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SYMPHONY

No. 1

Music for the Inner Ear

OP. 10



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for piano and
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I.

MODERATO

The sudden sound of trumpets
marks the beginning of the first movement.

Played in unison and with a crystalline clarity,
the sound of the trumpets
conquers every bit of the room.

The tone is held relentlessly for a very long time,
not even to be abrupted
when the trumpeters gasp for air.

The tone is played
without any vibrato,
and it has a cold
and unsentimental character to it
– dehumanized in every way,
and without
any emotional intention
whatsoever.

The dynamics are a mezzo- forte,
and the note,
which is played,
is a concert E-flat.

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Sounds of wood.

Sporadically,
and without any clear feeling
of rhythm or tempo,
the sound of a woodblock mixes in
– just like wooden raindrops.

One drop at first – then several,
and after a while,
a massive rainstorm,
caused by multiple woodblocks
now playing together
on top of each other.

By now the sound is strong.

Underneath it all,
a closely woven blanket of sound,
is coming to life.

The strings of the double basses
are set in motion with the bow,
giving birth to a fragile
and untempered universe of overtones
– constantly changing,
as if the tones barely erupt
before they perish again.

This microcosmos
of ever changing tones forms
a blanket of sound,
for the rest of the orchestra
to lye on top of.

Without hardly noticing them,
the other string instruments:
violins, cellos and violas, make their entrance.

In a slowly descending movement,
densely voiced, and without any way
of telling where one tone begins or ends,
the sounds of the strings
melt together into a cold-warm bolt
of sonic light.

It moves through the soundscape
in an ever descending movement,
repeating itself, over and over again,
almost like the respiration
of an ancient mystic being.

The sound of clarinets joins the sound of trumpets
in playing the unison E-flat.

At first in a perfect pitch,
and then pulling the pitch downwards,
a quartertone below the trumpets
– creating an immense interference.

The interference is very strong,
making the sound become
a physical and bodily experience,
pounding at the tympanic membrane
in rhythmical patterns.

The dynamics of the orchestra is now
a very strong forte.

Sharp sounds of piccolo flutes
cut rapidly through
the sound of all the other instruments,
just as a knife through butter.

Like a beehive,
the piccolo flutes create
a frenetic sounding universe, generating
extreme high frequency sounds,
that move around
in microtonal ways
without any melodic structure.

The sound has the character
of a fire alarm going off
– it's intense,
very invasive,
and physically confronting.

There's no traces of melody,
tonality or rhythm
– only immense sound,
with no intention other than
the sound itself.

The orchestra is now behaving
like one big pulsating block of sound,
going nowhere.

Even when the trombones
enter with a deep hum below it all,
it doesn't change the character
of this sound block
– it just keeps on pulsating,
generating massive lumps
of sound.

The dynamics
of the orchestra
are now at it's highest peak,
– a forte fortissimo.

In a glimpse of a second,
the sound of the orchestra stops
– except the sound of the piccolo flutes,
that relentlessly
continues sending out
insisting high frequency sounds,
that confront the ears.

Underneath the piccolo flutes,
the sound of the harp and piano comes to life,
and is audible for the first time.

Perhaps they had been
playing for a long time all ready,
it is hard to tell
– but now the sound is here and present –
very fragile.

The piano is played pizzicato,
and the harp and piano
join the orchestra like cousins
– one horizontal
and one vertical.

They are played like a child would do;
strolling the fingers
back and forth on the strings
– creating a sustained sound
of velvet.

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The sound of a fairy tale
living below the cutting sound
of the piccolo flutes.

The piccolo flutes
are now ending the frenetic universe,
by fusing into a concert D,
played together with a quartertone above
and a quartertone below.

This tone is kept for about 15 seconds
and then put to an end.

The only sound,
which is still there,
is the sound of the harp and piano,
continuing their movement
on the strings.

There is no melody,
no tonality
– just the sound of the strings.

The piano and the harp
are played without any change in dynamics,
and the character of this sound
is associated with
a sound of electronic origin.

The tempo of which the strings
are set in motion
is now at a constant moderato pace.

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Soothing and not demanding the sound
of these two instruments,
put the first movement to an end.

II.

LARGO

Silence.

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Sand sounds.

At first
– the gentle sound of tiny grains
of sand.

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Then more sound
– more grains.

A fine white layer of sound,
transparent and almost nonexistent.

A very fine layer of sound
sprinkled upon a surface
with the utmost
caring and concentration.

SYMPHONY · No. 1

A shaker in motion.

One additional shaker joins the first one,
and the sounds of the shakers
are immediately embedded into each other,
reinforcing each other
– transforming,
and becoming a form of white noise
– still calm in its nature.

