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An Interview with Annette Vande Gorne, Part 2

Abstract: Annette Vande Gorne, renowned composer of electroacoustic music, discusses her multi-faceted career in a two-part interview. In this second part of the interview, Vande Gorne reveals her compositional strategy for her current project (her acousmatic opera *Yawar Fiesta*) as well as for other electroacoustic genres—notably, acousmatic works, mixed works, and sound installations. Vande Gorne also discusses the fundamental importance of the art of interpreting sound in space, and explains the instrument of interpretation (the acousmonium) and her use of it. Additionally, Vande Gorne reflects on her teaching, most recently at the Conservatoire Royal de Mons, Belgium, where she conceived a section of electroacoustic studies. During her tenure as professor of acousmatic composition, she has conveyed her personal artistic aesthetic alongside the French electroacoustic aesthetic to several generations of composers in Europe and beyond. Other topics in this part of the interview include Musiques & Recherches (Vande Gorne's center for electroacoustic music) and her well-known acousmatic festival *L'Espace du Son*.

In 2005 Annette Vande Gorne (see Figure 1; b. 1946 in Charleroi, Belgium) began this in-depth interview with Elizabeth Anderson at Musiques & Recherches in Ohain, Belgium. It was subsequently translated, edited, and updated through additional interviews between 2005 and 2011.

In the first part of this interview (published in the previous issue, *CMJ* 36:1), Vande Gorne discussed her serendipitous discovery of electroacoustic music in 1970, and reflected on her early experiences in Paris with Pierre Schaeffer and François Bayle. She focused on her aesthetic philosophy and, in particular, highlighted the importance of the notion of space in her works. Vande Gorne concluded the first part of the interview by explaining how her appreciation for poetry serves as a source of inspiration, and how she works with text in order to reinforce the expressive power of her electroacoustic works.

In the second part, Vande Gorne discusses her current compositional project, her acousmatic opera *Yawar Fiesta*, which is another outgrowth of her work with text. Additionally, she recounts her experiences in composing numerous acousmatic works, as well as mixed works and installations. Vande Gorne also discusses the art of the interpretation of sound in space. She explains the acousmonium and how she uses it. Throughout the interview, Vande Gorne shares her personal and artistic aesthetic. Other topics include her center Musiques & Recherches and her acousmatic festival *L'Espace du Son*, which are explored in detail, in addition to her



Figure 1. Annette Vande Gorne in the studio “*Métamorphoses d’Orphée*” in 2000. Photo by Michel Vanden Eeckhoudt.

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long career as a professor of electroacoustic music in Belgium.

Elizabeth Anderson: Your fascination with text has inspired many of your electroacoustic works, including an opera which you are currently composing. Can you tell me about it?

Annette Vande Gorne: *Vox Alia* and *Fragments de lettre à un habitant du Centre* served as the foundation for my opera, *Yawar Fiesta*, based on a text by Werner Lambersy, which I am composing for 7.1 channels. It is an acousmatic opera. There are no singers on stage. When people heard this, they told me, “It is not an opera!” Yes it is, because the material comprises mainly the voice. Singers sing, but only in the studio. The singers improvise using, as a starting point, the prior detailed analysis of the meaning and structure of the libretto. Several recording sessions will provide most of the raw material for the work.

There are characters, a text, and a story, and there will be a decor. However, the decor will be projected—so as not to disturb the listening experience—with a link between the spatial movement of the music (in non-real time on a fixed medium) and the decor and movements by the characters. The characters will be mute, choreographed mimes on stage, and their movements will be linked with the space so as to make the expressive space audible. The characters will speak from the loudspeakers. With this idea, I discovered that space is not only a musical parameter but also an expressive one.

Thus, I develop in my opera a vocabulary of precise, multiphonic spatial figures that are chosen according to the underlying meaning of, or the numerous metaphorical images in, the text. At this compositional stage, I think the opera will be of a two- or two-and-a-half hour duration. It is long enough to engage the full dimension of the listener’s memory through sound signals, reminders, variations, and leitmotifs.

Therefore, I composed Act III first, in which the text is a kind of “moral” that synthesizes all themes. *Yawar Fiesta* is constructed like an ancient Greek tragedy in the style of Aeschylus: thesis, antithesis, synthesis, with a dialogue between the Greek choir

and the chorypheus [a choir leader in ancient Greek tragedies]. Using this strategy, I was able to gather all of the motives that are taken from, and developed in, Acts I and II. This is one of those good pieces of advice that I received during my studies with my former composition teacher, Jean Absil: one has to know where one wants to go, to know the goal, before starting the creative journey, which then remains something of a permanent discovery. César Franck is another Belgian composer whose many musical aspects I feel close to: lyricism, colorful vertical masses, polyphonic complexity, and the search for structural unity. He paves the way to vast architectures through his cyclical sonata form. These architectures are, nonetheless, unified by recurrent elements that run through all movements and are continually transformed before finding themselves united and superposed in the last movement.

