

Peter Adriaansz

No. 09 Music of Mercy pt.3 (1997)

Commissioned by: Percussion group The Hague & Aurelia Saxophone Quartet /Netherlands Fund for the Creation of Music

Info/Program Note:

Music of Mercy pt.3 derives its title from a quote by the English author G.K. Chesterton, which runs something like this: 'if you leave a white fence alone for long enough, it will eventually become a black fence'. At the time of writing this piece, in 1997, I was already heavily preoccupied with trying to find an answer to the question: 'how much does one really need to do (or conversely, how much can one just leave up to things 'being as they are')?' In this way, like *Chant Negatif* before it, *Music of Mercy* attempts to deal with the relationship between Man and Nature - and the degree to which Man feels he must 'act and alter'. Technically, it consisted of the 'pursuit of the single event': something which happens only once but is yet a structural component of the form.

The piece pursues these ideas in three movements, which gradually tilt in favor of Nature, but take the premise that 'Mercy' (one's freedom - the 'single event') can only be achieved under hard rules. Hence the piece is severely constructed, but a good deal less heady than the preceding words might lead one to think.

The first two parts are both written according to the square root form: the first very active, with quick successions of heterogeneous materials, changing course with each attack of the Chinese Opera Gong; and the second very empty, filled with 'small' sounds and a lot of empty space. Both parts include a 'single event' at some point.

The short third part finally takes a very contrived notion, which was prevalent in those years of New Complexity, namely the notion that 'more layering creates more depth' and proceeds to ridicule this idea through super-imposing six separate layers of information - all composed independently as separate 'layers', yet all together conjuring up no more than a kind of pastoral atmosphere with saxophone arpeggios, imitations of bird-calls, rolling thunder, literal nature samples of wind and rain and a far off tolling of bells.

instrumentation:

6 Percussion
Saxophone Quartet

duration:

18'

First Performance:

Percussion group The Hague
Aurelia Saxophone Quartet
1997
Paradiso, Amsterdam
Cond. Micha Hamel

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