Random patterns
of what could resemble rhythms
evolve by coincidence
and disappear again.

Slowly

– yet another layer of shakers
joins the previous ones, and again and again.

The sound is growing
from a gentle transparent sound,
– into a wave of white noise.

Any traces of rhythm
are now completely gone,
and the sound behaves
like a massive wall of white noise,
at a very loud level.

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The white noise
encapsulates everything.

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The white noise encapsulates the room
and the inner ear.

III

Then.

SYMPHONY · No. 1

Metallic sound
– and the outburst of white noise
ceases to exist.

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A full spectrum of metallic sound
– at the same time: cold and warm.

Metallic sound
– evaporates –
gradually the partial residue disappears
in a hierarchy of nature.

At first the higher frequencies,
then the middle, and in the end
– the lower frequencies
are left to hang in the air for some of seconds,
before they eventually die out.

SYMPHONY · No. 1

Silence.

Again – the metallic sound erupts.

Appearing with the same partial richness
as the previous sound,
a full spectrum of sound is born,
only to die out
and dissolve again.

At first the higher frequencies
– then the middle, and in the end –
the lower frequencies.

SYMPHONY · No. 1

Silence.

SYMPHONY · No. 1

Sound.

SYMPHONY · No. 1

The metallic sound.

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The sound
of the gong set in motion
by the mallet.

This third time
is different
than the previous
two outbursts.

As the sound of the gong dies out,
it becomes apparent
that a deep cluster of bass clarinets
is now floating vibrant
in the air.
Inaudible until this very moment.

Pulsating
and in every way fused together,
the clarinets are creating
a ritual-like drone.

A pulsating sound
with a warm wooden timbre,
played without any attack.

The dynamics
are piano going towards
a mezzo-forte.

The trombones join the bass clarinets
playing in the same spectral area,
without any attack,
and like the bass clarinets
– fused together in a drone-like cluster.

The trombones are playing with a plunger,
sealing off the sound,
making the sound a little closed
– a sound with a tactile quality
not unlike the bass clarinets.

The bass clarinets and trombones
morph into different clusters,
impossible to tell when they change tones,
but yet the clusters transform
into new clusters
– again and again.

SYMPHONY · No. 1

Dark vibrating sculptures of sound.

In addition to this deep plasma of clusters,
the double basses and the cellos now enter,
generating sound in the same
low frequency spectra
as the bass clarinets and the trombones.

The orchestra now
appears as one massive drone
– rumbling and pulsating
with associations
to the sound of a generator
or even a nuclear reactor.

The dynamics are now a strong forte.

The violins and violas
send off a persistent tone
in the upper register.

They are played without vibrato,
and with no intention of conveying
any emotional status.

Played in unison
– then spreading out forming
a microtonal texture,
and then again turning back
to the unison note.

The flutes and piccolos join
the violins and the violas
in the effort of creating this persistent tone.

The flutes don't return
to the unison tone though.

Once they have created the microtonal texture,
they stay there,
and this texture becomes
a texture of spectral investigation
– an investigation
of which the violins lead the way.

Playing flageolets in random ways,
as well as the flutes and violas,
the violins create random patterns
of uncontrolled
dissonances and overtones.

The dynamics rise to a fortissimo
and the pressure of the sound is very intense.

As this investigation
of partial dissonance continues,
the dark drone-like
pulsating sound
created by the rest of the orchestra
slowly dissolves
into a decrescendo.

In the end,
the flutes, violins and violas
are hanging alone
in the air.

The strong dissonant sound
of untempered partials
continues for a while
– until the sound abruptly is put
to an end.

Only the high tinnitus now generated remains.

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A reminder of the intense cutting sound,
that just one second ago,
was testing the limits of the audible spectrum.

III.
CONCERTO

for piano and
microtonal crotales

A huge loud cluster of sound
is sent off.

The origin of this sound is the grand piano,
and it sounds as if all keys
were pressed down at the same time.

The sound is kept alive
by using the sustain pedal,
and stays in the room for about 20 seconds,
until yet
another cluster is sent off.

This time the cluster is accompanied
by the snare drum
which is hit 4 times in a row
– 4 quavers in a tempo
around 50 beats per minute.

The snare drum is played with sticks,
without the use of snare wire,
and it is yet again the companion of the piano,
when a third cluster of sound
is sent off.

The texture of the snare drum
is now that of a Morse code
– played in a higher uneven tempo,
slowing down a little bit in the end,
before stopping.

A fourth cluster is sent out
with no snare drum by its side.

This time the sound is left to itself
– facing its lonely dissolve.

Gradually the cluster dies out,
and after a minute or so,
the sound is completely gone.

