

# **UNI-MODERNITY VERSUS PLURI-MODERNITIES**

**An interview with Jean-Claude Eloy**  
*Presented and commented by Avaera and Makiko*

*English translation revised by Meredith Escudier*

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*In this new interview, Jean-Claude Eloy is questioned about a recent book by Célestin Deliège, entitled "Fifty years of musical modernity: from Darmstadt to Ircam". Several inaccuracies from the book in the text about Eloy are raised in these comments. Beyond any polemical debate, the interview places this text in a critical perspective by comparing it with two other books that deal with the same subject.*

The three controversial works are the following publications, all in the French language:

- Célestin Deliège : "Cinquante ans de modernité musicale : de Darmstadt à l'Ircam" ("Fifty years of musical modernity : from Darmstadt to Ircam") - Contribution historiographique à une musicologie critique (Historiographical contribution to a critical musicology). 1024 pages. Editions Mardaga, Belgium, 2003.
- Marie-Claire Mussat : "Trajectoires de la musique au XXe siècle" ("Trajectories of music in the 20th century"). 208 pages. Editions Klincksieck, Paris, 2002.
- Jean-Noël von der Weid : "La musique du XXe siècle" ("Music from the 20th century"). 442 pages. Editions Hachette Litteratures, Paris, 2nd revised and corrected publishing, 1997.

## UNI-MODERNITY VERSUS PLURI-MODERNITIES

Avaera : *Last year, after the release of Célestin Deliège's voluminous work "Fifty years of musical modernity : from Darmstadt to Ircam" (1), I was intrigued by the contents of one of the paragraphs, beautifully entitled "Jean-Claude Eloy : the dream of a cultural expansion of poetics". This theme was seemingly positive in appearance. To have a frame of reference, I consulted two other works, more modest in length, nevertheless substantial and rather recent : one by Marie-Claire Mussat, "Trajectories of music in the 20th century" (2); another one by Jean-Noël von der Weid, "Music of the 20th century" (3).*

*From the first readings, I was surprised by the complete difference expressed (about Eloy) through the work of these three musicologists : differences in points of view, information, references, and sources.*

*Given the persistency of these contradictions, it seemed of utmost importance to clarify a number of facts. To that end, I put together a summary of the various comments, before questioning the composer directly.*

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**Makiko :** According to Célestin Deliège (p. 301 - 302), Eloy is strongly connected with the school of his master teacher, Boulez (serialism, post-serialism), along with other French composers from the same generation (Amy, Mefano).

**For Marie-Claire Mussat,** on the contrary (p. 133 - 135), Eloy's driving force is clearly situated under the theme "Orient-Occident": multiculturalism, influences of non-western music (together with Takemitsu, Isang Yun, La Monte Young and certain works by Stockhausen).

**Finally, for Jean-Noël von der Weid** (p. 238 and 257), Eloy is placed within the chapter of "experimental music" (on the side of Cage, Carter, Crumb, Feldman, the minimalists, as well as Bussotti and Schnabel).

**Curiously, the electro-acoustic practices** (intensely used by Eloy from the 70's onward) do not appear to be highlighted by these three authors, whose points of view are totally different.

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Avaera : *Jean-Claude Eloy, who is right ? How should we place the works that you have produced ?*

Jean-Claude Eloy : All three are right, but only partially. These three orientations are rather like "root-sources". But are these labels essential ? The difficulty of classification we notice here reveals the real intertwining and multiplicity which reign in the various categories of so-called "contemporary" music – a term which I would like to replace because everything taking place around us today is in fact "contemporary", and part of our lives - even our interpretation of the past.

