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## **Dmitri Kourliandski (b. 1976): saturation, globalization and pluri-disciplinarity**

Written in 2013, this text was published in *Sociocultural Crossings and Borders: Musical Microhistories*, Vilnius, International Musicological Society, 2015, 520-536. This is a modified version (september 2019).

**Abstract:** It could be that the Russian composer Dmitri Kourliandski (1976) synthesises various topics of our time. First of all, if the word “contemporary” still applies these days, then something like a globalization of “contemporary” music is pertinent in his case. More precisely, a new bridge between France and Russia seems to have been built : What some French observers of present day music call the new “saturation of sound”, for instance, is apparent in the works of several French composers (Raphael Cendo, Franck Bedrossian, Yann Robin), but also in the works of Kourliandski himself. A new “aesthetic tendency” may be born, perhaps a new “school” (when post-modernity, in first analysis, had caused the decline of every aesthetics or school, every “ism”, at least assumed by the composers themselves). But this school, here, may no longer be a national one (like “the 5” of the Russian romanticism, or “the 6” of French neoclassicism) but might appear like a new *international* one. The end of U.S.R.R., at least, is clearly involved here. A good illustration of this would perhaps be this concerto “for Porsche and orchestra” (*Emergency survival guide*, 2006) composed by Kourliandski, like a comic (but not only) sign of the new ultra-capitalist views of Eastern Europe.

**Keywords.**

Globalization, internet, pluri-disciplinarity, noise, saturation, sound, performance.

“Raphaël Cendo, Dmitri Kourliandski and myself did not invent the idea of saturation, but this category seems important to me to insert our music into the actual pan-optical world. Because we are living in a strange world, saturated by surveillance. The communication networks are surveyed more and more, while cities are covered by video-surveillances<sup>1</sup>.”

(Bedrossian, 2008, p. 54).

## Introduction

Dmitri Kourliandski, a Russian composer born in 1976, may be called a musician of the “sound as such<sup>2</sup>”. A simple blick on of *Broken memory*'s score, for example, shows that the notes (like in this work in particular) can all simply disappear. Only timbres and rhythms (which are more “vague durations” in this case) stay determinant. However, this phenomenon, since the first style of Ligeti, Xenakis or since the beginning of the Polish school, during the late 1950's, can obviously not be called an invention of the Russian musician. What might seem more original is the treatment of the sound itself (through a quasi systematic saturation). We will see that some kind of

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<sup>1</sup> “Raphael Cendo, Dmitri Kourliandski et moi-même n'avons pas inventé l'idée de saturation, mais cette catégorie me semble importante pour inscrire notre musique dans le monde panoptique actuel. Car nous vivons dans un monde saturé de surveillance. Les réseaux de communication sont de plus en plus surveillés, tandis que les villes sont couvertes de vidéosurveillances.”

<sup>2</sup> The composer himself, however, claims the opposite: “The essence to my approach of sound is that I am not interested in sound as such! what I am interested in are the conditions that make sounds appear: the natural physical data, that is to say the musician's physiology, the construction, the material and the physical characteristics of the instrument; the intensity of the musicians' gesture. Sounds are the projection, the outcome of those conditions (« L'essence de mon approche du son, c'est, apparemment, que le son en tant que tel ne m'intéresse pas ! Ce qui m'intéresse, ce sont les conditions physiques du jaillissement de la sonorité : le matériau et les propriétés physiques de la surface des instruments, d'une part, et l'intensité de la gestique des musiciens, de l'autre. Le son est la résultante de ces conditions »). Kourliandski, 2010, p. 44.

“international school” has emerged around this particular technique (involving notably several French composers). The originality, that of a musician from the XXIst century, is precisely bound to this inscription into an international context, into “globalized” concepts (aesthetics and/or techniques). Some works (some of Kourliandski typically) also seem to follow the topics of plastic arts: the words “happening” or “performance” can become musical in his case, far beyond the first conceptions of John Cage during the 1950’s, in Black Mountain College. But the new paradigm could be, even more (in the case of Kourliandski and this could make him a real precursor) some kind of new fusion, more organic, between popular interests and avant-garde. Is it the end of any solemnity in art and notably in music?

