

[60]Project

In 2008 a number of festivals all over the world celebrated the 60th anniversary of musique concrète and the pioneering work of Pierre Schaeffer. When discussions first started with the Artistic Director of the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Graham McKenzie to celebrate this anniversary, we quickly dismissed the idea of presenting a historical overview of 'significant works'. What I wanted to do was to show how Schaeffer's ideas were still important and relevant to sound artists and composers today who are working across a wide range of experimental electronic music.

From the outset of the [60]Project the involvement and the contribution of sound materials by over 60 of the world's leading electronic composers and sound artists was essential. The response I received to my letter of invitation to take part in the project was overwhelming. During the early months of 2008 a steady stream of emails went back and forth across the globe as more and more sound artists, composers, laptop improvisers and experimental turntablists accepted my invitation to take part.

The [60]Project had two distinct pre-compositional stages. Each of the participants in the piece was initially asked to contribute one sound object or a short improvisation on a sound. Nothing was prescribed as I wanted everyone to respond to the concept of the project in their own way. Each of these sounds were uploaded to an ftp site which acted as a repository for all of the material. For the second stage, I asked all of the participants to create a variety of sound treatments based on any of the initial material. This second stage produced some wonderful and unexpected sound fragments. Some decided to focus on a small number of sounds and develop short or in some cases extended phrases, whilst others set out to utilise all of the materials in a variety of imaginative means. These second stage sounds were again uploaded to the ftp site.

In July of 2008 I took all of the sound materials from both stage one and two to INA-GRM in Paris where the final work was assembled. I set myself the same limits that Francis Dhomont had done with his Frankenstein Symphony (1997) – another work made up of fragments by multiple composers. I allowed myself to cut and edit material to suit the compositional purpose and to layer material. A limited amount of transposition was used in order to facilitate the seamless transition from one section of material to another. At no point did I process any of the sounds further.

During the creation and mixing of the piece I was able to assemble imaginary ensembles of composers. Some of these are more obvious: Christian Fennesz duetting with Tim Hecker and then with eRikm, a vocal trio of AGF, Iris Garrelfs and Maja Solveig Kjelstrup Ratke. Other combinations were not so obvious: Andrew Lewis, Dror Fieler and Donnacha Dennehy, and Pedro Rebelo, Pierre Alexandre Tremblay, David Toop and eRikm are just two such unusual groups.

Although the work flows in one continuous movement there are a number of discernible sections and subsections. Overall the work is in three parts each roughly 20 minutes. The first part comprises three movements made from abstract electronic and concrete sounds. The second part comprises concrete and anecdotal material and comprises two movements – a seascape and an urban soundscape. The third part provides a balance to the first and marks a return to ambient electronic and finally vocal sounds.

Section 1

0'00-8'00 abstract/ambient
8'00-16'03 concrete/instrumental
16'03-23'57 concrete/experimental

Section 2

23'57-31'08 sea soundscape
31'08-38'15 urban soundscape

Section 3

38'15-44'12 ambient instrumental
44'12-46-57 noise piece
46-57-60'00 extended vocal

These movement indications are merely a guide to the listener. Some sounds occur in different movements fulfilling a different function in each as they move from background to foreground in the mix.

As one of the largest and most ambitious collaborative projects ever undertaken the [60]Project presents a unique cross-section of contemporary practice in sound art and brings together musicians from all around the globe in a piece to celebrate Schaeffer's revolution in sound. Those who took part are:

AGF	Mats Lindström
Lars Åkerlund	Francisco López
Michael Alcorn	Eric Lyon
Javier Alvarez	Stephan Mathieu
Miguel Azguime	Adrian Moore
François Bayle	Åke Parmerud
Natasha Barrett	Yin Pin
Gonzalo Biffarella	Gert-Jan Prins
Ludger Brümmer	Maja Solveig Kjelstrup Ratkje
Mira Calix	Pedro Rebelo
Christian Calon	Steve Roden
Lawrence Casserley	Sebastien Roux
Richard Chartier	Scanner
Rhodri Davies	Janek Schaefer
Vladislav Delay	Conrad Schnitzler
Donnacha Dennehy	Si-cut.dB
Francis Dhomont	Wayne Siegel
A_Dontigny	Rodrigo Sigal
Lawrence English	Sogar
eRikm	Pete Stollery
Dror Feiler	Paulina Sundin
Christian Fennesz	Terre Thaemlitz
Ambrose Field	Kees Tazelaar
Iris Garrelfs	Todor Todoroff
Gilles Gobeil	Kasper T. Toeplitz
Kink Gong	David Toop
Jonty Harrison	Germán Toro-Pérez
Tim Hecker	Pierre Alexandre Tremblay
Erdem Helvacıoğlu	Hans Tutschku
Zoe Irvine	Rodrigo Velloso
Christina Kubisch	Marc Weiser
Diane Labrosse	John Young
Andrew Lewis	Christian Zanèsi

I extend my thanks to all of those listed above for their generosity in giving their time and sounds to make this special piece.

The work was commissioned by, and premiered at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival on 28th November 2008.

[MA-2008]