

BCMG: EXCITING MUSIC BRILLIANTLY PLAYED

In an interview with BCMG's Projects Assistant Christopher Calvert in August 2007, Juste spoke about Eclissi, a new work commissioned in association with INTEGRA. Juste's piece was premiered on 29 September, conducted by Richard Baker. Click here to read the reviews.

Can you tell us a little about the piece you are composing?

Eclissi (eng. Eclipses) (2007) for violin, viola, cello, bass and live electronics is a slow harmonic, textural and timbral metamorphosis of one single chord. Musicians perform in a soundproof plexiglass installation - a sort of a magic 'soundproof music box' which is illuminated by changing light from its inside that creates the effect of a shadow theater of the musicians' motion. By means of electronics, acoustic-visual fictions are created. Audible sound (which is picked to be amplified by the computer) does not necessarily correspond to the bow gestures that are being followed by the audience and vice versa. Both the parts played live and electronic filters are based on individual regularly pulsating rhythms, thus generating multilayered counterpoints of different pulsations and materializing an effect which is rather utopian for the acoustic instruments: pulsation of the different parameters (dynamic, timbre, harmony and texture) of one sound in non coincident tempos which do not correlate with the rhythm of the bow motion. Speaking more metaphorically, these very silent, almost inaudible pulsations could remind us of a mysterious phenomenon of white dwarfs – stars in the last phase of their existence, which are a research object of my father, astronomer Rimas Janulis.

How does the use of electronics influence your work?

Use of electronics is essential for the idea of this piece, from the amplification of the musicians playing behind the plexiglass to the application of the filters and sound spatialisation.

Many of your pieces are written for a monochromatic ensemble (15 strings, 2 pianos, 4 flutes etc.) Why is this?

Monochromatic ensembles, which I keep choosing from my early pieces, have already become an integral quality of my musical aesthetics, related not only to the timbral sound of my music, but also to the use of some particular textures, the density and at the same time coherence of which couldn't be obtained by ensembles consisting of

different instruments. Single instruments in my pieces are not being individualized, but the whole ensemble is rather handled as a utopian solo instrument with extended ranges, textural and other potentialities, like e.g. would have a four voiced flute or a 60-string cello.

What else are you currently working on? What are your plans for the rest of the year and beyond?

Recently I've been very much interested in possibilities of visualizing sound or musical ideas, which I started to study in *Breathing music* (2007) and *Eclissi* and going to develop in my future projects. Usually gestures of the musicians while producing a sound, don't aim at any artistic quality in a visual sense, at least it is not conscious. Nevertheless we prefer to listen (and so to watch) music performed live. I'm thinking a lot of how the visual process of performing music could be integrated into the musical idea itself or at least how the musical performance could become more interesting vision, certainly avoiding all kinds of artificial theatrical acting.

In my first experiment of this kind *Breathing music* the musicians perform inside kinetic sculptures made of transparent materials. Through the use of the air compression they gradually shrink and get filled with air again, thus constantly changing their form. Each of them slowly 'inhales' and 'exhales' in its own tempo, this way governing the dynamics of the quartet's (musical) gestures. The breathing sculptures serve not only as a visualization and materialization of pulsating music, but also as giant mutes (as one of live electronic tools) that inhibit the sound of the strings and transform the timbre. Silent breathing of air sculptures, contemplative rippling of light/sound and periodic movements of musicians either merge into a mesmerising synchronisation, or intertwine in multilayered counterpoints of asynchronous tempos. *Breathing music* was performed in an electro acoustic musical festival *Jauna muzika* in Vilnius, in April 2007.

Meanwhile two monochromic pieces are going to be premiered: *Aquarelle* for four vocal micro ensembles, which reflects the old *cori spezzati* tradition and will be performed by the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir in October in Vilnius at the festival *Gaida*; and in April 2008 the French Flute Orchestra will perform my new piece for 24 flutes in Paris.

How did you come to be commissioned by BCMG?

Eclissi was commissioned according to the 3-year project *INTEGRA* led by Birmingham Conservatoire, which involved eight European research centers to create software-based open source environment for composing and performing music with live electronics. As a part of the project, ten composers from European countries were commissioned to write pieces with live electronics, working in one of the research

centers, the experience of which would be used for the development of new software. I was lucky to be commissioned by BCMG and to work at the electronic studio of Malmö Academy of Music with a great composer Kent Olofsson, who created a very wise algorithm for the idea of my piece.

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