Anderson: However, text is not the only source of inspiration for you. Your acousmatic work *Ce qu’a vu le vent d’Est* (2003) was inspired by archetypes. How did you compose *Ce qu’a vu le vent d’Est*?

Vande Gorne: I shall need to give some background information first before I can answer that question. When I discovered electroacoustic music, I was going through a very perturbed period in my life for personal and musical reasons. You have to understand that, from the age of seven, I felt I was a musician, but I lived with Mozart, Ravel, Monteverdi, Beethoven, Brahms, and all of the other great classical composers. And I lived well. I was very happy in this music and I had no desire to leave it because there was a whole culture behind it. And when I found myself in the electroacoustic world, I had the impression of being among barbarians, people who knew nothing of this culture. They didn’t have the same culture. Their culture is more current, whereas my culture is of the past. I also adore history. I taught music history for 40 years and always made the connection between the present and the past, which interests me because we do not really invent anything. We only reproduce the past with other means. But, all the same, you can imagine that, at the age of 28, it was a shock. The title of my second work, *Exil*, was not for nothing. So, I accepted this exile and closed the door. I really ceased

composing instrumental music and music with a notated score, except when I composed for a chorus.

The benefit of closing this door was that I could open my “listening,” my mental universe, to something else. And I produced things in this new domain but, while doing so, I said to myself, “This is something else; the past is finished. I need to go elsewhere.” Nevertheless, I always felt a sort of remorse until *Ce qu’a vu le vent d’Est*, a commission that I received for a concert in which Debussy would be played, for which different electroacoustic composers were asked to compose a work in relation to Debussy. I told myself that I would not take Debussy’s music and transform it to make it into something else. No!

However, I tried to see what I could pull out of Debussy’s style in order to apply it to electroacoustic composition. So, I made an analysis of *La mer* with an electroacoustic ear, which taught me a lot and, above all, gave me the satisfaction of seeing that I could transfer Debussy’s type of composition to the domain of acousmatic composition on a fixed medium. I don’t know if it would have worked with another composer. Debussy’s music has a relationship with nature. There is movement in *La mer*, the play of color, of timbre, and Debussy has ways of making transitions that have nothing to do with Beethoven’s transitions. And there is space. All these ingredients allowed me to compose a work that is based on Debussy’s temporality and construction with my sonorities. And I could not help slipping in several extracts of Debussy’s music in an acousmatic way, like an experience that is remembered, or like a trace. It was important for me to make a link, which I thought was completely broken, between the music of today—of this technological world—and the world of this beautiful music from which I thought I was definitely exiled.

On a practical level, and this is something I explained in my article on *Ce qu’a vu le vent d’Est* in the third volume of the review, *LIEN*, the compositional strategies were rooted in three different sources that shared one central theme: the form of the wave. These manifestations of the waveform included the sandstorm, the culture of Iraq (the cradle of ancient civilization and witness to many subsequent waves of foreign attempts at colonization), and

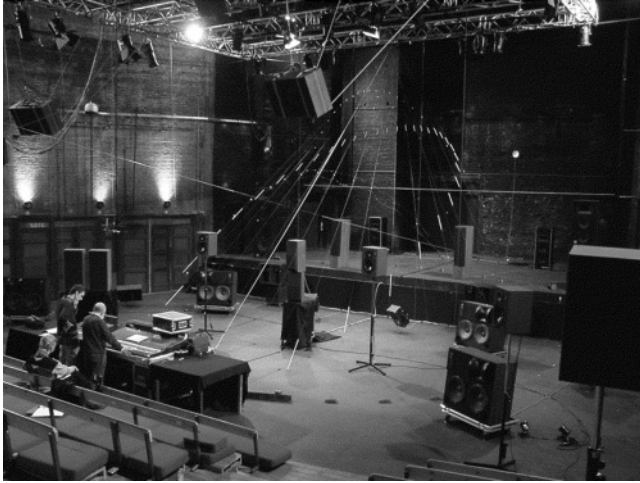
the music of Debussy. The waveform is a universal archetype, and its shape is one of the driving forces in nature. Therefore, many representations of it can be found in human behavior and art. Although one can perhaps most easily associate the waveform with the movement of the sea, the wave phenomenon in the form of a sandstorm was the inspirational starting point for the work, as it influenced the structure of the piece and the choice of materials. I think *Ce qu’a vu le vent d’Est* works as an acousmatic composition because it functions with the same principles of internal energy that are found in one of the most natural and psychological of archetypes: the storm.

