

François-Bernard Mâche (self portrait)  
(1935)

I.

I can report on two experiences which--while they did not have the dimension of Lutosławski's--have left deep traces.

One was my encounter with *musique concrète* in 1955. It was at that time that works by Pierre Henry were released on record. It was not any particular composition that interested me but the new sound world of concrete music.

The other experience occurred by chance: I heard Xenakis's *Metastasis* in a German radio broadcast. That will have been in 1957 or 1958. I was a young composer, still rather green, and while I could not yet offer an alternative to serial music with my own works, I felt an antipathy towards serialism which was similar to Xenakis's. His "Metastasis" proved for me that there existed a new musical language which had nothing to do with serialism. The significance of that encounter could be likened to that with concrete music.

Xenakis was working towards the same end as Varèse had done and I believe he succeeded in achieving many things where the older composer had failed. When I first heard "Metastasis", I had not yet come across Varèse; years later, his ideas related to mass were to make a stronger impact than Xenakis's researches.

In 1960, I composed a piece which I called *Volume*. It was scored for orchestra and included elements of concrete music. "Volume" merged both influences: the sound world of concrete music and the organisation of orchestral sounds as suggested by Xenakis. It was no imitation of "Metastasis"--Xenakis's music rather served as encouragement to look for my own path.

II.

My work has centered primarily on sounds. As I told you earlier, I was initially fascinated by the new sonorities of *musique concrète*. Soon, however, I set myself the task of conquering reality. To begin with, in my tape music, I was happy manipulating unusual sounds, I then moved on to similarly unusual but real sounds with which I attempted to create a kind of fantastic reality.

In the beginning, I was steered by my instincts; later on, theoretical considerations connected with music history took over. I am increasingly convinced that the obsessive historical view that has put its stamp on 20<sup>th</sup> century music since 1912-1913 has been losing its relevance. In judging musical compositions it is less and less possible to rely on notions such as past or future.

In my view, we are no longer supposed to seek novelty for novelty's sake (after all, the possibilities have more or less been exhausted). Instead, we have to focus our attention on the

research of archetypes. Today, I am interested in the universal values of music. My methods include the comparison of musical systems and the study of musical structures used by animals. Their signals do not in my opinion serve purely as communicative functions but possess in the animal kingdom an aesthetic aspect as well. In my book <sup>1</sup> I set out to prove that there is no basic conflict between nature and culture. Consequently, in starting out from natural models in my own work, I merely draw on one of the characteristic features of music history.

III.

My reply to the second question is an indication that I attribute no importance to seeking novelty at any price. That tendency characterised the epoch ruled by the *idée fixe* of historicism.

Nor am I afraid of repetition. It is no sin to use certain elements again, provided you do so not to make your job easier. I have in the past re-used every aspect of an earlier composition, for I felt that at first go I had not succeeded in unfolding the possibilities inherent in it.

For me, music is nothing but repetition. It is a specific way of interpreting the world of nature, one of the possible replies we can give to the sounds surrounding us.

1983 (Tokyo, à l'occasion du festival Music today où j'étais invité)

<sup>1</sup> Musique, Mythe, Nature. Klincksieck. Paris 1983