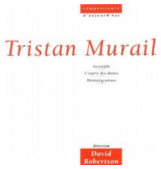
Tristan Murail: Serendib - L'esprit des dunes - Désintegrations (1996)



1. Serendib 2. L'Esprit Des Dunes 3. Desintegrations Ensemble Intercontemporain David Robertson - conductor

Tristan Murail (ur. 11 marca 1947 w Le Havre) - kompozytor francuski, twórca - razem z Gérardem Griseyem - Ensemble l'Itinéraire, uważany za ojca muzyki spektralnej; główny reprezentant tego kierunku, wspólnie z Griseyem i Horatiu Radulescu.

Student Oliviera Messiaena (1967-1971), stypendysta Villi Medicich (1971-1973); na jego rozwój muzyczny ogromny wpływ miało spotkanie z Giacinto Scelsim. Jego ważniejsze dzieła to m.in.: Mémoire/Erosion (1976), Gondwana (1980), Désintégrations (1980), cykl Random Access Memory (1984-1987), Serendib (1992), L'Ésprit des dunes (1993-1994).

Tristan Murail (born March 11, 1947 in Le Havre, France) is a French composer.

Murail studied composition with Olivier Messiaen at the Paris Conservatoire from 1967 to 1972. He taught computer music at the Paris Conservatoire and composition at IRCAM in Paris, where he assisted in the development of the Patchwork composition software. In 1973 he was a founding member of the Ensemble l'Itinéraire. Since 1997 he has been a professor of composition at Columbia University in New York City.

Major pieces by Murail include large orchestral pieces such as Gondwana, Time and Again and, more recently, Serendib and L'esprit des dunes. Other pieces include his Désintégrations for 17 instruments and tape, Mémoire/Erosion for french horn and nine instruments Ethers for flute and ensemble, and Vampyr! for electric guitar. Murail also composed a set of solo pieces for various instruments in his cycle Random Access Memory, of which the sixth, Vampyr!, is a rare classical piece for electric guitar. Vampyr! is one of several works in Murail's catalogue that do not employ spectral techniques. Rather, in the performance notes, the composer asks the performer to play the piece in the manner of guitarists in the popular and rock traditions, such as Carlos Santana and Eric Clapton.

This Accord CD features performances of three pieces by Tristan Murail recorded at IRCAM in the early 1990s. David Robertson leads the Ensemble Intercontemporain. "Desintegrations" for ensemble and tape (1983) is one of the great spectralist masterpieces, endlessly studied and called by many later composers a milestone in new music. As the title suggests, the musical material is based entirely on sound spectras. Murail decomposed various instrumental sounds (especially piano, brass and cello) into their overtones, and then assigned these to the performers, while the tape part is based on artificial spectra generated by electronics. The result is a massive sound mass, sure to appeal to fans of Xenakis and Ligeti. It's quite varied too, with among many other things lovely section of bell chimes, some crunching orchestral sounds, and an ear-tickling exhibition of interference tones. This recording beats that by the Ensemble L'itinerarire on an Naive disc.

Murail's second IRCAM commission was "L'Esprit des dunes" for ensemble and live electronics (1992). A portrait of the desert with its soft woodwind drifts, the piece is also based on analysis of recordings of traditional music from Tibet, including their remarkable trumpets and drums, and from Mongolia, where one finds the jew's harp and overtone singing. One immediately notices here more melodic writing, as the piece opens with a sinuous oboe line. Ultimately this is a piece that fascinates me and which I'd really like to like, but I just can't seem to get into it. Some of the electronic transformations are interesting, but Murail's inspirations don't seem integrated well into the final form, and the piece just sort of meanders. "Serendib" for orchestra (1992) is a bit better, a constant flurry. Still, I sometimes feel that Murail is just repeating the gestures of "Desintegrations" without moving towards something boldly new. ---Christopher Culver

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