Anderson: You make a distinction between your compositional aesthetic in *Ce qu’a vu le vent d’Est* and in *Figures d’espace*, which you composed in 2004. What is the difference?

Vande Gorne: *Figures d’espace* was inspired by an article I wrote about the possibilities of spatial interpretation using the acousmonium. The title of the article, “l’Interprétation spatiale: essai de formalisation méthodologique” (2002), is published in the review *Demeter* on the Web site of Université Lille 3. In the article, I discuss 16 spatial figures based on my practice of interpretation. When one interprets sound in space, one attempts to put in conjunction what one hears of the work—for example, the mass, the movement, the spatial placements whether they are stereophonic or multiphonic, the highlights and extrapolations—at the moment of the interpretation in the concert hall. I also include the interpretation of multiphonic works. At a concert performance, I am saddened to see certain composers placing all 8 or 16 faders on the mixing desk in an equal position and then sitting down to listen (see Figure 2).

I think this marvelous instrument of interpretation, the acousmonium, is underused. And when I say acousmonium, I do not mean eight loudspeakers. That is not an acousmonium. An acousmonium is an instrument where spatial frameworks are constructed. One begins the interpretation the moment one begins the setup of the acousmonium. This setup must never be the same from concert to concert. Rather, the setup is dependent on the acoustic and spatial topology of the premises and

Figure 2. Bernard Parmegiani rehearsing on the *Musiques @ Recherches acousmonium* during the *L'Espace du Son* festival at the Théâtre Marni, Brussels, Belgium in 2004. Photo by Pierre Gallais.



on the loudspeakers, which do not necessarily have to be the same either. This is the European conception. I know that in the English-speaking cultural environment an acousmonium has only one type of loudspeaker, but one loses the liberty in the interpretation of timbre that different loudspeakers provide.

I discuss the acousmonium and all its possibilities in my article. However, I also discuss the particular movements at the console which enhance the compositional techniques used to create the piece. I interpret the compositional techniques that I hear. For example, if I hear a cross-fade, I make a spatial cross-fade. If I hear inserts—remarkable ones, of course—I highlight the insert with one pair of loudspeakers which serve as soloists that appear and disappear when the insert is finished. For me, spatial interpretation is also a way to communicate the composer's compositional techniques and structures to the public. Thus, 16 spatial figures that I devised through practice are described in this article.

In 2004 I received an invitation to give a master class on spatial interpretation for young musicians in Luxembourg. I told myself it was the occasion to research my article [laugh], and, in an almost scholarly manner, I composed *Figures d'espace*, which I call an étude because it allows for the virtuosic use of a console. When composing it, I thought about the gestures that one makes at the

console. It's a bit like how Liszt composed piano works, not only to make music, but also to highlight the virtuosity of the instrument. It was another way to compose, which took into account space as a factor of interpretation.

Anderson: You are quite well known as a composer of acousmatic music. Have you also composed mixed works?

Vande Gorne: Yes, in 1985 I composed *Faisceaux*, a work for piano and tape, where sounds of the piano are used, although the compositional thought and technique center on timbres as conveyed through spectral content. The timbres range from white noise to the progressive transformation of the piano sound, taking into account the notion of interval, notably the augmented fourth. Energy-motion trajectories serve as the common points between the instrument and the part on fixed medium. The pianist must also convey emotional states through an improvisation on one note. It's quite difficult. The work evolves, spectrally, from white noise to a non-amplified piano solo; the piano is amplified up until the end. My goal with *Faisceaux* was to sensitize the listener to the timbre of the sound instead of the written melody. This necessitates a transformation in the way one habitually listens to the instrument, and it seems to me to be the goal of mixed music.

Additionally, when I composed *Tao* I created mixed versions of the movements *Eau* and *Metal*. The mixed versions were for zheng and electroacoustic sound on a fixed medium that was destined for a mixed performance. The zheng score in *Eau* makes use of the instrumentalist's own repertoire; in this case, this is the repertoire of Violette Beaujean, who is the only zheng player I know in Belgium. I first composed the part on fixed medium. Then, I asked Violette Beaujean to play Chinese songs for me that were related to water, which she did. I chose one, and she gave me the score, which I then reproduced and cut up in certain areas, like I would cut up a tape to do a montage. I saw that Chinese music is very descriptive and very much in movement. There was an energetic relationship between the song and the part that already existed on the fixed medium, because the song is about a fisherman

Figure 3. A section of the score of the mixed version of *Eau for zheng and stereo electroacoustic sound*, from the multi-movement work, Tao.

and water. It actually worked well together. When one hears it, one has the impression that the work was composed the other way around—that the tape part was created to accompany the Chinese music (see Figure 3).

