free and without a pre-established order, are lined up like toy soldiers. Now, however, this list puts them in relation to each other and the thing takes on different and mysterious meanings. I realize I have filled entire notebooks with names of composers and pieces of music, relative durations, composition and birth dates.

Lists, numbers, names, numbers, lists and then more numbers, numbers, numbers...

*Manuel Zurria  
Rome, September 6th, 2016*

## György Kurtág

Around 2013 I started working around the music of György Kurtág, without ever having had the opportunity to meet him personally. The first song I transcribed was *Ligatura-Message* for Frances Marie which I worked on in total autonomy and then sent to the address of the Maestro to share my work with him and get his opinion. After a few months, I received a phone call from Kurtág himself. He urged me to continue this research with other songs from his piano cycle, *Játékok*. So I did. For a few years I worked incessantly on about forty tracks, each of which was recorded, edited and sent to Kurtág to establish a common thread, a sort of long-distance collaboration. In the end, this immense work turned out to be what it was at the beginning: a novel experience with one of the greats of today's music. An experience that was worth pursuing without goals and deadlines. On the occasion of this publication I recovered two short passages that speak of flowers which, as always in Kurtág's music, are a metaphor for fleeting life, delicacy, joy that burns up in an instant. In 2016, during a concert in Budapest, I finally met the Maestro. At that moment, I had the sensation that I'd known him for a long time. And that's how it was, after all....

Manuel Zurria

## Salvatore Sciarrino

*- Thoughts on the Opera per Flauto -*

I still have a lot to say about flute technique and much about the composition and theoretical amplifications. About the titles as well. But I don't intend to write about those things: in other words, that which doesn't blossom in the moment better to leave aside or it takes on the traits of an unfathomable rigidity. I would rather reflect on what it means to have composed, over the span of a few years, something that is no longer a simple follow-up of more or less successful works. It is a true corpus, and this means that, first of all, from now on, the flute is not the same. And I don't so much claim to have played havoc with it, as attracting it to an unknown corner of the world. Most are sounds invented more than twenty years ago; some recent ones were provided by Fabbriani; one, quite well known since 1971, is by Giancarlo Graverini. But the same sounds that belonged to the common heritage of composers, even rightly today are attributed to me because they seem to be finally conquered by the music. Already in themselves, every composition of mine is also a legitimization of such sounds. On an old structure, the new sounds would amount to a sophisticated dressing. At one time there was talk of "effects." Here structure and the sonic event arise from the same needs and grow or lean toward a common perspective, a new image. It is not so much a case of choosing more or less appropriate sounds, to decorate the house, as it is a case of "building new universes with new sounds". This should be the aim of composers who are not unworthy of that name. I must speak without reticence and I will certainly seem immodest. I stubbornly tried to compare myself to the greats of the past. But it is a challenge of an ethical nature, not an aesthetic one. Do not confuse these: while I am familiar with them, my music is very far from them in the end. The way in which the classics challenge us, a challenge we can win, is to surpass our own limitations. On the contrary: in broadly surpassing them, right where we have given our best, we still need to surpass ourselves mercilessly. But this need to go deeper into a style, to broaden a fantastic horizon that already has such personal origins? It would have allowed anyone to spend a lifetime there. Already in 1984, *All'aure* was one of the most imitated pieces in recent history. Even on the gods of Olympus, it left its not-so-silent traces. Nothing, except an uncontrollable restlessness of imagination would have demanded five more pieces. However, if these had never existed, we would have been deprived of the best. I'm only outlining the technical profile, given that each piece is also quite characteristic (although not like the studies, which have far more meticulous ambitions).

