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Dusapin's Third Style in *Faustus, the Last Night*

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Abstract: Born in 1555, Pascal Dusapin is now probably France's most famous living composer. His opera *Faustus* (2006) was composed during a transitional period, when his second and third styles coexisted. His second style, which we could call « intonationnism » (close to speaking), was mostly typical of the 1990s. His third style came in the early 21st century. The musical language was then more romantic, more devoted to strings. Another details firmly enshrine this opera in the key topics of the new millennium : postmodernity, humour, regression.

French musician Pascal Dusapin's opera *Faustus, the Last Night* (2006), adapted from the tragedy by Marlowe, does not take as its objective a simple retelling of the familiar story of Faustus; rather, it could be said that this intriguingly creative piece is a critical reflection on the very tradition embodied in the figure of Faustus.¹ Set during the course of one night, the work is built with five characters, centering on Faustus and Mephistopheles, of course, with three other figures who comment on or punctuate the drama: Togod, Angel, and the Shakespearean Sly (inspired by the drunkard in *The Taming of the Shrew*). Above all, like many other operas of the twentieth century, the work intends to be as allusive (that is to say, intellectual) as possible; it self-consciously refers to musical or literary sources. Thus, Dusapin himself explains, "Le livret de cet opéra est construit sur de multiples emprunts au *Faustus* de Marlowe" (the libretto of this opera is made of many borrowings from *Faustus* by Marlowe), but, further, he proudly underscores that the work also alludes to many other figures, including Dante, Saint Augustine, Shakespeare, Blake, John Clare, Hölderlin, Nerval, Flaubert, Caligula, Al Capone, Melville, Beckett, and Olivier Cadiot, evoked in a manner the composer compares to the "cut-ups" of William Burroughs.² This extensive list of prestigious names not only betrays the book-lover, it also seems to

cultivate some kind of *auctoritas* for a “Faustian” musician who, at this point in his career, was forging his world reputation (in this regard, the choice of a libretto directly written in English might not be innocent). Composer of the music but also author of the libretto, like the master of Bayreuth (see Chapter 6), Dusapin obviously wished to conceive an ambitious *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total dramatic artwork). The purpose of this chapter is not, however, to follow the creator in each of his particular, complex intentions. Rather, trying to show what makes the work lyrical (“operatic”), original, and/ or typical of its time may prove more interesting.

One hallmark of Dusapin’s artistry is the theater, and even more specifically, conversation. He has always been interested in fundamental sonic links: between two people, two animals, a mother and her baby, two lovers, or two Neanderthal men trying to communicate yet ignoring any language but their intonations (their “music”). More precisely, as one sought to explain elsewhere, the “music of language” is what might *speak* to any listener of Dusapin’s works.³ This “speech” of the music seems familiar, as if it called back the music of speech. Hanno Müller-Brachmann, the first performer of Dusapin’s Mephistopheles, observed, “In the beginning, when we [the singers] opened the score, it was total panic. Thousands of notes, thousands of very complicated rhythms, and we thought that it was really impossible to produce so much information with one voice... [But] [o] ne day, I understood that it was something very close to a discussion, to speech.”⁴ Speech was the key.

At the very beginning of *Faustus, the Last Night*, a very peculiar detail sounds “new,” seems *unheard*. Faustus asks Mephistopheles, “Let me breathe a while!” and Mephistopheles laughs and repeats with a ridiculous intonation, “let me breathe!” The two “let me breathe” lines are identical in the libretto. On the stage, however, they are opposite: the first, tragic; the second, comic. Thus, right from the start of the piece, one understands that for Dusapin, the significant information may be less the text itself (even one written by the composer) than its prosodic lines. The subtle comparison of two melodic processes of speech, and then their translation into melodic lines of the score, forms the French composer’s specific *techné*, which he has refined over more than two decades.

Through such means, Dusapin can recreate very simply — and with his own distinctive processes — the two poles of theater, tragedy and comedy, in which the tragic is immediately mocked by the comic. In fact, this is specifically facilitated by atonal aesthetics, which represents a considerable success for the latter. The atonal language, not always appreciated by the public during the twentieth century, is suddenly humanized. And reciprocally, the musical model of intonation, which emerged in the Baroque era with the invention of opera, is much more precisely imitated with an atonal technique because prosody is also atonal music. Finally, the model of intonation may have been one of the few, or rare, efficient ideas of late twentieth-century modernism.

