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# Pour la Paix. Analysing the piece and preparing its performance

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## Abstract

*Pour la Paix* (1981-82) has a particular place inside Xenakis' production: it is his unique radio composition (Hörspiel). The composer drew extracts of texts from two books of his wife, to tell the story of two young boys, stemming from the same village, but recruited in two enemy armies. This text is read by four narrators. It is musically commented by sounds produced by the UPIC. In parallel, ten choral sequences open more speculative spaces, and propose a musical extension. Put in a tape, these three components can be diffused on the radio. However, the work was created in concert, and it is doubtless why Xenakis also proposes concert versions.

After the examination of the project and the genetics of the work, we will analyze the components one by one (text, choral sequences, UPIC sounds). Then, we will examine their assembly, by emitting the hypothesis that the fragility of this assembly explains why the version concert (in particular the one with the narrators and the choirs on stage) is the more interesting for the listener. A particular attention will be devoted to the performance of the version concert, as we will perform it with the vocal ensemble *Soli Tutti* on April 2022 at University Paris 8.

(A preliminary version of this article is M. Solomos, 2015).

## 1. Introduction

In the musical production of Xenakis, *Pour la Paix* occupies a unique place. Combining four reciters, mixed choir (32 voices minimum) and UPIC sounds on tape, this work is one of his rare mixed pieces. Moreover, it is the only radiophonic creation of Xenakis, which explains the very great importance of the text (which is by Françoise Xenakis) read by the reciters, whose UPIC sounds partly constitute a commentary, the choirs being able to be apprehended as choruses of ancient tragedy. Finally, no doubt because of the complexity of its project, it is little played or broadcast, and remains unknown.

Composed in 1981-82, *Pour la Paix* was commissioned by Radio France (and INA-GRM) in the form of a radiophonic work, a *Hörspiel*, i.e. a piece to be broadcast on the radio. The work was to be presented at the Prix Italia, a competition organized by RAI since 1948 – and still existing –, giving priority to radio and television programs. But that was not the case. On this point, Xenakis has bitter words: “*Pour la Paix* should have been entered for the Prix d'Italia. As it happens it was never sent because I was betrayed by French Radio. They asked me to write this piece but it turned out that the competition that year didn't cover that particular category” (Xenakis in B.A. Varga, 1996: 171).

The piece was created in concert, on April 23, 1982, at the Grand auditorium of Radio France (Paris), as part of a concert entitled “Tribute to Pierre Schaeffer”. Originally a radiophonic work, but finally created in concert with part of the live cast: we can already see an interesting ambiguity slipping into the circumstances of the creation. The Xenakis’ catalog at Salabert prolongs the ambiguity. Not having a section “radiophonic works”, it includes *Pour la Paix* in the section “electroacoustics”, indicating: “Version for choir, reciters and music”. But the piece also appears in the “Choir” section, which offers four versions: I. mixed choir a cappella; II. mixed a cappella choir, 4 reciters and stereo tape (UPIC sounds); III. 4 reciters and stereo tape (including recorded choirs and UPIC sounds); IV. tape only (bringing together choir, reciters and UPIC sounds).

There are therefore five possible versions of the piece. The first is its radiophonic form, which does not exist as such in the catalog in question. The other four are concert versions. The first contains only the choir parts, placed end to end, it lasts about 7' (and not 10' minutes as indicated in the catalogue). This may seem surprising, but, at the same time, expresses the importance Xenakis attached to choirs at the time. The other three versions, which include all the parts, are concert versions, which range from a version where both the narrators and the choristers are on stage to an acousmatic version (everything is on tape) through the version where the narrators are on stage and the choristers on tape. It should be noted that the acousmatic version corresponds to the radiophonic version (or electroacoustic according to the catalogue), but differs from it since it is to be broadcast in concert.

This article offers a first approach to *Pour la Paix*. Without going into all the details of the analysis, it wishes to go around certain questions and outline some lines of thought that other work could extend. It wishes to do justice to this piece which, just as it is little performed and broadcast, is still too little commented on by specialists. With regard to the latter, here is the list of some works that refer to them: Rudolf Frisius (1986), Jean-Marc Bardot (1999) and James Harley (2004) offer a general introduction; Kostas Tsougras (2005) analyzes the pitch structure of choral parts.

