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JACQUELINE CAUX

***almost nothing
with
Luc Ferrari***

INTERVIEWS

with

*texts and imaginary autobiographies
by Luc Ferrari*

ERRANT BODIES PRESS

OCT 16 2013

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texts and imaginary autobiographies
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Translated by Jérôme Hansen

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Almost Nothing with Luc Ferrari contains a series of interviews
by Jacqueline Caux, joined for the first one by:

François Delalande, musicologist

Evelyne Gayou, musicologist

Daniel Teruggi, director of the

Groupe de Recherches Musicales

previously unpublished texts and imaginary autobiographies
by Luc Ferrari

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INTRODUCTION

Luc Ferrari took part in all the insurgent strongholds, all the musical ideologies of the second half of the twentieth century, and still managed to get away unscathed. In the contemporary music world, no one quite knows what to make of this “offbeat” composer who seemingly strived to appear light, frivolous and nonchalant, whereas on the contrary each of his works is an invitation to reflection for the attentive listener. One thing everyone agrees upon, however, is the indefinable charm emanating from this art of sounds. This unique creator who challenged certainties, moving across fields breaking down boundaries and musical taboos along the way, whose works regularly emphasize themes of humor, intimacy and sensuality that some would consider unworthy of “serious” music – this is the ever-changing man I have tried to follow step by step throughout his rich and diverse career.

After studying with Alfred Cortot and Arthur Honegger and learning musical analysis from Olivier Messiaen, Luc Ferrari entertained as a young man the desire to meet Edgar Varèse, which he did by traveling to New York on a cargo ship. This significant encounter would not later prevent him from actively challenging the particular organization of notes in serialism as established by Schönberg, before becoming one of the pioneers of *musique concrète* along with Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry at the Groupe de Recherches Musicales (GRM). By juxtaposing and superimposing sound images borrowed from real life, for example in *Hétérozygote* (1964), he would be the first one to break away from *musique concrète*’s orthodoxy with regard to manipulated sounds, thus initiating what he would call “anecdotal music” and which others would later take on under the heading of “soundscape.” In 1968 he produced the first of his major minimalist works entitled *Presque Rien*.

Together with his electroacoustic experiments, Luc Ferrari carried out a vast work in instrumental composition, from his piano pieces (1952–56) and compositions for large orchestra (1966), through various

mixed works – for instruments and tape recorder – from 1963 onwards, and up to *Jeu du hasard et de la détermination* in 1999. His curiosity and interest for everything that lies beyond the strict boundaries of music led him to work with images, directing a film about Stockhausen's *Momente* and a "Homage to Varèse" amongst others. Intrigued by radio's ability to conjure up mental images in the listener's privacy, he composed his first Hörspiel in 1971 for the SWF in Baden-Baden. During the 1980s, he also engaged in experiments with music theater ...

Luc Ferrari repudiated the institution of any pre-established path, any process, artistic system or doctrine. What mattered to him was to steer clear of academicism before it had a chance to set in, to refuse being subjected to a given ideology and to hold on firmly to his libertarian stance. His refusal also extended to all mystical approaches, whether religiously or aesthetically motivated. His only credo was to stand outside of any confinement, in freedom and openness ...

Within the proliferation of musical directions that characterizes his work, I for one discern at least three permanent features and two fundamental attitudes.

The first feature is a passionate attention to everyday sounds, whether of social, psychological or emotional resonance. This allowed him to bring into play subtle musical constructions as with *Presque Rien n° 1, ou le lever du jour au bord de la mer* in 1968, up to more recent pieces such as *Far-West News* in 1999.

The second feature is his distinctive use of chance, in contrast with that of John Cage. Far from the machinic radicalism of American repetitive music, Luc Ferrari favored superimposed random cycles that would generate unforeseen musical riches through the play of their chance encounters and unanticipated frictions. Starting with the initial piece *Tautologos I* (1961), this concept, which he ironically called "Tautology," would come to play an important part in his entire work.

The third feature is the recurrent incursion into the realms of intimacy or sensuality, which was completely out of step with the musical

field's emphasis on abstraction and rigor. These elements can be found in *Presque Rien n° 2 ou Ainsi continue la nuit dans ma tête multiple* from 1977, as well as in *Symphonie déchirée* from 1998.

As for the two attitudes, the first one he shows is a clear fondness for playfulness. For him, the act of making music is a game: a game of chance, an irreverent game, a serious and at times critical game, but more often a perverse game.

The second attitude consists in an obstinate rejection of all forms of power. Why would an artist who discovered concepts as strong as those of *Presque Rien* not want to exploit them or be acknowledged as the founder of a new aesthetic that influenced so many composers? Why refusing to occupy this position, or for that matter any stable position in relation to institutions? Why this fondness for outplaying seriousness through derision? Is it perversion? Self-doubt? A taste for the eccentric? Probably all three associated with a refusal to find himself in the position of leader: he would then have to be right, which means exercising a certain form of power; and that, philosophically, he couldn't accept.

As they developed, Luc Ferrari's preoccupations often echoed those of contemporaneous artistic movements in other domains. His series of *Presque Rien* shares similarities with both Georges Perec's "infra-ordinary" and the concerns of the Nouveau Roman. His work with everyday sounds puts him next to the Nouvelle Vague's use of the *caméra-stylo*. He is also close to the Hyperrealist painters who glorified an aesthetic of the everyday. When talking about himself through his work, he appropriates in some way the method of painters creating series of self-portraits. To some, such transpositions between what is acceptable in a discipline and rejected in another appeared as near blasphemous. Many a time his views passed him off as a *provocateur*, an accusation he objected to: he never set out to provoke, only to explore wherever he found it necessary.

Unlike that of some radical creators, his career therefore does not resemble a straight line so much as a profusion of points in motion linked together by a crisscross of transversal lines. Other dominant traits

identifiable throughout his entire body of work include his taste for the free passage between fiction and reality, for irreverence, for a self-conscious detachment ... Perhaps this man's love of humor, play, the anecdotal, intimacy and sensuality was too strong not to be held against him in certain musical circles. Yet these very positions have also grounded the coherence of his development.

Jacqueline Caux

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Born in Paris on February 5, 1929, Luc Ferrari began composing in 1946, while studying piano at the conservatoire and in other schools. From 1952 onwards he attended the Darmstadt Summer School. His instrumental works were performed there as well as in Paris and at the "Musik der Zeit" festival in Cologne.

He married Brunhild Meyer-Tormin in 1959.

In 1958 he joined the Groupe de Musique Concrète, where he remained until 1966, and collaborated with Pierre Schaeffer in setting up the Groupe de Recherches Musicales (1958–59); teaching activities, series of programs on musique concrète (1959–60); research and artistic direction for a small ensemble conducted by Konstantin Simonovitch; individual and collective instrumental work (1961–62). Sound recordist, music supervisor and co-director of a series of TV programs, *Chaque pays fête son grand homme* (1965). Professor of Composition at the Rheinische Musikschule in Cologne (1964–65). In 1965–66 he co-directed *Les Grandes Répétitions* with Gérard Patris, a series of documentaries on contemporary music (Olivier Messiaen, Edgar Varèse, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Hermann Scherchen, Cecil Taylor).

In 1966 he was Lecturer of experimental music in Stockholm and the following year was invited by the DAAD to spend a year in Berlin.

He was in charge of music at the Maison de la Culture in Amiens from 1968 to 1969. In 1972 he created “Billig,” a small electroacoustic studio. In 1982, he founded the electroacoustic and radiophonic music association “La Muse en Circuit,” from which he resigned in 1994. “Parcours Confus,” a retrospective of his work, toured The Netherlands in 1995. In 1996 he created his own home studio named “Atelier post-billig.” In 1997 he undertook a lecture tour in California, returning to the American Southwest in 1998 as an itinerant sound hunter for a series of radiophonic compositions for Dutch Radio NP3 entitled *Far-West News*.

The turn of the millennium saw the beginning of a new series of compositions called *Exploitation des Concepts*, in which Ferrari revisited the concepts he had used throughout his career. The first release in this series was a performance with DJ Olive titled *Les Archives sauvées des eaux* (2000). He then developed a taste for improvisation through a string of collaborations with eRikm, Scanner and Otomo Yoshihide, amongst others. He toured the US again in 2001, followed by two concert series in Tokyo in 2002–2003. Week-long retrospectives of his work were organized in Marseille, Poitiers, Toulouse, Lille and La Chaux-de-Fonds in Switzerland between 2003 and 2004.

He died of pneumonia in Arezzo, Italy, on August 22, 2005.

Luc Ferrari won the Karl Sczuka Prize in 1972 for his radio drama *Portrait-Spiel* (Production Südwestfunk, Baden-Baden) and again in 1988 for *Je me suis perdu ou Labyrinthe Portrait*, the Prix Italia in 1987 for the composition *Et si tout entière maintenant* and in 1991 for his Hörspiel *L'Escalier des aveugles*. In 1989 he was awarded the Grand Prix National du Ministère de la Culture, and the following year received the Koussevitzky Foundation Prize for his symphonic piece, *Histoire du plaisir et de la désolation*. His CDs *Les Anecdotiques – Exploitation des Concepts n° 6* and *Archives sauvées des eaux – Exploitation des Concepts n° 1* received the Grand Prix Charles Cros 2005 In Memoriam.

Starting from my father's village:

Murato, northern Corsica, at the exact point where Cape Corsica joins up with the island;

then, L'Estaque, my mother's village just off Marseille, which by now must be an industrial suburb;

then rue Rollin in Paris, where I was born.

Every time ...

Rue Rollin is a cul-de-sac with stairs at the bottom leading down toward rue Monge. This street was like a border that I was only ever allowed to cross on very particular occasions.

I always had a desire to slide across borders.

Every time ...

Every time ...

Starting from rue Rollin where I was born, in the 5th arrondissement of Paris. It was the Latin Quarter, the Greek one even. Homer stayed in Place de la Contrescarpe and studied at the Sorbonne.

Then, I lived on rue du Cardinal Lemoine, the next street.

Every time ...

then Berlin on Kunz-Buntschuh Straße, for a year, and the strangeness of a city straddling a violent border,

and Amiens, I forgot the address, it was too central for me,

Every time ...

then rue du Cardinal Lemoine for 25 years, where I made much of my living sliding across borders.

Every time ...

Starting from the Billig studio, on rue Rollin, at the back of the courtyard, for 4 years, then for 10 years at La Muse en Circuit in Vanves, in the suburbs, how strange,

*and then La Muse in Alfortville for 4 years, but I slipped away,
Every time ...*

*and at the same time a new home-studio in Montreuil since 1995,
something like the one in rue Rollin, like a new Muse, or a post-Billig.
Every time ...*

*with my Mother, walking down rue Rollin,
crossing rue Monge, the slippery border, on our way to the amphitheater of Lutèce, where Ovid used to play football while contemplating the rapture of love.*

Every time ...

*starting from Place de la Contrescarpe, taking the 84 bus to Place des Thermes where you would only come across Roman beauties,
Every time ...*

*then walking down rue Mouffetard to go up the Gobelins,
and then Place d'Italie where all the hot borders would be, where sliding was a real pleasure,
Every time ...*

Every time ...

starting from the southern suburbs of Florence, there had been a storm,

in a suspended moment, one dominates the whole city,

then the road to Sienna but not all the way,

then the little town of Impruneta, where a John Cage concert was supposed to take place, I was surprised,

*and then the road to Strada, another very pretty little town,
it's strange for a town to be called "street"*

Every time ...

at the time, I would walk down the stairs on my heels

Every time ...

*turning left onto rue Clovis, toward the Lycée Henri IV where I had
attended my first classes,
then Place du Panthéon, still walking down the rue Cujas,
then Boulevard Saint-Michel, still on the way down to the Seine,
Every time ...*

*turning left on the quay to the Pujol bookshop, to buy manuscript
paper, on the right side of the quay, in front of the secondhand
booksellers, finding surrealist books,*

Every time ...

*starting from the Place Jussieu metro on the line that goes to Etoile,
a place that has never interested me,
then changing at Palais-Royal to get off at Saint-Augustin, neither
of which are interesting.*

Every time ...

*walking along Boulevard Malesherbes on the right,
up to the Rouard & Lerole music bookshop
finding scores by Schönberg, Berg, Béla Bartók, etc.*

Every time ...

*starting from the Cardinal Lemoine metro station toward Auteuil,
changing at Sèvres-Babylone, sliding over the antique ruins,
then toward Porte de la Chapelle, getting off at Saint-Lazare,
then taking rue de Rome southbound,
and on the left rue de Madrid where the conservatoire was,
it was just like paradise, full of ugly people.*

Every time ...

as for me, I sided with hell.

Every time ...

*leaving from Gare du Nord, with a stopover in Brussels,
then getting off in Amsterdam,*

*taking a taxi to the Hotel de Munck,
then going out for dinner in Utrechtstraat,
then wandering around Rembrandt Plein,
Every time ...
sliding time and time again,
Every time ... I discover.*

PHOTOPHONY (1989)

What do I feel what do I feel? What do I feel, I have no idea. What do I feel, I don't know I couldn't say after like that well what do I feel? I don't know. I couldn't say after like that.

To let yourself be seen a little then not be seen. Well, that's the game of seduction. Das Spiel der Augen und ... A look ein tiefer Blick. I step back, you step back. I step forward, let myself be seen a little, and then. A look. Yes.

Anyway, that's the game of seduction.

And then, there's ... the look is very important too. The look and the color of her green eyes. Some things are very very close. Sentimenti. It's funny it's good. And her hair so close. It's like a landscape that's very funny. Her hands of course I always look at her hands a lot. What do I see? I don't know. Her sex her belly there are moments of distance, moments when bodies are apart, ein Blick, der mich brennt. Sometimes everything appears in low angle close-ups. You can close your eyes, eyes opened eyes closed, the eyes are about color, feelings. Pleasure. In fact, I like to look at other looks. Amazement ein Blick der fließt. Approach. Die Sinnlichkeit.

*Closing one's eyes. Here they are the eyes here they are the eyes that's
the color of colored feelings, über die Wangen fließen.*

*What do I see, I don't know her sex her belly. Sometimes bodies are
apart der mich brennt. Sometimes you see really closely there are
only photographic close-ups, in low-angle shot even.*

It's touching it's the look then it grabs hold.

HISTORY

THE COMPOSER'S CAREER IN HIS OWN WORDS

*Luc Ferrari in conversation with Jacqueline Caux,
François Delalande, Evelyne Gayou and Daniel Teruggi*

E. GAYOU: Were you part of Messiaen's class at the conservatoire?

L. FERRARI: I first learned the piano at the Versailles conservatoire between the age of fifteen and seventeen. Then, at the Paris conservatoire, students who were a bit inquisitive were secretly swapping scores by Schönberg and Webern, because atonal, serial music was hidden from us. One day, I brought the Bartók sonata that I had secretly worked on at the Versailles conservatoire; I played it in class, and it was terrifying. The teacher told me: "If you keep on playing this elephant's music, you will never set foot in here again." So I left.

At the Paris conservatoire, Messiaen has been a very significant figure. He didn't teach composition; instead, he had a music analysis class, because it was less prestigious, except the institution didn't expect that everyone would turn up there. He played a fundamental role because he was the first to talk about these scores. So it was simple: people my age were either serial or reactionary ...

J. CAUX: When did you start getting interested in sounds?

LF: My parents had bought a piano for my three sisters and, with my mum and aunt, all these women thought it would be interesting if I

took it up as well. I started very young. I must have been three or four. I was a baby in knitted rompers. I still remember sitting on a chair, my short legs hanging down, my short arms couldn't reach very far on the keyboard. It was only an upright piano, but it seemed immense and fascinating to me. My sisters' teacher showed me how to place my fingers on the keyboard and how to read music. I don't know if this is a fantasy, but I think I could read notes before words. It turned out that I absolutely loved the sounds that came out of the piano. Then, when I was about ten, my dad came home with a big package. It was a Bakelite radio, modern style, with a lyre-shaped metal front, and we started listening to the radio all the time. One day, by chance, I heard a piece of music that moved me deeply. I later found out it was Honegger's *Pacific 231*. It struck me because it was a machine-like music, it was a poem to a locomotive. It's strange to have as one's first musical memory an orchestral music imitating noise. I could also identify all the cars by their particular sounds. I would say: "It's that model from that make." "But how do you know that?" my sisters would say. Then the war came. It was tragic, but it brought me different ways of living. For example, we stopped going to school, so I was playing piano all the time. Then, as Paris was bombed, we moved to Blandy-Lès-Tours. We had rented an out of tune piano that I found horrible because only sophisticated sounds appealed to me. There were also all these planes passing by, and I could identify them by their engine noises: American Mustangs, Spitfires, English Lightnings, and then ... I went to see them after they crashed ...

I had made a lot of progress by myself. After the war, I went back to school and had more experienced piano teachers. My father would say: "The kid is gifted, he must be pushed!" so there was no problem. At fifteen or sixteen, I started playing difficult things. My teachers – always women – got me to play in salons, then directed me toward the conservatoire. I first went to Versailles, before applying for the Paris conservatoire, and it turned academic.

JC: Were you still listening to the radio?

LF: There were some amazing programs on contemporary music through which I made many discoveries – I wouldn't miss any of them. I heard very moving things that I didn't know about: Schönberg, Varèse, Messiaen. The first time I heard a piece by Webern, I was astonished. There were all these seemingly unrelated notes distanced from each other, like dots scattered across silence. That is the reason why, at a very young age, I considered Webern to be more original than Schönberg.

EG: In the 1950s, people in the salons openly derided the serialists. Did you experience that?

LF: I was in the salons where Debussy was as far as it went. I was playing Debussy and Ravel in very fancy salons. One day, I tried playing a little suite for piano by Roussel. I sensed it was pushing it ... There were other salons, like Suzanne Tézenas's, who was the high priestess of the *Domaine Musical*.¹

EG: Who would go to these salons?

LF: Boulez, Nono, Gilbert Amy ... the familiars of the *Domaine Musical*, which was quite a lot of people. And also theater people around Jean-Louis Barrault, since he had housed the *Domaine Musical*. There was also [Francis] Poulenc, he was very assiduous.

F. DELALANDE: Wasn't he considered part of the reactionaries?

LF: His work was never performed at the *Domaine Musical*, but he liked this music, he was very curious.

FD: Around what time did you choose your side?

LF: I was one of the very few Parisian composers – with Xenakis, Boulez, Mâche ... – who, whilst writing instrumental music, also felt an attraction toward technology. I had no doubt that the future belonged in this kind of experiment. New electronic instruments had been invented before the war. In the 1950s, we were confronted with these new technologies: the tape recorder, the microphone. And all this effervescence we called “avant-garde.” This “avant-garde” revolved around two poles:

¹ The *Domaine Musical* was a concert society founded by Pierre Boulez in 1954 and dedicated to the performance of works by modernist composers [translator].

on the one hand, serial writing whose novelty displaced other forms of writing as archaic and reactionary; and on the other hand, forms of music that started to appear around technology. In 1950, I attended the first concerts of *musique concrète*, in the concert hall of the old conservatoire – a baroque room in an Italian-style old theater with red velvet seats, balconies, little angels, etc. And on stage were these two people, Pierre Henry and Pierre Schaeffer, propagating these sounds in space in a mesmerizing way. They were manipulating what looked like sewing machine bobbins, cables, large hoops – magical objects. It was mad and disjointed, such modernity in this 18th century concert hall. As a classical music student with a passion for the new, I immediately thought it was a promising direction. Pierre Schaeffer had written the concert program, he only talked about Pierre Henry, what a genius he was ... I thought: “Who is this guy who, being a composer himself, writes about another composer as if he were a god?!” I found it a little perverse, I think ...

FD: Who was in the audience?

LF: People who didn’t appear to be against it. Some critic probably said it sounded like dishes clanking; that was normal for a critic. But the audience was composed of enthusiasts. They already knew what they had come to hear and were here to appreciate it. I was part of a movement of young people who had admitted something inadmissible. It’s a rare thing to take part in an adventure made of entirely new elements.

FD: It was as if a door had opened. So there wasn’t any conflict?

LF: There was no scandal like there had been in 1954 for Varèse’s *Déserts*. Here, people were clapping as they would during the Sunday concerts, which I also used to attend to listen to Charles Munch playing Ravel or Brahms. Then I would go to the same concert hall three days later to listen to Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry. It all seemed incongruous to me.

FD: Why didn’t you join the GRM in 1952–53?

LF: At the time, with a group of friends, we were organizing concerts at the Maison des Lettres. I was playing my first potentially deviant serial scores for pianos, for example *Suite pour piano*.

SUITE POUR PIANO (1952)

This is the first composition to appear in my catalogue, which means it is the first work of my life as a composer.

At the time of writing it, a question arises: by what mystery does a young man recognize this unbelievable certainty, beyond any logic? I had composed many scores before the suite for piano, some of which were completed but didn't seem accomplished to me, perhaps because they were still too close to recognizable influences from composers whom I considered as my models. Of course, these influences can be perceived in the suite for piano, but they were already more assimilated. Identity may have cut a path through this collection of memories.

Another remark: the final piece, La Gigue, is the result of my first foray into the serial technique.

December 6, 1995

JC: Were you only performing your early serial pieces at these concerts?

LF: I participated in these concerts at the Maison des Lettres as a pianist. I would also play my friend's compositions, not all of which were necessarily interesting. But because I was inventive, I would perform them in my own way; they were very happy, and it went well. I also played my *Antisonate pour piano* there.

ANTISONATE POUR PIANO (1953)

The title itself was already a revolt. It clearly states a reluctance to settle within a classical form. Nevertheless, this score does not escape a certain convention: three distinct movements; fast, slow

and fast. It is rather the musical material that needs to be considered, an expression of fierceness and non-conformism.

In the first and third movements, violence is present in extreme nuances, in formulations of themes, but also by the use of a torn melody articulated in high-low unison. Already a revolt against the serial technique prohibiting the use of octaves.

Also of note: the series used for the second movement relies on intervals reminiscent of tonality – was this a sign of rebellion?

December 7, 1995

JC: Is that where you first met Pierre Schaeffer?

LF: Yes, it was during one of these concerts that Pierre Schaeffer said to me: “It would be nice if you could join us.” At the time, I was composing orchestral pieces that I wanted to finish – they were performed in Cologne at Musik der Zeit in 1957.

D. TERUGGI: So it was him who got in touch with you?

LF: We had seen each other before. We were everywhere: art galleries, concerts, etc.

EG: Did the Groupe de Musique Concrète represent another direction compared to the one you had chosen?

LF: No, that’s not it. I thought I had instrumental works to write or to finish: *Visage I, II, III, IV* (1956–58) ... I knew that joining them would mean being fully immersed in the technological experience, and that is why I waited. During 1952–53, I went to Darmstadt, then to the United States in 1955 to meet Varèse. I joined the group some time between late 1957 and early 1958.

DT: Could you tell us about your arrival at the Studio de Musique Concrète and your encounter with this difficult, strange character that was Pierre Schaeffer?

LF: Pierre Schaeffer was there as the person overseeing an in-

stitution. Pierre Henry was the one making the music. I was sort of a novice in experimental music. I became Pierre Henry's assistant intern. I learned a lot during that period, I listened to tons of tapes. He gave me instructions, and I started editing ...

DT: How did you get on with him?

LF: He was nice and distant. More intimidating than Pierre Schaeffer, who had a peculiar language, as is well known. Pierre Henry was more secretive, more silent.

DT: Was he interested in your music?

LF: No, I was an assistant. What was exciting was being able to listen to sounds, put them together, follow the instructions of a guy I knew from these *musique concrète* concerts that I thought were fantastic. But, as I was joining, Pierre Henry suddenly decided to leave. I had noticed when attending the meetings that things weren't going well with Pierre Schaeffer. During one of these meetings, Pierre Henry stood up, gave Schaeffer a letter, and then left with his entire team. That left a void ... Clearly, he had planned the whole thing. He didn't give Schaeffer the letter so much as throw it in his direction – and it was a big letter!

EG: Who left with him at that moment?

LF: A group of friends who were working there with him. When Pierre Henry left, I remember he told Schaeffer: "I disagree with your creative approach, with your pedagogy, I disagree with everything." Then, bang! He was gone. The only people remaining were the technician Alain de Chambure and the studio engineer Jacques Poulain. I found myself face to face with Pierre Schaeffer. Pierre Henry must have thought: "Why did Luc Ferrari stay? He was on my side." I think he held it against me. But I came there to pursue my adventure and think up unknown sounds, so I wasn't going to leave. I thought: "That doesn't mean I take Schaeffer's side, I follow my own side, which is to take part in this experience," and so I stayed.

EG: What about Xenakis?

LF: Xenakis didn't seem to belong to any group. He used to come

once in a while. Whereas I was there all the time, filing sounds for Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry.

FD: Did Pierre Henry take everything with him right away?

LF: After he left, we didn't see him for a while. He founded his own studio called "Apsome." Later, he came back with his group and assistants to collect the tapes, without making a secret of it. It was normal for him to take them back, it represented a whole period of his life ...

EG: Except Schaeffer considered it to be theft, as they were the output of a whole group's work.

LF: I didn't feel that way. The act of taking the tapes away is always symbolic, it's a way of saying: "I'm leaving for good." Theirs had been a fairly passionate relationship, and it must have been harrowing for Pierre Schaeffer. But, as I remember it, he didn't cause trouble.

EG: Was that the deal that you would come in every day and they would provide you with the means to compose?

LF: That was implicit. Since I was the only one there, it was in everybody's interest that I should compose. I started doing things immediately, because of my passion for these new instruments. After awhile, I mastered this technology and composed *Étude aux sons tendus* and *Étude aux accidents* (1958). I assisted Pierre Schaeffer for his *Étude aux allures* and *Étude aux objets*.

DT: Were [André] Boucourechliev and François-Bernard Mâche already there?

LF: They came later, and a group indeed formed around André Boucourechliev, Ivo Malec, Edgardo Cauton. Then came François-Bernard Mâche, followed by Bernard Parmegiani and François Bayle; that was the creation of the Groupe de Recherches Musicales. There was a beautiful moment of effervescence, of collective excitement when everyone met for the opening of the Brussels World's Fair in 1958. All the composers were there: Cage, Stockhausen, Berio, Pousseur, Kagel who was coming back from Argentina. It was a time of great friendship. Everybody came listening to each other. It was a sort of recognition for the

newcomers of modernity. There was also the Philips Pavilion designed by Le Corbusier-Xenakis where Edgard Varèse's *Poème électronique* was playing in a loop. The latest members of the GRM also gave their first concert there. I presented *Étude aux accidents*, Schaeffer played *Étude aux objets* and *Étude aux allures*. I had also made a piece called *Continuo*, a sort of exercise in manipulation of a single sound. It was a three-minute sound, Schaeffer liked it very much, so he insisted on sharing the credits with me. It was a very convivial, very friendly time.

Things deteriorated as soon as Pierre Schaeffer started working on his solfège, because he was paying less and less attention to the work of composers, and more and more to the individual work he wanted to do, the *Traité des objets musicaux*,² and to which everyone had to contribute. This is why Xenakis was never there: he wasn't interested in it, and me less and less so. Schaeffer's aim with the *Traité* was to describe sound objects in a precise yet ultimately dogmatic way, because it dismissed any sounds that didn't fit within its list of categories.

In 1958, I also attended the Musik der Zeit concerts in Cologne, where Stockhausen had become a prominent figure. I came across people who would turn out to be fellow travellers, people with whom I felt an aesthetic connection. I also discovered the electronic music of Herbert Eimert, who had founded the Cologne Studio for Electronic Music. At first, him and Schaeffer were broadly in agreement, but then there was a rivalry between them. I don't know why Schaeffer turned against a certain avant-garde music after that, especially since he was involved in it himself. He wasn't supposed to reject another part of the avant-garde. The reason he did this was because of misunderstandings on both parts. I'm thinking for example of the scandal with *Orphée 53* in Donaueschingen. *Orphée 53* wasn't rejected because the work was deemed too modern, but rather because it was written in a tonal style, which at the time was considered outdated.