*Hermes* draws harmonics from a single sound, in a fan or chords, and traces out a sort of conquest of the most dazzling harmonics. *Venere*, *Incantesimi* and *Nubi* make a mix of the more heterogeneous sounds. But *Incantesimi* and *Canzona* combine the mechanical emissions and transformations of the sound: yes, the old flute, just as it was, had not been completely explored. "According to one's own breath" - with this phrase, the tempo of *All'aure in una lontananza* was interrupted. Aton moves from the provocative discovery of the physiology (and psyche), to the identification of certain articulations formed inside the same physiology. So then, emerging into a consciousness of time is what binds two extreme works. One with the nebulous outpouring of images around a pulsing horizon line, the other that tends to not even be a composition any more. A branch of existence, that can vary from moment to moment, taking into itself all your psychological states and changes: no longer implicitly, nor with words, the sound is born and returns in the breath.

Salvatore Sciarrino

## **Beat Furrer**

*Invocatio VI* is an excerpt from the work *Begehren* (Desire), and represents the sixth scene where Eurydice speaks with an ideal alter ego (the bass flute) about a poetic and mystical lamentation of St. Juan de la Cruz. The scene is musically represented by a paroxysmal contradiction between extreme speed/minimal complexity and dynamics, barely perceptible. The rhythmic and melodic musical structures are layered at various levels, producing an undeniable alteration of perception and multiplication of meaning.

*Manuel Zurria*

## **Heinz Holliger**

Dear Roland, thank you with all my heart! Your kind soul and the sweet and transcendental sound of your piccolo will throw open the gates of heaven

*your Heinz*

## **Toshio Hosokawa**

*Calligraphy as an ascetic practice in search of a human cosmic awareness and an awakening to the roots of our existence. This is what calligraphy is: Cosmic immensity.* These words about calligraphy can be found in the diary of the avant-garde Japanese calligrapher, Yuichi Inoue. I have continued to compose musical works, conceiving of music as a calligraphy of space and time. What I mean here by "calligraphy" is the form of a musical note. You could also call it the shape of a song, the shape of its core melody. The idea that the melodic shape of eastern music has a calligraphic form was suggested to me by my composition teacher, Isang Yun. Without seizing hold of the melody as a structural element in a combination of several notes, like the brickwork of western architecture, just one single note is born beyond the space-time of silence, grows like a plant and decays, like the form of an oriental writing brush. The glissando, the various forms of vibrato, the tone color changes often used and seen in the melody of eastern songs are the means of keeping alive the flow of life of this one single note. In one stroke of the writing brush appears the breath of life, the power and depth of the person who draws the stroke. It is an expression of the original power of life, and it is proof that the person lives. If the "brush stroke" of my music differs from that of my teacher, Isang Yun, it might be in the attention my calligraphy pays to the place on which the stroke is drawn, to the canvas and its blank spaces, under the deeper influence of Japanese calligraphy. Japanese calligraphy places value not only on the subject being drawn but also on the blank space behind it, the power of the places where nothing is drawn. The appearance of the visible brush stroke is improved by means of the blank space in its background where nothing is drawn. In musical terms, the musical note is given greater expressive power by means of the inaudible blank space, or silence. For me the flute is the instrument which can most deeply realise my musical ideas. The flute can produce a sound by means of the breath, and can be a vehicle by which the breath transmits the sound's life-power. In Japan from ancient times we have had a tradition of various flutes such as the ryuteki of gagaku, noh wind instruments, and the bamboo shakuhachi. My flute music no doubt is influenced by various forms of this tradition. The breath noise you sometimes hear in it, which sounds just like the wind of the natural world, is a noise that was until the nineteenth century forbidden in western flute music. In the Japanese tradition, however, this noise is something used positively as a way to approach a more natural breath. Sen I for flute solo (1984) is a work from my earliest period which followed the process of a calligraphic brush stroke being drawn on the blank space of music.

