

“Contemporary compositional techniques and OpenMusic”

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Part One of the book presents extended analytical articles on works by Claude Vivier, Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail that seek to illuminate their underlying compositional techniques. In an interview specially conducted for this book Murail talks about his use of computers in composing, both as regards to sound synthesis and the actual writing of the score. Rozalie Hirs's article on Murail's *Le Lac* (2001) seeks to explain its frequency-based compositional techniques and the use of OpenMusic during the compositional process, and gives a detailed account of some of the patches used. Bob Gilmore's article on Claude Vivier's *Lonely Child* (1980) explores the composer's introduction of the compositional principle known as “l'addition des fréquences” into instrumental writing, a process developed without the use of computer technology but one which could easily be formalised in algorithmic terms. Jean-Luc Hervé's article discusses the compositional techniques and poetic ideas underlying Gérard Grisey's *Quatre Chants pour Franchir le Seuil* (1997-1998). The authors provide detailed analyses of these works, focusing on the frequency-based techniques and compositional processes employed by the composers.

The second part of the book originated in ‘OpenMusic and Contemporary Compositional Techniques’, a series of lectures and workshops given by Rozalie Hirs and guest professors Tristan Murail, Mikhail Malt, Benjamin Thigpen, Marco Stroppa, and Niels Bogaards at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam during the 2005/06 academic year. An extensive essay on Tristan Murail's compositional ideas and frequency-based techniques originated in the lecture series given by Rozalie Hirs. It provides the most detailed discussion of Murail's work available in English today. The following works are discussed: *Gondwana* (1980), *Désintégrations* (1982), *Serendib* (1992), *La Barque mystique* (1993), *L'Esprit des dunes* (1994), *Le Partage des eaux* (1995) and *Winter Fragments* (2000). The article aims to give an overview of his musical ideas and reveal some of their development during the past two decades; it shows how materials can be obtained, transformed, and translated into the score or into electronic sounds accompanying the performance. Both articles on Murail's compositions can be read as an introduction to his work, though they may inspire other composers to explore frequency-based composition and further their own working methods and ideas.

The series of lectures and workshops was initiated by the Nieuw Ensemble and its artistic director Joël Bons, as part of the annual *Componistenpracticum*. The Nieuw Ensemble and conductor Lucas Vis rehearsed and performed new pieces written by composition students from the Conservatorium van Amsterdam and the Royal Conservatoire in the Netherlands: Justin Christensen, Miguelángel Clerc, Ignacio Fernández Bollo, Daniel Gutierrez Berumen, Ernesto Illescas-Peláez, Chikage Imai and Andrzej Kwiecinski. This international group of young composers moves effortlessly from one medium to another and is not bound to one style of compositional thought within for example Western instrumental music. OpenMusic uncovered new realms within their individual aural imaginations. The composers acquired new visions of themselves and their music. For all the composers it was an intensive project in which they learned the new software, applied it within their creative work and tested it in practical sessions with the Nieuw Ensemble. There was a direct reflection of compositional ideas and calculations, and the resulting musical

workings of the score, as well as the instrumental possibilities. The essays in this book document their creative processes, spanning a broad range of compositional ideas, including frequency-based techniques, acoustic modelling, set theory, and permutational techniques.