Iannis Xenakis - Pleiades (1979)



1 Mélanges 8:48 2 Métaux 13:21 3 Claviers 10:20 4 Peaux 11:11 Les Percussions De Strasbourg Vibraphones, Marimbas, Xylophones Yamaha, Percussion [Instruments à Percussion "rhythmes Et Sons"]: Christian Hamouy, Claude Ricou, Gabriel Bouchet, Georges Van Gucht, Jean-Pierre Bedoyan, Keiko Nakamura (2)

The term the Pleiades normally refers to the cluster of sparkling stars in the right shoulder of the Taurus constellation. In the Northern Hemisphere, the Pleiades are visible only in winter. With a telescope dozens of stars can be seen, of which only six can be picked out by the naked eye as well as a slight milky mist in the same area. According to Greek mythology, this cluster of stars represents the seven sisters or Pleiades, servants of Artemis, Goddess of the Moon. One of the sisters, Electra, was said to have disappeared in the form of a comet, tormented with sorrow after the siege and destruction of the city of Troy built by her son Dardanus, victim of the famous ruse of the Wooden Horse of Troy. The whiteness and the mist in which the Pleiades appear is said to be the result of the tears wept by the six sisters abandoned by Electra.

Iannis Xenakis (born in 1922) composed "Pléïades" over the years 1978 -79 on a commission from the City of Strasbourg. This piece was played for the first time by the Percussions de Strasbourg at a concert with the Ballet du Rhin on 3 May 1979. The title Pléïades refers to the six members of the Percussions de Strasbourg. But for Xenakis, the reference to the multiplicity of existence seems to be more important. The very essence of this piece rests on the fact that it cannot be limited to one simple definition. "Pléïades" is already full of very rich sounds. The instruments used range from keyboards to various percussion instruments including the "sixxen" - a percussion instrument specially created for this composition.

The piece is divided into four parts whose titles refer to the materials from which the instruments are made and to the sounds that the latter produce. Listening to the sixxen immediately makes

us think of the Indonesian gamelan, in particular those from Bali, and of the instruments used in festive music in Japan, of Mediterranean church bells and Alpine cowbells. The richness of the sixxen's timbre is in a way the expression of the different types of life led by Man and of which the metals are an integral part. Whilst giving absolute freedom to the concept of a multiplicity of existence, Xenakis has succeeded in imposing a rule of diversity and unity in the temporal structure of his quest for the creation of a single, unique composition.

The only source of these polyrythmics is the idea of periodicity, repetition, duplication, recurrence, faithful, pseudo-faithful and unfaithful copying. --- percussionsdestrasbourg.com

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