*Toshio Hosokawa*

## **Yan Marez**

Outlined in its fundamental structure in 1993 in the wake of a study focused on a compositional notation problem and its resolution (in the mathematical sense), this short piece plays on the possibility of perceiving a polyphonic dimension in a monophonic instrument. One solution worth trying was polyrhythmic in nature, so I thought of combining two contrasting but complementary musical materials, and tried to reconcile them in a continuous discourse, with a percussive obbligato for the flute (a regular, almost metronomic pulse) and a melodic, more traditional style of writing, limited in its natural unfolding space by having to coexist next to the percussive audio. Gradually, out of the tension created by this duality, there emerged an unexpected sensation, almost like an incantation, accentuated by the persistent pulse that gives the piece its ritualistic quality. The main difficulties in playing this piece lie in the prescribed stability of the tempo (which must not fluctuate), in the precision of the general rhythmic articulation and in the special attention required in every second by the differentiation in the timbre of the two "voices". The final version of the piece was written in Rome in 1996, to be played

*Yan Marez*

### **Peter Ablinger**

*Ohne Titel / 3 Flöten* (1989-91)

This piece consists of 18 one-minute pieces for three differently tempered flutes. Flutes 2 and 3 are physically extended with an extension piece between the mouthpiece and the body of the flute. Only the non-extended first flute divides the octave into 12 semitones: flute 2 divides into 13, and flute 3 into 15 equidistant intervals. Similarly, the tempi are in the ratio 12:13:15. The identity of a musical beat or pitch appears as if multiplied.

*Peter Ablinger*

### **Howard Skempton**

Both *Axis 90* and *Half Moon* were composed in March 1990 and premiered in April 1990. The flautist for whom they were written was Nancy Ruffer. It is instructive to compare and contrast these two pieces. Both focus on flute trills; exclusively so, in the case of *Axis 90*. There is symmetry in both pieces: in the material, if not the structure, of *Axis 90*; in the structure, if not the material, of *Half Moon*.

*Howard Skempton*

### **Noah Creshevsky**

In 2003, soprano Beth Griffith, asked me to compose a Latin setting of the 23rd psalm (The Lord is My Shepherd). Based on recordings of her voice, I isolated over 700 vocal samples. These edited but other unprocessed recorded fragments provide all of the sounds for the prerecorded track that accompany a live performance. In 2016, I was honored when Manuel Zurria asked me to compose a second version of the synchronism, this time for flute and playback. Whether for voice or flute, Psalmus celebrates the pursuit of ecstasy and the sanctity of body and spirit.

*Noah Creshevsky*

### **Mary Jane Leach**

In the late 1970's I was listening to a radio interview with Steve Reich, and a remark that he made stuck in my mind. It's gist was that composers couldn't rely on traditional venues and groups for performances, and that it was up to composers to arrange performances and/or perform themselves. About that time I was practicing playing or singing with tapes that I had made of myself performing. It had started out as an exercise in intonation, and ended up with a fascination for sound phenomena: difference, combination, and interference tones, especially with like or similar instruments. With Reich's advice in mind, along with my new interest in sound phenomena, as well as my interest in exploring the timbres of instruments, I began to write for instruments that I could play myself, primarily voice and bass clarinet. I originally wrote *Bruckstück* for myself to perform, using 8-track recordings, because 8-track recorders offered the most tracks readily available at that time. *Bruckstück* is a piece for eight sopranos that was commissioned by the Kulturamt in Köln to coincide with the opening of an exhibition of paintings by Jack Ox that were organized using an analysis of Bruckner's Eighth Symphony. I chose a ten measure section from the "Adagio" of Bruckner's Eighth as the source material for *Bruckstück*. The lowest parts (relatively speaking, since all of the singers are sopranos) represent the string section, using the same basic rhythm and set up the tonality throughout the piece. The rest of the voices represent the wind instruments. The piece is polyphonic, with a lot of closely resolving intervals, primarily major and minor seconds. Rather than writing linear melodies for one voice, I wrote melodies that are passed from voice to voice.