2 First published by Seuil in 1966, 2nd edition 1998.

FD: Pierre Henry said it was the very first work of music theater.

LF: Yes, it brought innovations compared to traditional opera. But there was also a bad taste in the music! I say what I think, even if it's harsh.

FD: It was kitsch, and presenting it there was a provocation that turned tragically wrong.

LF: It caused a major rupture between the two schools. Donaueschingen being the temple of serial music, their way of composing was considered archaic; and eventually there was a first break between the serial school in Cologne and the school of musique concrète in Paris. After that, Pierre Schaeffer got completely cast off by the music world that was establishing itself as an institution.

Those of us who were close to him also paid the price, the whole group suffered from it by being denied access to the temple that defined what constituted the avant-garde.

EG: How did this rupture manifest itself at the time?

LF: In a brutal way. People like Stockhausen and Boulez had started working together at the Studio de Musique Concrète in Paris. Their relationship with Pierre Schaeffer suddenly became very tense, and it blew up. Not so much with Stockhausen, because he didn't care, he came from another world. But the relationship between Schaeffer and Boulez soon turned violent, and Boulez left the Studio furious and fell out with Schaeffer and musique concrète forever. From then on, as soon as a young guy like me joined Schaeffer, he was never worthy of the Domaine Musical run by Boulez.

Some offhand explanations

... Yes, I was running in so many different directions, and I found the time had come to draw them together – to construct a synthesis. At first I thought that everything was clear, that nothing required explanation. I enjoyed covering my tracks, assuming contradiction. I had embraced the pleasure of dismantling appearances.

I grew up in the post-war serial movement; for me it represented novelty and radicalism. At last, as a young man, I was part of it, and it was the avant-garde; it was there that I was looking for my identity. But it was probably also this impetuosity that led me to disturb the system, to start looking very quickly for my independence, to transgress it by mixing it with a sort of cyclical obsession. It was difficult to express it at the time.

If one looks at the score for Visage 1 (1956) now, one can see two methods conflicting, the serial and the repetitive. Indeed, one can see a series evolve across a superimposition of cycles. But expanded. What did the series mean to me at the time?

Perhaps it meant varying the pitch in order to achieve maximum diversity. It meant having a sort of numbering system at my disposal to inflict deadly wounds to the tonal system from which we wanted to escape by shattering it. It meant doing away with a constraining academic form. Ultimately, it meant entering a forbidden territory, since the conservatoires were fighting against this “disharmony,” this “music of noise,” or simply this “vandalism.”

And when I was thinking about repetition, what was I imagining? Like 12-tone technique, the phenomenon of repetition seemed insufficient in itself.

³ Extracts from a 1994 text previously published in the journal *Contemporary Music Review*, 1996, 15(1) 1, p. 95–102 [translation slightly modified].

Here, I think it is important to say – and if I don't say it, it won't be possible to identify the sources which have shaped my life – that I have never let myself be carried away by any method or system as a basic principle or as a totalitarian fact.

At the time of composing Visage I, repetition presented for me not so much a process as the observation of the social organization of time. Thus observed, time organizes itself in layers and according to different points of view – social, political and sentimental.

That is the sense in which repetition fascinated me. Repetition is thus an area where there are resemblances as well as differences: if I repeat the same phrase twice, the moment has changed.

One can hope, even if one is very pessimistic, that thought accumulates an experience or a memory, and that if you superimpose a purely mechanical repetition, it is seen every time as an event and not a redundancy. In the early 1950s, I didn't think that a single cycle could hold much interest. I hadn't come across Cage yet; he burst into my world in 1957 in Darmstadt, as the bearer of a completely radical newness. I didn't know you could repeat a chord or a formula for such a long time, I didn't know you could make silence last for so long. But that reinforced desires that I had only developed to an imprecise stage.

I didn't intend to speak of John Cage, but a tribute to the influence he has exerted on the period is not superfluous. So, the year before this meeting, I composed Visage I, which is a score based on superimposed cycles.

VISAGE I (1956)

This work should be discussed in terms of cycles rather than repetitions, a series of cycles, or the intuition of more general series attending to more than the parameters of sounds, and even more

than the musical form.

I imagined the cycles as if they were individuals, living at different speeds. When they didn't meet, they were independent; when they met through the phenomenon of different durations, they were transformed by influence or by confrontation. This is the process I used from Visage 1 onward. I have already said that it was a serial work, and that the series was used for both objects and cycles, that it also functioned as a 12-tone technique series inside the cycles themselves.

However, I could not apply this method in a systematic way, as I did not want the random encounters produced by repetitions to systematically modify the individuals. I wanted the choice of desire to lead the way, so that only desire would determine the value of transformations. In this way a sort of sentimental and narrative mechanism could be articulated.

DT: What were you doing during your time at the GRM?

LF: I had a tacit duty – which I didn't much believe in – to supervise the group. My role was that of a kind of psychological shock absorber between my very sensitive fellow composers and Schaeffer, who was hitting them, or rather hitting me instead of them. I was a bumper. I was softening the blow before deflecting it onto others. I never saw myself as the boss.

DT: That's not your style.

FD: What about your instrumental compositions at the time.

Were they serial?

LF: If one wants to characterize my musical activity, one can see that I was a deviant from the start. The serial technique interested me because of its novelty in the way of organizing sounds. I was also a deviant in relation to musique concrète and what was happening in the 1960s, and that led to the adventure of *Hétérozygote*.

FD: With *Hétérozygote*, you introduced realistic, anecdotal sounds, which didn't please Schaeffer; it was too different from abstract listening.

LF: When I made *Hétérozygote* in 1963–64, I used sounds that weren't concrete, that didn't belong in the musical world, but in the world of noises. I was leaving the dogma, just as I had left serialism. By doing so, I was also leaving the world of electroacoustic music, which at the time used studio-recorded sounds to create works whose form remained rather classical.

DT: Were you aware of that at the time of composing *Hétérozygote*?

LF: As far as I was concerned, the function of the microphone was to recognize noises or memorize them on a medium. So, whether in a studio, in society, on the street or in private, it memorizes in a consistent fashion. It made sense to me to introduce anecdotal noise within the musical discourse.

DT: What did Schaeffer have to say about this?

LF: This is where I was naïve. I thought he would like it. I didn't do things to please him, but out of a sense of personal necessity. Even so, I was surprised by his reaction, by his violence. He said it was incoherent, formless, that it was noise. It shocked me deeply coming from him, because I thought it was close to the attitude of *Symphonie pour un homme seul*. I was really taken aback.

DT: Did that cause you to distance yourself from the GRM?

LF: Yes, because when you are reckless, pretentious and self-confident, as young composers can be ... I was more self-confident then than I am now.

DT: This was a crucial moment that opened other doors, associating you with anecdotal music as its instigator.

LF: I could have taken advantage of it more, but that's not in my nature. I wasn't aware of it. I was in a sort of inspiration, to put it in a romantic way ... I found it so beautiful to put abstract sounds and rec-

ognizable, anecdotal sounds together ... It could be visualized. I was following my instinct and sensuality. Later, it became more conceptual, for example in *Music promenade* (1969) or *Presque Rien n° 1* (1968).

With *Hétérozygote*, I was being neither dogmatic nor provocative. It was Schaeffer who through his reaction made me understand how revolutionary I was. He tore *Hétérozygote* to pieces, and nobody came to my defense. The same happened with *Presque Rien n° 1*. When I brought it in 1969, Schaeffer had gone, but it was a disaster all the same. A deadly silence! ...

EG: But in making this music you were also being provocative.

LF: No, it wasn't meant to be provocative. I was doing something because I had to do it. Ten years later, François Bayle said to me: "We would like to make a record with *Presque Rien*"; it took ten years ... and a detour through the US, where it was recognized as important because it fell within the hyperrealist trend ...

EG: With *Hétérozygote*, did you feel a sense of injustice on an aesthetic level?

LF: It didn't make any sense to me. I had composed something that resembled genuine *musique concrète*, and suddenly I wasn't being understood. I found it bizarre. However, it must be said that to make music in the midst of the *Traité des objets musicaux* that broke away from every tenet in this research couldn't be well received. But I wasn't aware of that. I felt something like spite coming from the other composers, as though they were thinking: it might not be music, but it's original, it's got style, it's provocative. But I didn't set out to be provocative. I just wanted to say what came to me, what felt natural, in the same way I had always done in my instrumental music.

EG: Did you find it hard to take because you were being disavowed?

LF: Because I considered I had done a good job during the difficult period of the move from the GRM studios. I had been working at home, by myself. I thought it was an original musical proposition. I

identified myself as a composer in this story. I was hurt that the people I respected didn't acknowledge that.

In 1962–64, I was already living, as I do now, in two different but complementary worlds: the world of scored music and the world of magnetic tape, which granted access to the social object, the found object, to a scale in between realism and abstraction.

In 1963, at the same time as *Hétérozygote*, I had also composed *Flashes*, a piece for an ensemble of fourteen musicians, because the orchestra allowed me to make up structures, abstract forms ...

FD: You brought together electroacoustic and scored music ...

LF: I was spending as much time and energy in both fields. Recording allowed me to incorporate the social, something I couldn't do with the orchestra.

FD: Could you expand on this idea of “incorporating the social”?

LF: When you place a note on a piece of paper, you have no idea of reality; and also there is such a distance between the moment you write and the moment you hear it ... at least a year ... You lose the sense of reality. The amazing thing with *musique concrète* is that, as soon as you lay down a note, you can hear it coming out of the speaker. In the history of musical creation, that had never happened before us. It's even better than the invention of photography, because there is still a delay between the moment you press the shutter and the moment you see the result.

To incorporate the social within sound, to capture the voice of people talking in the street, the metro, the museum ... we are like wandering ears stealing sound in the same way you would take a picture. That voice then becomes a found object within a dramatic form. So that means incorporating society, intimacy or an expression of feelings ... These sounds represent an image, a memory; they are objects that take part in a creation. I feel a closer affinity with the visual artists of that era than with the composers. Arman did the same thing in the 1960s. He goes looking for objects, then puts them on display. Rauschenberg does the same when he sticks a tin can on the canvas. It's very similar to *Hétérozygote*. At the

time, I was closer to them than to musicians.

EG: Your biography mentions a television series about *musique concrète* in 1959–1960.

LF: Actually, it was a series of conferences Schaeffer gave for the Festival de la Recherche in 1960. It was very instructive. His take on the conference was completely original. They were real shows, with slide projections, sound images, graphs, etc. I was the one cuing the sounds, the pictures ... it had to have rhythm, it had to be punchy.

EG: How did the group concerts start?

LF: In 1963. As soon as a group of regulars had formed, the idea of a collaborative work was inevitably going to arise. Xenakis had brought some basic formal ideas, but Schaeffer criticized the project for bearing too much of Xenakis's hallmarks. Xenakis quickly withdrew from the project of a group concert for which he had designed plans.

EG: What were they?

LF: The kind of gorgeous architectural plans that he knew how to make. It was quite frightening ...

FD: Did you feel uncomfortable with this kind of idea?

LF: It could have been fascinating. The project interested me a great deal. Was it materially feasible? In any case, the aesthetic idea was really appealing.

EG: You said "frightening." Was it a slip of the tongue?

LF: I mean it in a positive way. It's true that there is something frightening about novelty. We are constantly dealing with frightening things, otherwise we wouldn't be creators.

EG: Was there a debate around computers at the time?

LF: No, none at all. There were meetings, like the ones Hermann Scherchen organized in Gravesano. He was the only one who would invite people from diverse trends in a non-sectarian way. He invited the Groupe de Recherche: Schaeffer, Xenakis and myself; people from America like Lejaren Hiller, one of the first people to write computer-music programs – he would recreate Bach's fugues with electronic sounds; peo-

ple from the visual world also took part. I remember watching the first video projector there. There were acousticians, psychologists, all kinds of people. I think he had an influence on Schaeffer. Perhaps that is where he got the idea for the Service de la Recherche.⁴

FD: Was there an institutional side to Scherchen's project?

LF: No, it was entirely personal. It took place at his home. He spent a fortune. He paid for everything: food, people staying over. He would commission works from composers and pay them with his own money. He commissioned me for *Tautologos I*. I remember driving with Xenakis on the way to Gravesano in 1960. I was thinking of a title that would convey the idea of repetition. I said: "I like *Tautologos*, I want something that ends with *logos* to give it a Greek ring, but does it make sense?" And Xenakis said to me: "Go ahead, it's a funny title." We came up with it together, in a car ...

AUTOBIOGRAPHY N° 12 (1982)

Why?

I think it goes back to early childhood. I was brought up by women, and later was still constantly surrounded by women. It is by living this secret union that I learned what it means to be underground. When they realized I was on their side, they started to love me. I must say that I worked hard at it. In any case, it's not easy to love women, it's much easier (not to say more acceptable) to love men. Personally, I don't care much for it, hence men tend not to like me. Granted, I was accusing them of all the failings of power, of their

⁴ Founded by Pierre Schaeffer in 1960, the research department of the Radio Télévision Française (later renamed ORTF) included the GRM along with three other research groups on the subjects of image, technology and language. After the department's dissolution in 1975, the GRM became part of the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA), to which it is still affiliated today [translator].

ability to open and close doors at will. And that particular power seemed to me crippled by “reactionism”; it was without quality, even when draped in colorful and aesthetic covers.

So I remained underground. There, in total insecurity, I thought, I worked, I loved, I hated, I accepted a little, I refused a lot, I spoke, I shut up. In short, I lived.

I shouldn't have.

I made films, I shouldn't have; I wrote texts, I shouldn't have; I even said things I believed in, I shouldn't have. I can't say I didn't enjoy it, I shouldn't have. I even wrote a score called J'ai tort, j'ai tort, j'ai mon très grand tort [I'm wrong, I'm wrong, I'm so very wrong] Well, I shouldn't have. But that reminds me of another score I wrote called Liberté, liberté chérie⁵ ...

Now there is nothing left but pain, violence, disaster movies, war jukeboxes, howling or dreadfully silent tunnels, aggressive snails and repressive modes of stimulation.

Will we ever reach the exuberance of kindness, the rainbow of softness, the caresses of the imagination?

JC: So, as well as an explorer and conductor of avant-garde works, Scherchen was also a patron?

LF: Indeed, at the time he was making a living conducting and making records. Everything he earned he put back into this place: Grave-sano. It was like a dream to him; he had a big studio there. And his dream was to invite people like Xenakis and myself to come and work there.

EG: What was happening there?

LF: It was a summer seminar. People were giving papers on the topic of their work. It was very well organized. Everyone had a pair of headphones, and someone was translating simultaneously.

⁵ *Liberty, cherished liberty*: a line from the Marseillaise [translator].

FD: How long had these meetings at Gravesano been going on for?

LF: It took Scherchen a long time to build his studio, which then ran for a few years. There are documents on this.⁶

FD: Did he have an ongoing relationship with the GRM?

LF: He really appreciated Schaeffer. After having covered the whole of contemporary music as a conductor, Scherchen was spending his life looking for new composers. This is how he discovered Xenakis, Nono, etc.

EG: Did the German school also take part in these sessions?

LF: No, I don't remember people from the Cologne studios being there. There were more Americans, especially among those who worked in computer research.

EG: Was Scherchen into computers then?

LF: He was into technology, all of it. He had invented a pseudo-stereo system. In 1958, he came to Paris, at rue de l'Université, with huge loudspeakers he had built himself; we spent the entire morning trying to hang them on the wall; there was also a little box that produced sounds with mysterious filters.⁷ It was funny. He was an obsessive. That man, he wasn't easygoing. He was cranky, very introspective, he never showed his feelings.

He had also designed a ball of speakers which I used on *Tautologos I*. It was a sphere mounted with thirty-six speakers, and it rotated, spun in all directions. There was a trick so that the cables would follow the movement using ball bearings. It produced Doppler effects, and he was delighted to hear Beethoven's symphonies whirling in all directions, with the Doppler effect warping its harmonic relations. He was an inventor fascinated by technical creation.

6 Werner Meyer-Eppler published the proceedings of the first conference held at Gravesano in 1954 as *Gravesano: Musik, Raumgestaltung, Elektroakustik* (Mainz: Ars Viva Verlag, 1955). The Institute also published its own journal, *Gravesaner Blätter*, from 1955 to 1966 [translator].

7 Ferrari is probably referring to Scherchen's stereophone, also known as spectrophone [translator].

EG: What did he make of Xenakis's work, which was the polar opposite of these ideas?

LF: Scherchen didn't see any polar opposites. He had explored the whole of contemporary music from Schönberg onward, the creation of *Pierrot lunaire* through Alban Berg's *Lulu*, the entire work of the Viennese School, up to Varèse. For him, we had to go on composing new things. And at the time, he thought that Xenakis and Nono were as innovative as you could get.

EG: How did Xenakis's departure from the GRM happen?

LF: At some point, Xenakis had had enough of the tensions with Schaeffer. I don't know why, but he blamed me for it. Is it because of something I said? I was trying to patch things up. There were all these tensions going on, not only with Xenakis, but also with Mâche, with Mireille Chamass ... I was always in Schaeffer's office trying to work things out. Then Xenakis told me: "I can't stand the sight of you" ... and I felt terribly sad, because I didn't understand. Later, when I asked him why, he said: "I can't remember."

DT: You then distanced yourself from the GRM while staying at the Service de la Recherche. You directed films for television, with the famous series *Les Grandes Répétitions*⁸ (1965–66).

LF: I also had a passion for images, I was part of a heterogeneous milieu. I was hanging out with poets, writers, painters, filmmakers. When the Service de la Recherche and the Groupe de Recherche pour l'Image gave me the opportunity to step into the visual world, I said yes. I worked with Gérard Patris, who was making experimental films in the same way we were making experimental music. There was Jacques Brisot, whose background was in reporting, but with an experimental use of camera and editing. Since I was familiar with the music world, I wanted to make a series of films on the contemporary musicians I had met in Darm-

⁸ Five-part documentary series including rehearsals of works by Olivier Messiaen, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Edgar Varèse, Hermann Scherchen and Cecil Taylor. *Les Grandes Répétitions* was released on DVD in France in 2010 [translator].

stadt. It so happens that Schaeffer was interested in focusing more on the groundwork, hence the idea of filming rehearsals rather than concerts. It was a great learning experience: how do you match the editing with the score? How do you conduct interviews? How do you go about explaining some of the music of this era? Bearing in mind it was meant for television, so aimed at a wide audience.

DT: Which is your favorite rehearsal?

LF: Stockhausen's *Momente*. It's the most accomplished in terms of editing. The episode on Varèse is interesting because it features so many dead people. Varèse had just died, the conductor [Bruno] Maderna would pass away a few years later ... but also so many living: Casadesus, who plays the timpani ... It's touching. But there is always something sappy about funeral orations when people have just died ...

JC: How did Schaeffer decide to set up the Service de la Recherche?

LF: The Service de la Recherche didn't come out fully formed. At first, there weren't many people. The first time we talked about it was at my house. We were having lunch together in rue du Cardinal Lemoine. It was Patris, Brunhild – with whom I had just got married – Schaeffer and myself. And during lunch, Schaeffer said: "I've been offered two things: one is a teacher training institute, the other is the creation of a center where people from the worlds of film, literature and music would meet ..." And Patris said: "That's what you should do." That's not why he did it, but it was a very special lunch because we were in the middle of the Festival of experimental music. That's how he came up with the Service de la Recherche. There was the GRM, Gerard Patris, me, Jacques Brissot, who was in charge of cinema, and Sophie Brunet who came from the literary world. In the beginning, between 1960 and 1962, it was exciting, everybody came by. We had seminars every Friday where we would invite outside speakers: philosophers, sociologists, writers, etc. Later, Schaeffer wanted to do something institutional, and he called more conventional people who weren't artists, but came from pseudo-communication ...

and everything became more difficult, more oppressive. These individuals then started to wage a war against the juniors who had founded the Service de la Recherche. They didn't have a clue what was going on in culture, in what used to be called the avant-garde. Little by little, they accumulated both power and friendships, so I stepped aside.

But it was thanks to what had initially been the Service de la Recherche that people like Patris, Brissot and myself managed to do things we wouldn't have been able to do elsewhere, like these films, *Les Grandes Répétitions*, for example. Nobody else would have allowed two youngsters to handle so much organization and money. It was a worthy effort, even though we also failed on a number of things.

DT: During all this time, how did your instrumental work cohabit aesthetically with your musique concrète?

LF: Instrumental music was a necessity for me. I had set myself a specific path. I was friends with Stockhausen, Berio, Nono. Between 1945 and 1960, serialism was still an emerging way of writing, and I wanted to be involved in this trend. In 1957, when I composed *Visage IV*, I called it *Profil pour dix instruments*; it stood between serialism and a somewhat tendentious recognition of musical objects, of sound objects.

DT: Were you applying serialism to concrete works, for example in *Tautologos II*?

LF: I wouldn't say that. The way of approaching the recognition of invisible sounds didn't correspond to serialism. On the one hand, serialism implied the necessity to calibrate each note as precisely as possible, so that it fits within a structure where each note has a coherent place. Musique concrète, on the other hand, represented a new mode of listening which no longer had anything to do with the note. Personally, I considered Pierre Schaeffer's solfège to be a return to the idea of instrumental writing, now transposed to the non-written, electroacoustic world. I was interested in using the microphone and magnetic tape to fashion objects that bore no relation whatsoever with solfège. Therefore, I had no intention of introducing serialism in *Tautologos II* (1961). I had stepped into

a new world, in sharp contrast with the world of classical instrumental writing.

DT: It's hard to think of you as a serialist composer. When did you move away from serialism?

LF: I did it very early. There is serialism as a way of organizing sounds, then there is dogmatism. Dogma always got my back up. I can never enter into a dogmatic system of creation, I can only get away from it. As soon as laws, boundaries and prohibitions come into it, I get deeply bored. If I were to invent a dogma for myself, I would lose my freedom. I have no time for it, it reminds me of church, Marxism, constraining ways of thinking.

EG: Can you tell us about Konstantin Simonovitch's Group?

LF: As soon as I stopped running the Groupe de la Recherche Musicale, I had more time on my hands. Simonovitch had a group of musicians around him called the Ensemble Instrumental de Musique Contemporaine de Paris, and on top of the concerts we were organizing, we started doing instrumental improvisations. At the time, the word improvisation was banished from contemporary music; serialist people would only reluctantly talk about "open works." We asked different composers to prepare working sessions with this group of instrumentalists. We would bring graphs and see how the musicians could expand upon them: the nuances, the pitch of sounds ... I think I had a contract to supervise the improvisation.

FD: What about computers?

LF: The high priests of computers who were friends with Xenakis worked with them. Those from the Paris group, like Barbaud, entered data into the machine and a score would come out with which they wouldn't interfere, because they said: we are mathematicians ...

FD: Can you talk about the new paths that you developed, for example in innovative radio?

LF: Thanks to *Hétérozygote*, the Germans who were producing radio Hörspiele came to see me. They had already noticed signs of com-

plicity in *Hétérozygote* and *Music promenade*. It's an interesting area, completely different, because Hörspiele could be made in a spirit of reportage, in a documentary spirit of description. With Hörspiele, they were already practicing the use of noises on an equal footing with musical sounds. These were Brecht's old ideas, all these German utopias from the 1930s: to use radio as a means of recording, to represent life and society in a realistic manner, with noises, musical fragments, speech, theater ... There is a whole history of soundscapes, of "long takes" [*plans sequences*]. That is where it came from. People who used to create Hörspiele are now famous artists: lettrist poets, people from music theater like Kagel, creators of chance events like Cage. They have contributed new aspects to Hörspiele, and so have I, to a certain extent.

EXTRACT FROM A SPEECH ON HÖRSPIEL (1984)

By Hermann Naber from Südwestfunk 4

In 1925, Kurt Weill wrote: "Now we can very well imagine that new sounds, sounds from other spheres, will join the tones and rhythms of music: calls of human and animal voices, voices of nature, the noises of winds, water, trees, and a host of new sounds that the microphone could produce in artificial ways if sound waves were raised or lowered, superimposed or interwoven, faded out or born anew."⁹ When writing these lines, he already knew about the first essays in cinematographic art, and was tempted to apply its principles to the nascent art of radio, whose development he followed as a critic. In 1931, the writer and dramatist Friedrich Bischoff presented at the Berlin Radio Exhibition his Hörspiel vom Hörspiel, an absolute radio art, a sound film combining literature with music and noise.

⁹ see 'Möglichkeiten absoluter Radiokunst', in *Musik und Theater: Gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin, 1990 [translator].

JC: I believe you soon started teaching Hörspiele in Germany.

LF: That's right. In '68 Stockhausen invited me to the Rheinische Musikschule in Cologne to teach a course in French-style experimental music, he was doing it the German way. Kagel, who was the school's director, invited me the following year to teach a course in Hörspiel. It was [Frederic] Rzewski, Kagel and I. Each was responsible for supervising a class of young people to produce Hörspiele later to be broadcast on Cologne's radio station WDR. German radio stations managed to find an audience for Hörspiele.

FD: What else were you working on during that period?

LF: I was developing a proto-minimalist aesthetic with the series of *Presque Rien*. Steve Reich creates a musical work based on a cluster of minimal notes, and as it develops it takes on a magic quality. My own minimalism consisted in bringing a minimum of musical elements into the musical world, i.e. the opposite of the classical sound in terms of pitch and dynamics.

FD: ... as well as the minimum of intervention on the composer's part.

LF: No, there is just as much composition, but it is concealed. If one hears the intervention, that means the reality has been distorted. It's like a hyperrealist painting which masks the photograph's intervention behind the act of painting. The same goes for the *Presque Rien*s. It is a composition, the composer intervenes at all time.

EG: How do you think this music is being received?

LF: The media, television, radio are looking to attract a large audience by making things that are accessible rather than challenging. As composers, we don't have to make things easy. It's up to the critics and the media to convey the ideas.

EG: What makes these types of music difficult?

LF: They require a degree of reflection: concepts have the power to unsettle aesthetic boundaries. Books of philosophy or psychoanalysis are not commercial either, their mode of thinking is hard to penetrate. It's

just as normal that what we do should be considered difficult, and that we don't attract crowds around us.

EG: It's more of a music oriented toward reflection?

LF: Yes, certainly. I think that without thought, there is nothing.

FD: I would like to raise the issue of the moral dimension in your music. It's noticeable that, with *Hétérozygote*, you brought an anecdotal dimension. You also compared your music to radio ... With all this, unassumingly, you made music with content. In novels and movies, there is always content. You brought content into music, as well as a particular way of understanding the role of the composer.

LF: Content interests me, and so does the dialogue between form and content. I need tension and conflict. The combination of things that don't necessarily fit together is where the excitement comes from. Sound is abstract by nature, but is also related to all sorts of things that have to do with reality, either directly or indirectly. Reality can be a sound referring to an image that is psychologically undefined or hard to identify.

FD: Music has always conveyed psychological sound images. The novelty is that a sound image can refer back to an explicit content. You pushed this conception of a morally committed music very far. You gave a committed view of our society.

LF: Creators and artists don't live outside of society. Their history unfolds in the thick of the most brutal, terrible but also the most joyful events. The great adventure of the spontaneous revolutionary movements of the 1960s was to take part in a social experiment, in a situation where we knew that women didn't have a voice, that homosexuals demanded to lead a normal life. We knew about people suffering, about Vietnam, etc. My own role was to join in this experiment by contributing my thoughts, my perception. We acted as a barometer for the spirit of the time. The act of capturing ordinary, everyday events on a tape recorder, before editing them as something brought out of anonymity, seemed incredibly important. When I was making Hörspiele, I never used to interview exceptional individuals; I was talking to ordinary people like you

and me, in their working life, their emotional life, in society.

JC: Do you see a connection between everyday, found sound objects and Marcel Duchamp's readymades? Or does that seem excessive to you?