## 2. Genetics of the work

As material in the Xenakis Archives, we have a file which contains in particular the editing of the texts of Françoise Xenakis with some indications on the music to be composed as well as the program of the creation. The digitized tapes of the Xenakis Archives are more consistent. Next to several copies of the piece in several tracks or in reduction, they contain the recordings of the choir parts in several takes or in the final version, the recordings of the reciters as well as the UPIC sounds.

The documents contained in the Xenakis Archives allow us to understand in what order the piece was composed. A first document consists of 20 pages where Xenakis has made a montage of selected extracts from texts by Françoise Xenakis. He probably made photocopies of these extracts, cut them out, then pasted them on the sheets. Then, on these same sheets, he distributed the text to the four reciters (named by their first names – but not throughout the text) and, in the right margin, he noted the “blue” UPIC sounds. On a second document, consisting of 14 sheets, there is a copy of the assembled text. It says “complete final version” and “in pencil the cuts for a shortened version”. Indeed, in the final version, the text is abridged and a few words are changed. On these same sheets, there are indications for the music: the planned interventions for the choir parts are indicated (“choirs”); UPIC sequences, named M1, M2, etc. – also including an indication of their duration – correspond globally (but not entirely) to the final version; in some passages, there are annotations on the type of sounds necessary; finally, certain sentences of the text are assembled in paragraph, others separated (in order to illustrate a word musically).

Thus, the first step consisted in creating the text, by editing excerpts. Then, Xenakis thought of associating certain passages with some UPIC (“blue”) sounds perhaps already composed. Finally, he added to the text the precise moments when the other musical elements will intervene: choirs and other UPIC sounds, which probably had to be composed.

Two elements are striking. First, we see that the text is the primary support and that it remains so until the end, even if the choral parts and the most consistent UPIC sequences create purely musical moments. Next, note that Xenakis proceeds by editing (this is already the case with the text), gradually adding the various elements.

### 3. The text

*Pour la Paix* is the only piece by Xenakis that calls on reciters and where the text – read by two men and two women – is so important, as evidenced by the score, which gives the choral sequences and the UPIC sequences in relation to the text.

The title is of course related to the text: it talks about the horrors of war. (Note that in Xenakis' catalog there are two other “For” in the 1980s, *For Maurice* and *For the Whales*, and that one of the young Xenakis' unpublished works was called *Dove of Peace*.) To Bálint Varga's question: “This piece has some of the simplest, the most innocent and lyrical music you have written (in 1980 we agreed that lyricism was not part of your make-up!) but it has also terrible visions and hallucinations. Perhaps you wanted to conjure up all the horrors of war as a warning and in order to remind people to appreciate peace?” (Xenakis in Varga, 1996: 171-172), Xenakis replies: “It's based on a text by Françoise which is not about any specific war but about war in general, the unjust treatment of people. Two friends find themselves in two opposite camps and have to fight each other. They find each other eventually but are killed in an explosion” (*ibid.*).