The New Lyricism

The first lyrical trump card of *Faustus, the Last Night* might still be this well-known secret of Dusapin. While his first style, which could be considered reflective of youth, still influenced by Iannis Xenakis and micro intervals, was more related to the 1980s, his second style, typical of the 1990s, may draw upon the common source of the intonation of speech, the spirit of tragedy, and thus the roots of opera itself, and he may have reached a third style since the beginning of the new century. This powerful framework had already permitted the resounding success of *Medeamaterial* (1991),⁵ Dusapin's second opera, which definitively installed him as a credible "opera composer" at a time when Pierre Boulez, for example, had long since buried the dramatic genre as obsolete. Dusapin used to transcribe speech intonations into the form of a score, or instrumental music. That led him to what one could call an efficient intonationism. Thus, in the works of the 1990s, one could invariably hear those typical repetitive melodic lines, written in a restricted ambitus and in "restricted scales of tones." However, this second style, even if it belongs to the past of the composer, reappears in *Faustus, the Last Night* as a process inextricably linked to opera. Here, it is related specifically to the comical figure of Sly, invariably arising with the jester. Indeed, intonationism might be popular because intonation may be the affective code understood by anyone. Intonation is an "intra-cultural consensus," according to the Japanese linguist Kawada Junzō.⁶ Thus, intonationism may be associated at least with comical figures, since they are assumed to be the most popular characters.

In *Faustus*, Dusapin keeps his subtlest processes of instrumental intonationism for the entourage of a single character and for rare moments, because for him they might just be the heritage of earlier times, aged and a priori artificial in the context of his new language. He seems to be interested in other processes, at this moment of his career, although not averse to older ones that have shown their efficiency. It is even possible that the character of Sly itself would have been invented just to allow the return of intonationism. One of the greatest successes of instrumental intonationism was the one permitted by the trombone. This was the very purpose of the trombone concerto *Watt* (1994), one of Dusapin's masterpieces.⁷ The trombone can slide. Its register is close to that of the human voice. It can almost "pronounce" consonants like the French "rrr" when it uses *Flatterzunge*. Thus, the trombone is the best "instrumental double" of the popular Dusapin. When Sly "wakes up" (at the end of number 7, just after the Angel sings "but your soul has been killed by the Light"), the solo trombone (in a trio on stage: a so-called *musique de scene*) "pronounces" mocking sounds using glissando and *Flatterzunge*, repeating a slide between two notes separated by a simple tone.

One hears, then, a sonic border: the limit that any musical instrument reaches when it tries to imitate a human voice and, more precisely, a *communication effort*. One hears a very peculiar mocking prosody, which incidentally seems to summarize the very spirit of comedy (and thus largely of theater itself). This spirit of irreverence is confirmed by the clownish elephant-like timbre of the slide trombone.

Dusapin is drawn to Shakespeare's tragicomic spirit. Sly yells and laughs while the Angel cries. The trombone lows when the orchestra sings in a peculiar, new, particularly lyrical way. The ubiquitous strings, heard throughout the opera, assume the role of the *coryphaeus* in Greek tragedy. For Dusapin, as mentioned, everything is reflexive upon the theater. As explained elsewhere, the composer, in his best scores, recovers, in Nietzsche's terms, the "birth of tragedy."⁸ He might cure our corrupted times of their disenchantment or a very ancient poison, in Nietzsche's terms: a "newly born daemon called *Socrates*."⁹

By building characters with instruments or groups of instruments, Dusapin literally tries to "re-enchant" our world and, more specifically, contemporary atonal music. That is probably why he wrote a series of true symphonies, since *Go* (1992), which he called "soli for orchestra." The orchestra is imagined as a human being, crossed by contradictory emotions figured by the different sonic strata. In *Faustus, the Last Night*, the strings — which are, in a neo-Romantic way, the heart of the orchestra — comment on the drama in the form of a permanent and deep sob, a black melancholia.

Plus encore que l'ange, l'orchestre, c'est le personnage qui est traversé par une grande variété d'émotions. Quelquefois il commente, quelquefois il amplifie certaines actions musicales de la scène, parfois il anticipe ce qui va se passer. Dans ce sens, il n'est pas très différent de celui que j'ai utilisé dans *Perele* ou dans d'autres partitions. Mais celui-là, il est aussi marqué par une très grande mélancolie.