LF: I wouldn't say it is excessive. I like the relationship that can exist with things that came before us and showed us new directions, even if they can sometimes lead us astray. Taking objects and appropriating them is an old idea. It started with Cubism, adding newspapers and other objects on the canvas ... It's a dialectical movement between an abstract aesthetic and a return to the concrete. These practices exist in music too. Think of Béla Bartók recording peasant popular music and combining it with his own music.

After abstract serial music, I already said that I wanted to draw on the dialectics of the everyday. Like Rauschenberg, I wanted to bend down to pick up a "tin can" with my microphone ...

As for Duchamp, he courted controversy. By taking an ordinary object and displaying it as an aesthetic one, his work provoked the social. My aim was to do something quite similar, although by that time provocation was no longer necessary.

JC: Yet it did shock.

LF: Yes, because critics are at least thirty years behind! (laugh)

FD: The perspective of music brings something else than literature, cinema or painting; but that specific function hasn't been exploited. You are the only one who did that.

LF: What has been done in literature, cinema and painting had not been attempted much with sound. After being processed in the studio, a conversation with someone is not recognizable as a discourse, yet it retains a discursive value ... something is also being communicated through sounds, not only through words. The part of instinct that goes into placing a word in time, the feeling that can transpire from a word trembling faintly in the voice: to me, all that carries meaning. My work points in this direction ... Faulkner is doing the same when he attempts

to illustrate the spoken language from this or that region of the United States; or Joyce, who goes even further by translating the interior monologue into words ... He reveals how rooted in sound it is. If I were a sociologist, I would provide an analysis, whereas mine is an intuitive, unreflexive kind of observation. It spontaneously says: something is going on right here and not there; maybe it is here that something about society is being signified. When a photographer releases the shutter, he probably chooses what feels like the right moment before having the chance to analyze it.

JC: Which directions were you starting to develop in the years 1960–1970?

LF: That's when the various paths I would later follow began to appear: the installations, the anecdotal music that led to *Presque Rien*, the instrumental composition developing around ideas of a mixture of styles, the text-scores, the autobiographical writings, cinema, theater. I felt a constant need to do different things.

DT: Did you stay at the Service de la Recherche until the early 1970s?

LF: No, I really left when I went to Berlin in 1966 on a one-year grant. I received the invitation as we were renting a holiday house in the South of France with Gérard Patris, Marie-Claire Schaeffer, Martial Raysse and his wife. I wasn't sure, because I didn't know anyone in Berlin, but Martial Raysse said I had to take on this journey. That's how we ended up going there. In Berlin, I wrote like a maniac. At the GRM, I had responsibilities, then I made films, all of which took up months of work. At the time, my instrumental output was virtually non-existent. I really wanted to get back to it.

DT: Were you also pursuing your electronic work?

LF: Yes, there were two *Tautologos* and *Presque Rien n° 1* in 1968. After Berlin, in 1967–68, I was invited by the Cuban Ministry of Culture to compose a piece for the Havana National Orchestra. This encounter with a country that had undergone a revolution was a shock. There was also a discovery of music that had come from Africa, of Spanish influ-

ence, popular music. We came back to Paris in April, and then there was May 68.

In the early 1970s, I went in search of different musical genres. I worked with people who came from rock, folk and chanson. It also marked my reunion with the use of pulse. For contemporary music, pulsation is an incongruity. This led to *Cellule 75*, which is a harmonic, pulsing and repetitive piece.

In the 1970s, I had set up a small electronic studio I called Billig by transferring my tape recorders in a fairly quiet place, at the back of a courtyard in rue Rollin. The tape-processing possibilities were quite limited, except when I was invited to Sweden or Germany to work in their studios. While others were building very expensive studios and creating computer-based works that required heavy institutional backing, I was closer to Arte Povera.

JC: You also traveled to the States in 1970.

LF: That's when I met Steve Reich, Terry Riley, Bob Ashley and his group. All this generated some strange fusions. But for Americans fusions are not a cause for clash as they are for the French, who loathe the mixing of styles.

My interest in observing other people also led me to visit Algeria in 1974–75. I used electroacoustic methods to interview people who had acquired their independence. Coming back, I wanted to carry on this investigation in France, and I worked with Brunhild, who took the pictures, on the portrait of a village in the Corbières, which became *Tuchan*. It was a multimedia work with tapes, musicians and slides projections.

JC: In 1974, you also went to Portugal during the “Carnation Revolution.”

LF: Yes, shortly after, but I didn't do any recording there. I was trying to figure out how revolution could happen in our time, how new ideas could emerge, and what was the role of intellectuals. In the late 1970s, there was also another *Presque Rien: Presque Rien n° 2* (1977).

DT: In the 1980s, what led you to found a structure like La Muse

en Circuit? At the time, there was a willingness on the part of the Ministry of Culture to set up research centers. I would like to know your account of this period.

LF: I had a mixed group of people around me: people from jazz, contemporary music, chanson. Maurice Fleuret¹⁰ said to me: “we’re doing something for Xenakis, for Pierre Henry, I would like us to do something with you.” So I made a mistake. Instead of creating my own studio, as Pierre Henry and Xenakis had done, I said: I want to do something collective, and this is how I founded La Muse en Circuit, which took over from the Billig studio.

When setting up La Muse en Circuit in Vanves, we repainted the rooms by ourselves, and we transferred my recorders and tapes. There was the excitement of the early 1980s and this enthusiasm around associative structures, which was a priority of the new socialist government. We started subverting the notion of the concert, we more or less came up with the idea of *concert-spectacle*, of genre-mixing ...

DT: You were trying to change the mode of communication.

LF: I was trying to come up with games that would disrupt the academic and ceremonial aspects of the concert.

DT: As a result of all this, you organized a lot of concerts throughout the 1980s and became quite famous in this milieu.

LF: The result is that we had a lot of fun; I developed a lot of things, but once again I left as soon as it stopped being inventive enough. During that time, my compositional work had slowed down and I wanted to spend more time on my own work.

DT: There’s a slightly odd phenomenon during the years 1970–80 in that the GRM rarely performed your work. How do you explain that?

LF: I never ask anyone for anything. Initially, it was Schaeffer

¹⁰ Following the Socialist Party’s 1981 victory, music critic and festival organizer Maurice Fleuret was appointed director of Music and Dance as part of Jack Lang’s Ministry of Culture [translator].

who had invited me to join the GRM. If the GRM didn't ask anything from me at the time, I can't do anything about it; I don't know why, although I have my suspicions.

DT: Do you think they didn't regard you as being serious enough?

LF: I was considered a stranger, in the sense of being strange. How does the tradition of the GRM in the 1980s relate to what Ferrari is doing with his pieces for instruments and tapes, his Hörspiele, etc., none of which belongs in an electroacoustic concert? So I could very well imagine that they wouldn't find a place for my work. Except that they sometimes performed works I had done previously, when I was part of the GRM.

FD: The 1980s are also the years of your work on the intimate.

LF: It starts with *Histoire du plaisir et de la désolation* (1981), which marks my first encounter with the symphonic orchestra. I wanted to explore the harmony of an orchestra while focusing on the intimate. And what is more intimate than sex? At the time, I wrote a trilogy: *Entrée* (1978); *Va-et-vient* (1980), a sort of apologia to repetition; and *Sexolidad* (1982), an odd score in which the tonalities, while being totally abstract, correspond to sexual positions.

JC: How did you compose this score?

LF: I worked out a series of tonalities that represented the sexual positions as they appeared on the score. There's always a duality: the eye and the sex, hand and buttock ... What interested me was to use sensual pleasure as a key to unlock an eccentric musical imagination. Then there was *Collection ou trente six enfilades* (1985), *Les émois d'Aphrodite* (1986) ...

JC: These titles were quite explicit, which caused you to be labeled a frivolous composer!

LF: I don't regret doing it. I still have that label, I can't seem to get rid of it. But all this was done very seriously, with the aim of getting as close as possible to the emotional realm. The audience is very responsive to the emotions coming from this personal, sensitive and, at times, dramatic side. With *Journal intime* (1980), I also brought the intimate into music theater, and I lay claim to it.

FRAGMENTS D'UN JOURNAL INTIME (1980–1982)

For piano

Revision: February 1995

From April 11 to 20, 1983, the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris held a music theater play for an actress, a singer and a pianist called Journal intime, which I wrote and composed. It was performed in various locations for several years, before going back in the drawer, to sleep.

From time to time I thought about getting it out of there, without knowing quite how. And then the idea came to me to turn it into a suite for piano. Since it was already about a series of suites for piano, it felt so natural that I wonder why I didn't think of it before! Each piece now bears a title that links it back to the earlier theatrical version – and so to the text – without any need to know about it. These titles simply situate the musical piece within a poetic mode of attention.

December 18, 1995

JC: Music doesn't often draw on the intimate, whereas it forms part of the foundations of literature, although the Nouveau Roman used it differently at the time ...

LF: The Nouveau Roman, that was around 1950–60. How do you reveal something new within the ordinary stuff of reality through the minute description of gestures? This is what I referred to as the anecdotal. And, indeed, it was more present in Joyce than in music.

DT: What happened in the 1990s? A lot of instrumental music with tapes, a lot of piano works ...

LF: 1990, that wasn't so long ago. In 1991, I wrote *Comme une fantaisie dite des reminiscences*: a return to the composition for two pianos and the apogee of my interest in pulsation. In 1992, I directed a spoken opera,

Cahier du soir, which is a kind of follow-up to *Journal intime*, including my thoughts on life and satirical observations of the goings-on in the music world. In 1994, there was *Fable de la démission et du cendrier*. It was a way of addressing my resignation from La Muse en Circuit, which my colleagues took badly. There was also *Porte ouverte sur la ville* in 1992–93, a commission from Cologne’s radio station about the meeting of two conflicting realities: the city on the one hand, and abstract musical sounds on the other.

The reason I talked about emotions is because we had all but forgotten about them in the years 1960–65 – just like we had forgotten about pulsation. To address emotions in music was to raise a serious issue. To an extent, it still remains the case today.

DT: What about 2000 and the new “post-Billig” studio? What are your plans – are you taking on a new challenge?

LF: The late 1990s were also the time of my return to the US, where I was invited as a “pioneer,” as they say. To talk about oneself requires choosing examples, carrying a luggage full of scores and recordings. From a university to another, I repeated my story to myself. What a strange thing to do! In the end, I thought to myself: you should start everything all over again, which is a stupid idea, so I dismissed it. On the other hand, I acknowledged the concerns and concepts that this experience had brought to light, hence the idea of “exploiting” my own concepts. That’s how, in 2000, I composed *Tautologies et environs* and *Exploitation des concepts 1, 2, 3 ...*. The last one I’m going to work on is an exploitation of improvisation provisionally titled *Impro-micro-acoustique*. The idea is to see what happens to sound when you use the microphone as an instrument.

I get a great feeling every time I enter into my new studio. This is where I get my ideas. I’m not a hurried composer. I enjoy working at a very slow pace; I like to say that I need time to think things up.

DT: How would you define your style? You use repetition a lot.

LF: I consider myself a French *répétitif*. The adventure of *Tautologos* was all about repetition. Serialism was about non-repetition, constant variation, and one day I said: I’ve had enough, I want to repeat.

For example, *Tautologos II* consisted of the repetition of what I considered to be botched openings. In my provocative way, I would say: I write openings that I don't like, and then I start again. It was a lie: I knew they weren't failures, but it allowed me to step on the first opening, as you would on a ladder, each step taking the experience of the previous one into account.

I began my career during the prolific period of serialism, then came minimalism, followed by postmodernism. I went through all that: musique concrète, instrumental music, Hörspiele, films ... That's why I have now come to look back on my past experiences; instead of forgetting about them, I can reclaim them. It's made me want to mix colors that have nothing to do with each other.

JC: Can we try to clarify the confusion that is often made between minimalism and repetitiveness?

LF: There is indeed confusion here. In Europe, during the 1970s, we started talking very early on about the American repetitive composers. One of the first manifestations of this particular technique was Terry Riley's *In C*, followed by Steve Reich and Philip Glass. Later, someone put forward the term minimalism to refer to that whole period. However, to me, minimalism is not about repetition. According to its founder, La Monte Young, minimalism was about developing a concept based on the powerful idea of long sustained tones. These sounds constantly renew the focus of attention, audition and reflection. Repetitiveness, on the other hand, is a thoroughly efficient and fascinating mechanism whereby repeated formulas develop over a certain period of time. What it shares with minimalism is the fact that the composition relies on a minimum of elements. But their philosophical and conceptual underpinnings are completely different.

I don't want to put myself forward in claiming a label, but in relation to both the conceptual nature to the primary object unfolding in time and its limited amount of information, I feel part of the minimalist family.

JC: Repetition could be described as a structural game based on the addition and subtraction of material, whereas minimalism is a concept that offers a way into sound, into the material itself.

LF: That's right. Repetitive composers are not primarily concerned with the materiality of sound, since they use ordinary instruments such as electric organs or synthesizers; what interests them is the idea of evolution through repetition. Also, they are genuine performers who come from and make use of jazz, African and Indian rhythms, etc. For La Monte Young, the material and the concept are what matter. The same goes for Alvin Lucier: the concept always prevails. The development of the idea is more exciting than the result.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY N° 5 (1974)

... Because there were flowers in a garden that were like a great dream. And I was very little. I started from that and I don't remember whether it was really a dream or life. That day, I was chewing a grain of rice that happened to be in my mouth without worrying about its provenance. It was very hot and I was saying "Hello Sir" to everyone because his hat was too small. Sounds of the heat were stuck in his throat and filled his beautiful song with silence. The sky bursts heavily through everything. We're roasting and the sun bursts through. Blood flows because it no longer has the strength to stop. Movements don't hurt anymore, they oil. The same landscape exists inside my head. It's colder under the blankets that preserve the winter cool. The skin is too smooth, clothes slip down into little piles on the ground. The trees turn their back, that's all they can do. And the sky is a mountain reversed ...

... I used to live in a remote village stretching far across the rolling hills, with steep slopes I would cycle down and walk on the way up.

I never understood this village. I was walking in it without understanding it. I knew each one of its streets, but didn't understand them. One day, an old woman dressed in black threw herself into the water and died. I made a long detour through byways to avoid having to see her dead body. I thought they must have left her in the water. Dead people scared me.

On the narrowest part of the track, I had to cross paths with the body lying on a stretcher carried by two men. It was wrapped in a blanket. Only the feet showed. Black slippers and black wool stockings. A tiny body, not even wet, that I had wanted to avoid.

... Elsewhere, it was a flat landscape caressed by the wind and cut by small woods covered with rough entangled trees. The wheat was growing but, despite paying attention, I couldn't see its progress or the wonderful moment that I always wanted to catch when it changes color. I too was changing color. The leafy trees in front of the house, the heat of summer and suspense, the American planes flying in tight formation, leaving white trails in the sky. Anti-aircraft guns fired all around them, and sometimes they would fall like dead leaves or so straight that my eyes couldn't follow them. I was observing death. I was observing my sensuality, then the bees singing. I was observing the girl next door swinging from the tree branches dressed in yellow shorts. She was looking at me. I didn't understand what pleasure she got out of swinging like that. She was all limp, her hands seemingly unable to bear the weight of her young girl's body. And the silver planes would fly overhead sending their lightning bolts to the sun, the rumble of bombs and the smoke.

I was watching death ...

... It was during the war. The German army lived in France. I had a passion for planes and went digging through the debris of those that had been gunned down. Sometimes I would find very pretty

scraps of gold-colored metal and some odd bits of equipment that I would bring back home.

One day, a German plane crashed near our house. Someone had told me that there were body parts and blood all over the place. I waited until the next day, thinking that by then the bodies I didn't want to see would have been removed. The weather was lovely and warm, and I was wandering around slowly after having collected several small and complex-looking dials. That's when I noticed in the middle of a scrap heap a bit of this gold-colored metal which was shining under the sun and looked much less vulgar than gold. As I bent down to pick it up, I saw a hand, a charred hand, clenched, all black and dry in a burnt glove. It was a man's hand that once belonged to a body, with all the sensations that come with it. So I felt cold. Now it was no longer the scrap of metal shining, but the hand, and I couldn't let go of it. It inspired, as well as a sense of horror, a kind of sensuousness - as if it had been passed on from the hand to me in some inexplicable way. So I took the gold-colored bit of metal ...

... I often had a girl in my mind. And what I liked in particular was her buttocks glistening on the grass. I can't remember whether I could see them from afar or if it was my imagination. It was a mixture of water, thick wood and mosquitoes in the heat ...

... Riding across the countryside on my red bike, searching for canons and pieces of equipment left behind by the war and the Germans. In a bushy wood, next to a small canon, I found notebooks and various papers stained with blood. Again, I felt this sense of kinship ...

... There was not a breath of air, I was on a small boat in a lake at night. The water was smooth and you couldn't see the surface, only the sky held captive deep down below. I was leaning over the water. I could see some clouds and felt dizzy. I was deep inside the earth's

mouth. I had penetrated her face and would never want to get out. I was the eye of the earth between her eyelids, the tongue between her two rows of teeth. There was no more up or down.

During the day, we can distinguish the surface of the water ...

... are memories of heat and I sometimes have the impression of having lived only in the summer. We were so young that we always felt incandescent. I remember, on her bed, in the evening heat of the room, her skin was glowing. And amidst this whiteness, her pubic hair was like an empty space returning to the night ...

... In New York, where I was staying at a hotel in the heart of Manhattan, I heard a church roaring as I was passing by. Attracted by the noise, I crossed and inside, through a broken stained-glass window, I saw a bulldozer charging at a wall and knocking it down. The church, probably built around 1900, was of Gothic style, the information boards were still hanging on to the half-destroyed columns, the roof was already gone. The precinct's floor was covered with a pile of gravel and bits of warheads crushed by the bulldozer. It dominated the whole edifice and looked like it was crunching the Gothic surrounding. Then all of a sudden, it started thrashing all around like an animal frantically trying to break out of a trap. It turned around fast and was everywhere at once, so anachronistic in this setting that it seemed to move at an incredible speed.

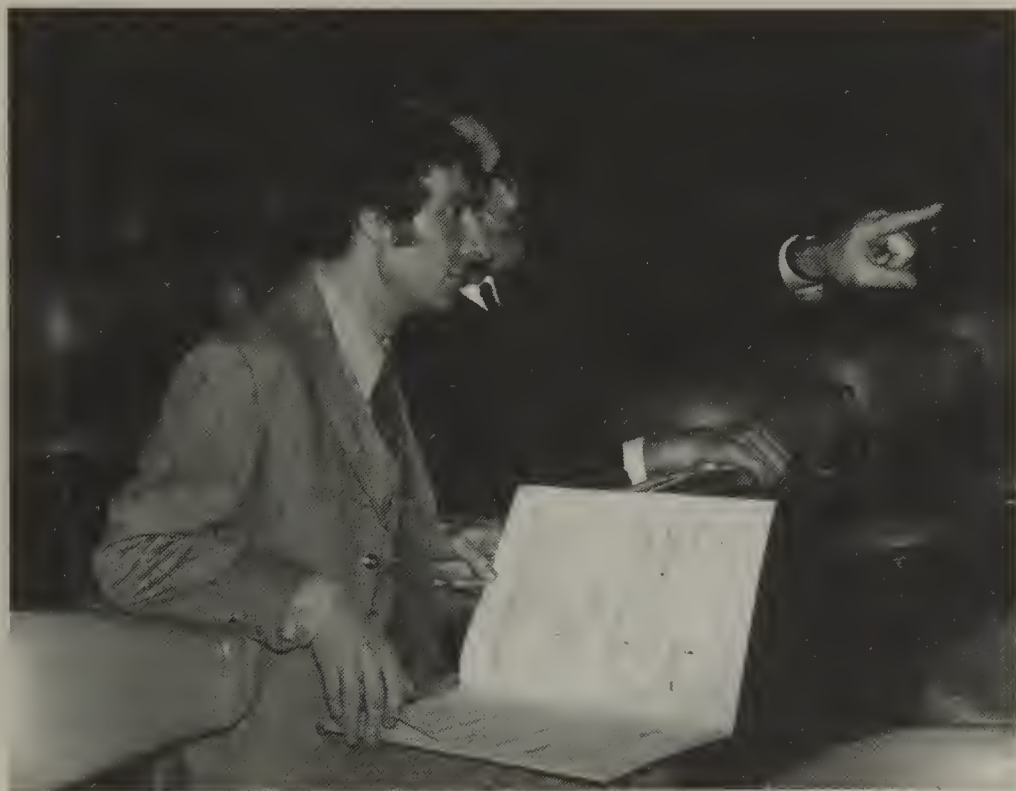
Behind the church was a dark glass building in construction, its immense and magnificent silhouette towering above the sections of wall and broken warheads. Cables hanging all the way down from it seemed to control the bulldozer from above like an old-fashioned puppet ...



1958: Brussels World's Fair. John Cage on the floor. Standing, from left to right: unknown, André Boucourechliev, Bruno Maderna, Henri Pousseur, Marina Scriabine, Luc Ferrari, Pierre Schaeffer. Kneeling: Mauricio Kagel, Earl Brown, Luciano Berio, Karlheinz Stockhausen.



1963: Preparation/collage of the 10-meter score for *Hétérozygote* (photo by Brunhild Meyer-Ferrari)



1968: Mauricio Kagel with Luc Ferrari at the Maison de la Culture in Amiens
(photo by Brunhild Meyer-Ferrari)



1971: Baden-Baden, Südwestfunk. Luc Ferrari with his assistant Ilse Mengel recording in a cosmetics factory for the Hörspiel *Portrait-Spiel*.



1980: La Muse en Circuit's first studio in Vanves, with Brunhild (photo by Olivier Garros)



1985: Homage to John Cage. Luc Ferrari on the floor. From left to right: Pierre Schaeffer, Bernard Parmegiani, Michel Redolfi, unknown, Jacqueline Schaeffer, Michel Chion.



1990: Luc Ferrari during a rehearsal of *Solitude Transit*, choreography by Anne-Marie Renaud.

INSTRUMENTAL COMPOSITIONS

LUC FERRARI IN CONVERSATION WITH JACQUELINE CAUX

Usually better known for his electroacoustic pieces, Luc Ferrari however never gave up instrumental composition. After a near-mandatory stint in serialism, his instrumental works would later eschew direct affiliation to a given musical movement. Although his path crossed minimalism, aleatory music or postmodernism, he deliberately remained on the edge of all of them. This position gave him free rein to develop his research on rhythm, chance, tautology, play, etc.

JC: Can you tell me about your instrumental compositions, especially those you see as corresponding to aesthetic ruptures?

LF: Half of my life has been occupied by instrumental music. I couldn't accurately place or date the changes that occurred in this work; there hasn't been any radical break; changes happened progressively. After serialism, in the early 1960s, I became interested in collage. This idea of collage came from electroacoustic practice, the splicing of tapes that could complement or contradict each other. So I also practiced collage in my instrumental compositions, thereby making audible references to different styles or genres. I started splicing things like polka, or Liszt-inflected romantic moods. These collages would therefore end up being reconfigured within a discourse that became completely chaotic.

As well as manipulating concrete sound objects, I also wrote and manipulated instrumental sound objects for the purpose of reconstructing noise. Orchestrated sounds could either make reference to harmony or not.

Then, in my instrumental work from 1962–65, I introduced interferences between atonality and elements of noise music. In the late 1960s, I rediscovered harmony as a novelty, and also went back to motionless, minimalist sounds that could be stretched over long periods of time. Added to that was another work I was doing on the absence of notation with the “text-scores.” So I find it hard to locate ruptures.

JC: When did you start working on the “text-scores,” and what did they consist of?

LF: They started in 1965 and stretched until 1972–73. They are scores of instructions. When you come from a tradition of writing where everything is notated, it’s quite a radical change of attitude to then turn up with scores with barely anything written on them. How do you put a musical desire into words so that strangers can turn it into an action? All this relates to the society of the time: the search for freedom, the necessity to be identified with one’s own intimacy, the reflection concerning all forms of power.

The first text-score, dating from 1965, is *Société I*, leading up to *Société V* in 1969. *Société I* is not meant for musicians, but for people behaving as actors. It consists of a list of actions for interpreters to perform. These are independent individuals, merely gathered in the same place. The objective was to see how individual actions might combine with or contradict each other when their presence is left to chance alone.

JC: Was the result with these text-scores close to what you had envisioned?

LF: What is particular about text-scores is that you don’t have the same sense of control as with traditional instrumental writing. It’s more about communicating with a group of people who will appropriate your idea. Sometimes I even wanted to join them as a mere participant and play the score too.

I performed *Tautologos III* (1970) a lot with students and musicians, both professionals and amateurs. But I also know that it was carried out without my involvement.

JC: So this research marked a radical departure from serialism both aesthetically and formally?

LF: Between serialism and the text-scores, ten years had gone by ... I think that what is interesting is not to forget anything. When I was young, I thought that once you had been through an era, you would find yourself in an entirely new situation. Now I think that it's much more exciting to engage in active invention without necessarily forgetting what has been done before.

LAPIDARIUM POUR PIANO (1955)

I was enthralled by surrealist experiments and had been writing automatic texts ever since reading the fascinating history of the Surrealists. At the same time, I had conducted experiments with a psychoanalyst in which we would set up the session, then instead of talking, I would write a music score without “thinking.”

Lapidarium can be considered a sort of improvised writing, except for the fact that improvisation happens in real-time whereas writing is a slow process.

The form therefore bypasses any traditional framework through which one might analyze it. States follow from each other, reappearing without ever repeating themselves, and revealing a number of thematic climates folded onto themselves.

If the piece seems rather violent, it stems from the difficulty I had in composing it – one could call it a “self-inflicted violence.” It also comes from form and objects being thrown and occasionally smashing together.

JC: Around the time of *Tautologos III*, you also tried your hand at improvisation. In a way, the text-scores are also part of it.

LF: Indeed, starting in 1964, I did research on improvisation. It remained within a private domain, like a scientific experiment that cannot be replicated. Other groups were also doing that at the same time: in Rome around [Frederic] Rzewski and Musica Elettronica Viva, in the States around Ashley and Mumma, but I didn't know them.

JC: When did you meet them?

LF: In 1967, Rzewski performed one of my pieces for piano. As for the Americans, I met them during my trip to the US in 1970. Then I went back to directing films, including one for German television, *Ken-
nen Sie Schönberg?* [*Do You Know Schönberg?*] in 1972. In the 1930s, Schönberg had composed the score for an imaginary film.¹¹ The German television invited composers to make films based on this music. I contributed along with Kagel and Jean-Marie Straub. In 1972–73, I also made political films: two films about farmers, including one on the Larzac¹² – *Presque Rien ou Le désir de vivre: Le Causse Méjean et le Plateau du Larzac* – as a way of showing that an urban intellectual could address the issues of pauperized agriculture and the peasants' revolt. I spent a long time on it, which didn't leave much for my instrumental work.

JC: Were the compositions of 1975–1980 scored and tonal?

LF: Everything was scored. If I say tonal, I wouldn't want it to be interpreted as a regression. It was a step forward. How do you go about inserting harmony within composition? How can an entirely written piece such as *Histoire du plaisir et de la desolation* (1981) have anything to do with an improvised thinking? How to avoid working out the form from the outset, but instead try to anticipate it from one moment to the next? How

11 Begleitungs-musik zu einer Lichtspielszene (Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene), Op. 34 [translator].

12 Following the Ministry of Defence's decision in 1971 to expand a military base in the area, the Larzac region was the theater of a ten-year long, non-violent struggle led by local farmers who refused to give up their land [translator].

to design mirrors that reflect not only backwards to what has just been done, but also toward a near future? How to embrace one's immediate snap reactions knowing that they will have to be transposed into a form of writing that requires months of work? We are trained in such a way that, when we compose, it seems impossible to leave room for spontaneity. The openness I was looking for was an investigation, not an obligation. This may seem contradictory, yet it is in fact the union of my improvisational practices and my experiments with text-scores. So, freedom, despite, but also frustration and doubt. The same proposition can be found in *En un tournement d'amour* (1986), in which the ideas are strung together without resembling each other, and the musical development becomes a narrative.