Contrary to the situation which prevailed in the 50's and 60's, there is no longer a dominant "school" today, or more exactly a "theoretical vector of thought", amply shared by an international community. Therefore, one sees the belief in a unidirectional sense of history fading away. No longer is there a true "musical reference theory", common to all, within the framework of modern music. This observation illustrates the magnitude of current difficulties because it is the first time that such a situation has existed in the history of learned music from western origins. I wonder, and would be tempted to say today that contrary to received ideas, serialism (which aspired in its beginnings to be "the" new common reference theory) dimmed, not because of its exaggerated excess of theory, but perhaps on the contrary because of its restrictive limitations. The difficulties for theorizing beyond certain limits arose partially from the complexity of new materials, engendered by the striking development of new technologies. Today, a great part of electronic music has grabbed the massive industrial ground ; placing the policies of old-style "research centres" in an awkward position. These difficulties have also arisen from the encounter with other theories and non-western musical practices, which belonged, as recently as fifty years ago, to the realm of "ethnomusicology", but among which some (let us take only the example of classical music from India) have become popular world-wide, continually increasing their audiences for half of a century.

A : *These two grounds (electro-acoustic music and music from non-western origins) are a part of both domains in which you have been strongly committed since the 70's, without ever turning your back on your past as a classical musician, trained at the Conservatory of Paris, and as a "post-serial" composer, trained in Darmstadt and Basel, with Boulez and Stockhausen.*

JCE : Contrary to some superficial comments, I have never repudiated anything I have done. To take a series of successive metamorphoses and to define these as a succession of breaks is an analysis without any foundation

and which is used by some to systematically mask the problem of *politics*, of *society*, and the *working means* composers can or cannot access in our continually transforming societies.

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**Makiko : In Célestin Deliège's lengthy work, I found some surprising things in the text about Eloy.**

The author begins with a very positive tone about Eloy's work at the beginning of his career, that is, some works from the 60's, conducted several times by Boulez and other great conductors (Maderna, Bour, etc... ; "Etude III", "Equivalences"). He continues to support the cause of the composer with works from the beginning of the 70's, such as "Faisceaux-Diffractions", and especially "Kâmakalâ", whose success he emphasizes warmly : "... *Kâmakalâ ... will probably remain his master work and one of the happiest from the second half of the century*" (p. 301). He even goes much further because in a footnote, he comments : "*It is surprising [...] to note that musicological literature, mainly American, ignores this work and even often the name of its author*" (p. 302).

Then abruptly, he seems to break loose from the composer's development : "*After this grandiose piece*" (*Kâmakalâ*) "*Eloy was in a position to occupy a major place in European music ; he seems to have refused it*". He then blames Eloy "*for getting closer to Stockhausen*" (4), then refutes a work such as *Shânti* that he considers "*excessively long*", accusing Eloy of following "*in Hymnen's footsteps, but without Hymnen's degree of coherence*" (p. 302).

More generally, he seems disappointed to see Eloy more committed to the electro-acoustic field, and less to the field of writing. Then he asserts: "*From this time on, works by Jean-Claude Eloy have been rare*". He even adds this curious comment (which is neither negative, nor positive, but which is debatable) : "*very conscious of social reality and technical obstacles, did he not think too much ; is he not one of the vanquished by the great disillusionment in the world as foreseen by Max Weber and painfully described by Marcel Gauchet ?*". Finally, quoting an interview which Eloy gave in 1972 to François-Bernard Mâche (let us keep in mind that this book was finished in 2002 and published in Belgium in 2003, or more than thirty years after the interview quoted as a reference ! ...), he brings up the questioning (or rebellion ?) that Eloy then seemed to raise against the domination of the "musical note" in the West, as opposed to

"sound". In fact, Deliège seems sincere in his attempt to understand Eloy, but hesitates to follow him, because, although he recognizes that "...notation, in a literal sense, has strongly determined western music", he reaffirms that "...we owe a great part of the richness of our writing to it...". To conclude, Deliège recognizes that if this writing "... favored the proliferation of signs [...] it is no less true that it is dangerous to cast off everything that has been gradually imposed on us for centuries : one does not embrace a culture, one grows out of it" (p. 302).