(More than the Angel the orchestra is a character crossed by a great variety of emotions. Sometimes it comments, sometimes it amplifies some musical actions of the scene, sometimes it anticipates what is going to happen. In this way, it is not very different from the orchestra I used in *Perele* or in other scores. But this precise orchestra is also marked by a very deep melancholia).¹⁰

The strings, better than "anyone" else, better than Faustus, are aware of his tragic fate. They articulate what Jung could call the "collective unconscious" of the characters and double the role of the Angel, in a more subterranean way.

The importance of the strings in *Faustus, the Last Night* recalls the composer's latest "solo for orchestra" (*Reverso*, 2005–6), first performed on July 1, 2007, by the prestigious Berliner Philharmoniker. We recognize here a new, third style. It is no longer a question of restricted scales and ambitus. In recent years, Dusapin seems weary of restricting his modes in only four degrees¹¹ and his lines in this severe fifth, already imagined by Denys of Halicarnasse during the first century bce.¹² Here, he obviously wants to free the expressive capacities of the instruments, especially those of the strings (heralds of Romantic expression par excellence) after ten years of self-imposed frustration. Thus, the ambitus of the strings explodes, notably up to the high pitches of the violin, and the notes take their time: they do not have to "pronounce" fast and precise "messages" (prosodic lines). This results in an impression of Romantic material. The chords and melodic lines obviously do not borrow anything from the nineteenth century. But, from this hypnotic time period, the complacent resonance of the violins comes back.

This return, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, is quite logical. Takemitsu Tōru had already noticed this "Romantic" feeling about the 1990s.¹³ Boulez, in *Anthème II* (1997), composed a piece for violin and electronics whose stunning effects of echo chambers celebrated the resonance of the instrument. The lovers of the first ascetic Boulez (*Le marteau sans maître*) (1954) were surprised, sometimes even disappointed, by this strange and "guilty" softness they heard. Also the late Messiaen (*Éclairs sur l'au-delà*) (1991) had markedly come back to the strings.¹⁴

This Romantic tendency could not be explained as just an "end of century" spirit, because it remains today (unless the twenty-first century might not have started yet, since the twentieth century is often considered to have begun with World War I). It might also betray our outmoded celebration of some eternal "Y2K" (Year 2000), a mythical date which, in a way, never came. The resonance, the echo, is like a cosmic call,¹⁵ which reminds one of the earlier optimism of science fiction. In the case of Dusapin and of his generation of relatively young composers, the echo is also the sign of a synthesis, or perhaps a compromise — typical of our time — between high modernism (here simply represented by the atonal language of *Faustus, the Last Night*) and the postmodernism of the 1980s, which inaugurated this propensity for bowed instruments (but caricaturing tonal language this time). The postmodernist Henryk Górecki, in this very way, drew his Third Symphony (specially dedicated to strings) to outstanding fame in 1993.¹⁶

More precisely Romantic, in Dusapin's third style, is the composer's continued use of very conjunct, often chromatic motions, as in his second style, but in this case imitating the human voice with the instruments. However, the result is not exactly Wagnerian, even though the German composer used that kind of ultra-chromatic line in *Tristan und Isolde*. More precisely, the conjunct motions, associated with atonal aggregates, give the

impression of recovering the less tonal work of Bartók (which remained conjunct), as in *Zene húros hangszerekre, ütökre és cselesztára* (*Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*); however, Dusapin evokes a Bartók who would have frozen his tempi, in a slower and perhaps more complacent way, while exclusively conceiving his works in what Boulez called a “temps lisse” (smooth time).¹⁷

As a matter of fact, even the strings, emphasized in the third style, are driven by a spirit of theater. They often organize “conversations” between one another, entering into deep dialectic relationships. Some violent oppositions cross them, and hence they become “human.” The simplest and most contrasted process that Dusapin likes to use is to reduce the entire orchestra to only two strata (or voices) of strings. The effect of this is to generate strange, massive, perhaps even monstrous, duets.¹⁸ One of the two strata is very low-pitched (occupied by the cellos and/ or the double basses), and the second is as high-pitched as possible, in the very high zones of violins, the upper echelons of the E string. The “dirty result” is an example of bad (and even absurd) orchestration, because the two strata excavate a large lacuna between them (the totally unoccupied medium register), which recalls the comic duets for piccolo and double bass composed during the 1970s by the Russian composer Galina Ustvolskaya.