Collection de petites pièces dates from 1985. These are very short pieces, each corresponding to a musical moment. As soon as it's placed, it's already gone. I was joyfully composing one every day. I was tackling a different musical and narrative issue every time, and I left them in the order in which they were composed.

JC: This respect for chronology is a constant in your work. Why is that? Would it be cheating if you were to disturb it?

LF: I thought that, after having composed the third piece, if an idea for a fourth one came to me the next day, they would be logically connected, either in continuity or in contradiction. There had to be some sort of truth in this desire, and that's the truth I wanted to respect.

JC: What were you trying to achieve?

LF: I didn't want to feel constrained within a given aesthetic situation. I could have an idea that was tonal, another atonal, yet others relying on caricature, humor or noise, etc.

JC: You like to make heterogeneous musical objects coexist.

LF: The search for contradiction is a permanent feature of my instrumental work. I like to introduce ideas that add something through their antagonism. In *Visage II* (1956), for example, the musicians were spread out across the concert hall. The only person on stage facing the

audience was the conductor. I saw the room as representing a human body. The instruments were parts of the body, and the dialogue between such and such instruments symbolized a sexual relation. Though the composition was somewhat on the serial side, I had brought in sensuality, eroticism and sexuality. So the two ideas didn't go together. This strategy was also used for many other scores, such as *Entrée* (1979). Each time the musicians arrived on stage, they would form a body in motion, without it being explained to the audience. It was only a working premise, it was concealed, but it produced a sensual secretion enhancing the abstract musical discourse. I also used these ideas in *Sexolidad* (1983). In this piece, I used tonalities representing different parts of the body. This part attracted that one ... None of it was ultimately logical, but it made it possible to work with potential antagonisms. This is perhaps the only score that testifies to an interest in tonality, because, like the series in itself, tonality doesn't interest me much. What interests me is not whether to fit within a tonality or not, but rather to strike a balance between the connections and frictions among sounds ... As I was saying, I wanted to break away from the constraint of form, but obviously there is a form emerging from this sonic magma, and it brushes against both harmonic and inharmonic spaces, tonality and atonality, all the ingredients of noise music and what used to be called consonance and dissonance. During the years 1975–80, I also found myself experimenting with rhythms, with steady or skipping beats, a concern which had disappeared since the 1920s only to return with a vengeance into the bpm's of techno music ... Rhythm constitutes a way of taking hold of time, of generating permanence or deviation through an exploration of the dynamics of rhythm. This is the theme of *Cellule 75*, subtitled *Force du rythme et cadence forcée*.

PORTE OUVERTE SUR VILLE (1992–1993)

About Porte ouverte sur ville

Paris, October 26, 1993

The tape of Porte ouverte sur ville is partly composed of radio samples taken at random. When I switch on the ignition in my car, the radio starts to chatter and I turn it off right away: for a second, I heard a sample of the world, a fragment of speech or music, emotion or sound bite. This irrational instant is captured, enmeshed with my present. It's an appearance.

The tape also contains the opening and closing of a door or a window: manifestation of the city. Sudden appearance of a fragment of reality. Someone is wandering amidst this scattering and symbolizes the observer's presence. Lastly, "abstract" musical sounds are woven into the realist fabric, creating distances and depths of field. As for the musicians, they are performing a genuine counterpoint, approaching or merging with the sounds of the tape, conversing with it or, on the contrary, living their lives independently, ignoring or even contradicting it.

Cologne, March 24, 1993

I read the following text: "When the door opens and I lean over the stairwell, I'll know that the street begins down there [...] that busy wilderness which can tumble upon me like a magnolia any minute, where the faces will come to life when I look at them [...] and stake my life while I press forward step by step to go pick up the newspaper at the corner."¹³

13 Julio Cortázar's *Cronopios and Famas*, trans. P. Blackburn, Pantheon Books: New York, 1969, pp. 4–5 [translator].

Paris, January 31, 1993

... where the noise of the media is so invasive that one can barely hear the noises of life.

Cologne, March 29, 1993

I went to a Spanish restaurant the other night; there was the mundane ritual of the restaurant, with people entering and leaving, some ordering, others paying, conversations fluctuating and starting again. Only one thing was constant: a man drinking at the bar, doing nothing else, except every ten minutes, like a perfect tautologist, going to the toilet.

A Spanish song was playing through the speakers, I remember it kept repeating: "love is over love is over love is over," and nothing else. And I was thinking about the end of our twentieth century, when love is over.

JC: Door noises appear regularly throughout your work. What do they symbolize?

LF: When composing *Porte ouverte sur ville* (1993), I noticed how important doors were to me. Leaving serialism was like walking through a door. When I left the Studio de Musique Concrète, it was like pushing a door to the outside to go in search of the sounds of everyday life. I opened yet another door when I resigned from La Muse en Circuit. Little by little, doors found their way into my electronic compositions. For example, I made *Ouvert/fermé* (1993): I'm in a car, the microphone placed in the driver's storage compartment, and I open and close the door repeatedly. In reality, this opening of the door gives me access to the noise of the street. In the mix, however, the door opens onto the absurd. In *Porte ouverte sur ville*, I used thick, soundproof doors. By opening the door of the Cologne apartment I used to live in, I was provided with all the sounds I needed to make my composition. I also used randomly switched-on radios that were also

like doors. In *Far-West News* (1999), a piece based on a road trip through the American Southwest, each opening or closing of the door signals a change of sequence. A door always opens onto the unknown, however familiar it may be.

JC: What were your instrumental concerns in the 1990s?

LF: *Cahier du soir*, from 1992, marks the end of the music theater period. There is a text and an orchestra, but they follow each other, they are left unprocessed on either side. These are short forms: twenty pieces between thirty seconds to three minutes, each with its own mood and particular emotional theme.

JC: You say they are unprocessed, that you don't want to presuppose a form, but there has to be a form somewhere?

LF: I have formal concerns. I don't set myself any aesthetic restrictions, which means I don't abstain from thinking about it. How can a form emerge based on random elements? How does chance produce events? Chance is nothing new: John Cage and Charles Ives were interested in it. A number of my scores had relied on a conception of time within which events were determined by chance operations. That is the case with *Interrupteur* (1967) and *Jeu du hasard et de la détermination* (1999): a piece for piano, percussion and memorized sounds which clearly emphasizes both chance and determination ... how determination produces chance and vice versa.

JC: What is interesting is the contradiction that seems to make these two terms antagonistic: chance and determination.

LF: That's because we don't want to stick them together. Still, with John Cage, one can see that a great deal is being determined, how his choices restrict chance ... Is the philosophy in the determination or in the play of chance?

JC: What are the outlines of determination?

LF: It depends. Chance is channeled through the rules of the game. Chance can propose margins of determination that will make the project work. That's the concept.

JC: In the notions of chance and determination, there is also the underlying idea of cycles which is so prevalent in your work ...

LF: Yes, how to make them deviate, what role can they play without being audible. Even without thinking about it, the cycle has a way of appearing as if it were a memory with a real presence. One could say that a preoccupation with chance has to do with form, and with deconstruction.

JEUX DU HASARD ET DE LA DÉTERMINATION (1998–1999)

For piano, percussion and memorized sounds

Concept

Whether with found objects or in my work on cycles, I have always been and still am fascinated by what can be produced by this thing we call chance. First, it is a reflection on the individual, on why someone happens to be there in a certain place at a certain time. Then, it's a reflection on the collective composed of individuals crossing each other in a certain place at a certain time.

On the one hand, individuals are determined in their moments; on the other hand, society acts as the random container of these very moments, stirring them up and assuming their diversity, sometimes channeling them through protocols.

Method

How can this concept be turned into a composition or an artistic creation is a question addressed in many of my works.

Containers

Take the ashtray: if it is detached from its function, which is to collect ashes, its capacity allows it to be used as a receptacle for

objects, for example notes and even chords, rests, rhythms, complex objects, etc. I've done it, but what a bother!

My idea with this new project was to say, for example: here's the length and here are the sounds, and I would like a tool to assign them a place with tireless determination, but something neutral, like a software ... I had a computer program designed for me to do just that without trouble, which I called "the computer ashtray." Its role was to say where each sound had to be placed throughout the overall length.

Determination

I decided to compose 21 minutes because I thought it was an interesting length. I decided there would be sounds (which from now on we will call "elements") ranging from short to long, with a maximum of 45 seconds each. So I had to imagine how many elements would fit within 21 minutes. All things considered, and following multiple simulations, I decided to settle for 371.

All the memorized (and often processed) sounds being instrumental, I decided that a realist but hazy field recording - that is, an ambiguous realism - should run all through the tape.

A few words about this field recording: it is taken from the Los Angeles train station, which is a very pretty, Mexican-style building. It has a very big hall with a soft and faintly reverberating sound, and has the advantage of being furnished with big and very comfortable leather seats. My task therefore consisted in sitting in one of them, putting my microphone on the armrest and recording a 21-minute field recording. I then incorporated this sound into the mix, without any editing, I promise.

Composition

There are two kinds of elements: those composing the tape and those intended for the instrumentalists.

For the memorized sounds, I had to come up with a whole stock of elements capable of working together as well as contradicting each other in their diversity, all this without knowing how they would be put together.

For the instrumental sounds, characters had to be devised in the abstract by defining the diversity of their sampling in principle, by means of instinct and taste, and without knowing where or how they would combine.

Chance

As mentioned above, all the elements were numbered from 1 to 371. All I had to do was to let the computer ashtray guide me to assemble the tape and the musical score. Which is what I did. Without cheating. At least not too much. What is curious, aside from the fact that the elements fell surprisingly well into place, is that chance created a coherent, even slightly conventional, form: a sort of big crescendo of effervescence towards the third quarter of the piece.

What's more, the ashtray had the audacity to end the work with the most conclusive sound of the lot. I thought it was verging on bad taste. But I left it.

And on this loose ground that is a train station, beings (sounds, elements, creatures) cross paths with each other, animated by choices or personal duties, briefly gathered by nothing but coincidence in this place delimited by platforms, yet at the same time opened to geography.

So the train of composition goes, amidst diffuse randomness and furious determination.

As I said before, I didn't cheat, at least not too much.

September 22, 1999

JC: Do you approach instrumental compositions differently than electroacoustic ones?

LF: When working on an instrumental composition, the composer starts from scratch. He's in a no man's land. As he lays down a note, all of a sudden it's there. He then lays down another, then a thousand more. He enters into a discourse based on a form that doesn't exist. The difference with my instrumental compositions is that I work from my own sound recordings, which means I'm dealing with something that's already there, events that possess their own organization. In the former, the composer is all-powerful; in the latter, the elements preexist.

Computer-assisted music makes it possible to alter sounds in real time. The same also applies there: you start from nothing; it's down to the imagination of the composer or the technician to modify, with virtually unlimited control, the sounds that either of them wishes to use. Personally, my electronic music starts from existing sounds.

In my case, instrumental and electronic music represent two completely different worlds. I'm interested in moving from one mode of expression to the other because it requires very different imaginative practices.

JC: What are these two practices?

LF: In one case, as I said, you have to make everything up; in the other, you reinvent something based on a given. Incidentally, I consider the moment of recording as a creative act in its own right, since I choose what is significant through a process of auditory attentiveness.

These two contradictory worlds bring back a memory related to Hermann Scherchen. In Gravesano, we would often spend time together talking. One day Scherchen, who was a conductor, told me: "In instrumental music, there is never more than one thing happening at a time. My dream would be to come across a type of instrumental music in which two things would happen, each with its own autonomy, contradicting one another and developing two contiguous discourses."

Indeed, when we listen to music, from Mozart to Xenakis, through Schönberg and up to the spectralists, regardless of the complexity, we are always confronted with a single, all-encompassing phenomenon, except in the case of Charles Ives. None of these musicians departed from this tradition of a music which only develops one idea at a time. Even with Xenakis, the scientific dimension is indistinguishable from the writing's own technical structure. There are two seemingly discontinuous "discourses": the mental and the corporeal. If the body is one of my recurring themes, it is to signify that, alongside the mental and beyond any technique, something about feelings, about the organic must be allowed to unfold. How does thought work? How does it course through the body, through the hand that is going to write down these neutral, cold and terrifying coded signs? Thinking needs to be fuelled with blood, with a reasoned sensuality. After all, the brain too is made of blood and cells ...

JC: When you evoked this search for two ideas running together, I thought you were going to talk about your mixed compositions: instrumental and electronic.

LF: I'm getting to that. In the 1960s, I started combining the abstract with what I called the anecdotal. I realized that abstraction and reality reinforced each other incredibly. I began with *Hétérozygote* (1964). I'm also thinking of *Porte ouverte sur ville* (1993), which expresses a desire to have two different discourses: first, a discourse of tonal allegiance, and then the noises of the city or the sounds of the radio – fragrances picked at random. Both discourses are not superimposed: they create a dual matter. The first time I heard this piece, I was lost. I didn't know what to listen to. Still, this composition was quite successful and it has often been performed since. Another, more recent example from 1999 is *Jeu du hasard et de la détermination*. On the one hand, there is an instrumental discourse of piano and percussion, which is an abstract discourse made of either scattered or clustered notes, and on the other, an unrelated field recording of the Los Angeles train station. If the levels are not adjusted properly, the balance is lost. A level has to be found for the tape and the instruments in

order to hear both discourses as if they were two people talking simultaneously. It's a kind of auditory acrobatics.

In my other mixed scores, the instrumental and the electronic converge to the point where it is impossible to tell who does what.

JC: It's a new concept for you to explore ...

LF: It's not a principle I have been actively searching for, more the fruit of an unspoken desire. I can make sense of it now, because of my recollection of Scherchen's comment.

JC: The author Lobo Antunes uses a similar form by mixing different stories from one chapter to the next or within the same sentence. It's like several discourses running alongside each other. The ear would have to do the same kind of work in weaving them together.

LF: I have always been influenced by literature, in particular by Faulkner's *The Wild Palms*. But I also remain interested in a single language, in reading or listening to a single idea. But even then, I like to play with contradictions.

JC: All in all, these two levels that Scherchen longed for can only result from the juxtaposition of sound and "noise."

LF: That's probably what he meant by it. It's true that I have never achieved it with instrumental compositions alone.

JC: Two instrumental discourses become one in the end, because they are abstract, and abstraction always ends up going back to the whole.

LF: You can use different harmonies and melodies, in the end they contribute to a single discourse. I think the best example is the fugue. With Bach, there is this idea of connecting contrapuntal threads of discourse. The point is to manage to follow these different threads. We don't know how people used to listen to it at the time, but now we take as homogenous what was then heterogeneous.

JC: Can't the rhythm contradict the melody?

LF: John Cage used wildly disparate elements in his electronic work. He was the first to do that. He envisioned that things could be assembled without any logical connection.

JC: You're referring to his works on chance.

LF: He wanted to organize them in such a way that chance would indeed play a role, but the choice of elements was deliberate.

JC: I would say that the outcome is disjointed.

LF: It's completely disjointed, but is that because of a conscious decision to engage in different discourses at the same time, or an interest in a non-hierarchy between what is logical and what isn't?

JC: What is surprising with you is that you never gave up instrumental music to go all-out electronic.

LF: I could have done fifty *Presque Rien* just as I could have done another fifty *Tautologos* ... The desire and the need for these two worlds never left me. That said, it's hard to be respected in both worlds, because they both have their own conventions, organizations and intermediaries. Those who recognize me in the electronic world, the world of the everyday object, don't know about my instrumental work. Those who know me as a composer of Hörspiele don't know what I do in the instrumental field, and vice versa. The problem is that they are impervious worlds. Nobody cares to take the overall work into account.

HISTOIRE DU PLAISIR ET DE LA DÉSOLATION (1979–1981)

For symphonic orchestra

Three successive movements:

The Devil's harmony - Pleasure-Desire - Desolation round

May 19, 1980

I realize that my Histoire ... revolves around the idea of duality. The three movements present different dualities. The first is a harmonic duality of chords, or "the Devil's harmony" because of the tritone, which, as everyone knows, is the Devil in music. The second is a duality of superimposed lines - I could use the term contra-

puntal if I didn't find it too stuffy. Two overlaid elements such as the percussion and the melodic line, or the two melodic lines in the canon. As for the third movement, it contains a thematic duality which is formulated in the succession. I think it must be said that duality is not understood in the sense of antinomy, but as a dynamic equilibrium, as complement to the vital harmonies. Harmony and its disharmonic complement. Here, we are far from conventional duality between good and evil, positive and negative.

March 13, 1981

I said somewhere that pleasure requires time to unfold, whereas desire can be instantaneous. This is why the second part, Pleasure-Desire, plays on both terms: on the one hand, there is continuity and a laissez-faire in the pleasure of this continuity, and on the other, there are sudden, at times incongruous, desires.

It is also the duality between slow and lively, this movement which is my pleasure. But not mine alone, since pleasure here takes on a social function through its demands, its claim for the right to existence. The very essence of life is denied precisely by the social, crushed by the play of power. In this multifaceted taboo, pleasure is reflected as an image of triviality.

March 18, 1981

Of course, on an intellectual level, we think, we discuss, we imagine ourselves as liberated, but deep down, is that really true?

So my second movement goes out of control. Just when pleasure was about to shine, when it could really lift off and fly around freely, instead it falls down and progressively deteriorates in a violent defeat. It spins out of control and falls back in the mud. Loss of pleasure. This time, I can't tell if I was unable to take on pleasure, or if this pleasure was not really the subject, since it had to be shown to be impossible, or if it had to be shown as impossible precisely because

it was impossible to experience. It had to be brought down. Didn't I fall into the very trap I was trying to denounce, and am I not then a craftsman of the trap, a torturer of pleasure? I don't know, I don't know anymore. Hence the desolation.

JC: You often take an ambivalent position toward form. Sometimes you say that you're not looking for it, and sometimes you say it's indispensable.

LF: It's unclear, and this is one of my many contradictions. I find contradictions interesting. When I say that form is crucial, I'm referring to the architecture of the work, which has to be strong; it must be able to hold up. But there are all sorts of ways of achieving this: a voluntarist way and one that navigates between solidity and fragility. We all have to deal with these two terms: solidity and fragility; we are made this way. So I too like to express myself by combining the unconscious with a strong reflection. There is conflict between risk and certainty. Inasmuch as my work is based on sensibility, I incorporate the audience's perception as part of my own. That may sound simplistic, but that's a philosophical stance.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY N° 3 (1971)

*I was born, I believe, in 1931, in the month of June, in Paris.
But this is neither here nor there.*

During her youth in Marseilles, my mother had worked as an editor for the Lumière Brothers. Therefore, she was involved in the first cinematographic experiments. This may be where my gift for images comes from.

Every morning she took the train in Marseilles for La Ciotat. One day, Lumière filmed this train and the movie has remained famous under the title The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station. My mother was probably on board. She would always choose a seat opposite the platform so she could enjoy the scenery and look at the sea.

The family dog that always accompanied her was watching over the train's departure. As the train was setting off, the dog used to run underneath to give my mother a last goodbye glance from the side where she was sitting.

This went on for months, but the dog was getting old and the train was departing faster and faster.

Coincidence of deceleration and acceleration.

One day, the train ran over the dog.

MUSIC THEATER

As well as the mixed compositions – for instruments and magnetic tapes – that have punctuated his career, another mixed form which Luc Ferrari has enjoyed exploring in depth is music theater. This form allowed him to stretch the strict boundaries of the musical world by working with actors, lighting and stage production, thus experimenting with a more complex use of the stage than that afforded by the concert setting.

JC: Talking about intersecting axes or layered discourses, you also worked in music theater. What led you to it?

LF: Again, that's to do with my taste for hybridizations. Starting with happenings, we were mixed up in experiments that went far beyond musical composition. From there to introducing theatrical elements, there was only one step. [Dieter] Schnebel did it, and Kagel called it "instrumental theater," which was the first step toward music theater. Before that, in the 1950s, there had been David Tudor and John Cage. Later, Stockhausen and myself became aware of the theatrical dimension of the musician on stage, and we asked them to do things that weren't exactly part of their practice; it was about taking notice of the fact that musical performance was already a theatrical activity in itself. I wasn't interested in singing and opera, but because of my experience in cinema, I was drawn to image and light. This is how I came to do things that resembled theater plays but weren't, that resembled musical compositions but transcended them. This led me to introduce versatile individuals: instrumentalists and actors. Around the same time, [Georges] Aperghis was beginning to use the voice in the form of onomatopoeias ...

JC: Was the possibility of having access to narration what drew you to music theater?

LF: What interested me in music theater was the stage direction, the possibility of talking to actors and not only to musicians, it's so much more interesting. They work more in depth, whereas musicians – it's not their fault – are forced to work very fast, to take the shortest route when it comes to staging works, so there can't be any analytical depth. When you perform on stage with orchestras, nothing ever happens. Whereas music theater requires you to know where to place objects, how to use light so that it conveys meaning. This appealed to me, like cinema had appealed to me.

JC: What was your first piece in this style?

LF: *Société I*, in 1965, which was also composed with the idea of tautology in mind. It's a text-score – which we have already talked about – comprised of purely theatrical actions, without any music. Its particularity consisted in the fact that each participant had his or her own psychology, something I had never experimented with before. Everyone had to act according to the psychology that the score ascribed to them. I later directed it in Paris, in 1966–67, at the Vieille Grille theater next to the Mosque. I worked out a script for the actors but not for the musicians, and I wrote the music based on what they could do. They also invented a discourse in a made-up language. Back then, there was an artistic effervescence and people were more prone to participate. It worked out well; it was a mix of theatrical and musical actions. We staged it again with Didier Flamand in 1979–80. Then I made *Société II – et si le piano était un corps de femme*. It was in Berlin in 1967. I thought there was something very sensual about the piano, with its finely sculpted curves not unlike a woman's waist and hips. The score included about twenty instruments; the pianist and three percussionists were drawn to this piano. The scenes were both musical and theatrical. You could imagine the three percussionists being jealous of the pianist. They would mute the pianist's strings or crush his hands on the keyboard. These men would go completely wild around the piano. In the end, I thought it was a chauvinist approach. Now I find that playing

with this piano offers incredible harmonies and attacks: it is an instrument for the emancipation of sound, which is a less chauvinist idea.

JC: Can we perhaps distinguish between actions, sounds and words?

LF: *Tautologos III* (1970) also contained actions, but they were more musical. Later, in 1980, I wrote *Journal intime*, which looked more like a play because it had more words than music. I was using words for their capacity to reveal the intimate. The sense of strangeness in the composition stemmed from the fact that everything was articulated following a chronological order. I had to put my faith in chronology and tell myself that a form would eventually come out of it. If you're being honest and moral with regard to chronology, you end up with a legible form, whether it is tolerable or not. Since both the texts and the musical pieces were written over the same period, there had to be some consistency between them. In this diary, I was reflecting on writing and speech, as well as music writing, which is coded and therefore indirect. I had also written down thoughts closer to the automatic writing favored by the Surrealists. It was an autobiography and, in a way, I staged myself through two characters: a pianist and an actress who was called the composer and who represented me. There was also a singer: Elise Caron whose intervention conjured up the idea of opera. I was in charge of the lighting and the stage direction ...

JC: This piece was performed at the Musée d'Art Moderne.

LF: Maurice Fleuret commissioned it in 1982, as he had done two years before with *Société I*.

Then I went on to make *Collection de petites pièces ou 36 enfilades pour piano et magnétophone*. The pianist played the part of a musicologist who discovers a score in some remote library and proceeds to study it, which allowed me to play with all sorts of interpretations. Later, I got rid of the theatrical elements and turned it into a purely musical piece. That's when I realized that music theater actually didn't interest me that much.

JC: What made you give up the form of music theater that you had been using for more than ten years?

LF: I think it's reasonable to have a thirst for new experiences, it's like moving to another formalization, like crossing a border. After all, you always come back to the same creative dynamics.

JC: Yet you still made *Cahier du soir* in 1992.

LF: Yes, but this isn't music theater any more: there's no stage direction, no lighting ... It alternates between sequences of music and speech of irrational lengths. There's only one actress, and she doesn't even perform the texts, she only reads them. In fact, I think of it as a spoken opera.

JC: Incidentally, it's strange that you never actually produced an opera, considering that you were virtually manipulating the same elements with music theater. Why is that?

LF: I have often been asked this question. It's as if you had to create an opera "package" to qualify as a true composer ...

I already said that, to me, music theater represented an alternative to opera, which was multimedia from the outset. This blend of literature, ballet, stagecraft and music already existed under Louis XIV ... What I dislike about opera is the whole economic and technical infrastructure that goes with it, all this overblown production value. However, the higher the production value, the dumber it gets. The same goes for politics: the higher up you are, the less you open your mouth ...

I've never understood the point of adding melody to words. It doesn't sound realistic to me, and I'm attached to realism ... A few wonderful exceptions aside, I find opera to be extremely stupid.

JC: What exceptions are you thinking about?

LF: Alan Berg's *Wozzeck*, sometimes Wagner or Mozart. Even Beethoven, whom I adore, I find unlistenable in *Fidelio*. I enjoy deflating the balloon that is opera. The best symbol of that is the Opéra Bastille wrapped in safety nets ... Opera is falling down. So much so it has to be prevented from falling on the heads of passers-by ... So we can try doing more inventive and more popular things than this bourgeois art of opera. I'm tempted to say that music theater also originates with John Cage and

Fluxus. When John Cage sits in front of a piano and doesn't play, that's theatrical. When George Brecht wrecks his violin, that's a performance, that's theater.

TRUE OR FALSE STORY OF CAHIER DU SOIR (1991–1992)

(Cahier du Soir)

Suite of 20 pieces for 14 instruments, one actress and slides

You couldn't make up a more sketchy adventure than that of Cahier du Soir.

Here's the story:

One day, an absolutely insane composer had the idea of telling the story of an ordinary evening in music. Twenty musical pieces as portraits of transient feelings. In the present case, a woman and a man experience this evening as a rite, without any concern whether the words, gestures and impressions exchanged are banal or exceptional, for that isn't the point. The point is that all of it can take place in a single evening, and that nothing in life is exceptional without at the same time being banal.

The first adventure goes like this.

Because this composition presented itself as a story, the idea came to me to have it narrated by a writer who would insert dialogues between the pieces of music. Conversations between a woman and a man, anything being said in the course of an evening, be it intelligent or foolish, memories, anecdotes, statements. That was my basic premise. The proposition also comprised a rule which consisted in having the music and the texts written simultaneously.

And then time passed, the texts didn't turn up. While I was almost done, the writer hadn't even started. I told him: "Well, then?" - "Yes, that's right," he replied - "But I'm almost finished," I said - "You're going too fast," he said - "I'm in a hurry," I retorted - "Wait for me," he said - "I can't wait," I said.

Thus, the collaboration ended there. It's a true story... well, almost. So here I am, with a 163-page score, 50 minutes of narrative music supposed to be validated by the text. I still ask myself whether it's a good idea, though I'm sure it is.

The second adventure is completely different, but just as complicated. I had befriended a collective of instrumentalists that had gathered to work in depth on several of my compositions. I was thinking about them when I began composing Cahier du Soir.

They later set up as an ensemble within an associative framework, and that's when the various leaders in the association started fighting, I didn't know who to call what or how things turned out like that.

Production, I said. And that's the third adventure.

It's a dumb thing to say, but production is a subject which touches upon intimacy, to the extent that, in the end, all things considered or not, and all intuition expressed, I prefer not to talk about it, however tempting it is, because it's very interesting, revealing and, on a symbolic level, precisely full of symbols. But anyway, I won't write about it.

The fourth adventure, however, I do want to talk about.

Adventures are like layers on top of each other, or blankets in the cold winter. Luckily, they are not consecutive; otherwise ten years would have already gone by. One day I was talking with a conductor and we thought: let's find a stage director who is also an author, and I just happen to know one, so do I, it's so and so. Very well, we

get in touch with them, they are excited about the project and we start talking about the production process. However, the person who was meant to do the writing starts lagging behind and, after a year of telephone chases worthy of the prehistory of the information society, not a single word had yet been written.