### **1. Saturation**

*Emergency survival guide* contents and represents a style we could consider emblematic in the case of Kourliandski. Only the rhythms seem to stay predominant, and so precisely noted on the score (as they mark the existence of time, of course, and can not be ignored). That is why their writing stays complex and detailed (see for example the wood-wind instruments and the pianos, all written in triple quavers)<sup>3</sup>. The pitches are nothing more than a simple indication of something high, medium or low. The instruments seem to have become percussion instruments, existing mainly for their timbre, like in the project of *Ionisation* (1928) by Varese (integrally written for percussion instruments, piano and sirens).

Thus, the relative historical importance of the composer might be linked to this “soundism” (even if the aesthetics are not new, the technical ways to re-approach these aesthetics are). Indeed, Makis

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<sup>3</sup> See for instance *Emergency survival guide*, Jobert, 2011, p. 17.

Solomos, in his recent book *From music to sound*<sup>4</sup>, proves in a quite exhaustive way that the new paradigm of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was sound and no longer “music” (as a combination of “notes” more than sounds). Thus, Varese could have been the real “father” of his century, after all. And Adorno, in his famous *Philosophy of new music* (written in the beginning of the 1940’s), confronting mainly Schoenberg and Stravinsky (revolution against restoration), could have ignored the most crucial point, thinking, along with these two great composers, that music was still a pure problem of pitch, a logical of degrees. Thus, the “sound as such”, as a paradigm, is not new if we think about Varese, but also about Italian futurism, John Cage, and later the French “musique concrète”, soon becoming (during the 1950’s) electro-acoustic and finally “acousmatic” music. The French musicologist Pierre-Albert Castanet, about Kourliandski and some other composers of the same generation, is right to think about a *return*: the return of some kind of “soundism” in present day music (“le retour du bruitisme dans la musique savante actuelle<sup>5</sup>”).

However, something is new in the case of the young Russian composer. The sounds used by Kourliandski, acoustic or electronic (but acoustic in many cases) are often *saturated*. In this way, the musician tries to explore an new limit (and perhaps the “final” limit, the “absolute” limit) of instrument: the saturated acoustic. In this way, the soundism becomes something more ontological. According to Bastien Gallet (thinking about these new aesthetics and techniques), writing the sentence in big characters to “saturate the letters or the words” and showing better what he claims: “ONLY A SATURATED SOUND CAN KEEP THE TRACE OF THE EVENT IT IS<sup>6</sup>”. In France, the term of “saturationism”, or “saturation”, is sometimes used to

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<sup>4</sup> *De la musique au son*, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Oral communication.

<sup>6</sup> « SEUL UN SON SATURE EST A MEME DE CONSERVER LA TRACE DE L’EVENEMENT QU’IL EST ».

qualify the technique and aesthetics of Kourliandski and others (mainly Franck Bedrossian, Raphael Cendo and perhaps also Yann Robin).

Let's examine directly an example of acoustic saturation in an orchestral work. *Objets impossibles 1* was commissioned by the Ensemble Intercontemporain and created in the Cité de la musique (Paris, November 2010). As early as the end of the first bar, the second horn, like many instruments in the most general case, uses saturated sounds as soon as its part appears. The playing mode may seem strange: *con sordina* but quadruple *forte*, which creates a new kind of tensed sound, tensed but not loud (because of the mute)<sup>7</sup>. These aesthetics might be called neo-primitivist (which could be a criticism as a state of non-originality) but not in a research of sonic power any more (like it was, notably, in *The rite of spring*, 1913). The crudity does not have to be connected to an orchestral demonstration of new sonic possibilities. The crudeness is confident in its new technical identity, confident enough to stay instrumental (and not orchestral as a massive process). Franck Bedrossian, using the same kind of technique, explains this new paradigm<sup>8</sup>. In a way, this "micro-primitivism" of the XXI<sup>st</sup> century, quite generalised (in the case of Kourliandski and Bedrossian), can become a new ductile vocabulary (generating *forte* as much as *piano* passages) searching for more

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<sup>7</sup> The composer himself confirms: "Parameters such as piano or forte are in most cases not determined by a dramatic concept, but by the properties of the material and the intensity of the movement: if you brush the palm of your hand against the body of a piano, it is almost impossible to control the intensity of the sound, and so, the produced intensity is not artificial but completely natural". Kourliandski, 2010, p. 82.