By comparing the text on Eloy written by Célestin Deliège with both of the above-mentioned books, I was surprised to note that the works by Eloy brought up by these various authors are in no way the same ! Marie-Claire Mussat comments on the work of the composer starting from "Shânti", without referring to any previous stages, and then she goes well beyond, up to "Anâhata" or "Erkos", passing by "Gaku-no-Michi", "Yo-In", etc... Her comments begin exactly where Célestin Deliège's leave off ! It is as if these two authors were speaking about two different composers, given how divergent their references are.

To clarify these contradictions, I made a quick calculation. The works quoted by Deliège are the first works by Eloy played in public in the 60's, up until his beginnings in electro-acoustics in 1972-73, that is, from "Etude III" until "Shânti". This represents about 4h.45' of music. I chose not to mention the works from his early youth : twenty four numbers from an opus of about 4h.15' in length.

Starting with "Shânti", I see that the works which follow, put end to end (from "Gaku-no-Michi" to the "Anâhata" cycle), represent about 14h.40' of music. Some of these works are based on original sound situations, built around various creative soloists (solo-performers, traditional musicians from other continents) : thus, individual, independent performers - not institutional groups. These soloists are most often integrated into a rich electro-acoustic sound, created in numerous highly-reputed, specialized studios or institutes : 1 - NHK, Tokyo ; 2 - Sonologie, Utrecht ; 3 - Sweelinck Conservatorium, Amsterdam ; 4 - INA / GRM, Paris ; 5 - ART, Geneva ; 6 - Technische Universität, Berlin ; 7 - again the WDR of Cologne (which gave rise to the production of "Shânti" in 1972-73, and also supported the production of "Erkos" in 1990-91 in its new Annostrasse studio). In addition to these works, one should add the work on the "Liberations" cycle, inaugurated in 1989 (with "Butsumyôe", "Sappho Hikètis"), which represents 4h.20' more of music or a total of 19 hours of music, systematically *ignored* by

**Célestin Deliège's assertions ("... *From this time on* [Shânti, 1972], works by Jean-Claude Eloy have been rare ...").**

For a work of musicology, this assertion is already disturbing ! It is contradicted by the facts. The question then that should be asked is : "Were these works (subsequent to "Shânti") so confidential that an established and influential musicologist such as Célestin Deliège was not informed about them ?". The answer to this question is even more disturbing because by studying the catalog of the performances of these works, I noticed that they have been clearly presented, played and replayed (by Eloy, and his various performers) in festivals and venues most renowned for their *modernity*, the defender of which Célestin Deliège proclaims himself to be ! These works were in fact performed more often than the prior works to which Deliège exclusively refers. And their public performances took place on an international scale, mostly for monographic concerts occupying complete evenings. From the "Autumn festival in Paris" (five times, always for monographic concerts) to the day-marathon of the "Music Today" festival in Tokyo. From the Donaueschingen festival ("Donaueschinger Musiktage", with two complete concerts around "Anâhata" in 1990) to the Berlin "Inventionen" festival (twice), or the series "Musik der Zeit" in Cologne (twice). From the "Autumn in Warsaw" festival (for four complete concerts with the Polish-Radio) to the "Holland Festival" in Amsterdam. From the National Theater of Japan in Tokyo to the "Presence" festival of Radio-France in Paris. As well as other festivals : "Almeida" in London ; "Sigma" in Bordeaux (three times) ; "Biennal of contemporary music" in Zagreb ; "38th Rugissants" in Grenoble (twice) ; the "Pan-Music" festival of Tokyo ; "Musica", Strasbourg (twice) ; the festival of Wallonie ; Goethe-Instituts of Sao Paolo and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil (with the Museu de Arte and the Cecilia Meireles concert-hall) ; the Museum of Contemporary Art of Chicago ; the SMCQ in Montreal ; "New Music Concerts" in Toronto, and other places in Indonesia, Hong-Kong, Kyoto, Berkeley, Yale, Austin, New York, etc...