In *Métal*, the zheng is used in a contemporary fashion with very diverse techniques, including ones that a traditional Chinese performer would not use, such as adding chains around the strings in order to add noise to the string sound. The instrumental techniques create a symbiotic relationship, energetically, with what the sound on fixed medium offers us, whether it's a type of percussion resonance, a smooth sound, a melodic profile, or a rebound, etc. These sounds are reproduced with the zheng. I think the links between the zheng and the sounds on fixed medium justify their existence.

Anderson: Have you made sound installations?

Vande Gorne: I discovered sound installations in 2000. The principle with sound installations is to know what's going on around me, not to redo something or to find another way of doing something with the same vision. I made an installation, *Cosmographie* (2003), with the sculptor Annie Lieberbergh, who works with latex and who makes enormous suspended oscillating spheres, like a ceiling of planets of diverse dimensions. I was interested in seeing what types of energetic relationships I could make between the sculpture and the sound by finding sonorities that would function as rebound, oscillation, or swinging and swaying, which would be identical to the motion trajectories the installation proposed. I have always detested situations where I

couldn't perceive any relationship in an installation between what I saw and what I heard. I would ask myself why there was a visual aspect to what I heard, or why there was sound to what I saw.

I used eight loudspeakers for *Cosmographie*. But [laughs] I also had a strange preoccupation with the guard at the installation. Why propose continuous sound for a poor guard the whole day? So I decided that the sound in the installation would be gated by the passage of a beam of light or an image. André Defosse, who is competent in Max/MSP, took my sounds and made me the software according to my requirements. We discussed how to find a way that would allow the sound files, which came from the work itself (because it is a work: it is recorded onto a fixed medium with silences and it can be heard as such), to be taken and distributed in space with certain modes of transformation according to the way the public would play with the installation. I think it's interesting for a sound installation to remain in the domain of the fixed medium but provide a touch of interactivity that is equally coherent for the visual as well as audible aspects of the work.

Anderson: You are the professor of acousmatic composition at the Conservatoire Royal de Mons. However, you have also conceived an entire section of electroacoustic studies at the Conservatoire Royal de Mons.

Vande Gorne: Currently, 13 professors specializing in electroacoustic music teach 85 hours of classes per week, more or less, at the Conservatoire Royal de Mons, where a student can obtain a Masters degree in five years. A doctorate is also possible. From my experience—which is to unsolder culture and listening from what electroacoustic music (in contrast to instrumental music) asks for—in order to compose electroacoustic music that is interesting (in other words, that pursues another path than the one addressed by instrumental, melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic thinking) one would need to investigate the Schaefferian concepts. These concepts include notions of grain, matter, morphology, energies, and movement, all of which are topics that one cannot find in the instrumental culture. I think this can be effective

from an educational viewpoint. Electroacoustic music needs to continue along this path and avoid being reclaimed by instrumental music, or by instrumental music which is aided by electroacoustic means, such as that which is practiced at IRCAM [the Institut de Recherche et de Co-ordination Acoustique/Musique], among other places. Otherwise, de facto, the teaching of electroacoustic music composition is considered as the teaching of technology that assists instrumental composition. I didn't want this. I was fortunate to experience the last years of this type of education, until 1980, with Schaeffer who, at that time, was retired and was perceived to be too old—although he stayed another three years. Afterwards, for other political reasons, the electroacoustic composition class at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Paris became a composition class for mixed music and for compositional techniques that are now integrated in the course of instrumental composition.

I began to teach electroacoustic composition at the Conservatoire Royal de Liège in 1986. In 1987 I created a class of electroacoustic composition at the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles and, in 1993, a class at the Conservatoire Royal de Mons. In 2002 I decided to make a complete section that would be independent from the traditional music courses and traditional solfège. [Editor's note: In French, the term *sofège* has a broader meaning than in English, encompassing not just solmization syllables but also music notation.] It's the only section in a European conservatory that does not require knowledge of solfège for the entrance exam. The course material includes compositional techniques destined for a fixed medium, acousmatic composition, perceptual analysis, *sofège des objets sonores*, acoustics, electroacoustic literacy, semiology applied to electroacoustic music, sound recording, techniques of synthesis, interactive techniques, computer languages and environments, sound design, and the analysis of perceptual sound-image ratios, among other subjects. My aim was for students to have an education that is recognized after a period of five years and which is oriented, on the one hand, to acousmatic music, and, on the other hand, to mixed composition, interactive composition, or

sound design (which is not exactly composition but it has to do with people who are in relation with other arts: multimedia, dance, and theater). Above all, the goal is to develop the individual musical personality of each student. Little by little students become aware of their own artistic evolution. They refine their listening and choose and construct their style.