During a dinner at my place, in which a great variety of alcohol was consumed, the alleged author told us that, after ten years of collaboration, the two partners were about to divorce. Just my luck! I've wanted to work with them for ten years, and just as things were looking good, now they're looking worse than ever. Why did it have to happen to me, and if I were fatalistic, I would say this score was plagued with bad luck. But thankfully, I don't give up.

The fifth adventure is the last one so far, but there's still hope yet. I woke up one morning and thought: silly me! And that was it: everything came together. In between composing the pieces, I was putting down texts, thoughts, letters, memories, clarifications intended for the musicians, etc. and leaving all of this in the score. It had become so much part of it that I had forgotten about it. That morning, I woke up thinking: silly me, that's what I need. And I thought: these texts make everything clear - the music, the spirit of the time, the transient feelings, the uncertainty. They make sense of it all. Really. And I thought: but of course, all there is to do is read them in order to have a succession of text and music saying the same thing in a magnificent, near-irreproachable redundancy.

So it was going along the lines of music and text, but not theater, speech and music, not oratorio, using electricity but not technology, using images but not multimedia ... Perhaps something as yet unclassifiable, though utterly normal. Narrative.

Provided no more adventure comes up, Cahier du Soir can be considered as a reading of the score; the reading of an adventure which is the score itself.

*I have recounted this story, in a nutshell, as I experienced it.
But is it really the true story?*

August 31, 1994

AUTOBIOGRAPHY N° 5

I think I was born in Royan on February 12, 1907.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY N° 15

*On the day I was born in 1989 in Montauban, there was thunder
in the air.*

AUTOBIOGRAPHY N° 7

*At the time of my birth in La Ciotat on August 22, 1900, my grand-
father was still playing the cornet in a customs officers' barrack.*

AUTOBIOGRAPHY N° 8

I wasn't born on February 5, 1924.

May 5, 1992

JC: How would you describe your work with Colette Fellous?

LF: They are *concerts-spectacles*, which is something else altogether. There is the production of a concert program with pieces from different composers, and in between them a sort of stage direction. I made *Radio sur scène* with Colette Fellous because she is a novelist and a radio presenter; I played with her by doing a caricature of radio presentations, veering toward the concert presentation side. Maurice Fleuret, who was there, said to me: "it's an alternative to music theater." *La Leçon d'espagnol* was a comedy I wrote with Michel Museau and Elise Caron, who were presenting a concert while learning Spanish using the Assimil method. Music theater is a personal endeavor, whereas these *concerts-spectacles* presented the works of different composers in the course of the evening.

JC: Rigor is a word you wouldn't want to use, although it is present in your way of working in each of those different domains.

LF: I'm rigorous and demanding. Rigor is puritanical, and puritanism is completely alien to me. I already said that form is for the most part irrelevant to me; but without any stability, the whole thing just falls apart. So when I say that I'm not interested in form, it's only to cut to the chase. My musical career started in the 1950s, which was a time of reconstruction, during which formalism, rigour and pure abstraction were the order of the day. I immediately reacted against this tyranny of the form. But when I compose, I construct a form, I need a certain balance, otherwise I would fall. If you miss a step, you fall ... The same goes for creation. It's not about rigor, but about a sense of playing with balance, playing with time. I have an acute sense of time ... One can remain unstable on a step and attempt imbalance, that's experimental. That is part of ethics, not aesthetics. I'm a great believer in morals. I have a moral attitude toward sounds, I don't want to disrespect them. Then, aesthetics knocks everything over and immorality finds its place. One must have a very pragmatic and realistic attitude toward the materials. There is a strong dialectical relationship between ethics and aesthetics.

*I live in the City of the Future.
The city is populated by robots.
They live in the City of the Future.
Humans live underground.
But the robots have feelings and flesh.
They breathe and seek warmth.
Robots are virtually indistinguishable from humans.*

*The only difference is that some live above ground and others underground.
Social equality means that nobody knows who is in charge.
It's only a matter of positive/negative.
The notion of happiness has been abolished.
I don't know what I am.*

*The city runs on solar power (main dome).
The dome is linked to the different buildings by cables through which power is distributed. The dome is also equipped with a powerful antenna collecting radiations from faraway galaxies. These radiations are used to gauge and regulate the functioning of the solar stove. The position of galaxies acts as a computer.
I can see my feet because the ground is very bright.
The multitude of antennae spreading all over the city makes it possible to subcontract to nearby solar systems should the main antenna break down.
So these antennae are also linked to the central stove.*

Cables also connect the main dome to the other parts of the city. Although technically obsolete, cables still remain the least wasteful means of transmitting energy. They are all the more awkward for

disturbing individual air travels. Which is why highways are still spreading across the City, at least for internal transports. For external ones, there is a main astroport for space travelers, as well as each building having its own airport allocated to terrestrial transports.

Small domes are located in various districts around the City. Experimental workshops have been set up to anticipate the coming City, because the City of the Future no longer fulfils our society's technical requirements.

Robot-architects and scientists have stored the energy from phosphoric batteries directly into ionized chambers. This energy allows them to resolve the most difficult of mathematical problems. Robot-scientists are designing the plans for the coming City. These are then sent to a committee of robot-judges, who are incapable of judging them since they belong to the past, whereas the problems under debate belong to the future.

These small domes are completely isolated and autonomous.

The problems being studied there mainly concern energy through inactivity and transmission through breakdown. Thus, the stopping of energy would produce energy and its transmission. Any given material may then be turned into a generator and be freed from mechanics and any material or wave transmission.

The issue of how to get rid of cables, roads and everything that leads to the urbanization of nature had been studied for centuries. How to get rid of the labyrinth in which we get caught and which ends up choking the Earth.

I wanted to design a scale model because the City of the Future seemed to me to suit our pressing needs, but without knowledge of architecture or urbanism, and being very bad with my hands, I had to give up. (I leave it to others to tinker with our future. The traders in charge seem to be doing just fine.)

At this point, these few notes were almost left unfinished for the second time. But since I am neither a man nor a robot, or more to the point, since I don't know what I am, notions of finite, infinite or incompleteness have for me faded into the past.

RADIO ART: HÖRSPIELE

Luc Ferrari could have considered Hörspiel too distant from genuine musical work to wish to devote much time to it. He would eventually come to produce a rather large number of them. What could have drawn him to this radiophonic medium?

First, its length: an hour and a half or more, allowing for a different treatment of musical forms which, in concerts, only have a restricted time at their disposal. He also saw in it an opportunity to move off center and adopt an attitude he was particularly fond of: that of the reporter who enjoys perverting reality as he captures it. Hörspiele were raising new and attractive questions: how to constantly capture the audience's attention in their privacy and outside of any spectacle?

How to encourage access to a world of mental images?

JC: How does a composer like you end up creating radio works, and do you think of them as compositions in their own right?

LF: It's relatively simple. The Hörspiele departments of the German radio stations contacted me to participate in this adventure. Having had experience of the world of cinema, I knew about scripts, so I wrote some for the radio. These scripts were different from music scores, but not that much. Instead of manipulating the orchestra or abstract electronic sounds, I was manipulating situations with the aim of turning them into sound compositions.

JC: Did you consider right away that there was nothing demeaning about a composer working for the radio?

LF: It would have been demeaning had I not tried a new experience. I was putting as much energy into making Hörspiele as in musical compositions. For once, a composition could escape the traditional length of a concert piece, which is usually between 10 and 30 minutes. Hörspiele last an hour to an hour and a half. Here we're dealing with a long form, as with opera or theater. If you want to render the image of a sunrise audible, you need a sufficient length of time to make it comprehensible. Both the composer and the listener must experience this length as a psychological time. It taught me how to grab the audience's attention, how to invite people in their home to identify form and components. It's very interesting for a composer to address this length and this personal mode of listening.

JC: Didn't you have the impression of working for something ephemeral?

LF: The ephemeral aspect didn't bother me. It's true that in the 1950s–1960s, I was coming from a world in which, without making it explicit, we were working to be immortal, we were perpetuating the romantic attitude of the composer who must go down in history. These notions were obviously shaken up in 1968–1970. We started working in the thick of things, in the present. Before addressing future generations, we had to address our contemporaries.

JC: There is something new and interesting about Hörspiele, and that is the use of the voice.

LF: Indeed, Hörspiel for me represented a ground for experimenting with language, because that is the material of radio. Working with language was new to me. I enjoyed experimenting with speech, with vocal objects collected at random: conversations, vocal improvisations, onomatopoeias, singing exercises, etc. I enjoyed solving the problems posed by the recording of texts: how should they be read, then how should they be arranged within the sound atmosphere?

As Hörspiel comes from Germany, I had to work in a language other than mine, so I had to solve the problems of understanding this

language. How to make sense of it in terms of vocal melody? How many words does it take to be able to grasp the meaning of a whole sentence? How should this language be translated: through editing, mixing, whispers? These are some of the areas of experience that Hörspiele allowed me to touch upon.

JC: However, in terms of form, you treated them exactly as if they were electroacoustic compositions.

LF: I would say the resemblance comes from the fact that both are compositions. They both bring about the same issues in terms of arrangement and sound manipulation, the same methods of composition. The difference is that Hörspiele have an identifiable narrative that serves as an argument and a script, whereas the presence of a narrative in a performed electroacoustic work will be much more concealed. The majority of my Hörspiele have been portraits: *Spiel-portrait* (1971), for example, depicts someone who is holding a microphone and using it to draw what comes to his ears. Actually, it is a portrait of the musician as a listener. I also did the portrait of a village with *Tuchan*, or again, in Algeria, the portrait of steel factory workers, and the portrait of a “socialist” village. A writer would produce a psychological or sentimental portrait, whereas I make subjective portraits, which I improperly call self-portraits.

JC: Essentially, a Hörspiel can be performed live, whereas an electroacoustic work can only be played on the radio as a concert broadcast. That’s where the boundary lies.

LF: Exactly.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY N° 3 (1986)

It took me many years to notice that what I’m most interested in is friction.

Also that music might ultimately be described as a large zone of friction.

Music or the acoustic phenomenon?

(Perhaps I should explain myself, otherwise what is the point of autobiographies?)

Friction in its most abstract: air, acoustics, time; but also in its most concrete: sound, its value and composition, rhythm. Ideas on the one hand, sexes on the other, and in between a space of complicity. So I create frictions.

But I can try to enumerate every kind of friction.

For example, between seriousness and derision, feelings of vitality and despondency, spontaneity and reflexivity. With the idea of friction, I also recaptured the old notion of tension and release, of dissonance and consonance, but also a more current formulation between acoustic and electric, phase and counterphase, tuned and de-tuned harmonics, association and dissociation, theme and non-theme, etc.

All this causes frictions.

Of course, I'm interested in how worlds overlap and epochs intertwine, how we never live within a definite temporality but across several overlapping histories, and so we can mix and match styles, signs and talk about many different things at once.

These frictions then lead to clashes of occasionally violent ideas; unfortunately, they often lead to wars, because we are too stupid and barbaric to live with frictions as civilized adults, because we are too mercantile to experience our sensibility in a dispassionate way.

In truth, nothing is more difficult than frictions.

That's why I create frictions ...

HÖRSPIEL = RADIO ART = AKUSTISCHE KUNST
= ARS SONORA.

As a way of fleshing out my ideas about autobiography, I will attempt to describe the Hörspiele I have composed since the beginning.

SPIEL-PORTRAIT (1971)

For Südwestfunk

This story is told through several elements remaining throughout and evolving in time. It features a nonsensical dialogue between a composer and his production team that represents the Assimil program for learning German. This implies a play with language and the issue of how to articulate one's thinking in a foreign language. It also contains fragments of my compositions from the 1960s, either taken as dramatic elements or subject to criticism during the live performance. There is also the composer collecting sounds in the city: in the modern art museum, the football stadium, the cosmetics factory, the restaurant, etc. Finally, there is the criticism of the work itself by the production team (a sign of the times).

JETZT (NOW) (1982)

For Hessischer Rundfunk - 1 h 45 min

Despite using my compositions from the 1970s, the subject here is the overlapping of places in the present, which itself becomes blurred through the composition's artifice.

The sounds were collected in Frankfurt: the market, the river port,

the Frankfurter Allgemeine's printing plant, the radio station's hallways and canteen, etc. They were then brought back to my house in Paris for editing and commented upon whilst playing through the studio speakers. At that moment, another passage occurs between the particular sound of the speakers and the "real" playback sound of the tape recorders, which takes the listener back to Frankfurt. The play of time and space follows the logic of The Golden Ass by Apuleius: a story linked to another story which contains a story itself linked to yet another story and so forth, so that we lose track of who does what and who is who. It's a different, labyrinthine way of using the autobiography as a medium.

L'ESCALIER DES AVEUGLES (1991)

(Collection of short stories)

For Ars Sonora, Radio Nacional de España - 30 min.

Here, the composer appears as an observer and portraitist through a series of short sketches referred to as a "collection of short stories." Having been invited to Madrid, I decided to make a kind of sound portrait of a city I didn't know. Because I didn't want to be alone, I asked to be accompanied by young women who would show me the city and play the role of interpreters. The rules of the game were strict: "one place, one beauty," as in "the beauty and the beast"; and each one would choose a place. I was then led around the city like a blind man turned voyeur. The second rule was that each short story would be a portrait both of the place and the young woman who had taken me there. Lastly, at the compositional level, I was only allowed to use the sounds recorded in that particular place. Borrowing sounds from another place was forbidden. The idea of autobiography is indicated by the constant presence of the author,

here linked inextricably to the presence of the microphone. I would even suggest that the mike-voice relationship of the portraitist and the person being portrayed is signified as the key theme of each story, because this particular acoustic relationship aims to describe the invisible.

SELBSTPORTRAIT (JUNE 12, 1997)

The project of making a self-portrait entails an evident relationship with the intimate. It is also a trap. That's why I worked out an even more abstract and rigorous form.

Time is structured in a ferociously repetitive manner, with recognizable elements reappearing periodically. As it unravels, this form reveals itself to be an expression of the predictable - what is predicted by the structure - as well as the unpredictable - how things appear within this structure.

These things belong to three different families: music, field recordings and words.

In the latter, for example, we find:

- *The game of words.*

In a museum in Munich, the author and his accomplices, Sandeep Bhagwati and Brunhild Meyer, interview young strangers, enticing them with enigmatic words and riddles (such as "repetition," "the eyes," "fall," "vibrate," etc.)

- *The game of conversations.*

The author talks to a friend, Jacqueline Caux. It's a series of conversations touching on the everyday, work, intimacy and reflection, more in a playful spirit than with the intention of delivering a message. Yet knowing that, when we speak, we always convey some sort of message.

- *The game of autobiographies.*

Something of a common thread throughout the composition, recounting very specific and concrete itineraries. Each autobiography indicates a significant place in the author's life: a street, a metro station, etc.

Because of its highly intricate form, this production displays an obstinate use of time. The fact that incompatible elements are expected to meet requires either to reassemble them in a completely new piece of music, or to create incongruous associations of discourses. This is why I progressively came to see this work composed with words, music, noises and images as a painting; also because I worked with time more as a surface than as a sequence, especially at the beginning – before I surrendered to my passion for the irrational. Also, when I used to say, in the 1970s, that I was making sound snapshots and that I was a hyperrealist, I now notice that I tend rather to work with sounds as if I was painting, distancing myself from reality.

JC: Was the research conducted on Hörspiele in Germany a sort of equivalent to what happened in France after the war with Jean Tardieu's Club d'Essai¹⁴?

LF: That came earlier. In France, the Club d'Essai had indeed broadcast fairly experimental dramas with sound effects. In Germany, we were given the most absolute freedom. This is where Cage and Kagel made their great radiophonic pieces, where the poet [Ferdinand] Kriwet pursued advanced experiments. People very distant from musical composition were invited there to experiment. We didn't see that anywhere else. We were invited in residence for a month if necessary. We had access to the studios and had everything at our disposal to produce a genuine radiophonic work.

¹⁴ The Studio d'Essai was renamed Club d'Essai when poet and playwright Jean Tardieu took over from Pierre Schaeffer in 1945 [translator].

JC: Was there an audience for it?

LF: Yes, German people are crazy about Hörspiele; they are reviewed in the newspapers. You couldn't imagine the *Nouvel Observateur* magazine featuring an article on an experimental radio program ... It's really a very different attitude.

JC: How would you define the idea of "soundscape"?

LF: I've always felt awkward about the term "soundscape" because of its association with an ecological stance. Murray Schafer or Pierre Marietan conducted soundscape experiments where there was the least amount of noise pollution, outside of any reality with regard to the modern soundscape, which nobody can imagine without the sounds of highways, planes, railways, etc. You can't romanticize the silence of yore, which was certainly invaded by dreadful noises: carts, horses, etc. Murray Schafer came to the Service de la Recherche, he knew what we were doing. He did his academic research without ever mentioning us, then said he came up with the concept of "soundscape." Occasionally, I have heard him say interesting things about sound recording – incidentally, he doesn't record it himself, he's got assistants for that. He works at a university, doing research on acoustic ecology ...

As for me, what I'm trying to render audible is the city or the country with the tractors, the traffic, the background noise of phone lines, the people on the sidewalk, the music coming out of the open doors of shops – everything that makes up our urban or rural environment.

JC: When you were making *Presque Rien n°1* ou *Le lever du jour au bord de la mer*, did you consider yourself part of this "soundscape" approach?

LF: If I removed the motorboats in *Le lever du jour*, there wouldn't be much left! ... (laugh) But the beautiful thing about the motorboats is that their echoes reveal the shape of the mountains around the harbor. What is interesting – I wouldn't say beautiful – but what is interesting about a car passing in the street is the way it describes the houses. If we pay enough attention, it wouldn't sound the same in rue Mouffetard or on

Boulevard Haussmann; it is also a means of describing the architecture, where people live, what they can hear from their windows. That's what my soundscapes are about.

JC: I would have thought you wouldn't have a problem with being named one of the initiators of the "soundscape."

LF: Obviously, I was upset when people coined it in this very restrictive sense, because I had been doing it for ten years and I didn't want it being made sterile through convention. Beyond that, whether or not my name appears in that history doesn't concern me. Personally, I call them everyday sounds.

JC: What was your relationship with New Wave cinema and their use of the *caméra-stylo*, or the *camera-vérité*?

LF: At the time of the New Wave, starting in 1960, it was particularly the cinema vérité around [Richard] Leacock which was associated with the inventions of the portable camera that made it possible to do away with the stand, and of the portable, wireless Nagra tape recorder. These filmmakers were practicing the *caméra-stylo* in a theoretically driven way. I was involved in this movement at the Service de la Recherche. When I began making films with Gérard Patris, we manifested an interest for these new practices. It was obvious that hand-held cameras gave the shots more freedom. People like [Mario] Ruspoli and Leacock were doing theoretical demonstrations on the ways of using the camera and how to synchronize it with the Nagra. A bit like Dogma, they were against the use of tripods, artificial lights and non-synchronous sounds. It was a different attitude compared to the New Wave. New Wave directors were trying to establish a mode of production that was different from the Hollywood model. They wanted to prove that cinema could be made on a smaller budget. They had no idea what was going on in visual arts and music. We knew them, admired them, loved and defended them, but we had no contact with them. It was another world, they didn't know about experimental music and, for the most part, they didn't make much use of it.

The initial idea went something like this:

A composer who has led an unusual life, full of instrumental and electroacoustic compositions, specialist of the wandering microphone, is planning a random trip across the American Southwest. This journey took place in September 1998.

Day after day, the road unfurls, recordings are dated, places are documented to the sound of the (rental) car, day after day, sound encounters are made, people are met, life is weaved.

Having listened to it after getting back, the outline of a three-part organization takes shape, each built in the same way but with different events.

What more to say about it?

It may be that poetry plays with reality like an accordion, and that in certain cases, especially mine and progressively throughout my life, composition is a perverse game with the truth.

What else to say ... that its subtitle could be “sound poem from nature.”

What else?

FAR-WEST NEWS N° 1

Transit in Houston. The time is about the same as when we left from Paris. It's pouring down. Another plane picks us up and drops us in Albuquerque. It's late in the afternoon. The weather's fine.

The rental company confirms that the car is waiting for us. “Take the LeSabre,” the manager adds. Having little experience of automatic cars, I can't find the reverse gear or the brake, and take a wrong turn in the parking lot. The manager tells me off gently. “I can't open the trunk either,” I say. We load our luggage. “Have a

safe trip! For Santa Fe, turn right at the bottom then it's straight on," he says with a hint of anxiety.

Sunset over the desert. Tomorrow I start my recordings, I feel like I haven't slept in a while.

In the Indian village of Taos Pueblo, I hear for the first time through my earphones the sound of my footsteps on this strange land. Everywhere and throughout the journey, the same dry and crunchy sound. Not European.

And then the roads. The silence of the road.

At noon, we have to eat something, but most of the time it's hard to find out where to go. It's usually at a crossroads, in a sort of shack concealed behind gas stations. It's full of people coming from nowhere, since we haven't spotted a single house for hours. As a friend had warned us: "When you see a gas station, fill your tank!" I also learned that as soon as we saw something resembling a restaurant, we'd better eat! Tres Piedras, Teek Nos Pos, so many memorable sandwiches.

I wanted to see Monument Valley. Now here we are. So many movies, so many cowboy commercials, so many pictures seen again and again. We know it like the back of our hand. And yet it's completely different!

And then, the sound of my footsteps.

FAR-WEST NEWS N° 2

I wanted to see Page and not die. Page is not Venice, despite it being on the edge of the water. I didn't think Page was a city. Things don't always turn out as they should.

For example, our boat makes such a low-pitched noise that my digital recorder loses all its bits, the water doesn't echo sounds as on a Swiss lake, I rerecord on top of a used tape, I'm furious and call

myself an amateur. I redo the lost recording and it's much better. I feel like a professional.

We often take the wrong road, which means we can't find certain landscapes. I have to remind myself that I'm here for the sounds and that it's not necessarily about the most beautiful sights. Sometimes it doesn't even coincide at all.

We visit some friends with the microphone in hand. They're always surprised, and so am I. Though it's been years, I like it. I mean the mike, it's still the same one.

In Monument Valley, I forgot my overshirt in our Navajo friend's Jeep, we were too far when I noticed it. Brunhild lost her cap down in Mexican Hat, Utah, and I forgot my camera at Phillip Bimstein's, the mayor of Springdale, but I went back to get it in the middle of the night. They were both there and we had a last drink.

In the Grand Canyon, sitting on a rock with the mike on the floor, I'm enjoying a sandwich and a coke. I'm not worried about what will come out of it musically. It's a great moment!

FAR-WEST NEWS N° 3

Prescott looks a bit like a European city. There are streets, we can walk around. There's even people wandering, some of them with piercings. Here we can say that we have a better rapport with the population than in Paris, where even the slightest glance is considered a threat. All around is the desert, without a speck of sea on the horizon.

Monica appears more and more on TV, she also looks fatter and fatter. I think if I were her, I wouldn't walk around in shorts. As it happens, the next day she's wearing shorts. Clinton looks tired. It seems strikes are on the way.

I'm getting used to the desert - one car every hour, it's OK.

I'm exaggerating.

When we arrive in Los Angeles, I'm terrified. Cars are everywhere. We stop at the beginning of Wilshire Boulevard. The hotel is on the other end, but at least we're on the right road. An hour later and we're still driving.

A few characteristic signs tell us we've reached civilization: there are buildings, actual houses and not trailers, even people in suits, elegant women with makeup on, a piano-bar playing postmodern style. Some friends take us out for a taste of Los Angeles's nightlife.

I continue my recordings.

I will go on to the end of the journey.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY N° 15 (1994)

Luc Ferrari was born in Paris in 1929.

What about this first sentence; first, 1929.

He wrote numerous autobiographies with falsified dates. Writing drives him mad, he should never be asked to do it. And because he didn't dare make himself out to be younger, he made himself older. So there are a lot of fake dates going around, he thought it was funny at the time. Not so much now!

Next, born in Paris. He asks himself: to be born in Paris!

He wonders what if he'd been born in his father's small village in Corsica.

He wonders what if he'd been born in Marseille, where his mother grew up.

He wonders what if he'd been born in Italy, the land of his ancestors.

He has no answer to all these questions.

INSTALLATIONS

Installation art provides a way of playing with another time and another space. A time and space offered to the visitors who are free to stay or leave, to wander around as they please. The time of the installation also affords possibilities for more musical superimpositions and random sound overlaps. Moreover, it makes encounters with other media possible, in particular with images: pictures, films, videos, etc. It gives freedom to the audience as much as the composer.

JC: What was your very first installation?

LF: The first one was *Music Promenade* in 1969; back then, it wasn't called installation but environment.

The idea, as with *Hétérozygote*, was to work with realistic elements and abstract sounds. It was a composition for four tape recorders. The tapes were of different lengths, between 22 and 24 minutes. At the end, the tape recorders rewind themselves and generate chance encounters, random cycles. It was a purely sonic discourse that lasted for an afternoon or an evening.

I also did other installations in museums that were social critiques. One of them was called *Mais où donc est-on?*, and another *Labyrinthe de violence*. They were multimedia works. I had taken pictures of political speeches on TV. The effect of freeze-framing politicians on TV is comical and dramatic. It was at the time of the Vietnam war, with all this violence and barbarity. They were protest installations.

Together with other composers, I also did something fun at the

Espace Cardin titled *Et synti soit-il!* There was no one on stage, just an installation of synthesizers. Backstage, we suddenly plugged the equipment in and it started playing by itself. It was very naïve, but it was an “event.”

This urge progressively gave way to music theater. It came back to me recently, in the 1990s, when I worked on the installation I call *Cycle des souvenirs*.

MUSIC PROMENADE (1964–1969)

For magnetic tapes

The making of Music Promenade stretched over two periods:

- *a recording period from 1964 to 1967*
- *an editing period from 1967 to 1969*

- *First of all, Promenade is the result of years of traveling during which I recorded anything that grabbed my attention.*

- *Secondly, at the editing stage, it is a trip back in time through those elements that have been left more or less realistic or rendered more or less abstract. For example, a conversation recorded there, and to which the loss of any human face has given a heightened dramatic acoustic meaning.*

- *It is also made of punctuations (the only musical elements) borrowed from my own previous works or from other pieces encountered, but used not so much for their musical value as for their interruptive function.*

- *Promenade is the outcome. It is meant to be played continuously on 4 independent tape players, so that no exact repetition occurs for as*

long as it lasts. It is intended for an environment in which people are constantly coming and going, it's the audience that walks around it.

- Finally, Promenade strolls through the specialized or traditional studios of Radio Stockholm, Hamburg, Paris, Amiens, Baden-Baden.

JC: Let's be specific. What made you want to create these installations? Where did this desire to make, once again, more than just music come from?

LF: Installations allowed people to come and go as they please, to create their own mix by wandering across the space, it offers a way out of the concert's limited duration.

As I said, *Music Promenade* was purely acoustic. All the installations I have done since also had some visual dimension.

JC: This was visual material you had produced?

LF: Photographer Jean-Serge Breton did the pictures for *Allô, ici la terre*. It wasn't really an installation, more of a multimedia concert: it had 40 slide projectors with 3000 pictures, an orchestra as well as electronic sounds.

The latest installation I produced is *Cycle des souvenirs* (1995–2000), which is part of the series *Exploitation des Concepts*. I spent a lot of time traveling and recording: these recordings represent moments of my life. I made up little scenes based on these situations, for example a trivial event in Amsterdam, when a streetcar passes in front of me, or a mix of church ceremony and fireworks in Portugal, because they are everywhere, so I captured them as a souvenir. The tape is burned onto CDs. They spin through moments of reality and silences. Encounters are generated by chance, just like the encounters in my head between images of the Gare de l'Est, the amphitheater of Lutèce, Ventimiglia ... all these precious but inconsequential memories. I wanted to add images to them. Since everything spins, I designed spinning plans, circular panoramas,

with the idea that everything should always spin in the same direction, thus producing a sort of moving disturbance. The composition is extremely rigorous. I say that because sometimes it looks as if I don't care about the form. Since it has neither beginning nor end, the form must be systematic. I've explained it in the *Untidy diary*.