Xenakis used two books by Françoise Xenakis, from which he chose a few extracts. From the first, *Écoute*, there is first the sentence: “Listen to the wind in the top of the trees. The wind that ruffles the dead, helmets rolled away. The wind that caresses faces and ruffles hair” (“Écoute le vent dans le haut des arbres. Le vent qui décoiffe les morts, casques roulés au loin. Le vent qui caresse les visages et décoiffe les cheveux”), sung by the choir and read by the reciters, which he also uses in *Nekuia*. Moreover, he takes the beginning of the back cover of *Écoute* to make it the very beginning of the text: “[A war.] By chopped sentences, by images, by verses, here is war in its horror. Atrocities, massacres, tortures, infinite suffering of men and women. We are anywhere. Where one hangs, shoots, massacres” (“[Une guerre.] Par phrases hachées, par images, par couplets, voici dans son horreur la guerre. Atrocités, massacres, tortures, infinie souffrance des hommes, des femmes. Nous sommes n'importe où. Là où l'on pend, fusille, massacre”). Finally, he isolates a few descriptions of the horrors of war, descriptions that punctuate Listening, making this little book a poignant work. For example: “Squatting by the crazy river a woman in a bowl of calmer water washes her child. Her pink skirt stretched between her legs, a hammock for the naked child. She has one hand under her head while with the other, cup, takes the water and gently pours it over the little body. Sometimes she spreads the fingers of her cup hand. Refuse the water. Wants only water, pure water to wash her dead child” (“Accroupie près du fleuve fou une femme dans une cuvette d'eau plus calme lave son enfant. Sa jupe rose tendue entre ses jambes, hamac pour l'enfant nu. Elle a une main sous la tête tandis que de l'autre, coupelle, prend l'eau et la fait doucement couler sur le petit corps. Parfois elle écarte les doigts de sa main coupelle. Refuse l'eau. Ne veut que de l'eau, de l'eau pure pour laver son enfant mort”).

The rest of the text (larger in quantity) is taken from *Et alors les morts pleureront*. This book tells, among other things, the story of two young boys, who were friends before being enlisted in two opposing armies. The narration opens great parentheses allowing happy memories to emerge, while advancing ruthlessly towards the sad ending. The book is also mixed with other stories, which Xenakis does not keep – for example the story of a woman who speaks on behalf of the resistance fighters.

The montage carried out by Xenakis is judicious. He fleshes out the story of the two boys from *Et alors les morts pleureront* with some descriptions of the atrocities of war borrowed from *Écoute*. The original extracts are very little modified. As we have insisted on the use of editing by Xenakis,

it is important to emphasize that the writing of Françoise Xenakis in these two books is itself a writing that proceeds by montage: several parallel stories are woven. The montage effect is reinforced by the fact that the writing itself is also characterized by a laconic, choppy tone.

We can read the text assembled by Xenakis as a manifesto against war. Xenakis himself, in the notice of the creation, gives a more general scope:

“Individuals are unconscious prisoners of societies and states that use them, like pawns, blindly, in its machinery to destroy lives and destinies. The nostalgia of two childhood friends taken as soldiers by two enemy camps is so fragile, it is nothing in front of the atrocities of the incessant wars. So much suffering for nothing. These sighs of their memory do not prevent them from running to their premature death” (“Les individus sont des prisonniers inconscients des sociétés et des États qui les emploient, tels des pions, à l’aveuglette, dans sa machinerie destructrice de vies et de destinées. La nostalgie de deux amis d’enfance pris comme soldats par deux camps ennemis est si fragile, elle n’est rien devant les atrocités des guerres incessantes. Que de souffrances pour rien. Ces soupirs de leur mémoire ne les empêchent pas de courir à leur mort prématurée”) (Archives Xenakis).

For Xenakis, it is undoubtedly also a painful memory of the Second World War and the beginnings of the Greek Civil War. In any case, this text, as we will see, also refers to the tragic events of December 1944, in Athens, which almost cost the composer his life. Moreover, the theme of death that runs through it also colors other works from the same period: *Aïs* (1980) or *Nekuïa* (1981), but also *La Légende d’Eer* (1977).

#### 4. The choir

Second element: the choir. Great is the importance of the choirs for Xenakis during the time of *Pour la Paix*: they appear in *Cendrées* (1973), *À Hélène* and *À Colonne* (1977) and in the two pieces composed just before *Pour la Paix*, *Serment-Orkos* (1981) and *Nekuïa* (1981). It should be noted that there is a certain kinship with this last work. Both pieces share the first sentences of Françoise Xenakis extracted from *Écoute* (“Listen to the wind...”). There is also the question of death which is, as we have said, common to both plays. Moreover, we find the same alternation between sequences playing in a linear way (ascending or descending scales) on screens and sequences which constitute gesture-sounds, although in *Nekuïa* the former tend to dominate. However, while *Nekuïa*, through its orchestral writing in particular, has a slight leaning towards neo-expressionism, *Pour la Paix*, due among other things to the presence of UPIC sounds, sounds quite different.