[Interviewer's note: In 2002, there was a ministerial reform in Belgium that permitted high-level artistic education to be considered on the same level as universities, following the European model put forth by the Bologna Accords in 1999, which sought to standardize superior European education. Belgium was one of the first countries to organize its education according to the European model. The electroacoustic section of the Conservatoire Royal de Mons gives the Conservatoire the additional qualification of being a European establishment, which permits exchanges with other European institutions that specialize in high-level artistic education.]

Anderson: Could you describe the compositional techniques that you call the *techniques d'écriture*? This pedagogical method is rare, and I think it is important for English-speaking composers of electroacoustic music to understand it.

Vande Gorne: Before I discuss that, I need to explain the essential point of my pedagogical view: I come from the Latin world—contrary to the Anglo-Saxon world, where one composes immediately. In the Latin world, one does harmony exercises each week for four or five years. Then one does counterpoint exercises for two years, at least, and then fugue exercises for three years before composing! In electroacoustic music, does one say, “go compose?” No! One has to have knowledge of the aesthetic tools, on the one hand, and the technique of composition [*techniques d'écriture*], on the other hand, in order to know where one is going. Each exercise is a progression along that path. This is normal in Latin culture. One doesn't find this strange. And one follows this path, step by step, because one feels these steps. I do not know if you felt it like this, but I did. One feels that one evolves little by little and begins to see more clearly.

Anderson: And the listening!

Vande Gorne: And, inevitably, the listening goes with it. The pedagogical path is, for me, both pedagogical and mental. One starts by teaching simple things, from a technological point of view, and rightly so. One avoids putting the students in front of ten plug-ins at first. Instead, one puts students in front of a microphone and teaches them to record. The students make play-sequences [*séquences-jeu*] for the first trimester with a musical constraint that's different every week. Afterwards, one teaches the technique of composition through editing—the technique of composition and not the technique of editing! This second part is very Schaefferian, whereas the first part is Reibelian.

Anderson: Aha!

Vande Gorne: Yes, because Guy Reibel proposed play-sequences, improvisations with sounding bodies that replace the gestural expressivity, at the center of musical invention. This is essential to conserve. Since its origin, music has always unfolded through the body. The improvisation of phrased, formed, musical play-sequences that corresponds to archetypal models, especially physical ones—for example percussion-resonance, friction, accumulation of corpuscles, rebound, oscillation, swinging and swaying, flux, pressure-deformation, rotation, and spiral—become a rich, living reservoir for composition itself.

The next phase is very Schaefferian in nature and includes the techniques of montage. In montage, one associates different sounds immediately, the one next to the other. This phase takes a trimester. One learns how to use software for montage. However, the interest for me is not the software but the compositional process used to make the montage. The third step is the mixing (superposition) and this requires compositional thought, because when one associates sounds one has to ask oneself how one associates sounds, why one associates sounds, and one needs to learn how to make transitions.

There are techniques that, over the last several years, I developed into the form of an enormous chapter on polyphony, which takes a trimester to accomplish. I find that occidental music is rich

by virtue of its complexity, or polyphony. So, I ask my students to think compositionally in a way that generously surpasses the linear. This is followed by a year, at least, of weekly exercises on transformation techniques that are associated with synthesis techniques.

What, though, is transformation? What type of result do I wish to have? There are five principal domains of transformation: pitch, timbre, dynamics, time, and space. We are the architects of time and we have software, which allows us to do a lot with a little or, conversely, to do a little with a lot. Last but not least, there is space and all the possibilities that we have for making real or false spatial landscapes and multiphonic composition. And after all that, one can begin to compose.

Anderson: I would like, also, to ask you about your center, Musiques & Recherches. It is one of the only centers in Europe where there is such diverse activity in the field of electroacoustic music. Can you describe Musiques & Recherches?

Vande Gorne: [Smiles and laughs after a long, deep breath.] I first need to give some background in order to explain it. I finished my studies at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Paris. Afterwards, I worked for a year at the *phonothèque* at GRM [Groupe de Recherches Musicales], at the request of François Bayle. He had received funds to mark the anniversary of French cultural heritage and he wished to organize the repertoire of works that were composed at GRM, which, incidentally, was the first studio in the world. It was founded in 1948 and, in 1951, officially became a studio of *musique concrète*.

I also forgot to say that I have an education as a musicologist. I studied musicology for three years at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and, in the beginning of the fourth year, when I was asked what would be the subject of my dissertation, I responded that I wished to write a dissertation on systems of spatialization and the relationship between music and space. "Who do you expect to judge that subject?" asked the professor. I said to myself, "Well, if there is no one capable of judging this type of research in a Belgian university in Brussels, in means that I am in a society that

is quite reactionary, so I will stop these types of studies."