The tragicomic effect may appeal to murky, but perhaps fundamental, feelings in the listener’s mind, evoking freaky myths, as in, for instance, “La belle et la bête,” “Der Froschkönig oder der eiserne Heinrich,” or in every other fable that compares innocence (violins) and monstrosity (double basses). The tragicomic end of *Watt* organizes such a dialogue between the solo trombone in its low register and the piccolo. It is clear that the trombone personifies a comic character, typically Beckettian (recalling the tramp hero of *Watt*) or Shakespearean (any Bottom comparable to Sly in *The Taming of the Shrew* or *Faustus, the Last Night*). The piccolo plays the role of his guardian angel, or of his “innocence” (according to Dusapin).¹⁹

The paradigm of those procedures may be to model the fundamental links that build every society: very different beings (symbolized, *dramatized*, by the very low-and the very high-pitched) finding common points between each other and finally discovering that they are products of the same essence. *Faustus, the Last Night* ends in the same way, with a dialogue between the violins (in the high pitches) and the double basses, an interaction that already occurs twice (each time when the opera seems to find some kind of simplification, a particularly emblematic spirit, or when the libretto has to be underlined), and even in *Reverso*, as if it would constitute a real musical tic of the third style. At the end of *Faustus*, long after Togod has sung — into Faustus’s ear — the last repetitions of the opera (“Repeat after me... There is... Nothing!.. Nothing... nothing... Nothing... That’s it... That’s right... That’s the way it is...”), these two very contrasted instrumental voices, like two pure consciousnesses (easily identifiable because

of their great difference of register), have not understood or admitted that the die has been cast, they still agonize, imitating each other²⁰ during a long decrescendo *smorzando*, around a few conjunct notes (A#, B, C#, and D), which form one of those usual “restricted scales”²¹ in a tiny ambitus (a diminished fourth).²² Finally, the two voices stop on the minor third B– D, but each note in its own register: in the end, the vacuum that separates the two instrumental “characters” (or “ghosts”) reaches more than five octaves (plus a minor third) — probably a tragic symbol of the fatal distance that separates them, or perhaps not. The work seems to have found, at least, a compromise between innocence and sin because of the common scale that the two strata use (this restricted A#– B– C#– D scale like a common language, in fact a common prosody).

The compromise could be between innocence and pride: Faustus’s pride, obviously,²³ which led him to his loss, perhaps a relative loss, precisely because of this final balance between God and the devil, right and wrong, innocence and pride, although this balance is precisely possible only when Faustus is finally damned. In the end, the consequence for the character of Faustus himself is of an absolute loss, but not so for listeners, because we are only partially Faustus. The latter is a scapegoat — “absolute pride,” according to Dusapin²⁴ — and his damnation is a good thing for us: it allows this final balance.

Faustus is one of those anti-heroes, rare, but at the same time, crucial in the history of opera. He remains a hero because he is the main character, which probably means that we are supposed to identify with him. Faustus is more than a banal evil character (which is always secondary). Rather than being our adversary, he occupies the same unusual and subtle position as Da Ponte’s character, Don Giovanni, immortalized by Mozart and, according to Kierkegaard, *the character par excellence, who accomplished “[t]he immediate stages of the erotic, or musical erotic”*:²⁵ music, across opera, seems to take advantage of amoral (not only *immoral*) subject matter because it may rank beyond every dichotomy.

Nietzsche, at the start of *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*, saw in the essence of all music either an Apollonian or a Dionysian principle, never a moral one. Then, a possible interpretation, if one wished, could link Don Giovanni to Dionysus and Faustus to Apollo. In both cases, as in *Carmen*,²⁶ the operas (for once) found a real *musical* subject, that is to say, true musical heroes, beyond every parasitic morality. Even if the destiny of the characters is moral (the end, for Faustus, as for Don Giovanni, is punishment), the existence itself of those characters in a musical work may be the important thing. In a way, Don Giovanni is Dionysus himself, as Faustus is Apollo (the god of beauty but also of knowledge, Faustus’s ultimate search) — both damned by Christianity.

A Twenty-First-Century Faustus

In the end, how do we recognize *Faustus, the Last Night* as an opera of our time? In other words, how does it differ from a work of the twentieth century? In the first analysis, this *Faustus* may not appear so different from a work by Berg: the characters mostly express an excessive pain in an atonal language. Faustus and Mephistopheles (the first abused by the second), both shaven-headed and clad in Andrea Schmidt-Futterer's sober costumes, and the first staging by Peter Mussbach, recall *Wozzeck* manipulated by the doctor or by his captain. Both Faustus and the Angel, having become mad, seem to yell in a typically expressionistic way. But here is the eternal anathema of modern and contemporary operas: they always risk reminding us of Berg, whenever they look for excessiveness (or only because they employ disjunct and dissonant intervals), which is often — if not always — the case.