The role of the choir in *Pour la Paix* fulfills a dual function. On the one hand, it is a question of commenting on the text, by seizing, among other things, important words such as “die”. However, unlike the UPIC sounds, it is not a case of a punctual and descriptive commentary, but of sorts of long parentheses, which invite a properly musical expression. Therefore, the second role could be, precisely, to open up a musical space. This is probably why Xenakis authorizes, among the possible versions, the performance of the choral parts alone, placed end to end – quite astonishing otherwise, given that, without the reciters and the UPIC sounds, the piece is considerably shortened, as it has been said. Finally, note that there is no relationship between these choral parts and the UPIC sounds: the two are thought out in relation to the text, but independently of each other, even when they overlap.

*Pour la Paix* includes ten remote choral sequences. For an overview of these sequences, see Solomos (2015). In terms of importance, by their duration, the last two stand out: in a way, the music ends up prevailing (the work concludes with the last choral sequence). In terms of writing, we will see that they sum up practically the whole of choral Xenakis: with regard to the relationship to the text, they oscillate between comprehensible words and phonemes; as for their textures, they alternate, as has been said, sorts of scales (or melodies) and sound-gestures.

These sequences can be grouped into several types. First of all, sequences 1, 2 (cf. **figure 1**) and 7, which consist of melodies in unison (sequence 1) or in two voices (sequences 2 and 7) on the text “Listen to the wind...”. They are based on the tetrachord of interlocking fourths evoking the famous Indonesian pelog scale that Xenakis used in many works of the late 1970s and 1980s. The second

voice of sequence 2 plays on another tetrachord with a major third in the middle ; as for the second voice of sequence 7, it deploys a chromaticism within a tone, C-C#-D. Moreover, in the original recording – reproduced on the Fractal CD – the choirs of these sequences are accompanied by strange synthetic sounds, created by Daniel Teruggi.

♩ = 72 MM    Séq. 2

S  
mf E - cou - te le vent Dans le haut des a - rbres le vent  
qui dé - coi - ffe les morts ca - sques rou - lés au loin le  
vent qui ca - res-se qui ca - re -

A  
mf E - cou - te le vent Dans le haut des a - rbres le vent  
qui dé - coi - ffe les morts ca - sques rou - lés au loin le  
vent qui ca - res-se qui ca - re -

S  
sse les vi - sa - ges et dé - coi  
sse les vi - sa - ges et dé - coi

A  
sse les vi - sa - ges et dé - coi  
sse les vi - sa - ges et dé - coi

S  
dé - coi - ffe les che - veux  
dé - coi - ffe les che - veux

A  
dé - coi - ffe les che - veux  
dé - coi - ffe les che - veux

Figure 1 : Choir, sequence 2.

We can then group together sequences 3 (cf. **figure 2**) and 8, because there dominates each time a word, respectively “jackal” and “die”, as well as the rhythm double dotted quaver – triple quaver. Sequence 3 connects a repeated chord, descending then ascending scales on a sieve (each voice starts from its note in the previous chord), the repeated chord with glissandi and a final rise. All the notes belong to sieve 1 (see **figure 3**), which can be considered as the main sieve of the piece (the highest note, Bb, is not played in this sequence). As such, this sieve does not present any symmetries. Kostas Tsougras suggests certain modifications (cf. **figure 4**: removal of low Eb, addition of a C# and G# in bass clef, substitution of B for Bb in the treble), which allows it to be analyzed as a sieve symmetrical on two octaves. Sequence 8 uses the notes of what could be called sieve 2 (cf. **figure 5**) – but the word “sieve” is probably too strong, because, apart from the fact that only this passage uses these notes, that these are obtained by embroidering a chord.

♩ = 92 MM      Séq. 3

S  
cha cha-cal cha-cal cha-cal cha-cal

A  
cha cha-cal cha-cal cha-cal cha-cal

T  
cha cha-cal cha-cal cha-cal cha-cal

B  
cha cha-cal cha-cal cha-cal cha-cal

Figure 2 : Choir, sequence 3: beginning.

