

A READING OF “*EFFET LISIÈRE* (2003)” COMPOSED BY JEAN-LUC HERVÉ, A MUSICAL IMAGE OF THE JAPANESE TRADITIONS BY A FRENCH COMPOSER

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ABSTRACT

フランスの作曲家ジャン-リュック・エルヴェ (Jean-Luc Hervé, 1960-) は, 2001 年に京都に滞在した際に「借景」という概念に強く影響を受け『*Effet Lisière*』を作曲した。その経験が, 後の彼の作曲スタイルを確立する原点になった。本発表では, 『*Effet Lisière*』作曲経緯紹介後に, コンサート用に編集された『*En découverte*』を実際に聞きながら, 一人の外国人から見た日本の伝統文化について論じる。

The French composer, Jean-Luc Hervé (1960-) was influenced by the Japanese traditional culture during his stay in Kyoto (in 2001). This was a turning point in his musical creativity, with the effect of composing his work “*Effet Lisière*”. Our aim is to give a presentation of this piece, which will enable us to analyze more in depth what the term “tradition”, means for contemporary artists.

1. INTRODUCTION

Is tradition doomed to be a hindrance to progress in a modern society and maybe for research in general, scientific, and otherwise? Pierre Boulez, the well-known French composer who was awarded the Kyoto Prize in 2010, stated in his Award Speech that 《 most certainly, we depend on the culture surrounding us, just as we find out what sort of judgment we are capable of. I do not mean tradition yet, but only atmosphere 》 [1], adding that 《 weak cultures like to take refuge in the past, this past which gives the illusion of a civilization with all its strength and splendor. But even so! Powerful civilization are those who can take the liberty to destroy because they will be able to replace immediately the emptiness thus created by something new. 》 [2]

However, this view seems to be almost completely rejected by French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss : 《 A

long time, about two centuries, the Western civilization was defined as a model of progression. Also, was it ideal? (...) But does it suit to look at somewhere else, widen the tradition, and the development of human beings? 》 [3]

This issue is highly relevant in the case of the Japanese people who are proud of their traditions while yearning at the same time for the Western way of life. In the economic and scientific fields, it seems that nowadays borders between countries are rapidly disappearing. However, in the cultural field, some mutual understanding and freedom are far more difficult to reach and are, to say the least, sometimes paradoxical. Coming to the field of music, a lot of western composers have discovered a new side in the world of music by looking at Japanese traditional culture. One example of this interpretation of Japanese traditions by foreigners is precisely “*Effet Lisière*”, a musical piece by Jean-Luc Hervé that provides us with a proof of how original the interpenetration between two cultures can be, and indeed a good reason that should prompt Japanese people to study it.

2. PRESENTATION OF “*EFFET LISIÈRE*”

2.1. Jean-Luc Hervé (1960-), French Composer

Jean-Luc Hervé studied composition with Emmanuel Nunes and Gérard Grisey at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse of Paris where he was awarded a first prize. Later on, he stayed as a resident-composer at the Villa Kujo-yama, the well-known French cultural residence institution in Kyoto, in 2001 while carrying on with a doctoral thesis in aesthetics and subsequent research at IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique). At present, he holds a position as a professor of composition at the National Conservatory (musical academy) of Boulogne- Billancourt in

Jean-Luc Hervé
Effet Lisière

A Natacha Nisic

Violon 1

Violon 2

Electronique

VI.1

VI.2

élec.

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Figure 1. Beginning of the musical score of “*Effet Lisière*”

Paris[4].

2.2. “*Effet Lisière*”

During his stay in Kyoto, Jean-Luc Hervé was strongly inspired by parks and green areas of that town, which is associated with the surrounding landscape, such as the mountains or the forests (*sha-kkei*). From there, the composer noticed, first, the particular Japanese assimilation between the nature and the objects, and secondly, the idea that the Japanese notion of “border” is indeed different from the European concept. For example, opposite elements (inside-outside etc.) are not thought as contrasting but co-existing together and they mix naturally. This is what we may call a “transition”. This experience became a watershed in his activity as a composer[5].

This is where “*Effet Lisière*” originated, being composed in those surroundings. One must add his collaborations. First, with Natacha Nisic, a visual artist. She also stayed at Villa Kujo-yama. Then, regarding the electro-acoustic part, that was composed at the CIREM (Centre International de Recherche Musicale), with the sound engineer, Frédéric Voisin. The whole

work was completed in 2003 (Figure 1.)[6]. Its world Premiere was performed in June 2003 at Hakusa-sonso at Kyoto, with 2 violons, electro-acoustic sound, and video. Unfortunately, no recording was made and therefore it does not exist any longer at present. Jean-Luc Hervé has since then re-written the version for a concert, entitling it “*En découverte*”. It was performed for the first time on March 9th, 2004 at Paris by “l’Ensemble 2e2m”[7].

2.3. Musical character of this piece

The musical character of “*Effet Lisière*” is based on the idea of “transition”. The artist imagines at first a place where different creatures, animals, or plants are living and rambling around running. This location is thus called “*Effet Lisière*” in biotopic terms. Then, the composer applied this concept to his own music. The transition of the harmonic passage to only one sound, and that of the noises to the clear tone and the transition of the rhythmic passage to the un-rhythmic passage are the most interesting features in this creation.

We must also point out that the opening motto was in-

spired to the composer by the scream of a Japanese bird (known in Japanese as *uguisu*), which is gradually transformed so that we cannot recognize which part each instrument plays.

In the first phase, the concert takes place outside in the park with the sounds of nature (made by the water or the breeze). The audience thus may listen to the music or look at the video while walking in that space (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Installation of the screen in the park, authorized by N.Nisic

Regarding the second phase, the concert takes place inside and it starts at sunset, as symbolically being a transition between the afternoon and the night (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Video of the concert of the second part of the concert

2.4. Consequences

The artist continues to work overall on this musical idea in Paris. He is working on a “Tobi-ishi : un jardin musical à Paris” (Tobi-Ishi:Musical Park in Paris) with the support of IRCAM [8].

3. CONCLUSION

At present, numerous Western composers are interested in Eastern cultures and several of them are presently composing musical pieces based on this new “Orientalist” movement. Yet, “*Effet Lisière*” by Jean-Luc Hervé seems to remain completely European in the nature of the music and we would not know that he was indeed attracted by Japanese traditional culture, if we had not read the notice of this piece. This point is very important as it shows how much “*Effet Lisière*” may be innovative, original and somewhat new while in the context of more and more “Easternized” works. From this piece, Japanese composers may indeed get stimulated, and then, some true respect of mutual cultures may be achieved between Western and non-Western composers.

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5. AUTHOR ' S PROFILE

Eiko SHIONO Born in Tokyo, she is presently completing her Ph.D at Sorbonne University in Paris. After studying in Japan, she went to Paris where she studied contemporary music after 1945 (piano and musicology). She received a MA in musicology at Sorbonne University (Paris IV U.), another degree called D.E.A.(Diplôme des études approfondies) at IRCAM. Currently, her doctoral dissertation is registered in musicology at Paris IV. As a pianist, she has learnt playing piano with Claude Helffer and Mr.&Mrs. Ganev. She received a Gold Medal in piano and chamber music at the Conservatoire (musical academy) of St. Germain-en Laye. She was twice invited at Sofia (Bulgaria) and Alicante (Spain) where she gave recitals.

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