SYMPHONY · No. 1

Silence.

The sound of the violas introduces itself,
forming a calm unison concert C

The note is played with the utmost equality,
and it's played at a consistent mezzo-piano.

The violins join the violas
in a seemingly effortless concert C.

The sound is quiet
yet rich in overtones,
and the partials above the root C
stand out very clear.

A new sound introduces itself,
as the crotales are set in motion,
joining the violas and violins
in playing a concert C.

The sound of the crotales
has an almost supernatural timbre,
and the sound seems to stay vibrant
in the air forever.

Another disk of the crotales is set in motion
– this time a sixth tone above the concert C.

Again and again and again
– disks are set in motion,
surrounding the concert C
from below and above,
in a blanket of tones,
each one a sixth tone apart.

The sound of the crotales is very constant
– and with its supernatural sustain
it defies any given law
about how sound should behave.

After a while the strings stop playing,
and the sound of crotales is left alone.

Each time a new disk of the crotales
is set in motion,
the sound remains unaltered in the room
– just like a stream of water
tuning into ice in a split second.

The number of disks that are set in motion,
are now countless,
and it's impossible to tell the origin of each tone,
since they all have melted together
into one sound with an ice-like timbre.

Eventually the sound of triangles
mixes into the sound of the crotales –
the sound of numerous triangles,
being played as fast as possible.

The triangles are of different sizes
and therefore creating sounds
of different pitch.
All these sounds melt together
into one crystalline sound.

The sound of the orchestra
is now that of ice and glass
– with a timbre that appears
to be synthetic.

SYMPHONY · No. 1

This wall of sound
stands firm in the room.

And then suddenly the piano enters.

A furious movement – from above and down.

And again and again
– the white keys
are strolled
in a descending
movement.

The spectrum of sound
created by the crotales and the piano,
is about the same,
and it becomes a stubborn investigation
of the upper frequencies
between 2000 and 4000 Hertz.

The violins and violas join the investigation
of the upper frequencies,
and they blend into this texture of sound,
by playing flageolets
in a very slow tempo,
with a dissonant relation to each other.

The dynamics are a strong forte.

SYMPHONY · No. 1

Clarinets make their entrance
into this world
of upper frequencies.

The amazing range of this instrument
makes the clarinet able to exceed
this spectrum of high frequencies,
creating sounds that change very rapidly,
with recollections
to busy insects and the sound
of old phone modems.

Underneath this spectrum of sound,
the double basses and trombones,
send out a firm and determined concert E,
infused with an F
and a quartertone below F.

A dramatic deep mumbling sound,
like a wordless mass.

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Then – trumpet.

SYMPHONY · No. 1

A concert B-flat
is launched
with great intensity.

Growing from a mezzoforte
into a forte-fortissimo
– the sound of the trumpets
almost distorts.

The tone is played without vibrato,
with as little attack as possible
and with a supernatural equality.

The trumpeters take in air
at different times from each other,
making it possible to sustain
the tone in terms
of volume and intensity.

The clarinets join the trumpets
in playing this B-flat
– at first in a perfect unison, and then –
one quartertone above
the trumpets.

Underneath it all,
the trombones and double basses
rise to a fortissimo.

The trombones are now playing
without a plunger
– creating a very loud sound.

A rise in volume followed
by the violins, violas and crotales.

Then a wooden sound.

A series of rapid wooden sounds
that die out within seconds,
in a very sudden way.

The sound of a vibraslap
– and then the sound of another vibraslap
and yet another.

The rapid sounds soon become a constant,
and this continuum of sound
becomes a bombardment of wooden gunfire.

The sound of the crotales
is now morphing
into two tones a major third apart.

This major third is doubled
by the piano,
the violins and violas
– turning the frenetic background
into a calm and soothing
texture.

The double basses and trombones
gradually fade out.

Then suddenly
– the vibraslaps, clarinets and trumpets
come to a stop,
and what is left
is the major third
consisting of
a concert G and a concert B.

The dynamics are now a mezzoforte.

There's a strong,
almost ritual force within the major third.
Obsessive in its nature.

As the major third
is played for a while,
it becomes apparent that there's also
a third tone.

There is nobody playing this tone
and it seems as if it is brought to life
by the other two tones
forming the major third.

It is the differential tone
– the Tartini tone –
which erupts just like magic.

The major third
becomes increasingly hypnotizing
in its deep mysticism,
as it continues pulsating and buzzing.

And then
– after a couple of minutes
the sound is slowly
coming to an end.

At first the crotales stop playing
– leaving the sound of the piano
the violins and violas
to end the third movement.

SYMPHONY · No. 1

Decrescendo
– and then silence.

Kolofon kommer fra SMC