However, subtle details give us information. First, the choice of subject itself takes on a postmodern color. There is no question here of the postmodernist aesthetics typical of the 1980s, to which Dusapin never adhered. However, as Judith Lochhead has noted, the term “postmodern” is increasingly used in an extended sense to characterize the present period.²⁷ Even atonal composers (against whom postmodernists reacted) choose more and more popular librettos for their operas. In the emerging dramatic works, one notes the taste for supernatural, for fairy tale, for the world traditionally associated with childhood, as in, for instance, *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern*, conceived by the very “serious” and, in any case, hyper-modernist German composer Helmut Lachenmann in 1996. Even if the political and subversive aspects of the tale by Hans Christian Andersen are well known, the choice remained surprising in its simplicity.

More recently, the Portuguese musician Emmanuel Nunes, also a hyper-modernist, gave us *Das Märchen* (2006–8), based on the poem by Goethe; the Belgian Philippe Boesmans, *Wintermärchen* (1999), based on *The Winter's Tale* by Shakespeare; and the Korean composer Unsuk Chin, *Alice in Wonderland* (2004–7). Those tales are admittedly high cultural references, yet they still summon the child in every listener.

In the case of *Faustus, the Last Night*, the myth is darker and seems “for adults.” At first sight, what child would sell his soul to the devil? However, the fable stays popular, and its treatment by Dusapin takes comic aspects and even regressive, childlike, typical-of-our-time colors^{27-bis} that *play* in a strange and sickly way, perhaps in order to forget what *Time* called the “decade from hell,”²⁸ marked by September 11, 2001, and then by various severe economic recessions. Here is the greatest distance from Berg, who did not put a drop of humor in his two operas.²⁹ Or humor, in Berg's case, may be closer to dark sarcasm (which is supposed to be politically useful and then “serious”) than the

regressive, free, lightweight, almost kitsch games held in *Faustus, the Last Night*.

Beyond the comic character of Sly, or the childish — and popular — mockeries of Mephistopheles, the original staging by Mussbach adds greatly to the overall atmosphere of kitsch. As Mephistopheles reappears in the middle of the work, he is disguised as a monstrous (ridiculous) white bunny, recalling *Puppy* (1992), the enormous work by Jeff Koons.³⁰ Similarly, the Angel wears an outdated costume, whose feathered white wings are anything but discrete. One is reminded, also, of the latest opera by Péter Eötvös, *Angels in America* (2002–4). The Hungarian composer remarked, “what I like in this story from Kushner is its unreality.”³¹ What the public could like, indeed, might be its supernatural statement.

This may also be the degeneration, or, at least, the simplified lecture of the myth of Faustus in our time: not a moral lecture, but an infantile one. What is delectable in it, for us, may be simply its underlying magic in general. Mephistopheles is no longer frightening, if we are already in hell. He is a magician when our own hell does not even contain magic and we, Harry Potter readers (children and adults), are probably thirsty for a re-enchantment of the world. That is perhaps the new context that André Malraux glimpsed as he famously prophesied, “The 21st century will be spiritual or will not be.”

Notes

1. Pascal Dusapin, *Faustus, the Last Night. La dernière nuit de Faustus: opéra en une nuit & onze numéros 2006* (Lyon: Opéra de Lyon, 2006). Christopher Marlowe, “*Doctor Faustus, A-Text (1604)*,” in *Doctor Faustus: A-and B-Texts (1604, 1616)*, ed. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1993), 103–98.

2. Dusapin, “À propos d’une histoire de Faustus,” in *Faustus, the Last Night*, 125. Translations by the author, unless otherwise noted.

3. Jacques Amblard, *Pascal Dusapin: l’intonation ou le secret* (Paris: Musica Falsa, 2002).

4. Quoted in Dusapin, “J’ai envie de dire,” interview by Marcus Gammel, in *Faustus, the Last Night*, 114.

5. This opera was the second composed by Dusapin, after *Roméo et Juliette* (1988), and before *To Be Sung* (1993), *Perela* (2001), *Faustus, the Last Night* (2006), *Passion* (2008), *Penthesilea* (2015) and *Macbeth Underworld* (2019).

6. Kawada Junzō, *La voix. Étude d’ethno-linguistique comparative*, trans. Sylvie Jeanne (Paris: Éditions de l’École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1998), 232.