This incoherence cannot simply be the fruit of ignorance. Consequently, how must one interpret these considerable gaps ?

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A : *I'll go back to the question : to what do you attribute this incoherence ?*

JCE : Deliège might as well have written a book entitled "Pierre Boulez; his life, his work, his institution, his circle of acquaintances". His project would have gained in clarity. Instead, he tries to implicate quantities of names which have nothing directly to do with the subject of this book. But he does so without any respect for their individualities. What do American minimalists have to do with a work entitled "From Darmstadt to Ircam" ? What is Takemitsu doing under such a banner, he who never had anything to do with either Darmstadt or Ircam in his lifetime ? - Takemitsu was a friend of Xénakis, and also a personal friend of mine, which authorizes me to vouch for him. He was in fact very critical of the French policy of institutional centralization. In Deliège's book, everything is presented and considered in connection with a *centre of the world* that extends from Darmstadt to Ircam, by way of Pierre Boulez. At no time did it occur to him that this "centre of the musical galaxy" could (just like our real galaxy) reveal the presence of a powerful "black hole" (what the astrophysicists call "an attractor"), a black hole which attracts and absorbs all the surrounding energies, and does not let them escape again. It is moreover what happened to an entire younger generation that rushed into the institution by career opportunism (and anyway, did they have a choice ?), never allowing themselves the expression of any critical perspective.

A : *I find here the idea which you already tried to sketch in your short text from 1965 entitled "Heritage and Vigilance" ("Inheritance and Attentiveness") which, at the time, caught the attention of a few French journalists, such as Maurice Fleuret. But do you think that Deliège (whose work is impressive - you recognize it yourself) is an impartial observer ? A short biography published in the back of this book mentions that the author led "... seminars for the DEA degree in Paris, ENS and IRCAM, for almost ten years". Did Deliège contact you before the publication of his work ? Did he ask you for more recent information about your life and your work - as most musicologists, researchers and journalists do before publishing their texts ?*

JCE : Obviously not. Such a summary speaks for itself. But I do not wish to make a personal affair out of it. As you say, certain aspects of this book are excellent. Boulez's thinking is very seriously approached there. His musical œuvre is very well analyzed, in its spirit and according to the criteria which we ourselves assimilated in the early 60's, during Boulez's composition class at the Music Academy of Basel - at the time when he published "Thinking music today". I always considered this period of my youth as indisputable. It never seemed necessary to question it, except to feel the need to surpass it so

as not to lock myself into it. Now, Célestin Deliège's problem is that he has double-locked himself there for half a century.

A : *As Deliège would have it, your musical work apparently stopped in 1977 as he makes no further reference to your work after "Fluctuante-Immuable" (Orchestre de Paris, 1977). By chance, I notice that this is exactly the year of your public and inevitable confrontation with what was then the "new institutional circle of acquaintances" of your former teacher, Boulez (the beginnings of Ircam-EIC). Coincidence ? Furthermore, I notice that the "French social model" (we could expand that to the model of all "Francophony") has thus far offered you no venue for a response to these publications, no access to an alternative channel of information. Absolutely nothing.*

JCE : The system has been more and more muzzled and silenced. For example, for thirty years of my life (and more widely during the 70's and 80's), I was frequently invited to radio programs on Radio-France : France-Culture notably, or I even produced or co-produced broadcasts. When there were burning issues, the journalists came to us. All of this has been progressively censored, eliminated, and blocked from 1992 on, and increasingly so from the late 90's and early 2000's. These strategies have been deliberate and come from the ideological and political manipulation permanently organized around the musical Institution, with a capital "I". Music has become *the least free* of all the arts.

But what strikes me here, and will be the summary of this first comment, is seeing how certain authors self-appropriate the mission to inform others, to be the influential thinkers, to enlighten a profession, all the while refusing the most elementary duty of inquiring on their own !