UNTIDY DIARY OF A WORK IN PROGRESS (SEPTEMBER 21, 1995)

Cycle des souvenirs

April 8, 1995

The sound installation will endeavor to create a curved surface engulfing the viewers-listeners. But depending on their place, the sounds will come to them from different distances. That is to say, their experience of space, proximity or distance will vary by switching place.

One can thus imagine six independent sources that could be perceived as isolated, but can also combine to generate a total environment. These six sources will play independently of each other. Instead of being synchronized, they will randomly overlap in time, in the same way that everyday noises overlap as they reach our ear, or more deeply into our intimacy, the secret recesses of our head.

Six sources, that means six CDs of about 70 minutes, each disc will be of a different length so that the superimposition of the six CDs will constantly change.

Each CD will be similarly composed of the following 4 elements:

- 1) speech elements (voice, words, sentence fragments)*
- 2) realistic elements (more or less recognizable ambient noises)*
- 3) silence (long gaps of different lengths)*

4) harmonic sound elements (layers of “abstract” or instrumental sounds)

Therefore, these elements will be randomly superimposed in time to produce a shifting surface in space, in a journey that would displace the body’s harmonic lines.

June 8, 1995

On April 1, I started devising a working method. I thus imagined this installation to be made of texts dispersed in time and space.

Writing the texts didn’t seem to be a problem, but I wanted the idea of writing itself to obey the rules of chance.

So I had to come up with rules of play.

I said to myself: well, I’m going to work with, say, 50 words. Here is what I wrote on April 1.

April 1, 1995

50 words.

Randomly selected from a spelling dictionary, according to an indescribable method. I decide to choose another 50 words using the “Petit Robert” dictionary. With one’s eyes closed, one can indeed point at something other than the word itself: definition, synonyms, antonyms, etc. I try.

This second list is completely different from the first one.

June 8, 1995

The “ashtray” has become a working tool for me, and I have to explain myself for those who wouldn’t know. I sometimes have snatches of ideas, like body parts glimpsed in the slit of a cloud, and I don’t know what to do with them, how to fully unveil them. Lay bare my ideas. In a nutshell, I would say that, in the many traps I have set up for myself, I recently came to use the ashtray.

By putting numbered bits of paper in an ashtray, anything could come out. They can also represent words.

April 1, 1995

My idea is as follows. I randomly pick out words and bits of sentence. My project is to make up a text by connecting them in the same order as they appear (I now have two ashtrays: one whose shape is, shall we say, abstract; the other with a woman laid down on the edge of a basin that forms a large hollowed-out curve under her belly. This is where I seek my chance).

April 2

Yesterday, I drew 101 words or elements from the two ashtrays.

April 26

I have done work in the meantime!

I have been working on the overall composition of the sound matter. The principle is to have a certain number of harmonic and tonal threads spread out across the whole sound installation. Here I shall give some possibly tedious but at least accurate explanations. I have six sound source locations, each triggered by a CD, which corresponds to more or less 70 minutes per channel. Seeing as I, like a number of composers, have 12 tones at my disposal, I foolishly thought that I could distribute these 12 tones in space.

I tried to see whether picking tones from the ashtray would produce any result. So I drew 3 times 12 tones and managed to get repetitions of keys through chance, because each one I had picked went back in the ashtray, thereby increasing its probability to be picked out again. I then started to simulate the length.

How long should a tonal thread last? How long should a field recording last? How much voice and silence within the total length of 70 minutes?

Composing this length.

What can I make of it?

For example: 2 two-minute speeches, 5 four-minute field recordings and 6 four-minute harmonic sounds; that makes 13 elements for a total of 48 minutes of sounds, which leaves 22 minutes of silence. If I insert a silence in between each sound element, I need 12 silences, each lasting 1'50".

Hence I noticed that the rests were too short, that the distribution of this organization across the six points in space was likely to create an overly confused sound matter, and that it needed to be further refined, if possible!

So I took another 70 minutes and recomposed them as follows:

I thought: let's stick to 2 two-minute speeches, but cut it down to 5 four-minute field recordings and 4 harmonic sounds now extended to five minutes. Which makes 40 minutes of sound and so 30 minutes of silence. But as there are now fewer elements - only 10 - if we string a silence in between, that makes 9 silences of 3'20" each, which is much more airy.

April 27

Let's return to the tonalities.

According to this new method, I have 4 harmonic threads per CD. Now, the question is how to organize the tonalities in a completely irrational way. I went back to my ashtray and drew 6 groups of 4. I came up with the following result, which can be broken down thusly: we should note first that some keys were not picked, such as F and A-flat, which means there are only 10 left.

On the other hand, some were picked more often than others: E-flat and G-flat 4 times; D and D-flat 3 times; and B, B-flat and C only once. That's where we are!

April 28

I need 10 words per CD, which means approximately one word every 7 minutes.

May 1

After many calculations, and without going into detail, I have decided that there will be 4 texts, each in three languages. We still have to calculate how texts and languages can be combined in space.

June 8

When, on April 1, I described my early attempts with 50 words, I was only getting the hang of it. I have now acquired an extremely virtuoso practice of the dictionary. I grab the "Petit Robert," close my eyes, open at random and put my finger impulsively on the space of the page.

I open my eyes, raise my finger and see the fragment of a word's explanation, which through my eyelids appears as a poetic object. To me, these fragments are pearls of chance; all I have to do is string them into poems.

May 1

On the one hand, I have the words: ten words per CD, which makes 60 words (I should say sentence fragments).

I decided arbitrarily - I can't say authoritatively, since I'm alone and I choose for myself - to use the same words to write the texts. So that the words are dispersed on the one side and gathered on the other. All the texts are delivered by women's voices.

The delivery will be very meticulous: faltering, but in an arbitrary way, gently time-worn, hurried and distended.

May 22

The field recordings will either be very or relatively recognizable, and even almost abstract. But all of them will have to do with memory, intimacy, my subjective worldview and my memories.

Each 4-minute element tells a little story and evokes a dramaturgy in sound. It is a composition, that is, a way of digging through sounds recorded a long time ago that I had never used and forgotten about, and that I now recompose. It is also about recording things from my present. It is about combining times. It is a journey.

I make lists. For example, elements: sea, wind, volcano. Frictions: fabrics, skin, the body. Circulation: the city, train, boats, steps. Landscapes: atmospheres of nature, noises of the night. Interior: domestic sounds, make-up, distant music.

June 16

According to my plan, I need to compose 24 “field recordings.” This is where I am now. I realize that reality is suggested more than represented. But the sound is made that way, to convey a fantastical image that evidently belongs to some reality, but whose cause we forgot.

Thus we find a collection of memories.

Here is the rue Rollin where I was born; here is the amphitheater of Lutèce where my parents would bring me to “play” when I was little; and the rue Mouffetard where I used to go to the market for a long time; and here is the house, with our noises, our door, our stairs, our cutlery. My interior; here is the make-up, I was always fascinated by these little sounds I hear from a distance. Sitting in a tram stop shelter in Amsterdam, I record everything that is happening in front of me, without moving. Here is the sea in Portugal during the Carnation Revolution, the fireworks and the mass – an intense activity there. Here is Ventimiglia, the old town balancing on the border. Here is also Misterioso, the theme by Thelonius Monk

I reworked as though in some very hazy dream; of course, my working environments and the objects surrounding me; and finally, the female body which was always the subject of my attention.

September 24

After finishing the work, I notice that, for the main part, it deals with memory, immobility and movement. Indeed, if we take the so-called realistic sounds – which should really be called narrative – we see that they belong to my personal memory, let us say my intimacy, such as, for example, all these noises I identified to be mine. But I'm the only one who knows it.

JC: Tuchan is another of these audiovisual pieces. How did you find out about this village before making its portrait?

LF: It was in 1976, it was very hot that year. I was coming back from all my trips abroad: reportages in Algeria, in Germany, etc. I had worked in foreign languages a lot and I wanted to go back to French. Brunhild and I came up with a project to head for a French village. We were in journalist Pierre Péan's garden. He was watering his lawn. I had spread out a large map of France, and to choose a location I asked him to sprinkle a drop of water. With a small, deft gesture, he made only a single drop fall onto Montgaillard in the Corbières region. We left with the tape recorder and camera. Montgaillard consisted of three houses, a Cathar tower and a bunch of old people around the fountain; so we went down to the next village, which was Tuchan. I did the recording and Brunhild took pictures. It turned into an 1½ hour-long portrait, an audiovisual piece with 160 pictures. The following year, we presented it in the village of Tuchan and at the Musée d'Art Moderne.

CONCEPTS

Luc Ferrari is reluctant to dwell on his own compositional concepts. He finds it inelegant, even obscene. Perhaps he considers that this is not for him to talk about ... And yet I encouraged him to do it so as to shine a light on those concepts that have been most recurrent and fruitful throughout his shifting career and heterogeneous work.

1. ANECDOTAL (ANECDOTAL MUSIC)

JC: What made you want to work on the anecdotal and give this name to the resulting music?

LF: Abstraction-based instrumental music makes it hard to set up a narrative. If there is one, it's concealed, based on form and structure. As I said before, when I started working with electronic sounds around 1958, I realized that I had the possibility of initiating a dialogue between the abstract and the concrete. With the early experiments in musique concrète, we would take sounds from the studios, sounds from various instruments – piano, bits of metal, etc. – and treat them as if they were notes. As soon as I walked out of the studio with the microphone and the tape recorder, the sounds I would capture came from another reality. That led to the unexpected discovery of the social. I listened to all these elements that I had collected outdoors, and I thought these sounds developed a discourse that had something to do with narration. There was no name for this kind of music in the early 1960s, so I said: “that’s anecdotal music.”

JC: This term didn't exist previously? How was it perceived?

LF: I used the term defiantly, not as a way of labeling myself. Then it caught on in Germany and the Scandinavian countries I was visiting frequently at the time. That's how this label encouraged people to start using recognizable noises. Later, it would be called "soundscapes."

JC: It's almost as if this act of naming had spawned a whole movement.

LF: I believe I was the first composer to use these "found objects" in the music world. Obviously, people in film had been doing it for a while. Literature also used this sort of images: in the *Nouveau Roman*, in Joyce's interior monologues, etc. I was making sound films that you could only see in the mind's eye. As I said, my philosophy consisted in using everyday sounds. I wasn't interested in the spectacular, but rather in what was happening all the time.

JC: Is it because of your taste for the mundane?

LF: I didn't think of it as being mundane. To bring something from the everyday into the music world, to use specific, evocative moments, to shatter the confines of abstraction – that was extravagant.

JC: So what fascinated you was the confrontation between realistic sounds and abstract forms.

LF: I was treading both grounds at once, moving from one world to the other. They weren't collages so much as paintings. Some sounds were made from abstraction, others from reality.

Starting with *Hétérozygote* in 1963, I thought that the sounds I had recorded were like images, not only for me who could remember them, but also for the innocent listener. They conveyed often contradictory images that catapulted themselves inside the mind more freely than if they could actually be seen. I enjoy playing with sound images in the same way that poets play with words. Certain images can be meaningless and others meaningful; some can be frail and others powerful. Here I had a full spectrum going from abstract to concrete, so I had the possibility of representing images, making them appear or disappear, I could create a

spectacle of absurdity, I could articulate the language of noises. I called it anecdotal music because I wanted to claim the anecdotal in a world dominated by abstraction.

This was both a personal and an original initiative, because it didn't exist before – which doesn't mean much in itself, though it was acknowledged as such by my colleagues' condemnation of it. I could have relied on this identity as you would turn on a switch to set the mechanism in motion: “you know, it's anecdotal music! ...” I probably thought it was inappropriate because, on a philosophical level, I considered that no one ever invents anything, and besides I was inspired by the idea of not getting typecast. Fear to lose my freedom, that's probably what it was!

JC: Were you aware of the work of the Nouveaux Réalistes¹⁵?

LF: I felt my work was close to what they were doing. Curiously, this approach set me outside of the music world and closer to visual artists. I had more in common with the Nouveaux Réalistes or the Hyperrealists than with any musical trend. We were treading the same ground without knowing it. It was incongruous to claim the anecdotal, to claim that sounds could be recognizable as natural noises. From this moment on, as I already said, I walked away from the Service de la Recherche, even though everything was happening there, including concrete poetry ...

2. AUTOBIOGRAPHY

JC: Is it your approach toward everyday sounds that prompted you to incorporate autobiographical elements in your compositions?

LF: I think that the use of autobiography comes rather from the fact that I have always kept what could be called a diary. I would write outlandish stories in my schoolbooks, something I couldn't do with music.

15 Emerging in 1960 as a French counterpart to Pop Art, the Nouveau Réalisme movement was dedicated to “new ways of perceiving the real” and included artists such as Yves Klein, Arman and Jean Tinguely [translator].

When suffering from tuberculosis in my youth, I was inactive, so I did write and read a lot of cutting-edge literature: the Surrealists, the Americans, Joyce ... and it fascinated me. I was eager to learn about all the things I didn't know from before the war, because I only reached cultural maturity after the war. When I read about the Surrealists' discourse on automatic writing, I thought: that's for me, and I started doing it. At the time, I could spend days writing music and infernal tales. I was writing in a completely irrational way so as to always stay as extravagant as possible. Having no artistic pretensions, I felt completely free. It was amazing to indulge in writing.

Then I started playing concerts, which required writing autobiographical notices. I started writing transgressive statements spontaneously. I would talk in the first person, which you weren't supposed to do; I would falsify dates and places; I would invent a life for myself in which, under the cover of casualness and irreverence, I would express my thoughts on society. That's how I came to write inaccurate autobiographies.

JC: When I mentioned autobiography, I was also thinking about your own acoustic presence, your voice, which turns up in your pieces from time to time.

LF: Given that I was the composer-sound recordist, I appeared as a microphone, since I was going out in the social world and asking people questions. I started letting my voice come through a bit more when it was necessary to understand the anecdote or the narrative, like a novelist writing in the first person. People know that I'm the one handling the machine, but this use is fairly limited, it's like flashes. This is how a presence progressively took shape without being narcissistic, in the same way that Goya's self-portraits are not narcissistic.

JC: Yes, but self-portraits are far less common in music.

LF: The music world is a complex one, where emptiness is often mistaken for fullness. It's not an attack ... It's a puritanical world and I enjoyed breaking its taboos.

EXPLOITATION OF THE CONCEPT OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY (OCTOBER 20, 1999)

At first unconsciously, then more and more consciously, I realized that I was working in the autobiographical realm.

It's only in retrospect that I can talk about the moment when I started exploring this concept.

Indeed, what was the situation at the time?

At the Groupe de Musique Concrète, around Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry, the work took place within the studios of the Radio, the institution: a technician would set up the microphones to record instrumentalists or objects of all kinds. The sounds were then transformed, edited and reproduced using the latest technology. I produced my first Études in 1958.

In the Cologne studios, around Herbert Eimert – also part of the Radio institution – the composers, together with their assistants, would busy themselves over tone generators, before cutting, editing, manipulating and mixing. Stockhausen was then working on his first electronic works.

A little later, at the Phonology studios in Milan – another institution – Luciano Berio recorded Cathy Berberian's extreme singing exercises, which he then manipulated and mixed to compose Thema (Omaggio a Joyce).

At this particular moment in time, between 1955 and 1962, when the effervescence of musical creation appropriated and experimented with technology, misusing machines to create and compose with other sounds, I naturally felt that recording opened the door to other domains outside of the studio.

At this time I started using the portable tape recorder to collect sounds in society and use them in my compositions.

Looking back on it now, I think it was a different approach compared to what used to be and still is called the soundscape.

But there was also a more complex, more specific and perhaps more original idea with regard to musical composition which had to do with this concept of autobiography.

I was therefore going out of the studio with portable equipment that belonged to me, i.e. my own microphones and tape recorder. It was my equipment and it was me.

Whether one agrees or not, I was there in an original situation of presence and instrumental recognition that turned me, without realizing it, into a craftsman of autobiographies. I was on location, holding my microphone, turning the tape recorder on when I judged it to be right. I was collecting passing sounds whenever I decided. It was my choice, my snapshot of life recorded on my equipment.

In other words, in case the last sentence wasn't clear, this gesture was compositional in terms of the recognition of sound, however uncertain; recognizing the found object as the first stage of an emotional attitude which inevitably involved the attending composer as an actor in real-time, and so as an autobiographer.

I became aware of the autobiographical dimension of my electro-acoustic work when I started working for the Hörspiel (radio art) departments of German radio stations in 1970. So much so that my first Hörspiel was entitled Portrait-Spiel (Portrait-Game), and that all those that came after attested to the presence of the composer as a non-critical and openly subjective observer of the fabric of everyday life.

3. CONCEPT

LF: To me, the concept is an entry into madness, a journey deep into the irrational. Originally, the concept has nothing to do with aesthetics, technique, calculation, etc. It can be straightforward or impenetrable, but in any case it stands outside of any reality. Then, based on the concept,

I can decide whether or not to devise the means, the working methods and the various scales of thinking involved in what I refer to as the calculations. There is a difference between a conceptual artist who will put his madness on display without mediation and someone whose work is based on a degree of representation of the concept. It's striking, for example, with La Monte Young, who starts with a very obscure and apparently irrational concept, then progressively brings various degrees of rationality, calculation, etc.

If we are talking about the difference between concept and minimalism, I would say that, in minimalism, it is the rarity of elements that provides an aesthetic. That is also what *Presque Rien* is about: an aesthetic of the rarity of elements. The concept of *Presque Rien* is the observation of an acoustic or social phenomenon that can only be apprehended by means of recording. Later on, technique comes into play: where you stand, where you place the microphone, what decisions you make in order to maintain the minimum amount of elements.

JC: To me concepts evoke something circumscribed and "hard."

LF: It's very difficult to create when you start with something that is rational. Some people might start off with a strong idea then, little by little, their irrational side demolishes the hard side, but it's less common. Concepts interest me because they are irrational and unbridled. Then, there's a whole reflection to put in place.

4. EXPLOITATION OF THE CONCEPTS

JC: Can you tell me about this new concept, this idea of "exploitation of the concepts" which you're working on at the moment? How do you put it into practice?

LF: I've always put a lot of energy into the creative process, but as soon as the piece is finished, I forget about it. That's a constant need to do with my nature, driving me to distance myself radically from what

I've done before. However, I've been asked recently to tour in the US and give overviews of my work. So I had to revisit my past, and I realized that I could look back on it as though it didn't belong to me. I was able to judge some works as bad or excellent without any sense of shame. I realized that I was able to maintain a subjective objectivity. It was me without being me, a kind of active detachment.

Then I traveled to the American Southwest where I recorded a reportage about "a composer who travels for hundreds of miles." In a comment, I said: "I'm going to reclaim my ideas and mix them up, I'm going to bring them back to life in a different form." I applied this to all my ideas, whether about serialism, chance, found objects, tautology, minimalism, narration, radio art, etc. Strangely, the idea came to me while visiting Monument Valley and the Grand Canyon ... As I said before, my ideas thrive on contradictory shocks in order to explode or condense.

Then I went back to my studio, and one morning, water had leaked from the ceiling on some of my tapes from the 1970s – a substantial work I had produced in the studios of the Cologne radio station. After drying the tapes, I made copies onto CD and manipulated them because it was too boring to copy without doing anything. It was fun to misuse this work done thirty years ago. All this taken together – the overviews, the American Southwest, the flood – led to the discovery of the exploitation of my own concepts!

I started with a piece on tautology which I called *Tautologie et environs*; I've been working on this score for a year. It took so long that I have completed six "Exploitations of the concepts" in the meantime: *Archives génétiquement modifiées*, *Cycle des souvenirs*, *Archives sauvées des eaux* – a title some might find poetic, but it's actually realistic.

JC: What do you like about exploiting your own concepts?

LF: Concepts are relevant to some extent, but I take them with a pinch of salt. And yet it's really me who has been using them, so there's no reason why I should be suspicious of them ...

JC: Why should there be suspicion toward them?

LF: Because I remember well the period of the concept for concept's sake, at a time when we needed it, but I see a lot of people who haven't moved on since. I prefer to demystify concepts by saying: yes, they are interesting, but let us keep our distance and not become so addicted that we become purist or systematic.

5. CHANCE

JC: How would you define your use of chance, which is very different from John Cage's?

LF: Each composer working around the question of chance does so in a personal and distinctive way. I don't know whether one can speak about a practice of chance in any straightforward sense. Chance is such a loaded concept that it can only ever be talked about in simultaneously meaningful and meaningless ways. What interested me was to apply it to the juxtaposition between the rational and the irrational. If I open the door to listen to the city, as in *Porte ouverte sur la ville*, what I hear is a magma composed of rational and irrational occurrences that are cyclical and whose outcome is indeterminate. If I take John Cage's late scores, I find that one sheet is about random durations, another about randomly selected pitches, and we never know which are going to be linked together. That said, he had rigorously codified the unfolding of time, which isn't nothing. In the 1950s–60s, when he was using graphs with transparent sheets that bore no relation whatsoever to musical notation, but allowed the composer's irrationality to express itself, it was also a way of working with chance. How do you go about framing the irrational when it always retains a licentious side, because, as I understand it, it has to do with intimacy, sensuality, sexuality, the body, the emotions?

JC: Do you fully equate chance with tautology?

LF: Completely. This powerful word of tautology simply came as a result of observing and activating arbitrary cycles, and that is completely different from what John Cage was doing.

However, *Jeu du hasard et de la détermination* (1999) contains only a few cycles. I asked the computer to arrange the sounds at random, but there's also a degree of determination involved, because what came out of it was a score in which everything is subsequently written. I place the sounds as indicated by the software, then these chance encounters inspire other ideas. Being free, I reserve the right to reshuffle the data with an extreme determination.

6. HETEROGENEOUS

LF: I can't identify with any term associated with a movement, only with a term that doesn't belong to the history of music. I could label myself as "heterogeneous," but the term's individuality renders it ineffective. I would feel a greater sense of fellowship with a painter like Gerhard Richter who also follows several heterogeneous paths. Also, this notion of heterogeneity is too dubious to be taken into consideration.

JC: A movement is primarily an aesthetic that outlines the contours of a practice. Does heterogeneity amount to a philosophical attitude?

LF: What I wanted above all was to never do the same thing twice, including in different domains. It's a thirst for curiosity that drives me to say: I have learned something, but now I don't want to use it anymore, I want to create a domain of experience that will always remain new.

JC: Is this desire to be heterogeneous anything more than an attempt to avoid falling into a routine? Is there something else beyond curiosity?

LF: One would have to go back to an earlier period in my life to recapture the ideas that informed this choice. But each time you start a new work, you take part in an adventure that generates new processes, that's what's fascinating.

SUITE HÉTÉROCLITE POUR PIANO (1955)

I was on a boat sailing to "America."

A cargo ship because that was the cheapest option.

And I had decided to go there to meet Edgar Varèse.

It was winter, life was governed by the rhythm of storms, the journey would take something like three weeks by way of Cuba and Florida.

I was composing short pieces for piano, letting the weather guide me.

Some were quiet, some were rough, others were balanced.

This is how, in the middle of the ocean, I first became aware of a near-conscious relationship between an outside reality in motion and an inner turmoil.

December 15, 1995

JC: Is experimenting with new ideas what matters most to you?

LF: When I started working, the composers that interested me brought fresh ideas with each composition: in terms of style, aesthetics and deep thought. For example, every composition by John Cage I was listening to revealed a different attitude toward sound.

I'm very interested in confrontations with society, in listening to everything that surrounds us. I'm very interested in everything that touches on the body: sensuality, sexuality, the feeling of love, etc. What are all these things that shake us up internally and modulate the spectacle of life? I thought it was essential to confront artistic creation with these elements that had been overlooked during the (otherwise entirely justified) period of abstraction. I've always thought the point of creation lies in the meeting of ideas that are not necessarily related, because these contradictions bring about difficulties through which you have to find your way. The clash between fragility and stability, between truth and lies, feeds the imagination, and the experience of form remains a constant preoccupation. You couldn't say that the Nouveaux Réalistes, for example, eschewed form ...

SYMPHONIE DÉCHIRÉE (DECEMBER 1994 – JANUARY 1995)

For 17 amplified instruments and memorized sound

Preface

Symphonie déchirée is a suite of 8 movements and interludes for 17 instruments and memorized sounds.

Each movement varies in its instrumentation and deals with different issues of composition, aesthetic or meaning.

This symphony is heterogeneous or disparate or perverse or mixed, a sort of oscillation between rebellion and voluptuousness, realism and abstraction, impulsive gesture and formalism, electronic and acoustic.

Started in 1994, it underwent several disruptions due to the troubles of personal soul-searching and the passing of time that never repeats itself.

This symphony carries within it a revolt against all kind of racism and nationalism, and broadly stands up against purity in all its manifestations.

Harmonic penetration

Yes, that's it, a slow and peaceful penetration.

The penetration of a central note within which we travel, observing, perceiving its qualities, its details, its surprises. Then, we notice its complexity through contiguity or harmonics, so we also explore other expanses that were not intended in the initial proposition of a single note.

But what does "single" mean?

Isn't it yet another residual idea of purity, or the idea of homogeneity, or that simplicity cannot be complex? Whereas, on the contrary, penetration can only reveal the complexity of things.

And that is exactly what we are looking for, otherwise we would stay at the door, and all the philosophical tales, all the stories, all the works of art would fall apart all at once for failing to find people willing to penetrate them. Of course, sexuality as a whole would have to be called into question again.

This is one way of understanding the title: harmonic penetration. Not to forget the many ambiguities and echoes that its undulations bring about.

Game of objects

The idea here is to signify that silence is as much a kind of character as sound is.

Sound objects play their own roles. They are autonomous, but made to be superimposed in the tautology. They then combine, complete or disturb each other. They also creep into silences, which they use as so many catalysts.

Thus a paradoxical and repetitive form is added to the play of either audible or silent layers, but without necessarily conveying the image of repetition, rather that of a random becoming in which objects are sometimes known and sometimes unknown.

Duality

This piece consists of two overlapping monologues, like two characters talking over each other about different things. I wanted to find out whether two incompatible discourses could reach a mutual understanding, which would demonstrate the originality of musical discourse in contrast with speech.

To be completely honest, I must say that there is only one fleeting moment when the two appear to merge into one, but it is so brief that no one would be aware of it.

Torn speech

If Duality may cause a kind of unease, this piece alludes to feelings, to the emotional. If the sound matter in Duality was deliberately abstract, here the reference to spoken language is evident, if only through the use of recording for collecting words. However insignificant the speech appears to be, that is exactly where it inadvertently becomes most significant by its noise. In other works, I describe this type of process as a search for the “interstices,” the spaces in between words, sounds or gestures that are secretly linked with the intimate.

These “interstices” are more or less used in loops; the loop itself being a machinic cliché as well as a “catalyst.”

Game of timbre

Due to its abstract nature, the piece does not require any particular explanation. It has a well-defined form within a pseudo-repetitive system that unfolds in the pseudo-homogeneity of its timbres, which makes it a game. This may be one of the mellowest or the least twisted pieces in this suite. You have to make the most of it. By this I mean that this movement is part of an alternation of tension and release and is necessary for the dramatic equilibrium of the whole.

Game of reflection

Although it seems abstract, this composition is in fact based on an entirely realistic image. As its title indicates, it is an image of reflections. There are two sequences: one dislocated and chaotic, the other undulatory and morbid-cum-harmonic. The reflections are those of the sun.

The first sequence is about reflections on the water. I noticed that, seen from above, the water's surface reflects two rays on either side of the ripples. As they move, the eye perceives the rays as a random trajectory.

So I put notes, silences, nuances, etc. in different containers and, for each reflection, selected two (short) notes, a length of silence, a nuance and an instrumentation. The length of silence therefore varies for each instrument; the reflections can meet, combine and destroy each other through the combination of impossible nuances. That's for the basic rules. But for me, playing also implies cheating. Whenever necessary, I would take back my freedom.