7. Even if he’s probably now France’s most famous living composer, Dusapin was always a much disputed figure of

contemporary French music, notably because of his apparent (and in fact assumed) clumsiness of the self-taught composer. However, even the famous and much respected French composer Henri Dutilleux recognized at least that he liked *Watt*.

8. See Amblard, *Pascal Dusapin*, 51– 53.

9. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 68.

10. Dusapin, “À propos d’une histoire de Faustus,” in *Faustus, the Last Night*, 137.

11. Those four degrees confirm the analyses of modern phonology, which often modelizes four “intonation contour points” in several languages, including French and American. See Kenneth Lee Pike, *The Intonation of American English* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1945), 27, or for the prosody of French, Mary-Annick Morel, *Grammaire de l’intonation l’exemple du français* (Paris: Ophrys, 1998), 12, or Pierre R. Léon, *Phonétisme et prononciations du français* (Paris: Nathan, 1992), 125.

12. The Greek grammarian had already analyzed that the intonation of speech (of ancient Greek in this case) was “contained in a fifth.” (“Dans le discours, le chant de la voix se renferme dans l’intervalle de la quinte ou à peu près.”) Denys d’Halicarnasse, *Traité de l’arrangement des mots*, trans. Charles Batteux (Paris: Nyon l’aîné et fils, 1788), 59.

13. Takemitsu Tōru, *Chosakushū* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2000), 5:162.

14. The last movement (“Le Christ, lumière du paradis”), like the fifth (“Demeurer dans l’amour”), is entirely dedicated to them.

15. The echo, since Beethoven emphasized it for the first time in his famous Sonata no. 14 (op. 27, no. 2), is traditionally related to the idea of night. Thus, the sonata is subtitled “Moonlight.” This is probably because the echo (the new resonance of the pianoforte which was allowed by the new pedal) reminds one of the depth of a cavern, but also of the human soul, of course, or of a sky that reveals its stars only at night. The cosmos is then the echo, as a sign of depth (as the sound of the universe).

16. The second recording of the London Sinfonietta had remained on the Billboard Classical Charts for 134 weeks and even appeared in the British Pop Album Charts (number six, before Madonna and the pop group R.E.M.).

17. Pierre Boulez, *Points de repere* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1981), 81.

18. These monstrous (at least clumsy) effects may be those of a self-taught composer, in a way, but are also fully assumed by the musician because they generate a vivid effect of improvisation, of “truth,” as if, each time, something “deeply human” would happen.

19. Dusapin, interview by the author, June 1998, Paris.

20. This process often occurs in the counterpoint-like manner of Dusapin. However, those imitations, here, are driven at a slower pace

than in the prosodic style (second style), which is typical of the third style.

21. Those restricted scales form the main vocabulary of the second style. But here, they obviously do not intend to make the instruments “speak” because of the slow tempo (which is not the one of speech).

22. However, when in the second style, each instrumental stratum should have stayed in this strict ambitus; in the present third style, the four notes sometimes change their register (octave), in order for the expression to be deployed.

23. Faustus, as Dusapin represents him, is not only a careless scientist, in business with the wrong man, but a monster of pretentiousness who verges on madness, capable of yelling, “! Myself! ! But I, myself, my... llllll. Without myself?” (number 9, near the end, when Faustus is alone with Togod and the Angel).

24. After he wrote an opera “about innocence” (*Perela*), Dusapin wanted to compose another about the opposite, the “absolute evil.” Interview by the author, 2005, Paris.

25. This is the title of an essay that became a chapter of *Either/ Or*. Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).

26. It is possible to think that the success of *Carmen* also finds deep reasons in similar arguments.

27. Judith Lochhead, introduction to *Postmodern Music/ Postmodern Thought*, ed. Judith Lochhead and Joseph Auner (New York: Routledge, 2002), 4.

27-bis. See Jacques Amblard & Emmanuelle Aymès, *Micromusique et ludismes régressifs depuis 2000* (Aix-en-Provence: PUP, 2017).

28. See Andy Serwer, “The ’00s: Goodbye (at Last) to the Decade from Hell,” *Time*, November 24, 2009. *Der Spiegel* also painted a grim picture, featuring “Das verlorene Jahrzehnt” as a cover headline in December 2009.

29. Unless one sees the use of *Wozzeck* as guinea pig (by the doctor) as bitter irony.

30. This is a gigantic flower sculpture, first assembled in 1992 and notably remade in 1995, in front of the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao.

31. See “Great Performers 2009– 2010: Peter Eotvos Talks about His Opera Angels in America,” [http:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cp2gnobFzQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cp2gnobFzQ).

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