A : *Did you personally know Deliège ?*

JCE : Of course. I met him rather often during the period of my youth when I was present, as a direct pupil of Boulez, at emblematic places of the time ("Domaine Musical" in Paris, "Reconnaisances des musiques modernes" in Brussels, Darmstadt's summer courses, etc...).

A : *You have just brought up the idea that serialism was not that complex from a theoretical point of view – though it's always been blamed for being too complex. This is a paradox, isn't it ?*

JCE : Seemingly, yes. But beware. For that matter, Deliège himself makes that same argument several times and very rightly so. The *application* of

serial principles has sometimes been very complex and hyper-virtuoso on behalf of certain important and inescapable composers. But the *theoretical foundation* has often remained rather simple. Very often, composers found themselves compensating for this lack by inventing supplementary or different rules. We have to keep in mind the quantity of new cultural, social and technological factors that have come into play more and more quickly and influenced the development of music during all the second half of the 20th century. Such a novelty of sound and cultural phenomena could not be *legislated* by a theory stemming, for the most part, from an "overcoming-sublimation" of the most sophisticated past of western learned music. Hence, the remarkable *opening up* of Stockhausen's development, criticized for years by the most dogmatic voices from the "avant-garde" academy.

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A : *In the text which is kindly devoted to you by Célestin Deliège, I have noticed the conclusive sentence ; "One does not embrace a culture, one grows out of it". What is your reaction ?*

JCE : As far as I'm concerned, to proclaim this kind of thing, in such a sententious way, is a prime example of an assertion that is too short and incomplete, bordering on blindness. It is a very conservative conception of culture. In a time of extensive and accelerated communication such as ours, wanting to limit the mechanisms of "cultural legacy" to the strict inheritance passed on by the *historic moment* of birth, and the *geographic place* of this birth, is too restrictive.

We are living in a time that is shattering two taboos.

1) The first taboo is that cultural inheritance must be limited only to an "*historical place*" ; the immediate, one-sided, unidirectional historical moment. Unlike this logic, our time, more than any other, confronts our eyes and ears with a greater and greater wealth stemming from *all the times* in history. It makes of us the *live* witnesses of humanity's past (just as for current events, simultaneously) - notably by the development of a museographical and videographical interactivity that is more and more intense.

2) The second taboo is that cultural inheritance should be limited only to the *geographic place* of birth ; exclusive, harmonious, well-balanced and surrounded by borders. Naturally, during all of my youth, I studied western

writing : harmony, counterpoint, fugue. I played all of the composers on the piano : classical, romantic, modern. I absorbed all of these foods, with passion! But very early in my youth, I *also* liked, and just as much, *all* of the types of music in the world. I discovered music from Bali by going to a spectacle at the Chaillot Theatre with my parents at about the age of 14. In Paris, I frequented the Centre d'Etudes des Musiques Orientales (*Centre of Studies for Oriental Music*) towards the age of 19. Quantities of records from all of the classical musical forms in the world accumulated around me and accompanied me all through my student life. They became *integral parts* of my cultural food, in the same way as the classical, romantic, polytonal, dodecaphonic, polymodal, or serial music of the West.

If our friend Célestin Deliège is exclusively "grown" from a culture which extends from Bach to Boulez, I have no objection to that. I claim it just as much as he does ! But he should understand, as a man of culture, that this exclusivism is no longer compulsory nowadays, that other modes "of cultural begettings" are possible. And that art, that culture have this potentiality of power to stimulate intertwining, variable, transversal, multiple, renewed paternities, and sometimes even "a-historical" - in the sense of a *pluri-dimensional* movement of history, and not just the *unidirectional* movement he refers to that underpins his point of view.

"Cultural begetting" through multi-culture, *geographically and historically*, is an inescapable fact of modern life. Certain models and archetypes expressed in philosophical, political and artistic realms can be found here. The utopian ideology of a revolutionary unidirectional progress from an exclusively European source (an idea that I once shared with many others), is today confronted by factors of historical complexity that are vaster and more subtle than ever before. "Globalization" also exists in culture. And the ascendancy of learned music from the West-European (this irritating superiority complex) will some day be questioned, by necessity.