<sup>8</sup> « Le principe de saturation du timbre affecte les instruments eux-mêmes de façon individuelle. [...] De cette recherche découlent de nouveaux timbres associés à de nouvelles techniques de jeu pour toutes les familles d'instruments. L'écriture même des symboles musicaux s'en trouve remise en question. Ce qui découle de cette action, ce n'est pas seulement une distorsion instrumentale mais la découverte d'un nouveau territoire sonore » (« The principle of timbre saturation affects the instruments themselves, in an individual way. [...] This research generates new timbres associated to new playing technics for all the families of instruments. The writing of symbols itself becomes problematic »). Bedrossian, 2008, p. 34.

“economical ways” than those of Stravinsky. The orchestra is perceived to “go out of itself” (without having to play loudly) and more precisely to be going in the territory of other sounds. For some kind of psycho-acoustical reason, electronic sounds can be heard here (with the exception of the percussion instruments and concerning all the other instruments). It is true that this phenomenon of the acoustic world imitating the electronic world was already there at the end of the 1960’s, for instance in the end of *Continuum* by Ligeti (1968)<sup>9</sup>, or even ten years later in John Adams work: *Common tones in simple time* (1979)<sup>10</sup>. Here however (in the work by Kourliandski), the phenomenon is systematised. It is the complete orchestra (or at least a great part of it) which becomes something else, with another sonic signature, and thus, “comes out of itself”, as we had previously noted. And we can already advance that the problem here is not the end of tonality: *that* was the work of Schoenberg, already one century before. Further, the question here is the possible end of the orchestra. After that, why not use quite simply all electronic instruments, if the orchestra “kills itself” in approaching them, and considering their heavy ergonomic superiority? We will come back to this problem later.

One could object that the orchestra, and Kourliandski here, are not trying to imitate this “popular” electronic world. But it may not be totally true. This “saturationist” composer is obviously influenced by pop music, by the saturation of electronic guitar, as Bastien Gallet

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<sup>9</sup> This work, for harpsichord, ends with a global gesture: the pitches get higher and higher and tighter and tighter. Finally, they equalize themselves on the same quickly repeated note. Thus, the human ear is not familiar with a high pitched note very virtuously repeated by the harpsichord. One recognizes some other instrument, or even some “non musical” noise, like a clock alarm.

<sup>10</sup> The work starts with long and very resonant string textures. A piano is added, doubling these textures with light and mechanical batteries (very quickly repeated hesitations between notes of each chord of this postmodernist – and thus tonal – work). The obtained texture is close to some kind of combination of sounds, often proposed by the Korg, Yamaha or Roland personal synthesizers which were beginning to appear at this time – the early 1980’s).

had already noticed<sup>11</sup>. The generation of Kourliandski no longer fears the world of rock music. The concept of seriousness, on one hand, “vulgarity” on the other, are not so much the problem of our young and post-modern world where “everything has the same value”, according to Nicolas Bourriaud (and it is noted that the term “post-modern” is increasingly used to characterize the present period)<sup>12</sup>. That is one of the new phenomena here. Compared to other arts, Contemporary music was late for that. For instance, plastic arts (always pioneers of new aesthetical concepts during the 20<sup>th</sup> century) had already wanted to leave the galleries, to make an art “from and for the street”. The fear of Adorno and Horkheimer about cultural industry (in *Dialectics of reason*, 1944)<sup>13</sup> finally became the fear and the distrust (or even contempt) felt by all contemporary music itself, perhaps until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2. Globalization

The second main axis of this text is about Kourliandski and the globalization context, Kourliandski “and internet” in particular. Kourliandki is obviously a musician composing after 1989, in a neo-capitalist country. A symptom of this can be seen in his work *Emergency survival guide* (2006). It is a concerto “for 2 automobiles and orchestra” (see *Emergency survival guide*’s score and consider the two “soloists”, Auto 1 and Auto 2, the two only instruments which are not capable of executing the rapid and complex rhythms written

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<sup>11</sup> Here, Gallet writes about Bedrossian and Cendo. But the works of these two French composers (also said to be saturationist), can often be closely analysed like Kourliandski’s: with the same analytic tools. We shall come back again to these composers, later in the text. « La force de Franck Bedrossian et de Raphaël Cendo, est d’avoir opéré la remédiation dans l’écriture instrumentale contemporaine du bruit assourdissant de la pop music [...]. » (The force of Franck Bedrossian and of Raphael Cendo, is to have inoculated in the instrumental contemporary writing the loud sound of pop music »). Gallet, 2008, p. 42.