For the second sequence, this time of underwater reflections, I noticed that the ripples trace moving light waves onto the seabed. They move at the same speed and in the same direction, but differ in length. These intersecting lines compose diamond forms morphing continuously in and out of shape.

So I wrote different diamond-shaped modes and drew an extremely precise plan according to rules I forgot. But it worked. In fact, it's the emotion that is important to me.

The two sequences are separated by a big "splasssshhh."

The bells of Huddersfield

This apparently banal piece would be joyously optimistic if it wasn't for a terribly dramatic and desperate tearing (memorized) sound that progressively disturbs it to the point of drowning out the orchestra.

Tear

This movement marks both the end of this symphony and its initiative, it is somehow split at this point. Indeed, split means divided in two; perhaps in a violent way. If I were to let my feelings take over, I would say that I feel at the same time a great desire to live and anger in the face of barbarity. Rebellion, anger, pleasure, softness: what a bitter balancing act, what a loss of balance to the point of risking a fall into despair.

As for me, in the middle of all this, I am torn.

So how can that be translated into music?

By indulging in fits of great violence and anger at the risk of lacking aesthetic quality, by smashing ideas, by interrupting or exaggerating any emerging development. Then, anger dies down, replaced by expressions of great softness, even sopiness, but which can only turn into grimaces.

*Finally, by leaving this great symphony without an ending ...
And that is really perverse.*

7. HETEROZYGOUS

LF: The word heterozygous appealed to me because it calls upon heterogeneity. In biology, the term describes two different, even contradictory, elements of a similar nature ...

In 1963–64, I had given up musique concrète to enter the world of electro-realism. At the time, the music world had come to acknowledge that contemporary music was a true language. We were then in a position to take the next step and argue for the inclusion of noise within music. So I thought to myself: I'm going to go in search of noises in the streets, the factories, the restaurants, etc.

JC: Did you feel close to John Cage?

LF: I knew him, but I didn't draw any connection with his approach. Mine was less conceptual, and rather more "opportunistic," by which I mean the opportunity of using new tools, such as the Nagra portable tape recorder. It's true that, at the time, the combination of everyday noise and musical sound was unheard of. It was eccentric to move between these worlds, even more so to superimpose them.

JC: That is what had caused scandal with Varèse.

LF: I think that what had caused this scandal was the orchestral composition more than the use of factory noises. Indeed, there had been *Désert*, but more importantly *Ionisation*. Maybe this is where it all started ...

In the 1960s, I incorporated the social within the music world, and that was a novelty. Yet, you cannot compose with ambient sounds without destroying them. For example, the structure of *Hétérozygote* is all the more abstract for the fact that the sounds are realistic, and that contradiction gives the music its explosive character. Each moment can be identified either in terms of absolute realism or absolute abstraction. My intention was to play with the perception of opposites, with time, psychology ...

In order to lay claim to the anecdotal in this world dominated by abstraction, I said: "this is anecdotal music." Laying claim to the anecdotal, to these sounds being recognizable as natural sounds, was incongruous. I would have found it more radical had this strange object that is *Hétérozygote* not been granted the status of a work of art. The same claim would later be reformulated with *Presque Rien n° 1 ou Le lever du soleil au bord de la mer* (1968), but by then time had passed ...

8. FREEDOM

JC: Being cautious to steer clear from what you considered redundant or constraining is not the same as blindly going forward. Where were your choices, not only against but also for, taking you?

LF: Creation gives access to an idea of freedom; however, if it comes with codes equivalent to social or religious laws, that's not very interesting. The idea that this domain should be governed by obligations seems to me to contradict the very act of creating. On the contrary, creation should confront us with a fantastic abyss. That's what always appealed to me: to recognize that from within this abyss something can be done, that there are elements whose capacity is unknown to us but that we can exploit.

JC: When facing this abyss, what can you rely on in order to trace the outlines?

LF: As soon as style, writing practice and aesthetic have been delineated, academicism sets in as a form of power. I've always been offended by academicism. What happens to an adventurer who has given in to academicism? He's no longer an adventurer.

By putting forward at the same time the idea of seriousness and derision, I destroy the idea of system. I don't settle into a system, but into a concept from which I take what I like and reject what is too constraining. If there is constraint, it means the concept is inappropriate. I like to be confronted with a concept that leads me to reinvent it again and again; I find that more engaging than situating myself within a movement.

JC: What do you mean by this "self-boycott"?

LF: I figured out very early on that chapels are rallying signs that allow one to benefit from the backing of institutions, radios, universities, etc. I thought it was wiser to follow uncharted paths like anecdotal music, tautology ...

JC: Was it an unconscious decision, a philosophical attitude or a combination of both?

LF: Probably a combination of both. After having directed organizations, I left them; after being "famous," particularly in Germany, I turned my back on it all ... I wanted to be free, to be serious without taking myself seriously, to challenge the notions of composer, artist, culture, etc. The 1960s movements, culminating in May 68, were also animated by the same desire to break down barriers.

JC: You never talk about the serious side of your work.

LF: Being serious while working in a spirit of derision is a permanent feature in my work. I have always carefully steered away from anything approaching the idea of reason. Derision makes it possible to upset reason: who is right and who is wrong? It's also a question of power ...

I have always been worried about imposing myself as someone with a strong identity. There is something socially perverse about the rejection of dogmatism, because the *maîtres à penser* and critics still very

much hold on to the idea of dogma. But as much as this fragility has drawbacks, I think it also has its qualities.

JC: There are contradictions in your approach. For example, you say: "I'm interested in repetition and I eschew repetition." Or: "I don't want to be in a position of leadership, but I want to seduce."

LF: Certainly, I believe that contradiction is at the heart of it all: the fragility that comes with a certain dedication, a certain temperament ... If I say, "I'm weak and I'm right to be weak," it's saying that I'm somehow right. Isn't there a degree of certainty to be gained from contradiction? There has to be some certainty, since there is also a dynamism and a spontaneity associated with reflection, so that is yet another contradiction. My convictions and weaknesses are eminently debatable, but because of this desire, this exuberance, I live with this sort of external controversy and internal dialectic.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY N° 11 (1979)

... because I quite like the idea of trying to explain the different periods of my life or my work, but not with the gravitas of those who tilt against windmills ... rather with the kind of casual self-reflection that enables one to put up with oneself and eventually touch upon many different things ...

... when talking about my pieces, I used to categorize them by genre. Now, I'd rather speak of periods, even though they blend with each other. But that doesn't matter, it's probably normal, and if I stick to three periods, that's not overdoing it ... So, in order not to muddle them up, I ascribed each with a different color ...

Thus, I called black roughly the first period of my life. This is the period corresponding to a serial, or post-serial, trend (as one wishes), not to be confused with série noire, black here is tainted not with a derogatory connotation but with anarchy ... since for me the use

of series has always been anarchic; Interrupteur aptly represents the end of that period.

Let's say the black period was dedicated to experimentations in compositional techniques, since I was simultaneously experimenting in the fields of musique concrète and electroacoustic music without meaning any harm, or at the very least with formalism in mind in the first place. Because, in the second place, it was more "deformal," in the sense that form, in order to subsist, had to carry its deformation, its excavation, its explosion and its self-negation through contempt. Or rather contempt was a sort of passage that allowed for the form to be desecrated and altered by its association with undisciplined ideas. As in Visage or the Société series, for example ...

End of the black period, without wishing to disavow it ... There were some good stuff in there ... and it readily overlaps with the red period since the black one ends in 1967 and the red one already begins in 1963, which isn't easy. But it's far from easy to explain oneself ...

The so-called red period is about all-out subversion, but it carries its own contestation in the same way that the black one carried its own deconstruction. Therefore, it marks the time of a certain conjunction of the social and the political with musical intentions. But above all it is a time of demystification of the work, the art and the artist, of the cult and the manipulation of power in all its guises; it is also a period during which I observe society, listen to the landscape and inquire about the voices of others. Not to forget derision, driven by the devil of curiosity to mind about things outside of my own domain, much to the exasperation of the music world. For that matter, I completely understand it, and I would be equally exasperated if I were the music world, as I find myself exasperating ...

I was wrong.

But the current period is a blue one (which doesn't mean I'm right), blue like the Mediterranean sea, and I might add miscreant and feminine. So many difficult things to explain.

9. NARRATION

JC: How do you articulate anecdote and narration?

LF: Narration is somewhat broader than anecdote. The anecdotal, which appeared in *Hétérozygote* (1963), is more akin to flashes; it doesn't necessarily tell a story. It is a poem in sound. Narration, on the other hand, really tells a story. I would say that the *Presque Riens* are more narrative than they are anecdotal. It tells the story of the break of day or, in later works, the chronological account of the writing of the piece; it recounts these moments at the start of a new work when, no matter how experienced you are, you find yourself in a state of confusion and fragility. I like to show this trouble in the work in progress. There's a narration here that the listeners don't know about but must sense intuitively, because this discourse resonates with them. In fact, there are two narratives: one relating to a journey across a musical discourse, the other to the genesis of the compositional idea itself. This latter chronology speaks of the moment when the exploration of an idea develops into a real adventure, like an experience, a series of markers. I was making marks along the everyday. This progression of experience in the work built a kind of narrative that I needed and which gave even the most willful abstraction a concrete grounding in social, political or sentimental life. In that way, I could turn the everyday, either realistic or transfigured, into a raw material and use its observation as my working tool.

For example, the concept may be to respect the chronology of sounds collected during a journey and the chronology of the development of compositional ideas. In the process of creating, I had to start from the beginning and, day after day, progress toward the end. I wouldn't say that I didn't have any plan; I even had very elaborate plans. Sometimes I was describing the path to follow in great detail, I was defining the form all the way through. I know of many composers who start with a plan, and go from one place to the next in a non-chronological way, moment by moment, as Stockhausen would say, which resulted in the open forms of the

1960s. Even though I participated in it as well, my nature, my individuality compelled me to pursue an adventure that followed time. In that way, I recognized that, as time went by, I was using my chosen components with increasing dexterity, I was improving in the course of composing this very work. Following this particular process seemed to me to reveal a kind of suspense and resembled the intimacy of the writer's diary. To me, that was also part of the narrative. It was the narrative of the creative process.

I even found it interesting that one might spot some of my early missteps before realizing that they progressively give way to dexterity.

With regard to narration, I discovered how time unfolded and how subjective my feeling of it was. I realized that my work was a manifestation of that subjectivity, and that it came into being in a society within which it could find a place or with which it entered into conflict.

JC: Are you interested in narration as part of the musical discourse?

LF: I find it interesting if it's a sunrise, a trip in the metro or in the desert like in *Far-West News* (1998) ... All these examples relate to electronic music. In instrumental music, I have nothing to communicate but my fragility. Besides, I never found a book I would have liked to adapt. The kind of opera that tells a story based on a libretto, like Berg did with *Lulu*, or Stravinsky with *Histoire du Soldat*, that's not my thing.

JC: Yet, in *Journal intime*, there is clearly a narrative running alongside the music.

LF: In *Journal intime*, both instrumental and narrative tracks develop in rigorously chronological order: the entry dates of the diary I was keeping coincide with the dates of composition of the instrumental fragments. By bringing the dates together, it just so happened that the chronology provided a form, but at first I wasn't trying to construct a narrative.

JC: Can narration be seen as a concept?

LF: I got interested in narration in the early 1960s. Suddenly, after living through a moment of extreme radicality, there was this desire to reintroduce things that had to do with the body, the emotions, linear

processes. I could then reinvigorate form. The interchange with reality set in motion a whole new imaginative proliferation together with the application of discursive procedures to musical creation.

If we are talking about narration, then we have no choice but to turn to literature. As in literature, there can be flashbacks, memories and moments drawing simultaneously on several different time sequences. How do we follow the progression? How will the composer introduce other elements into this progression in order to elicit a state of permanent attentiveness?

As for the autobiographical aspect, it is part of the narration: it's like a novel. Novelists write about characters who are not real but who reflect something of themselves. They can speak in the first person and say things that are untrue and no one will criticize them because they are novelists. What I'm saying is that the sound constructions I make are both true and false; they are a perversion of reality. Perversion is an expression of the imagination. It's like looking down from above on a reality that one usually sees from below.

10. ALMOST NOTHING

JC: Do you see the *Presque Riens* as being close to minimalism?

LF: With *Presque Rien n° 1 ou Le lever du jour au bord de la mer* (1968), I feel an affinity with minimalism. The title itself already evokes minimalism. I was being provocative, but that wasn't essential. What was essential was the strict, albeit hidden, compositional intent.

I regard this composition as being narrative rather than anecdotal. It tells something distinctly realistic, since it doesn't contain a single sound that doesn't belong to the event in question. Later, the *Presque Riens* quickly became deceptive, otherwise it would have turned into a gimmick, I would have done a third, then a fiftieth, I would have become a composer of *Presque Riens*, which wasn't my ambition.

JC: How does it relate to minimalism?

LF: In these compositions, there are representations and minimal elements. Up until now, wherever you are in the world, the sun rises every day; it's ordinary and unremarkable. The composer's inventiveness is not made plain, it could be assimilated to a minimal intervention, but in fact it isn't. In minimalism, the elements appear to be simple but there is a great deal of intervention.

JC: With American repetitive composers, the parameters of intervention are not blurred as they are with you.

LF: Certainly. Around 1965 appeared this concept of repetitiveness, presented in the purity of its intentions. It wasn't a working tool as it had been for me; it was a raw concept. I found that interesting, I could partly identify with it, but not entirely.

"Repetitive" means using a short element which builds up a complexity with others through repetition. It's a melodic, rhythmic element that relates to the tonality in a particular way, making it possible to follow the trajectory of the element itself. Step by step, you can distinguish the process and the unfolding of this simple idea whose trajectory across time forces the limits of simplicity to gain a complexity. The process is abstract, without anecdote, set in motion on the basis of a hard and conscious concept devoid of randomness.

What I was doing was completely different, since I was covering my tracks to make the process inaudible; however, on the level of the concept, you could say there is a kinship.

*Almost nothing isn't nothing
I don't know if I was born
first, it's a precaution, you never know
I don't know if I'm already born
who knows
the sun rises and men shrink
the longer I live, the smaller I get
until I'm no bigger than a speck on the horizon
very small
I've never said anything maybe one day I will say
something
and I will say: "I don't know ... Why, do you?"
little by little the day consumes the silence of the night
it's a photograph
if I was ever born, then I took the picture on that day
Almost nothing, I don't know if there is such a thing
Who knows*

JC: Is it possible to equate the use of simple, minimal elements with minimalism?

LF: No, it's not the same, but could *Presque Rien* be part of the history of minimalism? I would say so, I don't see a problem with that. I would even suggest that it might expand the definition itself to an extent. What is captivating is to see connections and concepts rubbing off on each other, and that they represent the richness of creation at a given time. I find it hard to say that I was displaying a minimalist attitude, and yet the minimalists of the time shouldn't refuse that this attitude could be in proximity with their work. A momentary kinship is nothing to be ashamed of.

SOMETHING ABOUT PRESQUE RIEN

Presque Rien illustrates, or rather unknowingly insinuates, a “minimalist” approach that we would hear a lot about in the following years.

Composed between 1967 and 1970, Presque Rien n° 1 ou Le lever du jour au bord de la mer indeed marks the break from classical electro-acoustic practices. Even more so than what, following Hétérozygote, would be called “anecdotal music,” this piece clearly establishes the long take and the fixed sound image – a sort of snapshot that makes a portion of reality audible – as working methods and means of freeing oneself from routine ways of doing.

Presque Rien n° 1 ou Le lever du jour au bord de la mer is made up of recordings collected during the summer of 1968 in the former Yugoslavia, where I had been invited by some friends. There was a whole group of people there. On this island of Korcula, in the little fishing harbor of Vela Luka, our friends came from everywhere, we were surrounded by Slavs, Croats, Bosnian Muslims, Slovenians; everyone got on really well and I can’t recall a single instance of hostility or aggressiveness between them ... which is why I find it so hard to comprehend.

If Presque Rien n° 1 is notable for its radical attitude which consists in creating a “composition” without any musical sound, Presque Rien n° 2 ou Ainsi continue la nuit dans ma tête multiple contains elements that resemble music but immerse the listener in a dream-like world. These elements signal the anecdotal transition from realism to fiction, or the moment when the real nighttime sounds are perceived inside the composer’s head. Searching for almost nothing, I realized that it wasn’t an easy thing to find; you think you might find some here or there, but no.

An “almost nothing” is a homogeneous and natural, non-urban place imbued with specific acoustic qualities (transparency and

depth), where one can hear sufficiently both far and near, at the audible scale – as one would say of the human scale – without any technological support, where nothing dominates so that the variety of sounds are given a voice and the juxtaposition of this small life-world remains almost nothing. (...)

Description of a nightscape that the sound recordist is attempting to capture with his microphones, but the night takes the “hunter” by surprise and seeps into his head. It then turns into a twofold description: the interior landscape modifies the night outside and, by composing it, adds its own reality to it. (...)

But the really strange thing about the story of Presque Rien is that, once I had finished it, I forgot to make it public, as if it were too intimate, as if it concerned only me. This lasted for two years. One day I forced myself to listen to it again and then saw there was no reason for me to lock it up jealously, no reason for this secret night not to see the light of day, and so I should set it free.

Presque Rien avec filles no longer follows the idea of a unity of time or space, instead forming a sort of poetic tale in which the characters are played by sounds and the story is ultimately left unfinished, it is never told but rather unfolds to the senses like a landscape.

“A photographer, or composer, is hiding amidst some paradoxical landscapes where young girls in a kind of luncheon on the grass innocently offer him the spectacle of their intimacy.”

11. TAUTOLOGY¹⁶

JC: Could one say that for you tautology has the status of a concept?

LF: There are several different ways of defining the principle of tautology – as the “useless repetition of an idea in different terms,” or a “logical flaw that consists in presenting as meaningful a proposition in which the predicate says nothing more than the subject,” or “a complex proposition that remains true by virtue of its form alone, whatever the truth value of the propositions it contains.” So, whatever the element of musical language introduced into the cycle of repetition, it becomes true because it is irrefutable, because it has an active effect that is grounded in time. Any element can become true because at any moment it is made true by its time, and by its interaction with another element. I have always represented tautology as being realistic and concrete. It is rooted in the observation of psychology and society. Tautology is based on a cycle that repeats itself and combines with one or several other cycles of different durations. For example, one of the stories I told about tautologies was this: “the butcher on Place de la Contrescarpe is closed on Monday and the metro stops on Place Monge every five minutes”... When I was a young boy and I heard the church bells in the villages we visited, I was fascinated by their cycles. I realized that here you had an organization of time and a repetition of simple, balanced objects that gave rise to an astonishingly complex process of renewal. Another example: one of the first times I caught the plane, and we were over Paris, I saw that all the flashing lights formed an extraordinary temporal pattern. Thanks to modernity and technology, I saw how individuals could form a highly regular set of events. Time itself changed as a result: the time I spent flying over Paris felt very long because I was enthralled. These were probably the memories that led me to this concept related to the notion of cycles, whether

¹⁶ Interview previously published in *Art Press*, issue 252, December 1999 [translation slightly modified].

regular – the universe, nature – or irregular – psychological, social or emotional cycles that allow everyone to come up with their own interpretations. Later, I wanted to see what I could do with this notion by applying it to musical sounds and forms. So I devised a method: I said, since I want to make something, I need rules. These rules could be constituted by an action and a silence forming a cycle that would be repeated and would inevitably come up against other cycles since several different people were involved, and could all interact on this action. Ultimately, the permanent modifications may lead to the initial concept being unidentifiable and indeed, depending on times and feelings, becoming something else.

JC: Do you try to hide the concept?

LF: It is interesting that a concept can exist independently of the resulting works. It is a collection of ideas, whether completely abstract or otherwise. Later, I look for a method that will involve working instruments which may or may not be juxtaposed with the concept in order to produce an action. Since the action links with the concept, which is itself evolving, sometimes this concept may be forgotten in the course of action. The concept is a repository where you go for ideas. It is only of interest in so far as it is transformable, malleable, and makes it possible to fertilize the imagination. It is not the law. I do not fetishize the concept. If it is not recognized, then that's fine by me. Sometimes I've tried to make it so that the tautological principle would be recognizable, but I've never succeeded, either because I was unable to, or because ultimately I wasn't really interested. I don't know. Maybe some pieces stick very closely to the concept and that shows, but it's not always interesting to make it so clear. It is enough for the concept to "color" the piece when you listen to it. If the concept is totally abstract, it won't go on working for long. There has to be a permanent balance between the abstract idea and reality. I'm very much concerned with striking the right balance between abstract and concrete, between fantasy and its relation with reality.

When I set up sound objects, with the timing of their active and inactive phases, I invariably have these impulses that will transform the

concept. Should I resist them because I want to defend the concept, or should I indulge in the pleasures of my imagination? Both possibilities seem to me equally acceptable. I see myself as a creator who at any moment is “free” in relation to his concept. My option is to follow the rules of the game that I invented, so I also have the option of infringing upon them. We cannot but be aware of the manipulation of opposites: law and freedom, seriousness and derision, abstraction and realism. This panoply of strong words are related to that which constitutes an individual, to someone who lives in a certain way, who takes certain directions, and all the things that could come under the heading of ideology. Individuals stand in this complex space constituted by the body, thinking, feeling, clothing, nudity, their relation to society and everything else that shapes their identity. The concept comes from all that. It is a small replica of that identity. At the moment of creation, all these strings, all these directions start resonating, and there is pleasure too. Pleasure is not a superficial idea: it is part of the dramaturgy, part of life. What pleases me may displease others, it can be grating and awkward, but the way things come together can bring a perverse pleasure.

TAUTOLOGOS IV (MARCH 1996 – OCTOBER 1997)

*Symphonic suite for large orchestra and 4 samplers
Block - Interstice - Tautology*

Tautologos IV, which comes more than twenty years after Tautologos III, explores the same idea, perhaps with greater freedom, perhaps less systematically, even though being systematic was never my forte. As time passes, things evolve and cycles move in or out of phase. As they gather momentum, they further branch out in more secret domains where silence obscures their object.

Block

If I speak here of a formless magma, it is to fix the characteristic of the musical action and the psychological situation of listening. The desire expressed in this first movement was to create a very loud sound, as loud as possible, and which seems to go on for a very long time. Ten minutes exactly, not a second more. It's a desire to produce a completely radical block of sound and induce a very specific sonic state, like a bath. Or a wall that would surround the listener while seemingly remaining still.

"Block" is more like a sculpture.

Interstice

The interstice, to me, is something that is "in between" but appears inadvertently. In a speech, the interstice is that involuntary element that wasn't planned in the discourse. It's a passage, like a gap or a breath that helps gather one's thoughts, it's like a vertigo, maybe even a fright.

One doesn't create an "interstice" but rather finds it: in its fragility, this gap between two ideas provides endless delights; as a sensitive plate, not to say a developer, it occupies the gap between hope and despair.

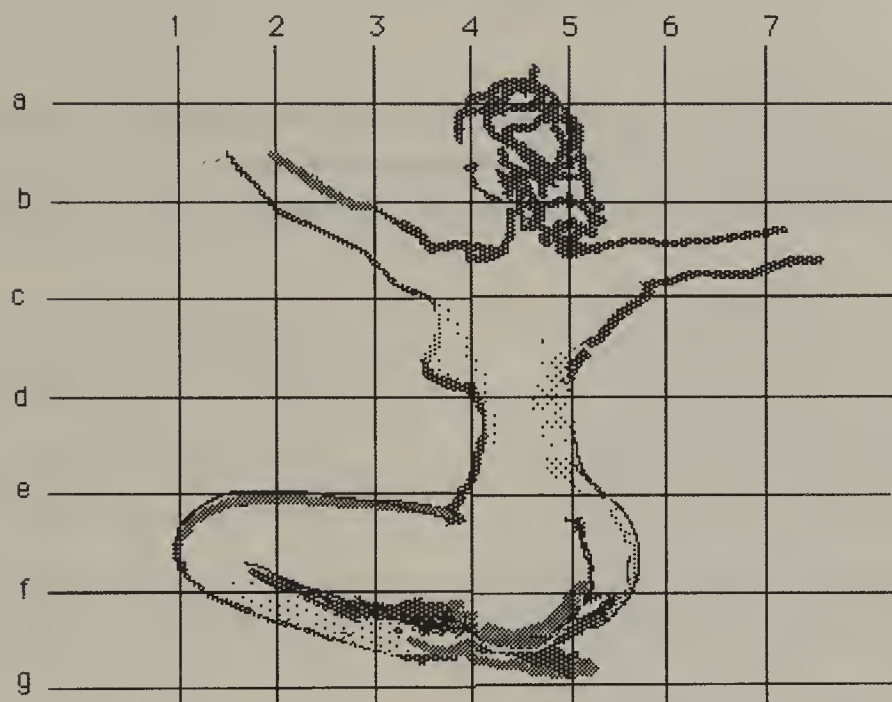
Tautology

This third movement is made of 21 relatively short musical phrases told in a familiar harmonic mood. Each phrase is attributed its own instrument and is followed by a fairly long rest of variable yet calculated length. The play of random overlaps caused by the uneven length of the different cycles generates instrumental impossibilities that require alteration either of the objects or the instrumentation. This is what I call constructive tautology. It may be that the gathering of several phrases also generates a new idea, which is what I call spontaneous tautology.

JC: You referred to a perverse pleasure: are you talking about transgression here?

LF: It's a matter of dogma and anti-dogma. These are attitudes I picked up when I was a kid. I get the impression I was always an outsider with regard to dogma, power and ideologies. It's all part of a general attitude that comes from a state of insecurity that was involuntary at first, then became more and more conscious. I eventually managed to turn it into something positive, because constant self-doubt brings with it an attunement to psychology, to a permanent imbalance between joy and sadness, in marked contrast with the quest for power, influence, or a dominant way of thinking that allows you to say: "I am right, they are wrong." Why is that? The first ideology I encountered as a child was religion, and I was never drawn to it because there were laws to obey and advantages you could gain from it – it was a despicable capitalization. When I was young, I used to look at Dante's book with illustrations by Gustave Doré, which I liked a lot because it was filled with naked women. The depictions of Paradise, with its conjectures about sexless angels and this untouchable God in the background, bored me to death. I didn't find that exciting at all. Also, I was fascinated by nature and the human body – both of them being non-dogmatic. I have been involved in an artistic field since I was fifteen. I had ideas and I wanted to get them heard, but the conservatoire made it impossible. With time, I developed through a combination of extreme shyness and great willfulness. This duality meant that, in order to assert my feelings, I had to overcome this timidity that made me vulnerable. All this fostered a personality that feels close to transgression.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY Nº 18



March 15, 1994

catalogue

The following biographical document compiles a chronological list of Luc Ferrari's works for concert performances, film music as well as ephemeral actions that were created for specific circumstances and remained one-off events.

Suite pour piano

(1952) – 7'04" University of Miami (1954).
Éditions Salabert, Paris

Antisonate pour piano

(1953) – 8'30" Institut d'Art, Paris (1955).
Éditions Salabert, Paris

Sonatine Elyb pour piano

(1953–54) – 8' Darmstadt (1956).
Éditions Salabert, Paris

Quatuor

(1953–54) – 25'

Suite heteroclite pour piano

(1955) – 6'45" Maison des Lettres, Paris (1956).
Éditions Salabert, Paris

Lapidarium pour piano

(1955) – 6' Maison des Lettres, Paris (1956).
Éditions Salabert, Paris

Huit petites faces for chamber orchestra

(1955) – 20' Éditions Salabert, Paris

Tête à terre for piano and voice

(1956) – 10' (poem by Romain Weingarten)

Visage I for piano

(1956) – 5'32" Darmstadt (1957).
Éditions Salabert, Paris

Visage II

(1956) – 14' Die Reihe, Vienna (1961).
Éditions Salabert, Paris

Visage III The prose of the Trans-Siberian by Blaise Cendrars

(1957–58) – 35' RTF recording (1962).