However, the education in musicology permitted me to catalog this repertoire in a respectable way. I realized the importance of archives. And I also realized the phenomenal quantity of works that were composed at GRM and that are still there. So, in 1980, I found myself in Paris, my studies finished, and in front of a Cornelian dilemma. Having had a foot in the door at GRM, I asked myself whether I should stay in Paris, where I had an apartment, or to return to my own country, Belgium, and give birth there to something that did not exist. For cultural patriotism, I chose the latter solution. I saw it like Caesar: to prefer to be first in one's hometown rather than second in Rome. I don't know if it was the best solution, but it was the one I chose and it was necessary to take responsibility for it. So, in 1982, I immediately founded a professional analog studio. I thought, and I still think the same way today, that it is better to spend money on professional tools that will last over time rather than spending less, but purchasing tools more frequently.

I founded Musiques & Recherches to compose and especially to bring in other composers, notably Belgian composers of instrumental music, whom I invited to use the studio to compose works. I was a technician for them because I knew the use of the studio. I also wanted to exchange ideas with them. I organized my first festival in 1984, which consisted of 20 concerts in 10 days. It was the official opening of Musiques & Recherches to the international world. I understood that it would be advantageous for Musiques & Recherches not to function on Belgian territory alone, but to be open, immediately, to all possible international opportunities. This was important because the electroacoustic world is a minority, one which is not known and not very accepted by "official" music. I thought it would be better to work with similar types of artists and give them tools for composition and diffusion with the acousmonium—which is very important for me—instead of bringing in local composers to work and afterwards shutting their tapes in a drawer. Musiques & Recherches has been an international organization since 1984, by virtue of the festival L'Espace du Son, and by virtue of the reviews it has published.

As a musicologist, I know that a type of music exists only if there are texts that surround it. If not, it disappears from history. It only appears in history when it is supported by theory, by long-term actions, and by all these actions I aim toward the long-term. This is a result of my education. And while working in the archives at GRM, I discovered an enormous number of texts that no one knows about and yet that are there in the archives. People wrote a lot. Schaeffer wrote an enormous amount. He was, first, a writer before being a musician. Thus, it became necessary to create an aesthetic musical review: *LIEN*. I called on international composers, and I hired an editor-in-chief who would take the responsibility for each volume. I also attributed a subject to each volume.

The first two volumes are entitled *L'Espace du Son* (edited by Francis Dhomont), which were published in 1988 and 1991, respectively. The third volume, published in 1991, is entitled *Vous avez dit acousmatique?* The fourth volume, published in 1994 and titled *Parcours d'un compositeur*, is dedicated to François Bayle, one of the most important composers in the field of acousmatic music. His compositional work and his theoretical research to define the concept "acousmatic," as well as to find other modes of composition that would be adapted to him, was very influential and beneficial to me during the course of my artistic evolution. Michel Chion and I have questioned François Bayle at length, from the perspective of the chronological journey of his works.

Musiques & Recherches then published ElectroCD in 1993 and updated it in 1995 and 1997. It is a list that includes all the electroacoustic works that have been commercially released on disc. And it was from this work, between 1994 and 2000, that I got the idea to make a database on the Internet [electrodoc.musiques-recherches.be—a site dedicated to documentation on electroacoustic music that links works with documents]. Currently, our electrodoc database comprises more or less 6,500 creators, 10,700 works, and 5,850 books and articles.

The 2006 volume of *LIEN* is entitled *L'analyse perceptive des musiques électroacoustiques*. We then edited the third volume of *L'Espace du Son* in 2010. This volume addresses the technical,

analytical, and compositional evolution of the relationship between sound and space 20 years onwards.

The review will continue, but on the Internet. What I discovered while doing the article for the Université Lille 3 is that today's method is much less expensive, and permits a wider distribution, than the paper version. Thus, the latest volumes and previous editions of *LIEN* can be downloaded from the Musiques & Recherches Web site [<http://www.musiques-recherches.be>]. The articles appear in the language of the author, and each volume is illustrated by a different Belgian artist. There are also sound examples from time to time. The idea is to find ways of creating "thinking," or ways to diffuse "thinking" about acousmatic music.

The other activities are the usual ones proposed by a center: the organization of concerts and festivals, the diffusion of music. At first, we organized these concerts ourselves, and we do it with the acousmonium, which is mobile. We try to diffuse the music that is created in this studio, music that is commissioned by or produced in the studio, which is not necessarily Belgian music. We do not have a lot of funds for commissions, but we have what is necessary to invite composers for residencies, which is important. The second important aspect is that the works by these composers must be diffused. One of the roles of Musiques & Recherches is to participate in this diffusion by way of all types of events that permit the work realized in this studio, by Belgians and other composers, to be known. This allows people to find out how these composers work and also promotes an environment where the composer can develop a relationship with the students, which also seems important to me.

