

...who holds the strings...

for string quartet

(8'10)

Clara Maïda

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(Les trente ans du quatuor ARDITTI)

ARDITTI STRING QUARTET

...who holds the strings... is the second part of the triptych for four instruments *Order of release, border of relish*. The three pieces use the same harmonic material generated by the spectral analysis of multiphonic sounds of wind instruments (four from the bass clarinet and three from the oboe) and of the low C of the cello played with a maximal pressure of the bow. Some sound objects and musical situations come back in the three pieces.

The title of the piece is playing on the word "strings" (which both refers to a piece of string and to the writing for string instruments) and the expression "the one who holds the strings" which means "the one who holds the reins", or "the one who pulls the strings".

In this piece, no one holds the strings. The string quartet is conceived as a global entity, a sort of object that moves alone, driven by its own mechanics. The strings are tangled in a mobile and fragile architecture constituted of microscopic elements perpetually transforming, which never have any fixed location and whose articulation suffers constant alterations.

Tears appear, new links are tied then torn again.

Various forces such as attraction, repulsion, combination, phagocytosis, govern the objects, putting them face-to-face, and thus create an always temporary morphology.

All the sound objects of the piece have an invariability. They overturn around a pivot, from left to right or up and down.

This oscillating gesture around an axis governs also the harmonic distortions (chords in a mirroring relation with the original chord), the melodic structures (repetition of a few notes around a pivot note), the melodic curves (motives that form an ascending-descending or descending-ascending curve around a horizontal axis), the registers (rocking between low and high), the dynamics (crescendo-decrescendo or the contrary), the rocking between two musical situations.

An antagonism between the musical objects or situations can appear. A situation, with its persistence, can drive away another one.

The articulation of very small and abstract objects, which are more principles of objects than objects (a simple gesture, the pivot around an axis, the rocking) raises the question of representation.

What can be perceptible when this representation is refused or impossible? What can be the variations of one same gesture, in which new perspectives can one make them appear? An envelope, a movement... Something runs along the sounds, at the border of what can be represented.

It is the insistence of the gesture that helps us to mark it out in a temporal course and attempts to draw the vague outlines of an invisible and inaudible real.

Clara Maïda, March 2004