I remember a conversation, years ago with the ethnomusicologist Mireille Helffer. She explained to me that to broaden the education of children, she made them listen every day, from their earliest years, to music from the whole world. She said to me: "*For them, these different sources of music became as natural as the music that can be heard every day on the radio*".

I notice, for that matter, that this persistent prejudice (that one must be "born" into a culture to be able to live it and understand it - which is a downright racist prejudice) is expressed essentially within *European* circles of music. More precisely within European circles of "learned" music. Because

when it comes to popular forms of music, the most creative jazz or numerous other fields using digital arts, this has not been the case for a long time !

I have never heard this idea in the United States. I have rarely heard it in Asia. Indeed, the assertion of such an idea in Asia would immediately condemn to obsolescence the numbers of Asian musicians who have received their education *exclusively through western music* ! How can Célestin Deliège account for all these musicians and Asian students who have been converted by the West to the religion of Western music, who stream into Paris, Berlin, New York or San Francisco, to conservatories, universities and music schools? Will he say to them : "*You were not born into western music, so as a consequence, you have no chance to be able to understand it in depth. You cannot embrace our culture : you should be born into it*". This point of view is ridiculous and indefensible in our time.

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A : *Apart from what concerns you directly, do you have any other comments about this book, from a more general point of view ?*

JCE : My third comment goes back to the title chosen by Célestin Deliège for his work : "Fifty years of musical modernity". I question the existence of a single musical modernity, in the singular.

He exacerbates things by these two direct institutional references : "From Darmstadt to Ircam" (which seems to imply a relation of continuity and flowing from one to the other). To suggest that the spirit of Darmstadt would have continued in a permanent institution like Ircam is a questionable and unfounded assertion.

Furthermore, to observe history only through the filter of pilot institutions seems to me to send the situation of the artist back to a *state of dependence* and loss of *individuality* (not to be confused with individualism), which I consider a very grave infringement on the artist's *freedom*. That is a very academic view and one that sees a safe social status for the artist only through positions pompously baptized as "research functions".

I lived Darmstadt, as a young student in my adolescence. I can assure you that the spirit which reigned there had nothing to do with the institutional and academic constraints that tend to be so imperative today almost everywhere in the world. It was even quite the opposite. The spirit of Darmstadt does not

necessarily end up in institutions such as Ircam. There is no automatic chain from one to another, through the application of some designs borrowed from a formal and hollow Marxism. The "laws of history", once again, reveal themselves to be more rebellious and sly than the statements from any of our learned apologists for the "single thought".

If Ircam had been the continuation of Darmstadt, then Stockhausen would have exercised an *active* role there - and not simply as a passing guest. Xenakis would have *actively* participated in its development, instead of being driven to publicly protest at my side in 1981 against the hegemony of this institution – a hegemony programmed far in advance by its founder. And Béria would not have left the institution so quickly to go and found his own working centre in Florence ; etc.

A : *But Stockhausen refused to be part of it.*

JCE : I know. He later confirmed this to me. But if the structure had been conceived otherwise, and in a more openly *artistic* way, he would have probably participated more effectively. At the beginning of the 60's, in Darmstadt, and during my studies in Basel, I witnessed numerous internal struggles, often very fierce. Sometimes, Boulez was accused of trying *to brake* the movement. But in spite of the debates and confrontations, all these people managed to express themselves inside the same framework, with their growing differences, but without ever cracking the framework.

A : *And Xenakis ?*

JCE : Please, re-read his article from 1981 (5). When - from Tokyo, in 1977 - I clashed with Boulez's entourage (Nicholas Snowman in particular), who were playing a game of *deceit* and absolutely unacceptable *manipulation*, and things quickly degenerated, Xenakis called me a little while later to say that he had not been surprised by these conflicts : "*These people are deliberately trying to destabilize you*" he said to me... which they have never stopped doing since.