We also program music that is produced elsewhere, for instance, prize-winning pieces from other composition competitions. We engage in international exchanges with students and professors from other electroacoustic composition courses, from which students and professors at the Conservatoire Royal de Mons may benefit. All this is the result of a genuine artistic choice: because of my respect for the public audience, there is no "anything goes" programming, nor a "favor-for-favor" policy. I am keen to propose works that I believe are of quality.

Consequently, we have a truly open-minded audience that comes again and again for concerts; this is not an audience that consists solely of professionals and students.

I must say that a genre exists when there is a life around it. It dies if there is no life. This begins with the word. The French are very strong in this, almost to the point of making battles and chapels with words, but they are right. I say it is necessary to continue to call "acousmatic" the actions that stay in the vein of the acousmatic. The installation I made is acousmatic. But one needs to say the word. If one ceases to say the word, the thing will cease to exist, as well as all the life around it. The competition nourishes this idea. It's about acousmatic composition. And composition and interpretation are linked together. The life of these works can only exist when one can educate interpreters that can perform them. And the permanence of this art can only exist if there are young interpreters who take the repertoire in hand and who can perform it in any circumstance and any frame. It's also useful to have competitions with important prizes, because it's necessary to have money behind them in order to justify the existence of the competitions.

That's why, every other year, Musiques & Recherches proposes a competition for acousmatic composition where the prize-winning works are performed and appear on a CD. The First Prize winner receives a substantial monetary award, as does the First Prize winner of the spatialized interpretation competition. We are the only ones to organize this kind of spatialized interpretation competition. Both competitions take place during the international acousmatic festival L'Espace du Son.

Anderson: Let's talk about your festival L'Espace du Son.

Vande Gorne: [Laughs.] So, the festival! Why a festival? Well, it's a festive moment, as the name indicates. It's a moment where people meet each other, especially people who might or might not know each other, but who are in the same field, such as composers of electroacoustic and non-electroacoustic music, interpreters, and the public. A festival engenders these types of meetings. It also

offers the opportunity to organize small colloquiums and composition workshops, which permit a useful exchange of ideas. The festival began in 1984, and we functioned without any subsidy until 1996. The festival includes four or five days of concerts by important and young composers. I think the notion of a portrait concert by invited composers is important. I prefer to access the artists, to know who they are through the works they present. And with the *carte blanche* concert, the composers' choices of works also tell who they are.

For the past several years I have also organized a cycle of concerts. The cycle consists of one concert per month and each concert has an enormous luxury: two days of rehearsal which also includes the spatialization course for the conservatory students on an acousmonium with 44 channels. The cycle is called *Saison acousmatique*. (The word *acousmatic* is repeated once more.)

Anderson: The conferences you organized were also very important. You always invited people in from the exterior. Could you explain those, as well as the workshops you organize at Musiques & Recherches?

Vande Gorne: The conferences are for professional and pedagogical use. They are specialized and allow an opening to the wider world. I think it's essential to invite people who have something to say. I don't see education as being tied to one professor, but as being tied to a trend. Of course, I will more easily invite someone with an outlook that is similar to mine, as opposed to someone who composes instrumental music and regards acousmatic music as an accessory. The opening to the public is also important because music can only exist if the public knows it. There are two ways to reach the public. One is through concerts. Another is through open workshops for the public and particularly for the young public. This is why I organize a yearly workshop for the initiation of electroacoustic music composition. I have organized it from the beginning, and anyone can register for it. I have had participants from the age of 12 or 13, and I remember one lady who was over the age of 60.

Since 1995 I have also organized a yearly workshop on interpretation. It hasn't had the success I had hoped for, because people do not yet understand the

importance of interpretation. There is also a workshop on Max/MSP which, as a sign of the times, is more successful today than the workshop on the initiation of electroacoustic composition techniques. The workshops are open to everyone. They are not workshops for specialists. They are directed toward the public—in contrast to conferences, which are directed to professionals.

Anderson: What closing thoughts would you like to add as a composer, professor, and pioneer in the international world of electroacoustic music?

Vande Gorne: I would like to add one thing that seems important to me. If electroacoustic and, particularly, acousmatic music could be in the plan of social and artistic life as Denis Dufour and Francis Dhomont prefer to have it, it would be an art which is apart, a sound art which is detached from the preoccupation of the term “music.” It would be an art like photography, like all the other types of art and their corresponding—and changing—media; for example, the evolution made by the art of representation on a stage, from the theater to the cinema to the video. One can, at that moment, say that art on a fixed medium, and particularly acousmatic music, which has a particular relationship with the imagination, could be considered to be an art form apart from music. Somehow, in creating a section of electroacoustic music that is separate from instrumental composition at the Conservatoire Royal de Mons, I went in that direction.