*Mary Jane Leach*

### **Michel Van Der Aa**

Continuing the line of works for solo instrument combined with soundtrack (Auburn, Oog and Just Before), Rekindle integrates the play of changing perspectives between live and prerecorded sound. Rekindle is a dialogue between the flute and the soundtrack, the two elements 'rekindling' one another's material. The soundtrack takes notes over from the flute, deforming or prolonging them into new gestures and producing resonating flute chords. The flute in turn reacts to these electronic sounds. As the material is passed back and forth, pulsating rhythms in the soundtrack create a rhythmic blueprint for an increasingly virtuosic dialogue. At the work's climax, the soundtrack takes control, forcing the flute into a flurry of sequential outbursts. The flutist determines the interplay with the soundtrack partly by ear, at times synchronized to set musical markers.

*Michel Van der Aa*

## **Laurence Crane**

The thing that has always impressed me in Laurence Crane's music is how sparingly the elements are managed and the wisdom with which they are transformed in the course of the piece. These Four Pieces bear strong witness to this aesthetic process. A single, simple idea is introduced and then reintroduced but its slightest alteration produces macroscopic effects. This piece in four movements alternates suspension and dance, but an intimate, ancestral dance.

*Manuel Zurria*

## **Giuliano D'angiolini**

*Romanza* (2016) is an accompanied melody. But everything mutates with each performance, nothing is definitive.

Such human feelings ... We can find them again and connect with them, if the intention is free, if the thought is impersonal.

*Giuliano D'Angiolini*

## **Pierre Jodlowski**

*Limite Circulaire* [Circle Limit] (2011)

This project is part of a cycle of works written for various formations around the principle of cumulative composition, that principle consisting of the use of electronic resources to overlay sequences played live. In the other cumulative pieces I've composed (*60 loops*, *24 loops*, *Série Blanche...*) everything that is played by the musicians is gradually established over time through a looping procedure. The music that is created is the result of the accumulation of elements in succession. We find ourselves in a context of sound that is necessarily repetitive, but, unlike what happens in the American minimalist trend, at times the phenomenon of accumulation is pushed to an excess, bringing with it processes of tension and a strong dramatic perception. In its extension, *Limite Circulaire* can explore the principles of accumulation in all its aspects in a decidedly radical elaboration process, and for which the participation of the flutist Cédric Jullion was crucial. My initial idea was to make recordings of special performance techniques in order to expand the montage possibilities; we sought out and recorded exactly 1050 different sounds, exploring three instruments, bass flute, alto flute and flute in C, timbral effects (blowing sounds imitating wind, and other noises produced with the breath) percussive effects (sounds of keys, "slapping" sounds, tongue-ram) and harmonic effects (multi-phonics). During this phase of the research, we chose 27 specially recorded fingerings with the three flutes in a wide range of tones, intensity and duration. These 27 fingerings are a sort of compositional matrix which runs throughout the piece and determines its unity. While I was composing, manipulating these "sound objects", already in some way micro compositions, what immediately came to mind were the graphic works by Escher and in particular the series *Circle Limit I, II and III* made between 1958 and 1959. The principle in this case is simple: the same simple form is repeated on a circular surface with a zoom effect that magnifies the central areas and shrinks those near the edge. The gaze, as often happens with Escher, loves to get lost between perception of detail and overall perception. It takes delight in finding pathways, enjoys observing how he plays with the scale of the objects, the result of a simple definition process. The music I composed is not intended as a close reproduction of the principle in Escher's paintings, but it shares the same type of perception, transposed here from the spatial plane to the temporal plane. The accumulation leads us to perceive time in a non-linear relationship given that, for each section, there are some elements that are repeated continuously, and precisely because of their persistence, one can also perceive others. The piece is structured in multiple zones which in turn exploit the perceptive effects produced by the accumulation: harmonic effects, spatial effects, rhythmic effects... Apart from the technique of repeating more or less long elements, there is no other treatment of the original sounds. In fact, in a project of this kind it was absolutely necessary to impose a precise performance framework, playing with the notion of limits, perhaps also the notion of being trapped in an inextricable labyrinth, where finding solutions for exiting were never easy. These 1050 sounds were work mates for me, a sort of entity that was available to me over time, like so many possible points of a totally utopian architecture of sound...

*Pierre Jodlowski*

Translations: Manuel Zurria, Elizabeth Burke