What Célestin Deliège has kept totally under silence in his book is the *political* aspect of the institution, with regard to the world of modern music. He defends a cause which, from the very beginning, was engaged by the will of a man and his circle of acquaintances towards the goal of *confiscating the future*, and the *means* of the future - or what could be considered as such at the time.

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A : *What comments do you have on the two other books which we chose for the sake of comparison ?*

JCE : Marie-Claire Mussat's more modest book has the wisdom to refer, in its title, to "trajectories" in the plural. That implies this inescapable multiplicity of our time. It is also true for Jean-Noël von der Weid's book, based too on the idea of a lively and mixed pluralism. From the beginning, this creates an enormous difference in the orientations of these three books, going beyond their weighty differences and volumes !

Furthermore, I observe that the three affiliations with which I see myself honored and which are attributed to me (one could almost say ; three "paradigms") reveal a specific "geographical" orientation of their authors' views. In the first affiliation (Deliège), they are French references (Paris, the "Domaine Musical", Boulez, etc.) which form the data to which he exclusively assimilates me. In the second affiliation (Mussat), Asian references attributed to me ("Orient-Occident") are in the majority. In the third affiliation (von der Weid), American references to which he associates me (transversely, very indirectly) seem more numerous. I lived in France. I lived in Japan and sometimes taught in Asia. I taught and lived in the United States. It is correct.

A : *It is at the same time partially correct and completely contradictory. Hence, the difficulties to include you in a musical world which is still very compartmentalized and which practices the game of labels. Please, speak to us about the affiliation in which Marie-Claire Mussat places you : this influence of the East on western music, which is interesting as an idea and debate.*

JCE : It is a possible affiliation, that I myself openly claimed during several periods, but which should be clearly put into perspective. I advanced this "Orient-Occident" theme at a time when *nobody spoke about it* in the sphere of contemporary music activity (with the exception of Messiaen and Stockhausen, but in directions which were very specific to each). It was in 1971, at the SMIP festival in Paris, in a lecture entitled : "The Orient and us : chances for a conjecture", which accompanied the creation of my work "Kâmakalâ". I also wrote and published different texts and studies on this subject (6). But today, this theme seems to me a little bit reductive.

In 1982, while doing a series of lectures at the universities of Taipei, I recall a very interesting comment from a young Chinese student. This student got up and said to me : "*You should abandon this terminology, in the shape of*

*contrasting arguments, opposing the East and the West. Here, one does not think in such a way anymore. We live our two cultures day by day, Western and Chinese. They overlap to such a degree that we can no longer really draw a clear line between them. So we live both of them, which now together just make one".*

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A : *To conclude, some words on Jean-Noël von der Weid's book (3). In this book, the author places you in the chapter dedicated to experimental music. It is rather strange. Aren't you amazed ?*

JCE : Experimental music does not necessarily grow out of the invention of a machine, a "technological experiment", or an exaggerated form of behavior in a specific direction, such as random techniques. To explore the voice of a woman solo-performer, a voice that lies completely "outside norms " (as I did, for example, in "Sappho Hikètis", for the voice of Fatima Miranda), and succeed in composing something for her that is coherent, could be considered a form of "experimental" method. To be recognized in Japan (7) as the first composer who attempted to "compose" something original for traditional Buddhist Monks from the Tendai and Shingon sects (a composition to be learned and sung with *their own vocal techniques*), is also a form of "musical experiment". I did it in "Approaching the Meditative Flame", as in "Anâhata". "The experimental" can also grow out of *aesthetics* and is not *necessarily technological*. As for electro-acoustics, I did indeed explore this direction very thoroughly during certain times of my life. "Gaku-no-Michi" proves it, even if the "experimental" aspect is less technical and more aesthetic, and linked to the duration. The use of the electronic studio was not, at this time, particularly commonplace, especially pushed to such extremes !