Visage IV – Profils for ten instruments

(1957–58) – 12' Musik der Zeit, Cologne (1959).
Biennale de Paris Prize 1962.

Étude aux accidents

(June 1958) – 2'14" Musique concrète – INA-GRM.
Brussels World's Fair (1958). BAM LD 070 (LP)

Étude aux sons tendus

(July 1958) – 2'48" Musique concrète – INA-GRM.
Brussels World's Fair (1958). BAM LD 070 (LP)

Music for theater: *Passage pour mimes*

(1959) – 18' Musique concrète – INA-GRM.
Rome (1959).

Visage V

(1958–59) – 10'33" Musique concrète – INA-GRM.
Expériences Musicales, Paris (1959).
Philips 6526 003 (LP)

Film music: *Égypte, ô Égypte I*

(1960) – 20' For a short film directed
by Jacques Brissot – INA-GRM.

Tête et queue du dragon

(1959–60) – 9'13" Musique concrète – INA-GRM.
Festival de la Recherche, Paris (1960).
Candide CE 31025 (LP)

Tautologos I

(1961) – 5' Musique électronique – INA-GRM.
Commissioned by Herman Scherchen and
composed at his Gravesano studio.
RTF concert, Paris (1962). BAM LD 072 (LP)

Tautologos II

(1961) – 14'54" Musique concrète – INA-GRM.
RTF concert, Paris (1962). BAM LD 071 (LP)

Film music: *Forme Bleue*

(Nov 1961) – 5' For an abstract short film
directed by Piotr Kamler. INA-GRM.

Film music: *Étude*

(Nov 1961) – 5' For an abstract short film
directed by Piotr Kamler. INA-GRM

Spontané I

(Jan 1962) Improvisation for nine performers.

Spontané II

(Feb 1962) Improvisation for ten performers.

Spontané III

(March 1962) Improvisation for eight performers.
Filmed performance (16mm short
film, dir. Gérard Patris)

Spontané IV

(April 1962) Improvisation for eleven performers
Filmed performance (35 mm colour short
film, dir. Gérard Patris, June 1962)
4 improvisations based on orchestra
diagram with the EIMCP Ensemble
conducted by Konstantin Simonovitch,
as part of the GRM's instrumental
experiments.

Film music: *Chastel*

(May 1962) – 20' INA-GRM.

Film music: *Égypte, ô Égypte II*

(Jan–Sept 1962) – 60'

For a feature-length Film directed by
Jacques Brissot (35 mm, colour). INA-GRM.

6 pour 4

(June 1962) 4-track tape

First version of the group concert.
Ranelagh Festival, Paris (1962). INA-GRM.

Composé Composite

(Oct 1962–Feb 1963) – 10' For orchestra and tape.

Final version of the group concert.
Venice Festival (1963), Zagreb Festival (1963).
Philips 836 894 (LP)

Film music: *Les Pèlerins*

(Aug 1962–Feb 1963) – 25' For a
short film about the Richard
Wagner Festival in Bayreuth
Co-directed with Jacques Brissot
(35 mm, colour). INA-GRM.

Flashes

(Jan–June 1963) – 17' Music for 14 instruments
Premiered in Paris, 1963 by the EIMCP Ensemble,
conductor: Konstantin Simonovitch.
Éditions Transatlantiques.

Film music: *Portrait d'une autre*

(Oct–Dec 1963) – 30' For a short film
directed by Marie-Claire Patris
(35 mm, colour) INA-GRM.

Film music: *Dernier Matin d'E.-A. Poe*

(January 1964) – 30' For a short film
directed by Jean Barral (35 mm, B&W)

Hétérozygote

(1963–64) – 27' Stereo tape
First piece of "anecdotal" music
INA-GRM. Philips 836 885 DSY (LP)
BVHaast Records Acousmatrix 3
(CD, 1990)

***La musique à l'envers,
Fragment d'un opera collectif***
(1965) Text by Pierre Schaeffer.

Société I

(1965) For seven performers and the audience
(unspecified length) Premiere staged by the
composer at "La Vieille Grille," Paris, 1965.
Staged by Didier Flamand at the Musée
d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1981.

TV documentaries: ***Les Grandes Répétitions***
(1965–66) Five documentaries (16 mm,
dual-band, between 45'–55' each)
Produced by the Service de la Recherche, ORTF.
Co-directed with Gérard Patris:

Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum,

by Olivier Messiaen
Filmed during the creation of
the work in the Chartes Cathedral, in
the presence of General de Gaulle.
(broadcast Nov 11, 1965)

Hommage à Varèse

Memory portrait with testimonies
by several composers.
(broadcast April 20, 1966).

Momente,

by Karlheinz Stockhausen
The composer rehearsing with the
orchestra for the creation of his piece.
(broadcast June 1966)

Quand un homme consacre sa vie à la musique.

Portrait de Hermann Scherchen
(broadcast November 1966)

Cecil Taylor ou la découverte du free jazz

(35 mm, colour) INA-GRM.

Und so weiter

(1965–66) – 18' For piano and magnetic tape.
Tape composed at the GRM, Paris.
Commissioned by
Radio Bremen, Musika Viva (1966).
Wergo 60046 (LP)

Symphonie inachevée

(1963–1966) – 35'48" For full orchestra.
Created for the inauguration
of the Maison de la Culture in
Rennes (I think in 1968)
Moeck Verlag, Celle, Germany.

Film music: *So*

(1967) Musique concrète for the film
Elektronische Musik
directed by J.A. Riedl.

Société II: Et si le piano était un corps de femme

(1967) – approx. 60' For 4 soloists
and 16 instruments
Deutsche Grammophon (LP)
Moeck Verlag.

Interrupteur pour dix instruments

(1967) – 20' Barcelona, May 1968. EMI
Co61–11133 (LP) Moeck Verlag.

Film music: *Tinguely*

(1967) Musique concrète for a television
program by C. Caspari. NDR, Hamburg.

Film: *Les jeunes filles ou Société III*

(1967) – 25' 16 mm, dual band.
Production: TV Hamburg, NDR3 (in German).

***Société IV –
Mécanique Collectivité Individu***

(1967) – approx. 50'
For full orchestra Havana, Cuba (1968).

Musique Promenade

(1964–69) Electro-acoustic music.
Stereo tape version (20'). Permanent
version for 4 independent tape recorders.

Wergo 50054 (LP)

“Presque Rien” INA-GRM/La Muse en
Circuit – MUSIDISC 245172 (CD)

Société V –

Participation or not participation

(1967–69) For 6 percussionists, one actor
and the audience (unspecified length).

Nuits de la Fondation Maeght,
Saint-Paul-de-Vence (1969)

Société VI – Liberté, liberté chérie

(1969) For audience solo (unspecified length).
Text-score.

***Tautologos 3 ou Vous
plairait-il de tautologuer avec moi?***

(1969) For any group of instruments
(unspecified length).

Text-score. Moeck Verlag.

J'ai été coupé

(1960–69) – 12' Stereo tape. Production:
GRM, Paris. Philips 836 885 DSY (LP)
“Matin et Soir” MUSIDISC 242242 (CD)

J'ai tort, j'ai tort, j'ai mon très grand tort

(1969) Imitation-dialogue for mixed choir
(unspecified length) Text-score. Moeck Verlag.

Le dispositif et son disnégitif

(1969–70) Radio Stockholm (1970).
Text-score.

***Presque Rien ou Le lever du
jour au bord de la mer***

(1967–70) – 20' Stereo tape. Deutsche Gram-
mophon 2 561 041, Avant-Garde series (LP)
“Presque Rien,” INA-GRM/La Muse en
Circuit – MUSIDISC 245172 (CD)

Tautologos 3

(1970) – approx. 20' Realization No. 4
For 11 instrumentalists. Conceived as an
illustration to the text and as example
of possible realization in the form of tape
(No. 3) or traditional score (No. 4).
Realization No. 3: EMI C 061 11133 (LP)
Score No. 4: Moeck Verlag.

Portrait-Spiel

(1971) – 80' Stereo tape. Production: Hörspiel
swf, Baden-Baden. Karl Sczuka Prize 1972.

Unheimlich Schön

(1971) – 20' Stereo tape.
Production: Hörspiel swf, Baden-Baden.
Metamkin KCDOO8 (CD, 1993)

Pornologos 2

(1971) Erotic “realizable” (unspecified length)
Text-score.

***Les réalisables et le journal
d'un autobiographe***

(1964–72) Collection of text-scores in book
form with various autobiographical writings.

Allô, ici la terre

(1971–72) Chapter one. Play-light
and time-show (approx. 2h)
Screenplay and music: Luc Ferrari.
Photographs: Jean-Serge Breton.
Schott's Schöne Verlag, Mainz (Germany).

Film: Kennen Sie Schönberg?

(1972) – 30' (16 mm, dual band, colour)
Production: WDR 3 TV, Cologne.

***Programme commun pour
clavecin et bande***

(1972) – approx. 20' For amplified
harpsichord and stereo tape.

Erato STU 71010 (LP)

Rhythm Plus 581233 AD184 (CD)

Journal d'un journaliste amateur

(1972) – 27' Stereo tape. Production:

GMEB, Maison de la Culture, Bourges.

Danses organiques

(1971–1973) – 52' Stereo tape. Elica mpo-3340 (CD)

***Two-part documentary: Presque
Rien ou Le désir de vivre***

(1972–1973) Part 1: Le Causse Méjean – 55'

Part 2: Le Plateau du Larzac – 52'

16 mm dual band, French-German.

Production: swf, Unterhaltung Musik
und Dramaturgie, Baden-Baden.

***Petite symphonie intuitive
pour un paysage de printemps***

(1973–1974) – 25' Stereo tape. BVHaast

Records Acousmatrix 3 (CD, 1990)

Allô, ici la terre

(1973–1974) – approx. 2 h Chapter two.

Spectacle for the ear, or "auditable."

Commissioned and produced by WDR,
Abteilung Neue Musik, Cologne.

Éphémère

(Nov 1974) – 30' For tape alone or

played with various instruments.

Labyrinthe de violence

(Feb 1975) Stereo tape and slides.

***Cellule 75, Force du Rythme et
Cadence Forcée***

(May – Nov 1975) – 31' For piano,
percussions and tape.

La Muse en Circuit MEC01 (LP)/ MUSIDISC
242232 (CD) Tzadik USA TZ 7033 (CD)

Algérie 76 n°1. La revolution agraire

(March – June 1976) – 32' For tape

alone or with slides. Photographs:

Djamel Farès. French-Arabic.

Algérie 76 n°2.

Belghimouze, Village Socialiste

(March 1976 – Jan 1977) – 30'

For tape alone or with slides.

Photographs: Djamel Farès.

Tuchan, village n°11350

(July 1976 – March 1977) – 1 h 15'

Audiovisual piece (music,
interviews, slides) Stereo tape and
two projectors on two screens.

Photographs: Brunhild and Luc Ferrari.

Film music: Place des Abbesses

(June 1977) – 25' For a film by Erika Magdalinski.

Production: INA Tzadik USA TZ 7033 (CD)

Film music: Les Apprentis

(July 1977) – 1 h 20' For a 16 mm dual band
film directed by Gérard Patris. Production:

Coquelicot Film and Südwestfunk.

Television program, Portrait of Boris Vian.

Film music: Loin de l'équilibre

(Sept 1977) – 30' For a film by Alain Bedos.

Production: CNRS Paris.

***Et tournent les sons dans la
garrigue. Réflexion sur l'écriture n°1***

(Aug – Sept 1977) – 25'

Stereo tape and free instrumentation.

Exercices d'improvisation

(September 1977) – 5' or 7' each

For stereo tape and instruments.

***Presque Rien n° 2. "Ainsi continue
la nuit dans ma tête multiple"***

(Sept – Oct 1977) – 21'

Stereo tape. INA-GRM 9104 fe (LP)

"Presque Rien" INA-GRM/La Muse
en Circuit MUSIDISC 245172.

***Algérie n° 4: La Société National
de Sidérurgie***

(March 1976 – Jan 1978) – 35'

For tape alone or with slides.

Photographs: Djamel Farès.

***À la recherche du rythme perdu.
Réflexion sur l'écriture n° 2***

(Feb 1978) – 20' For piano and tape (may also
be played with additional musicians)

La Muse en Circuit MUSIDISC 242242 (CD).

***Promenade symphonique dans
un paysage musical.***

Un jour de fête à El Oued en 1976

(March 1976 – March 1978) – 32'

Stereo tape alone, originally
conceived as an audiovisual piece.

Photographs: Nasser Edin Ghénifi.

INA-GRM 9104 fe (LP).

***Chantal, ou le portrait d'une
villageoise***

(July 1977 – Apr 1978) – 40' Stereo tape.

Composed in collaboration
with Brunhild Meyer.

***Ce qu'a vu le Cers. Réflexion
sur l'écriture n° 4***

(May – Sept 1978) – 25'16"

Stereo tape and instrumental group.

Ventadorn VT 323 (LP)/MUSIDISC 242262 (CD)

***Apparition et disparition
mystérieuses d'un accord***

(Sept 1978) – random length

For alto saxophone quartet.

Bonjour, comment ça va?

(1972 – 79) – approx. 12'

For piano, cello and bass clarinet.

Éditions Salabert, Paris.

Entrée

(1978 – 79) – 23' For 15 instruments.

Éditions Transatlantique.

Film music: ***Le Dernier Soleil***

(May 1980) – 45' for a film about the Aztecs.

Production: CNRS Paris.

Film music: ***Le Petit Pommier***

(June 1980) – 1h 30' In collaboration
with David Jisse.

Directed by Liliane de Kermadec.

Production: FR3

Histoire du plaisir et de la désolation

(Nov 1979 – Feb 1981) – 35'

For symphonic orchestra.

Commissioned by Radio France for
the Orchestre National de France, Paris,

Nov 1982. Serge and Olga Oussewitzky
International Prize (1990). La Muse en Circuit

MUSIDISC 242242 MU 750 (CD)

Éditions Salabert, Paris.

Film music: ***Chronopolis***

(Apr 1981 – Feb 1982) – 72'

For an experimental animated film
by Piotr Kamler (35mm, colour).

***Jetzt oder wahrscheinlich ist hier mein
Alltag, in der Verwirrung der Orte und
der Augenblicke (Maintenant ou probable-
ment mon quotidien il est là, dans la
confusion des lieux et des moments)***

(Sept. 1981 – April 1982) – approx. 1h 45'

Radiophonic piece. Production: Hessisch-
er Rundfunk, Hörspiel Department.

Journal intime

(Jan 1980 – July 1982) – approx. 2h

Musical for one female narrator, one pianist and one female singer. First staged by the composer at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1982.

Staged by Philippe Adrien at the Theatre du Lierre, 1989. Book-score: La Muse en Circuit, Paris (out of print).

Sexolidad

(Nov 1982 – Nov 1983) – 30'

For 15 instruments (See Entrée)
Lille Festival, 1983. Éditions Salabert, Paris.

***Une Soirée avec Matricia
Perséverse***

(1978–1984) – 2h

For 15 instruments and one actress.

Patajaslotcha, suite de danses

(1984) – 25' For 9 instruments. Composed
for the Bal de la Contemporaine,
Musica 84, Strasbourg, 1984. La Muse
en Circuit MUSIDISC 291302 (CD)
Éditions Salabert, Paris.

***Dialogue ordinaire avec la machine,
ou trois fables pour bandes
douxement philosophiques***

(1984) – 30' Stereo tape. Song: Michel Musseau.

***Collection de petites pieces, ou 36
Enfilades pour piano et magnétophone***

(1985) – 45' La Muse en Circuit MEC
01 (LP)/ MUSIDISC 242232 (CD)

Strathoven

(1985) – 3' Stereo tape. BVHaast Records
Acousmatrix 3 (CD, 1990).

Les émois d'Aphrodite

(1986) – 35' For piano, clarinet,
percussions and tape.

En un tournement d'amour

(July – Nov 1986) – 30'

For 49 piece orchestra.
Festival des Manca, Nice, 1987.
Éditions Salabert, Paris.

Et si toute entière maintenant

(Dec 1986 – Feb 1987) – 34'
Stereo tape. Symphonic tale.
Text by Colette Fellous.
Italia Prize 1987. Mode 81 (CD)

Je me suis perdu, ou Labyrinthe portrait

(May 1987 – Jan 1988) – 88' Stereo
tape. Hörspiel, French-German.
Production: Südwestfunk.
Recorded at La Muse en Circuit.
Karl Sczuka Prize 1988.

Un Calypso pour Colette

(October 1988) – 4'
For two saxophones, two pianos
and two percussions.

Conversation intime

(Oct. 1987 – March 1988) – 20'
For piano and percussion.
Maison de la Radio, Paris (1989).
Éditions Salabert, Paris.

Tango-Pas

(June 1988) – 8' For piano, clarinet, percussion,
synthesizer and voice. Madrid, Dec 1988.

Crémaille 88

(Sept – Nov 1988) – 45' Stereo tape.
Composed by Brunhild Meyer and Luc Ferrari.

Musique dans les spasmes

(Sept 1988 – Feb 1989) Text. Realistic fiction.

Conte Sentimental n°1

(Jan – March 1989) – 29' Stereo tape.

Produced by Brunhild Meyer and
Luc Ferrari with Südwestfunk (Baden-Baden).

Extrait du corps

(Feb – June 1989) – 1h 30'

For 15 musicians, piano solo and tape.

Festival des Manca, Nice, July 2, 1989.

Photophonie

(May – Aug 1989) Stereo tape (permanent).

Commissioned by Musica 1989 for Alain
Willaume's photo exhibition. Photophonie I
intended for the big room: three 30-minute tapes
playing continuously without ever meeting
in the same situations. Photophonie II intended
for the small room: one 15-minute tape
playing in a loop.

Presque Rien avec filles

(Aug 1989) – 14' Stereo tape. bvHaast Re-
cords Acousmatrix 3 (CD, 1990)

"Preque Rien" INA-GRM/La Muse en
Circuit MUSIDISC 245172 (CD).

Le Freischütz (Die Wolfsschlucht)

(Oct 1989 – Jan 1990) – 20'

Tape on three tape recorders.

Bayrische Staatsoper,
Munich, February 21, 1990.

Solitude Transit

(Nov 1989 – June 1990) – 1h10'

For a ballet. Stereo tape.

Italie mon amour

(Dec 1989 – June 1990) – 50'

Five musicians, one actress, twenty extras.

Light show: Gilles Chatard.

Labyrinthe Hôtel

(Sept 1989 – Aug 1990) – 1h 30'

Chamber opera. Text by Colette Fellous.

Stage direction: Farid Paya.

Musica Festival, Strasbourg, September 27, 1990.

Comme une Fantaisie dite des Réminiscences

(Dec 1989 – Jan 1991) – 25'

For two pianos. Albi, April 1994.

Éditions Salabert, Paris.

Berceuse d'illusions

(June 1991) – 3' to 6'

For three instruments:
keyboard, high-pitched woodblock
and low-pitched woodblock.
Co-published by Albin Michel,
CIRM and Paris-Musées.

L'escalier des aveugles

(March – May 1991) – 35'

Collected short stories. Stereo tape.
Commissioned by Radio Nacional
de España. Co-produced by Ars So-
nora RNE2 and La Muse en Circuit.
Italia Prize 1991 (RAI Special Prize)
MUSIDISC 291302 (CD)

Clap

(June – Oct 1991) – 6' For piano and
tape. For Mauricio Kagel.

Cahier du Soir

(1991 – 1992) – 90' Suite of twenty
pieces for 14 instruments,
one actress and slides. Musica, Strasbourg,
1994. Éditions Salabert, Paris.

Fugue de J.S.B.

(March 1992) – 5' For flute, clarinet in B, bass
clarinet, piano, vibraphone (cymbals), cello

Ouvert – Fermé

(Sept 1993) – 11' Stereo tape. Part of the
Metropolis series produced by
Akustische Kunst, WDR, Cologne.

Bistrot

(June – Oct 1993) – 60' Stereo tape. Composed for the choreography by Anne-Marie Reynaud.

Porte ouverte sur ville

(Nov 1992 – Nov 1993) – 32'

Cologne, 1994. Commissioned by the WDR Department of New Music.

Chansons pour le corps

(March 1988 – Jan 1994) – 40'

For instrumental ensemble and female singer. Composed based on texts by Colette Fellous. Mode 81 (CD).

Portraits de femmes

(Jan 1994) – approx. 80'

For a female singer, 2 clarinets, percussion, synthesizer, piano and two tape recorders.

Fable de la démission et du cendrier

(Feb – June 1994) – 25'

For two pianos and two clarinets. Commissioned by Radio France. Premier at the Maison de la Radio, Feb 1995. Éditions Salabert, Paris.

Je courais tant de buts divers

(Aug 1994) Autobiographical text. (Contemporary music review Vol. 15 in G+B Arts International, London 1996.

Portrait de Michel Portal

(Oct 1994 – Feb 1995) – 45'

Commissioned by Radio France. Composed for a day dedicated to Michel Portal on Radio France.

Fragments du journal intime

(1980 – 1982) – 14'

For piano – revised in Jan 1995. Éditions Salabert, Paris.

Quatre femmes hollandaises

(Apr – May 1995) – 25'

Radiophonic piece for the Dutch Radio NCRV.

Hold still keep moving

(Apr – Sept 1995)

Permanent audiovisual installation Commissioned by the PRIME Foundation for the Groningen Fine Art Centre. Slide projections and videos created by Ellen Kool. Music composition using 6 CD players together with 8 slide projections and 2 videos generating endless chance encounters for a permanent environment. Created for the Luc Ferrari retrospective in the Netherlands, October 1995.

Madame de Shanghai

(July – Nov 1996) – 15'

For 3 flutes and memorized sounds. Tape composed at Ateliers UPIC. Musique d'Aujourd'hui 9701 MDA M7 847 (CD)

Selbstportrait oder Peinture de sons ou bien Tonmalerei

(Dec 1996 – June 1997) – 55' French-German Hörspiel recorded at Studio Post-Billig. Commissioned by Südwestfunk.

Tautologos IV

(March 1996 – Oct 1997) – 30'

Bloc – Interstice – Tautologie Symphonic suite for full orchestra and 4 samplers. Commissioned by Art-Zoyd and the Orchestre National de Lille. Premiered in Lille, March 1998. Éditions Salabert, Paris.

Symphonie déchirée

(Dec 1994 – Jan 1998) – 60'

For 17 amplified instruments and memorized sounds. Éditions Salabert, Paris.

***Presque Rien n° 4 -
"La remontée du village"***

(1990-1998) - 16' Memorized sounds.
Composed at Studio Post-Billig.

Les émois d'Aphrodite

(1986-1998) - 25' New version, 1998. For clarinet,
piano, percussion, 2 samplers and 1 CD player.
Memorized sounds composed
at Studio Post-Billig.

Far-West News

(1998-1999) Three-part radiophonic piece com-
posed at Studio Post-Billig. Commissioned
by NPS Hilversum. Episode 1 (March 1999) -
29'30" 11-16 Sept 1998 - From Santa Fé to
Monument Valley. Episode 2 (May 1999) -
29'45". 17-24 Sept 1998 - From Page to the
Grand Canyon. Episode 3 (June 1999) - 28'
25-30 Sept 1998 - From Prescott to Los Angeles

Jeu du hasard et de la détermination

(1998-1999) - 21'40" For piano, percussion
and memorized sounds, Composed at
Studio Post-Billig with the support of the GRM.
Specially commissioned by the French
Minister of Culture and Communication.

Les Archives sauvées des eaux

(Jan - Apr 2000) - 48'
For 2 CDs and a set of vinyls.
Commissioned by Hermes Ensemble.
Premiered in Gent, May 2000.

Cycle des souvenirs

(1995 - 2000) - unspecified length
Exploitation des Concepts 2
Audiovisual installation for 6 CD players and 4
video projectors. Production: Post-Billig with
the support of Césaré and ccMix

Archives Génétiquement Modifiées

(May - July 2000) - 25'
Exploitation des Concepts 3 Memorized
sounds solo. Composed at Studio Post-Billig.

Tautologie et Environs

(2000 - 2001) - 25' Exploitation des
Concepts 4. For 14 amplified instru-
ments and memorized sounds.

Presque Rien avec instruments

(2001) - 30' Exploitation des Concepts 5. For 15
amplified instruments and memorized sounds.

Impro-Micro-Acoustique

(Jan 2001) Recording of an improvised
electro-acoustic session with
Nöel Akchoté and Roland Auzet.
Blue Chopstick BC12 (CD)

Paris-Tokyo-Paris

(Jan - Nov 2002) - 27' Sextet for oboe,
clarinet, bassoon, violin, cello, piano
and memorized sounds.
Commissioned by New Generation, Tokyo.
Premiered at CM Tokyo by the
NOMAD Ensemble, conductor:
Norio Sato. Score available from La
Muse en Circuit.

Les Anecdotes

(2001-2002) - 54' Exploitation des Concepts 6.
Radiophonic piece for DeutschlandRadio Berlin
Sub Rosa SR207 (CD, 2004)
Grand Prix Charles Cros In Memoriam 2005

Saliceburry Cocktail

(Oct - Dec 2002) - 30' Electro-acoustic
music. Premiered at
La-Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland,
May 25, 2003.
Sub Rosa SR 252 (CD, 2006)

Rencontres fortuites

(Jan – June 2003) – 21' 25"

For viola, piano and memorized sounds.
Premiered in Dijon, November 22, 2003
by Jean-Philippe Collard-Neven (piano),
Vincent Royer (viola). "Les Didascalies"
Sub Rosa SR261 (CD + DVD, 2007)

Quatre morceaux en forme de promenade

(June – Dec 2003) – 21' For brass quartet,
2 percussions and memorized sounds.

Commissioned by GEMA Musical Centre, Albi
Premiered in Toulouse, Nov 5, 2004
by the Pythagore Ensemble.
Score available from La Muse en Circuit.

Les Arythmiques

(May – Nov 2003) – 40' 20"

Electro-acoustic music
Premiered in La Chaux-de-Fonds,
Switzerland, June 17, 2005.
Blue Chopstick BC 19 (CD, 2008)

Didascalies

(2004) – 25' For viola, piano and memo-
rized sounds. Premiered at Chapelle
de Boondael, Brussels, May 16, 2004
by Jean-Philippe Collard-Neven
(piano), Vincent Royer (viola). Score
available from la Muse en Circuit

"Les Didascalies" Sub Rosa SR261 (CD+DVD, 2007)

Après Presque Rien

(April – Nov 2004) – 25' For 14 instruments
and 2 samplers. Commissioned
by CCMIX (Paris), Musiques Nouvelles
(Brussels) and Art Zoyd (Valenciennes),
with the support of the European Funds
Feder Interreg III. Premiered at the
Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 20 April
2006 by Musiques Nouvelles, conductor:
Jean-Paul Dessy. Score published by
Éditions Pierre Neurey, Valenciennes.

Femme descendant l'escalier

(Sept 2004 – Jan 2004) – 40'

Sound installation for a bus shelter.
Commissioned by Itinerario del Sonido
Premiered in Madrid, May 2005.

Les ProtoRythmiques

(June 2004 – Jan 2005) – approx. 60'

For two DJs. Premiered at Les Instants
Chavirés, Montreuil, Feb 12, 2004,
by eRikm and Luc Ferrari
Room 40 RM417 (CD, 2007)

Didascalies 2, ou Trois personages en quête de notes

(2005) – approx. 20' For 2 pianos and
a very powerful instrument
capable of holding a very loud note. Score
available from La Muse en Circuit.
Sub Rosa SRV 305 (LP, 2010)

Morbido Symphonie

(March – Aug 2005) – approx. 25'
For 15 instruments and memorized sounds.
Premiered in Paris by the Ars Nova
Ensemble, conductor: Philippe Nahon.
(third movement left unfinished)

Dérivatif

(2005) Memorized sound archives. Intended
for "Seven Things," Edinburgh. (unfinished)
Finished by Brunhild Ferrari in 2008.

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