When I see the world of techno music, where the presence of a computer is normal, I think it's a pity when I see a person walk on stage in order to press the play button on the computer. It would be better to consider the interpretation on another level, so why not through spatialization? There is much to do in this domain. It's possible to consider techno music or ambient music as an art apart. Why not? Nevertheless, having had a formal education, I consider all sound to be music. And, like Varèse said, I think that all organized sound is composed music.

This is why I continue to say that the word “music” also applies to this art. I think it's important to find this relationship, this link with *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Est*. If we detach acousmatic music

completely from the instrumental musical world, and from the world of electroacoustic music in general—for example, live electronics, mixed music, laptop, computer music and processing—and if we say that we are doing a completely different thing, I think the result will be that we will isolate ourselves instead of participating in a general movement. This is on an institutional level. On a personal level, I think of myself as a musician, nothing else. This is an aspect of the term “acousmatic” and its utilization, which I hope will be permanent.

I would also like to add that I wish that there were more musicians in the world of technology. I attend so many conferences, such as the International Computer Music Conference, among others, which are so wonderful theoretically and so poor in terms of sound and musical quality. I would like to find “resonators,” other people, who, when presenting theory, give another image of electroacoustic music in general: a more personal, individual, and more creative artistic image. These days, this has enormous consequences on the sociological level.

In music festivals, technology is at the service of instrumental music. The word “music” is associated with the word “instrument.” When political, university, or other powers have something to do with electroacoustic music, they only see it on a technological level, by virtue of the fact that the actors of this music only speak about technology. Consequently, one will never find electroacoustic music in music festivals, since the actors themselves do not present it like music. For this reason, electroacoustic music (almost “tape music”) is presented in specialized festivals outside of the contemporary musical world and contemporary musical festivals.

I would like to end this long interview, for which I thank you, on a more personal and artistic note.

When, at the age of 25, I chose to engage in the path of acousmatic music, I didn't know at what point it would disrupt my musical listening and the concepts and habits of composition and of interpretation acquired during my studies. A résumé in the form of a non-hierarchical list, perhaps, permits a clearer vision.

Improvisation with sounding bodies (largely reaching beyond musical instruments) and the

direct rapport with bodily gesture are a principal source of material and immediate musicality.

A vocabulary of models, especially physical ones—while changing the way I listened to music, whatever music it might be—has the advantage of proposing archetypes to the listening experience, and this permits a form of communication with any listener.

The use of sonic archetypes and images, or their traces, or their most abstract evocation, calls to the imaginary and provokes an interior cinema, which orients the listening and meaning perceived by the listener.

The linear association of sonic elements made of different materials and morphologies creates unique figures that are unexpected and surreal.

I reunify material that is very diverse, by applying a new common character to it. Frequently, it's the pitch or frequency, but often it's also the color or spectra, the duration—the elongation, fragmentation, granulation—or the space. It can be compared to the image of a society that, when giving itself the same goal to attain (for example, an identical activity or an ideal) unifies disparate individualities.

Space becomes a fifth musical parameter, as much as through different scales of width and illusory depth (stereo), as in complex and superposed figures in a three-dimensional space (multiphony). This struck me from my very first acousmatic listening experiences. The immediate desire, from 1972, to interpret this music through space, thanks to the acousmonium, is a logical consequence. I play freely with the disposition of loudspeakers on the premises (which is not necessarily a concert hall), the number of loudspeakers (Musiques & Recherches has 80), the diversity of their colors, their frequency responses, and their strengths. Paradoxically, each concert of fixed sounds [*sons fixés*], according to Michel Chion, becomes a unique event. Each spatializing interpreter gives the same work a style, a different meaning, that reflects his or her musical perception. We verify this fact during each biannual edition of the only competition for spatial interpretation in the world, which Musiques & Recherches organizes.

The infinite number of possibilities proposed by today's software has modified my compositional

technique towards the creation of new polyphonies and massive, or airy, textures. The weaving of stained glass or mosaic textures, complex designs, divergences and convergences, rhythms and speeds, and the superpositions of images are new paths of research.

What has most fundamentally modified my approach to composition is to be able to listen and re-listen and, therefore, deepen my listening of the music that is in the process of being born. Perception becomes the guide. There is nothing new under the sun since Husserl and phenomenology! It is the acousmatic modality—slow, meticulous work in the studio.

I am no longer the master of hidden calculations, abstracts, of arbitrary and reasoned processes, but, instead, I allow myself to be modified, and to modify the project according to the sounds, the found objects [*objets trouvés*] that the studio generates. The music constructs itself little by little as if it were outside of me, through my choices, in the same way that novelists are led by their characters.

Every new work thus becomes an uncertain adventure, a dive into the unknown, where I know neither the goal, nor how the work will develop, nor the alpha or omega, each of which has its doubts and victories, and which one begins, courageously, with every work. I am only a sounding board.

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