Personally, I think that Jean-Noël von der Weid made a link (perhaps subconscious) between the word "experimenting" and the word "exploring", which is not exactly the same thing. My path belongs rather to this second nuance. "To explore" unfamiliar lands is a little different (although parallel in some ways) from a project that consists of "proceeding to an experiment" ; this last language relating more to the scientific approach.

A : *I have here a copy of a more developed and substantial article that Jean-Noël von der Weid wrote about you in 1996 in the Swiss magazine "Dissonance" (8). At the beginning of this article, he says : "The program of the eighth year of the 38e Rugissants of Grenoble features the French*

*composer Jean-Claude Eloy, creator of worlds of sound that are as subtle and elusive as they are gripping and telluric. He is often misunderstood – or rather he is incompletely understood or misinterpreted, as if his musical isolation had been organized". This takes us back to Célestin Deliège, doesn't it ?*

JCE : No comment.

A : *At the end of this same article, he says : "So what are record companies waiting for to record the works of such an important composer ? One would think that the truly original and independent creators can no longer, as Varèse once said, refuse to die ; but they are condemned to such a fate". Was this call ever heard ?*

JCE : Never.

*English translation revised by Meredith Escudier*

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- (1) Célestin Deliège : "Cinquante ans de modernité musicale : de Darmstadt à l'Ircam" ("Fifty years of musical modernity : from Darmstadt to Ircam") - Contribution historiographique à une musicologie critique (Historiographical contribution to a critical musicology). 1024 pages. Editions Mardaga, Belgium, 2003.
- (2) Marie-Claire Mussat : "Trajectoires de la musique au XXe siècle" ("Trajectories of music in the 20th century"). 208 pages. Editions Klincksieck, Paris, 2002.
- (3) Jean-Noël von der Weid : "La musique du XXe siècle" ("Music of the 20th century"). 442 pages. Editions Hachette Literatures, Paris, 2nd revised and corrected edition, 1997.
- (4) Nevertheless, in a note on "Equivalences", drafted in 1964, Eloy already awards to Stockhausen the fact of having encouraged him - in some days of class in Basel - to release himself from certain serial bans, notably the use of "decomposed clusters", very widely used in the writing of "Equivalences" - a work praised by Deliège.
- (5) Iannis Xenakis : *"It must change ! "*. In "Le Matin de Paris", January 26, 1981.
- (6) "Music of the Orient : our familiar universe". (1968) - Published in "La musique et la vie" ("Music and life"), volume 2, OCORA (Office de Coopération Radiophonique - Office of Radio Cooperation), ORTF, Paris 1969. "To finish it with exoticism" (1982) - Published in "Temps actuels" ("Current Times") : special issue dedicated to the Autumn festival in Paris (1982). "L'autre versant des sons" ("The other side of sounds") (1995) - Published in "Internationale de l'imaginaire" ("International of the imagination"), new series, number 4 ; "La musique et le monde" ("Music and the world"), Babel, Maison des cultures du monde (House of the cultures of the world), Paris 1995. "Une rencontre nécessaire" ("A necessary encounter" (1996) - Published in the program of the festival "Why Note", Dijon 2002 ; etc.
- (7) Motegi Kiyoko -The Creation of tradition at the National Theatre of Japan: A Descriptive Documentation. Works commissioned by the National Theatre, Tokyo. Contemporary Japanese Music, Volume 3. Published by JAPAN ARTS COUNCIL. Theatre Research Office, Research and training Department, National Theatre. Published by Shunjūsha Publishing Company, 2-18-6 Soto-Kanda, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0021, JAPAN
- (8) Jean-Noël von der Weid : *"The sound cosmogony of Jean-Claude Eloy"*. "Dissonanz - Dissonance" - die neue schweizerische musikzeitschrift / the new Swiss musical review ; N° 51, February, 1997.

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