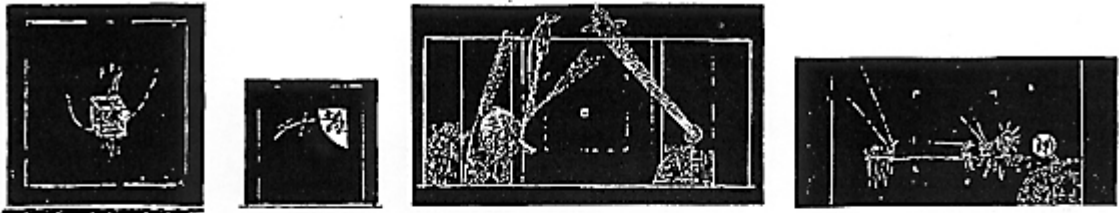
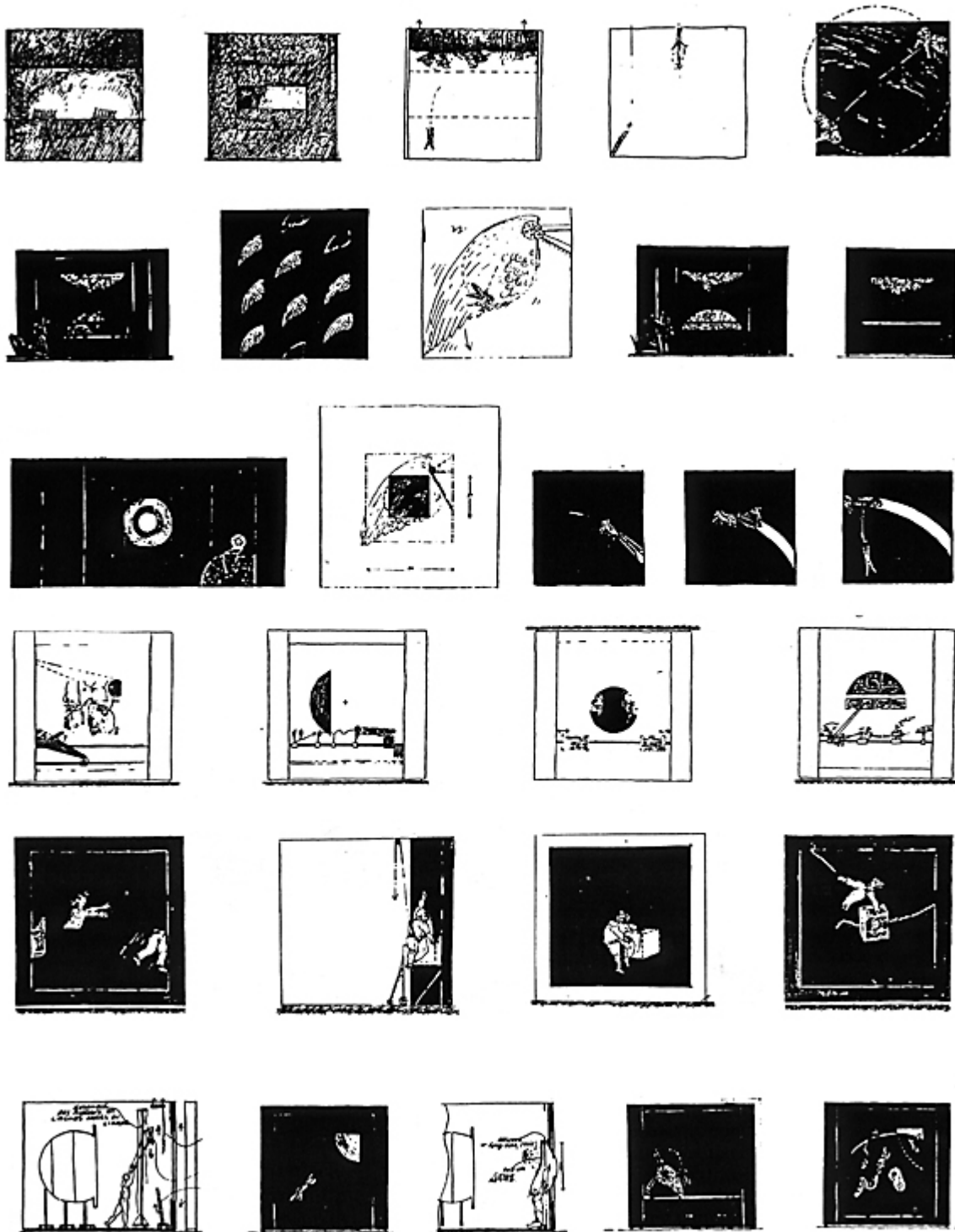