<sup>12</sup> See Lochhead and Auner, 2002, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted by Solomos, 2013, p. 147.



everywhere else)<sup>14</sup>. In fact, for the first performance, in the Biennale of Venice, the automobile (unique) was a Porsche 911, here even with a supplement of ostentation: the superb orange colour of the car. We could see in the Porsche a criticism, or not, of the new globalized pan-capitalism (this question – criticism or not – is *the* problem of the young art of our times, according to Nicolas Bourriaud<sup>15</sup>, and also to the French philosopher Alain Badiou)<sup>16</sup>. If it is not entirely a criticism, eitherway it is still a symbol: a flag of the young post-sovietic Russian greed, greed for the world and its caricatured treasures which were before hidden from it. Even if the presence of the orange Porsche were not really a severe criticism, or not even not a touch of humour or grotesque<sup>17</sup>, Kourliandski would finally appear like a composer of the globalized and merchandized world (where every one knows that

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<sup>14</sup> This point of view could make of *Emergency Survival Guide* a real anti concerto: virtuosity is forbidden to the soloists in particular. The concept of note (of pitch), is therefore subtly denied: in the ending of any virtuosity. The instrument stays a pure timbre and the “playing” (eventually virtuosic) on this timbre disappears.

<sup>15</sup> « Mais un paradoxe s’attache à cette mission historique, qui devra s’effectuer contre cette mise au pas que l’on nomme “globalisation”, et non pas dans son sillage... » (“But a paradox is bound to this historic mission, which will have to be *against* this [pan-capitalism] that one calls globalisation, and not in its following”). Bourriaud, 2009, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> « Tout le problème est de savoir aujourd’hui ce que c’est qu’un art non impérial, c’est bien une question qui est indiscernablement une question politique et une question esthétique. Une des raisons de la difficulté de l’art aujourd’hui est l’extraordinaire faiblesse de l’invention politique contemporaine. L’espace général de résignation dans lequel l’humanité est installée à cet égard, l’absence de projets, de sorte que l’art est toujours tenté de porter un retrait plutôt qu’un projet – cela reflète la situation d’ensemble. » (“the question is: what could be a non-imperial art [which means, in the Marxist vocabulary of the maoist philosopher, a non-“democratic-pan-capitalistic” art], it is a politic and an aesthetic question. One of the reasons of the difficulty of art, today, is the extraordinary weakness of the contemporary politic invention. The general phenomenon of resignation, in which humanity is installed about this weakness, the absence of projects, makes that art is always tempted to carry a retreat and more than a project.”) Badiou, 2002, p. 27.

<sup>17</sup> Makis Solomos, though, clearly sees in the work *Happy mill* humoristic aesthetics: “Dmitri Kourliandski’s music displays a quality that counterbalances the impression of drama: humour. In *Happy Mill*, an interactive performance for four female performers, the soloists slowly eat chicken nuggets and chips, and drink some coke – the McDonald’s children’s menu –, while the computer imitates the process of digestion and produces crumbling sounds reduced to powder. The beginning of... pas d’action, with the huge Alp horn, also has elements of derision in it. Or maybe not. Elsewhere, we are not far from the grotesque.” Solomos, 2010, p. 91.

the best cars are German and that having a Porsche, from now on, is less vulgar than “fun”, specially in the eye of a post-modern “kidult”<sup>18</sup>, etc.), where communication of art seems to be often included in art itself<sup>19</sup>.

The titles of Kourliandski’s works are mainly thought up directly in English, the language of this merchandized world, at least the language of “communication of art”. Or in French, like this work directly called *Objets impossibles I*. Being a citizen of the world, or at least of Europe, is not only convenient, it is a necessity, for a Russian contemporary composer, according to the musician himself<sup>20</sup>. But the globalization is upper most in the fact that in a way, Kourliandski belongs to an international “electronic, online” school of music and aesthetics. Because “saturationism”, as we already noticed, is also the technique and the aesthetics of three French composers, Raphaël Cendo, Franck Bedrossian and Yann Robin.

