

Tape Concerts: Groupe De Recherches Musicales (GRM, Paris)

GRM

Extract from "Larousse de la musique"

The Paris Groupe de Recherches Musicales (group for musical research), which is at present integrated in the INA (National Institute for Audiovision) was founded by Pierre Schaeffer and is headed by François Bâyle. This group is one of the most important ones and as to its origin the oldest and today the principal center for electroacoustic music and for musical research in the whole world. Its origin actually coincides with the beginning of "concrete music"—growing from the cell of the "Studio d'essai" of the French radio, where Pierre Schaeffer invented that music in 1948, into the "Groupe de musique concrète", created and officially recognized in 1951, to finally become the "Groupe de Recherches Musicales", founded in 1958 by the same Schaeffer within the ORTF, the French Radio and Television Organization.

In 1960 the GRM became one of the cells of the Research Service which was established under Schaeffer and in addition to other subjects dedicated to the research of the image, television production, etc. Apart from its founder it then consisted of the composers Luc Ferrari, François-Bernard Mâche and Ivo Malec. Until 1966, the activity of the GRM focussed on the "Solfège experimental" (an experimental solfeggio) under the direction of Schaeffer—its findings were published in the important "Traite des objets musicaux" (Treatise on musical objects) in 1966. This does not imply that composition had been abandoned: in 1963 an original experience of collective creation, the "Concert collectif", united the founding members of the group with newcomers like Edgardo Canton, Bernard Parmegiani, François Bâyle. The latter accepted responsibility for the group in 1966 and continued as its director in 1975, when the GRM became one of the departments of the INA – this marks a new beginning for the group. Since then it has concentrated its efforts on the development of its technological means (especially those of information systems) and on written and acoustical publications of its work. GRM's activities are numerous: musical productions, manifestations, research, education. Since its beginning, members of the group or invited composers have produced several hundred electro-acoustical pieces in the group's studios. An "aesthetics of the GRM" can be noted in a wider sense only: proceeding from the heritage of Schaeffer and the tradition of the fifties, it is a "concrete" attitude of musical creation, trusting the ear more than formal schemes a priori. From this basis tendencies diverge and styles compete. Musical research has known two very active periods: the first one from 1958 to 1966 focusing on the topics of the "Traité des objets musicaux" under the direction of Schaeffer; the second one in the middle of the seventies, when work was split up in distinct areas: musical analysis, information systems, education and publications on the various activities (Cahiers recherche/musique). Educational activity is represented primarily by instruction within the Conservatoire de Paris (CNSM), which was officially authorized in 1968. Pierre Schaeffer and Guy Reibel as professors offer a two-year course on electro-acoustic music with admission pending an entrance examination. GRM also organizes courses and programs of short duration. It presents part of its activities in concert. Recently, it has taken important initiatives of dissemination and publication (a magazine and a record series) and has produced some forty hours of radio broadcasts annually over the national educational networks. Membership to the group is by contract and the team is frequently renewed around certain "pillars" of long standing: apart from the very active promoter of the group François Bâyle there are also Ivo Malec, Bernard Parmegiani, Guy Reibel. At present the team also includes younger members such as the composers Jacques Lejeune, Jean Schwarz, Denis Dufour; the

researchers (sometimes composers at the same time) François Delalande, Benedict Mailliard, Pierre-Alain Jaffrennou, Jean-François Allouis, Philippe Mion, Jean-Christophe Thomas, Denis Valette; and in various duties of organization and production Suzanne Bordenave, Jack Vidal, Christian Zanesi (who is also a composer), Evelyne Gayou, Jacques Darnis and others. Many composers have been members of the GRM for certain periods of time and have contributed to its activities, of which apart from Mâche, Ferrari and Canton, mentioned above, Philippe Carson, Alain Savouret, Michel Chion, Robert Cahen and Bernard Durr should be listed. Finally, very many musicians have used the group's studios to realize their works and to acquaint themselves with electro-acoustic music.

M. C.

FRANÇOIS BAYLE

"TOP IN THE SKY"

Proceeding from the sounds of an old whipping top to the light wail of a siren, a bundle of lines bent by the energy of very rapid rotations is realized. Diverse figures of that kind intervene. A wave swings on two descending minor thirds. This deep swinging moves in a multitude of designs in layers of increasing density and mobility.

The monotonous unity of that movement is organized in a sequence of 27 parts which gradually interlock at varying speed, depth, acceleration and orchestration. At times the material is perforated like a sky dotted with small comets. In the middle a slow sliding attracts harmonics far from the basic chord.

Towards the end this great sliding bursts into flames.

Back to the EROS NOIR—the black eros.

Chromatic volutes... noise...sheaves...silver ashes.

"EROS NOIR"

Wailing and whistling murmured words rise from inverted resonances.

Descent. Landing on the moon.

BERNARD PARMEGANI

"LA ROUE FERRIS"—"THE FERRIS WHEEL" (1971) 11'05

You imagine it as something marvellous. It really is glittering—at festivals in Mexico they light it and it becomes a fire wheel—a symbol for perpetual movement. The "Ferris Wheel" I have created implies a regular movement around the axis of a fundamental tone. Each of its rounds appears to create sonority with successive layers penetrating and fluidly interlacing each other. The rattle of its origin is finally transformed into fine threads of sound resembling the clouds at very high altitudes, the cirri, resounding with the cries of circling swallows, when the air is hot.

CHRISTIAN ZANESI

"D'UN JARDIN À L'AUTRE"—"FROM ONE GARDEN TO ANOTHER" (1982)

Do not be mistaken, all the sounds we reveal with our machines exist or have existed in nature. We only put them into new structures and novel forms result.

These gardens (closed places) can be heard as imagined space to be walked in. They succeed each other and interlace at the slow rhythm of discovery. Here real and imagined animals who might inhabit different places and ages live together.

The immobile spectator watches these gardens pass by on the "acousmatic screen", they have been made public through this concert, his ear lends this screen the superior form of a sphere of which it is the center.