LE SYSTÈME DU MONDE





The view is a cosmic principle. The eye of a poet is a center of light, the Sun of a World. Copernicus often called the Sun the "Pupil of the World" or "Visible God". For Sophocles' Electra it was the "Allseeing". The view is a sun, and the sun is a view. The planets are orbiting around an eye of light. And we are also eyes of light. The poet is the dreamer of the world. You have never seen the world well unless you have dreamt what you have seen. The words of the dreamer become the names of the world. So, the world is great and Man who dreams it, is greatness. (after Gaston Bachelard)

LE SYSTÈME DU MONDE

The World's System

"Le Système du Monde*" is the tale of an imaginary cosmology. It is a piece of manipulation of objects and images, a performance with actors invisible or visible only in exarticulated fragments, a visual and musical performance without any proper text.

The performance takes place on a miniature theatre stage equipped with what machinery one would find in a theatre of the 18th century. In front of the stage, not only out of the pit, but as an authentic actor of the event, the composer-performer, with his violin and the electronic instruments he controls through his computer.

The exposition—or rather experimentation—of the system tells us about a world both foreseeable and aleatoric, concentrated and in constant dilation, chronological and timeless. A world enchanted, closed, unlimited, irreversible.

It is beyond question that there are still planets, stars, and even galaxies unseen to date. But we will also see this microcosm go through all the great families of celestial appearances in our cosmological fiction.

There are the Celestial Mechanics, great automats describing the universe as an infinite clockwork. There are the Virtual Beings, existing only because we name them. And the Aleatoric Bodies sowing disorder. We will also see the Messenger Bodies, and the Metaphorical Bodies, all those animated beings of the sky that—as we think—will tell our past and future. A world inhabited by signs which we try to take into our service.

This experimentation of the World's System is not without risk, for the celestial objects, in reality, are the actors of a permanent conflict. It will soon become clear that not even the manipulator masters all the parameters of the System of the World.

* In 1609, Johannes Kepler published his "Harmonies of the World". In 1790, the French physicist Pierre Simon de Laplace wrote his "Exposition du Système du Monde". It is to the both of them we owe the title of our work.

An imaginary cosmology

A flash lights up the hall.

The gigantic Eye opens, and—it is full of stars. A musician directs the orchestra of time, while an invisible hand tries to shape the myriads of stars. Dragon, Chariot, Great Bear ...

A majestic planetary describes the celestial orbits. Suddenly, a planet falls, and the planetary goes crazy. The deciphering robot sets everything going again. Phaeton crosses the sky, sumptuous in his fiery chariot. He falls. The aster follows its route without him.

An electronic mini-laboratory meticulously follows the course of the skies. Suddenly, an explosion. The universe has a breakdown. Alarm! The musician resets the time ... Alarm again. The universe does not stop going nuts.

The musician tries to remodel everything. In vain, the universe tumbles and falls, the scales go flashing. The universe going nuts is driving the experimenter crazy. So, where to live in this world changing more and more, the more we explore it?

Serge Dutrieux/Jean-Pierre Larroche/Michel Rostain

A performance of the manipulation of sonic material.