*Transmissions* (2001) for bassoon and electronics, by Franck Bedrossian, clearly shows the savage saturating technique, probably more widely than any other work of the “group”. The work, which we

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<sup>18</sup> During the 1970’s, the psychologist Tony Anatrella was one of the first to stigmatise those “kidults” (contraction of “kids and “adults”). Later, in 1983, another American psychologist, Dan Kiley, imagined his *Peter Pan Syndrome* (1983). According to Kiley, it would now be the whole occidental society, frightened by the eternal economic crisis and the difficulty of living in general, which would be touched by this syndrome (the child who doesn’t want to grow up). Kourliandski, like any other citizen (and specially this *young* citizen, born in 1976) could also be more or less touched by this phenomenon. See Amblard and Aymès, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> For that opinion about contemporary art, for instance, see Foster, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Answering Omer Corlaix (asking “how do you earn your living in Moscow?”): “Europe! At the time of the Soviet Union, a composer was recognized, he had a status. Today, he no longer exists. He can’t earn his living with his music but thanks to the lessons he gives. The composers from the time of the Soviet Union still hold the tenured positions in the conservatories. You have to imagine that from 1948 to the disappearance of the Union of Soviet Composers in 1991, that Stalin had founded in 1932, musical life was run by Tikhon Khrennikov (1913-2007), one of Andreï Jdanov’s creatures. He was still officially in charge in 2004, three years before his passing away, and he taught at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory until his death. Still today, almost all the teachers are pupils of Khrennikov, except for some famous personalities such as my professor Leonid Bobylev. At the Saint-Petersburg Conservatory, the teachers are mainly pupils of Shostakovich. In the end, there is no place for musical creation. Of course, there’s a lot of money for classical music but not for contemporary music”. See Corlaix, 2010, p. 77-78.

could call *trash*, is typical in its capacity of emphasizing – perhaps – new affects. These affects might be horror, embarrassment, and sometimes, then, a new kind of *monstrous* musical grotesque or tragicomic<sup>21</sup>. As Philippe Leroux notes, “in the creative act, Franck Bedrossian attaches little importance to politeness and good manners” (Leroux, 2008, p. 71). And far beyond, as a matter of fact, the word “Monstrosity” is assumed by the composer himself (Bedrossian, 2008). That could be typically a survival – and more: a technical development – of the most violent primitivism or expressionism (and finally avant-gardism, modernism). Our *exergue*, written by Bedrossian, shows that the French musician includes his Russian friend and colleague in his own aesthetical branch, as if the concept of avant-garde (typically modernist) would still exist and if Kourliandski would be part of it. In many ways, these composers finally try to make the great modernism survive. The paradox is that, on the one hand, they belong to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, thinking about this idea of avant-gardism and radicalism, this “monstrousism” (where even a certain idea of constructivism is assumed by Kourliandski himself)<sup>22</sup>. And on the other hand, on the contrary, they might be part of the rare composers who belong to their century, trying to build something radically new for orchestra and instruments.

This “school” of saturation, as far as it exists, is not a national one (but Darmstadt wasn’t either). The new phenomenon might be that this “school” may even not be a “material” one. Kourliandski knows Bedrossian. They are friends. But they mostly discuss their ideas, from the beginning, on internet. So, this group of 4 (Cendo,

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<sup>21</sup> Laughing, of course, the listener has to protect himself against this new embarrassing – because trash – music.

<sup>22</sup> “Because of this visible mechanization and formalization of my creative processes, many try to draw a parallel between my aesthetics and that of the constructivists and formalists of the twenties in the last century. It is actually difficult to dispute those allegations. However, as far as the aesthetics of constructivism is concerned, what applies best in my case is catastrophe constructivism.” Kourliandski, 2010, p. 85. See also Solomos, 2010 (title “constructivism”), p. 98-101.

Bedrossian, Kourliandski, Robin), is an international group and more, a e-group, an internet group: it is a group of our globalized times: international and online. Kourliandski has also tried to build a more traditionally Russian “groupe of 5”. But the latter doesn’t really appear on the international scene – not as much as our e-group of 4 – and it might eventually disappear in the end.

### 3. Pluri-disciplinarity.

The idea of this part is the taste, quite up-to-date, for pluri-disciplinarity. It’s the same taste, or mode, or symptom, that we noticed during this conference (on Thursday night, 6<sup>th</sup> September 2013) in *Breathing music*, by Justé Janulyté, associated to the “air sculptures” of Dovydas Klimavičius. In both cases, we see the obvious influence of the plastic arts of the 1990’s. Let’s consider *Objets impossible 1* again. In fact, the work, after its first performance, has been re-inoculated in a pluri-disciplinary project, including Kourliandski and Abstract Birds, a collective of plastic internet artists (perhaps not at the top of the art market)<sup>23</sup>. “Abstract Birds” could be the name of a Rock and roll band. That is also a sign of our times, beyond the new fusion between popular and more elitist aesthetics<sup>24</sup>: Kourliandski doesn’t work with Jeff Koons or Damian Hirst like Stravinsky could only compromise himself with a Ramuz (or better with Picasso), or Schoenberg with Kandinsky. His works can associate themselves with these confidential internet graphists, these *Abstract birds*: the globalized world of art is today so big that the

