

Shel(l)ter - unter... () ...Gitter

for clarinet, bassoon, cello, three percussions and electronics

[14'45]

Clara Maïda

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Residency at the ELECTRONIC STUDIO of the TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT
(realization of the fixed electronic part)

Technical processing: Sébastien NAVES and Franck ROSSI

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L'ITINERAIRE ensemble
Direction: Jean DEROYER

Shel(l)ter is a series of four pieces which refers to a very specific space, one of the atomic shelters in Berlin.

The reduplication of the letter "l" condenses in the title the words "shell" and "shelter", which both evoke the attempt to protect the body against any aggression. But "shell" means at the same time the protection of certain animals (molluscs for example) and a weapon. So the double polarization of this word underlines the absurdity, constant in Man, which consists in constructing quite as many objects of destruction and objects that would protect against this destruction. Placed in brackets, this reduplication of the "l" indicates at the same time a stop and a junction or the transformation of a repeated element, a rupture, a mutation of the structure of a given material or situation, as well as a separation or imprisonment, the self-destructive perverse effect which all protection is also likely to induce when it leads to isolation.

In *Shel(l)ter*, one can talk of "nanomusic" (in reference to nanosciences which observe and manipulate objects on the atomic scale), since this mobility and this transformation of the properties of the musical fabric result from micro-processes that act on the sound particles. These processes generate variations of masses, forms and paths, but also resistances and persistences. The atomic thus reminds us that everything is particle, everything is atom, the sound field being considered only as one of the possibilities of the infinite field of matter.

This second piece of the series refers more directly to this strange place that an atomic shelter is.

The sub-title *unter... () ...Gitter* – which means in German "underneath... () ... grille" – evokes, on the one hand, the subterranean aspect of the place which can be related to a cellar or even a vault, for this descent down the town can give one the impression to be buried.

On the other hand, the word "grille" accounts for the oppressive sensation that a closed space can induce. The opacity of walls, the cut with the outside and the silence would thus give rise to a discomfort or an anguish all the more acute as the duration of the stay would be unknown in the case of an atomic catastrophe.

The protective function would then be of secondary importance and the impossibility to leave the shelter would be experienced as an imprisonment.

In this piece, the harmonic structure relies on four aggregates, four bounds which limit space. Four series of rhythmical processes played by percussions (wood) shape some kinds of blocks located between the other times of the piece. The musical sequences are hatched. Each time a development of the material is attempted, it is interrupted as if an obstacle was impassable. Short sound situations are alternately set out but without being able to carry on their trajectory. They come round, but their briefness persists because of the powerlessness to clear the way for an opening.

The musical speech is confronted to this inexorable dimension of confinement which raises a long moan, a kind of panic-stricken monologue, ever more expressing the difficulty to exist in such an environment, the absurdity that one feels, and the proximity of a possible madness, the only bursting out of the framework likely to occur.

The electronic sequences punctuate the piece with instants in which the distorted memory of a lost world seems fleetingly to emerge. But the absence of perspective revives in the conclusion the invasive presence of a sound force, static and pulsating, close to these automatic and stiff gestures done by an individual when he has given up all hope.

Clara Maïda, November 2010