As instrumentalist, I am fascinated by the spectacular progress of musical micro-informatics, where the production of the sound and its mastery are functions of the same attention—both in terms of craftsmanship and intimacy—I give to my violin. As a composer, I extend this sonic research to the creation of a score. "Le Système du Monde" is one moment of this adventure.

I have worked on an enhancement of the subtlety of his informatic tool, until at last I am able to play my Macintosh on-stage like a real instrument. Thus, in the course of the piece, my violin, which has exchanged its resonance body for an electronic card, plays a duet with an electronic system I control with my feet.

"The System of the World"

will be a "performance of the manipulation of objects and images", but also a performance of the manipulation of sonic material, thanks to the readily available memory. The notions of aleatoric, time, and dilation will be constituents of live music. Pitch, rhythm, intensity, timbre, time, liaisons, and accents are other musical parameters in which I can intervene in real time. The management of all that necessitated a body of electronics adapted for live performances. We attained that goal by utilizing:

1 computer

9 synthesizers

1 sampler

4 effect processors

2 numeric mixers

1 MIDI violin, 1 electric violin, 1 bass

1 system of electronic controls, the prototype of which has been custom designed for this performance.

This prototype is an ensemble of 64 pedals connected to a multitude of microprocessors. With every stroke on a pedal, the latter triggers an electric pulse that is immediately processed. Once the functions of every pedal are defined, the command just needs to be sent through the appropriate MIDI channel to start a precise action programmed in the computer. Thanks to the message sent via MIDI channel, it has become possible to intervene in the musical action: selecting a particular mix, or a musical element, start or stop of special effect, transformation of the pedals into a foot-driven keyboard console, intervention of aleatoric moments affecting time, pitch, rhythm, accentuation, etc.

The MIDI violin as such is both an electric and numeric violin. It generates MIDI codes as well as controlling other musical instruments as a computer or a numeric mixer. By violinistically controlling, for instance, a numeric mixer and by assigning each note to a different parameter of the mixer, one has real time access to all mixing parameters. The electronic sound, thus, finds itself in constant transformation by the violinist's playing while being played.

Serge Dutrieux

Train de Nuit (Night Train)

A shrieking whistle, a deafening roar, two spotlights focussed on myself lying flat, glued to the wet wall, the fingers gripping the cold stone. The "Paris–Toulouse" is entering the tunnel. A powerful wave of air and dust. A devastating storm.

Memories registered in a flash. The little red marker light fleeing towards the horizon.

This is how I discovered the beauty of the sound, the beauty of its power.

Time has passed. But still today, the memory of a music holds on, a music the violence of which definitely got me off the academic tracks.

So today, "Train de Nuit" shares every adventure with me, where the voyage is as valuable as the goal.

Our means of transport: light, image, and sound.

Serge Dutrieux

A Theatre for Music

"A theatre for Music!" This is the motto under which I want to describe our work. Along with the standard repertory operas, in France there is space for musical performances bearing the mark of a spirit of creation, a spirit of adventure and a spirit of communication.

Behind my ideas there is the certitude that it is possible to present the audience with truly lyrical performances allying the theatre and music in thousands of new and vivid fashions, from instrumental theatre to jazz operas, via operas from the reign of contemporary music, via video operas, musical theatre, via theatricalized recitals and so on. This might even lead us to taking up certain works from the traditional lyrical repertoire, but then in a completely new context both on the material and the aesthetical level.

It is in this spirit that "Un Théâtre pour la Musique" has taken part in the enterprise of the "Rebus Malheureux" and is presently involved in the creation of the Système du Monde. At a time, when the setting has achieved so great—if not to say outstanding—importance in lyrical productions, this cooperation between a composer and a scenographer allows to go further with this incessantly repeated question: What does the theatre as such have of its own? What is the theatre? What is musical theatre?

Michel Rostain