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<sup>23</sup> The work is available on Youtube (checked in January 2013). One could think that Kourliandski’s *Objets impossibles 1*, here, simply turned into a video music, which doesn’t make a new kind of pluri-disciplinarity. Here, the abstract numeric images, however, stick on the music, illustrate the music, precisely not the contrary like in the music of most videos. The final work by Kourliandski and Abstract Birds seems more like an installation “music + numeric images” than a video.

<sup>24</sup> About this general inclination for popular interests, one could mention the subject of the two first operas, as simply appears in their titles: the rather popular theme of science fiction in *Asteroid 62* and well as the – quite also popular – notion of fantastic in *Nosferatu*.

communication between artists is not assumed by an eventual unified world of arts anymore. The paradox is that our society of ultra-communication is much more inefficient than yesterday, in this way, just because of the number of artists. The communication then appears chaotic and subjective, hazardous.

Kourliandski has also attempted to build real “physical” installations or even happenings. A good example, already quoted, is *Happy mill*. A speaker on a stage comments the noises of digestion taped on the belly of people eating some Mac-Donald. The concept of the work is politic like a plastic art work could be: a reflection about consumerism like for instance *Cloaca* (2000-7) by Wim Delvoye, the famous “shit machine”. The criticism (of the pan-capitalist and ultra consumerist world symbolised by Mac-Donald), this time, is more than clear.

But in the end, we could try to make a nuance (or just ask a question), considering a simple musical work, *Four states of same* (2005). Indeed, It is easy to *feel* this power of this work, but also its potential limits. The power, mostly in this vocal work, lies in a fact that the animalism, or what Bedrossian called the monstrosity, is efficient of course, obvious, and expressive, a good point perhaps for a non tonal and so-called constructivist work (much more accessible than many other constructivist works of the past: the numerous serialist pieces of the 20<sup>th</sup> century). Then, this famous neo-constructivism could have led all the modernisms to their final simplification and comprehension: these saturated sounds. The saturated voice notably seems to figure the vocal grotesque itself, the very centre of human-animal expression. Wouldn't Stravinsky or Varese have not dreamt of finding it? However, a probable limit is hidden in this expressive animalism, which always goes back, again and again, obviously and fatally, to Varese's soundism, to Viennese expressionism, to Stravinsky's primitivism. A hundred years after the *Rite of spring*, the idea is still that the truth is to be found in the root, in sexuality, in the

animal, in wildness. But this “anti-bourgeoise” idea, crucial in its time, the idea of Freud, then of the whole pessimism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, could now be re-discussed.

Let’s forget, however, *Four states of same*. The second limit, for the saturationism in general, is the pertinence of classical instruments and further, of the score itself. If, according to us, *Transmissions* of Bedrossian may appear like the purest expression of saturation aesthetics, it might also be the absolute limit of what a score could possibly contain. The electronic part seems to build, to *write* (directly on the CD) almost the entire part of the final result. Does interpretation still have something to do with such a work? The fusion between the worlds of classical music and pop music might be more accomplished than the composer himself, or any contemporary composer could admit<sup>25</sup> (because renouncing the classical world would lead also to renouncing the traditional diffusion of contemporary music, which the musician is used to). This “success” (that of a fusion which seems fatal in our times) also leads to a statement which could frighten many contemporary composers: “we don’t need orchestras any more”.

In the case of Kourliandski, *Broken memory’s* score is also pertinent to this problem. Indeed, one single page encompasses a whole work (and not an extremely short one: the total duration is around 15 minutes, as is written at the end). We clearly understand

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<sup>25</sup> Once, Bastien Gallet asked Raphael Cendo: “Why do you not compose electronic or electro-acoustic pieces or, in other words, why do you not compose for a material which can be fully saturated?” See Cendo, 2008, p. 81.

that the score, in this case, can not deal with any detail. Could one still call it a score? The terms “diagram” or “performance guide” or “intention” might be more appropriate.

