

## **Introduction Sandglasses - an hour of time slipping by in music**

In a moment you will be viewing and listening to *Sandglasses*, an 'installation concert' created by the Lithuanian composer Juste Janulyte and the Italian video artist Luca Scarzella, performed by four cellists of the Gaida Ensemble with live electronics by Michele Tadini. In this piece several aspects of Janulyte's music converge. Writing for ensembles of identical instruments, using electronics, and a fascination for time. She feels an affinity with minimal music. Composers active in this style often didn't focus so much on the development of musical material, but on the immersion of people in a sonic environment. They played on the experience of time. Something that is pivotal to ritual music of non-Western cultures.

### *Vietnamese Jorai gong row ensemble - field recording*

In itself the notion to work with ensembles of similar instruments is not new. It was common usage in the Renaissance in so-called consort music, which led to the development of instruments in different registers. The string quartet was a logical consequence of this. The instruments do differ in timbre, however. You can work your way around those differences, if you so wish, by putting together ensembles of identical instruments, and by multiplying instruments through electronic means. This is reminiscent of a scientific experiment, in which elements remain constant so that effects of certain changes can be measured. An extreme example of this approach is Al Margolis (working under the moniker If, Bwana) who constructed a piece in which he built an ensemble of more than a 100,000 clarinets spanning the entire hearing range, through a judicious use of cassette and tape recorders.

### *Clara Nostra - Al Margolis/If, Bwana*

This version of the piece was intended as an installation in an elevator taking people to a floor in a building where an art gallery had organized an exhibition. Multiplying and layering a single instrument results in a variety that is radically different from that of an ensemble of mixed instruments. It is as Janulyte puts it 'monochromatic'. But within the limits of this one colour a multitude of shades and nuances blooms. The fact that the differences are less conspicuous influences the experience of the passing of time.

When images are added to such sounds the brain tries hard to connect the two, regardless whether any perceived connections were originally intended, like in the work of Phill Niblock who presents his music and films in conjunction. Almost invariably his films show manual labour that entails repeated movement; the music is a dense layering of recordings of one single instrument, just as in the Al Margolis piece. Because it integrates imagery and sound without resorting to a developing story line Phill Niblock's work can be designated as an installation. He can and does exhibit his work as such, but more commonly he presents it in a concert format, with one live musician adding a further layer to the superimposed sounds. In this sense Janulyte's *Sandglasses* is akin to his work. The following fragment comes from Niblock's DVD *The Movement of People Working*, with footage shot in Mexico and music from an electronically multiplied cello.

### *Trabajando Una (Mexico)/Summing III (David Gibson, cello) - Phill Niblock*

Juste Janulyte writes for ensembles of identical instruments as well, in this piece four cellos and their electronic shadows. As in Niblock's work, music and imagery combine into a unified whole. But Janulyte's music does have a story line. In *Sandglasses* it is the

passing of time, unconditionally a constituent part of music as such. In its progression the music expresses how time slips by, as grains of sand sliding down in an hourglass. To introduce you to Janulyte's sound world, and give you an idea how it differs from what I played before, I will end with an extract from her composition *Psalms*, written for live and pre-recorded cello.

*Psalms - Juste Janulyte*

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