

„...figures perforées ...“

Prior to the work on „...*figures perforées* ...“, I worked extensively on a specific compositional technique by using two pianos tuned one sixth of a tone apart from each other in the piece „...*danses oniriques*...“. I prepared a little number of pitches with rubbers in both instruments in order to make sound them like bongos. The basic idea was not to have “prepared sounds” but to have sort of an “empty key click” in order to build one voice microtonal scales by using both pianos in a quick and brilliant tempo (one piano plays a prepared note while the other plays a regular pitch and vice versa). By using this technique, the whole microtonal pool of both instruments could be handled in a quick and quite traditionally pianist way.

In the piece „...*figures perforées* ...“, I tried to “transpose” this technique, using a combination of woodwind instruments: flute and clarinet, where the flute has to be tuned one quarter tone lower than the clarinet. Thus, the piece uses basically two microtonal melodic lines in a more or less parallel motion, where the flute always plays the quartertones and the clarinet the regular pitches. The instrumental lines always have to “jump” from one to the other melodic line. This “job-sharing” results in a special colorist aspect of the music.

At the beginning of the piece, the pianist creates resonance sounds with the lower strings of the instrument by playing heavy chords releasing them. The player thereby evokes “shadow-sounds” out of the piano and the little improvisational gestures function as little comments to the dark sounds in the reverb. Towards the end of this piano introduction, the string instruments take over the resonance function of the piano pedal.

These two ideas: the piano solo and the woodwind-microtonal part are appearing in different moments and situations in order to be finally reunited at the end of the piece followed by a calm and lucid coda.

Michael Pelzel, 2006