However, let’s finish with an opinion by Kourliandski. The musician doesn’t admit the vaine of the score. But the latter obviously becomes a simple support, and not the work itself:

“I am not so much interested in the transformations of sounds resulting from the textual parameter – the changes indicated in the text – as in the physical transformations affecting the musicians while they perform. I started by putting the musicians in such situations that their main concern was not so much to control the accuracy of the sound result as to “survive” under the conditions I imposed on them. This approach has led me to favour rather static and often repetitive compositions whose central issue is not the control of the sound result but the fact that the sound is beyond any control.”

### **Conclusion.**

Dmitri Kourliandski is definitively a composer of “noises” and, in fact, of saturated noises. But this might not be the important concept. The fact that this music could be “objective” (which the young composer not only claims but explains in detail: see again Kourliandski, 2010), could not appear more like the real originality of the works. The performative aspects of *Happy mill?* The pluri-disciplinarity of *Objets impossibles 1?* It can be doubted. These techniques (saturation) or essays (of imitating the liberty of plastic arts) could only appear like ways. The real paradigm may be more the discovery of a new centre between two worlds: pop music and “great music” and beyond this: popular world (which is no longer ignorance) and culture in general (which is not “bourgeoise” any more). This might be a centre between “serious” culture and “childish” (regressive) ancient so-called “subculture”. That is where the titles of

the two first operas appear more than emblematic: determining real new aesthetics, not so much “saturated” or “objective” but rather new “democratic” aesthetics of “kidults”. Indeed, if *Asteroid 62*, or *Nosferatu* are operas, they are operas of a new society where science fiction and films of the Fantastic are no longer reserved for teenagers but adapted to all of society, identified to its own youth.

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### **Summary.**

Dmitri Kouliandski is a composer of "the sound as such". However, this "soundism" is not that of the last century, and finds new aspects, typical of our new globalized world and common to French composers like Franck Bedrossian, Raphaël Cendo and Yann Robin. All these composers develop aesthetics (and specific techniques) of saturation. They sometimes write books about their precise topics (see Bedrossian, 2008 or Kourliandski, 2010). A new kind of primitivism is born with them. Is history of music simply still going on, with the eternal invention of new modernisms, searching for more and more wild sounds, or are these composers imprisoned in an ancient paradigm of avant-gardism, whereas many others (who clearly assume to be part of our "post-modern" society) could have left that avant-gardism for ever? That which is post-modern in their case, anyway, is the concept of an international "internet" (virtual) school of composers: international aesthetics at the age of globalisation. Another typical topic of Kourliandski himself (and not Bedrossian or Cendo this time) is the taste for pluri-disciplinarity. We can see in it the influence of the plastic arts more than the legacy of John Cage or of other composers from the XXth century, more or less bound to

Fluxus. Kouliandski, who calls himself an “objective musician”, could think about himself as an artist in general more like a musician in particular (which could be especially pertinent today, when the plastic artists have also conquered the sonic world). The last aspect that we have emphasized is that Kourliandski (1976), who is still a very young musician, might be called a “kidult composer” also. His interests are as much “classical music” (traditional “bourgeoise” culture) as teenager “subculture”, internet, science-fiction, films of the Fantastic, Porsche, etc. His Concerto for to automobiles (the first performance with a Porsche 911), or his operas *Asteroid 62* or *Nosferatu*, the presence of Mac Donald food in the work *Happy mill*, show this phenomenon. The result may be the birth of new fusion between popular arts and avant-garde. Even if plastic arts had already begun this fusion during the 1960’s, music was late in this peculiar aesthetical project. However, Kourliandski enables the emergence of this fusion when the latter might be one of the most important paradigms of our times: the end of any solemnity in music, or in arts, or even in the entire occidental society?

#### **About Author.**

Jacques Amblard (b. 1970) is a musicologist, associate professor at the Aix Marseille Université (France). His publications concern aesthetics, music of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries (for example in his recent books *20 regards on Messiaen*, PUP, 2015 or in *Micromusique*, PUP, 2017); music and intonation, notably in a book about the French contemporary composer Pascal Dusapin (*Dusapin. The Second Style or Intonation*, mf, 2017); or musical pedagogy (*Harmony Explained to Children*, mf, 2006). He has also written several novels (like *v comme Babel*, Balland, 2001 or *Noé*, mf, 2016). He conceived and presented a radio program, concerning musical pedagogy, on the cultural French public radio channel “France

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