1 1 2 1 2 4 2 2 3 2 1 3 2 2 1 2 3 1 2 2 2 1 1

Figure 3 : Sieve 1.

2-2-1 2-3 1-2-2 2-1-2 2-2-1 2-3 1-2-2 2-1-2 3-2

Figure 4 : Sieve 1 modified by Kostas Tsougras.

Figure 5 : Sieve 2.

Third type: sequences 4, 5 and 6, which play with pure phonemes and are composite. They include alternations or repetitions of chords, ascending-descending scales with rhythmic shift and glissandi. They all use sieve 1. Sequence 4 (cf. **figure 6**) begins with two chords, then it alternates scales and chords; it uses neither the low Eb nor the high Bb of the sieve. Sequence 5, the shortest with sequence 3, uses only a few notes from sieve 1: it alternates a diminished seventh chord F#-A-C-Eb in the low of the female register and the chord D-E-A-Bb in its treble (this is the first time that the Bb has been used), before polarizing on an Eb. Sequence 6 features brief glissandi over chords. Then, she gives us to hear “horrible unrhythmic cries” (indicated by the score) on relative pitches. The glissandi resume, and the sequence ends with a “very strong ‘H’ from the back of the throat” and a “continuous modulation of the breath: ‘H’A by inhaling then exhaling alternately”.

Séq. 4

♩ = 32 MM.

→ = transformation continue d'un phonème à l'autre par la modification continue de la cavité bucale.

Figure 6 : Choir, sequence 4: beginning.

Sequence 9 – the longest, as we said, with the tenth – is unique: it almost forms a small musical work apart. It consists of repeated phonemes as if they were forming a word: “KO-OU-A”, always on the dotted eighth note - triple eighth note rhythm, the texture gradually thickening (passage from 2 to 8 voices, then additions of triples quavers). **Figure 7** completes it. In terms of heights, it deploys what could be called screen 3 (**figure 8**) – here too the word “sieve” is probably too strong –, which has some affinities with the screen of sequence 8 (sieve 2).



Séq. 10

♩ = 46 MM

The musical score is for a choir sequence. It features four vocal parts: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The tempo is marked as 46 MM. The lyrics are: "PLEU - RE PLEU - PLEU - A O A OU A É O O OU". The score includes piano accompaniment for each part, with dynamics like *ff* and *mf* indicated.

Figure 9 : Choir, sequence 10: beginning.

The musical notation shows a sequence of notes on a staff, with a corresponding sequence of numbers below: 3 1 1 2 2 2 3 1 1 3 3 1 2 2 2 1 3 1 3 1.

Figure 10 : Sieve 4.

## 5. UPIC sounds

### 5.1 CEMAMu and GRM

UPIC sounds occupy a very important place in *Pour la Paix*. Divided into 30 sequences of very unequal duration (from 0.5" to 5'37"), they total 18'24", for an overall duration of the work of just under 27'. Although the order came from Radio France, Xenakis chose to use only UPIC sounds, and not to use the GRM to produce sounds, but only for the final mix. We have said that the composition of the UPIC sounds was done in two phases. As Daniel Teruggi explains in the interview he gave us: "Xenakis had 2 or 3 reels of sound that he had prepared beforehand, we spent a lot of time listening, premixing and gradually building the continuity of the artwork. But he lacked a lot of sounds and that's why he left in the evening quite early to go to UPIC to make new sounds, this time with a precise function in relation to the narrativity of the text". For the sounds composed in the second phase, that is to say parallel to the mixing with the recorded voices, Teruggi specifies:

“The choirs and the actors were there from the start, it takes a lot of sounds to last for 26 minutes, hence the need for new sounds all the time”.

### 5.2 Names of UPIC sounds

Regarding the names of UPIC sounds, it seems that there were “UPIC long”, “UPIC red”, “blue” and “green” sounds. Moreover, as shown in the sketch provided by **figure 11**, which reproduces one of the two documents which accompany tape Xenakis 574, several types of names were used for each sound. In the **table 1**, we copied the names and the durations of the second document which accompanies tape 574 (it is the same document as before, with the addition of this list at the bottom of the sheet).

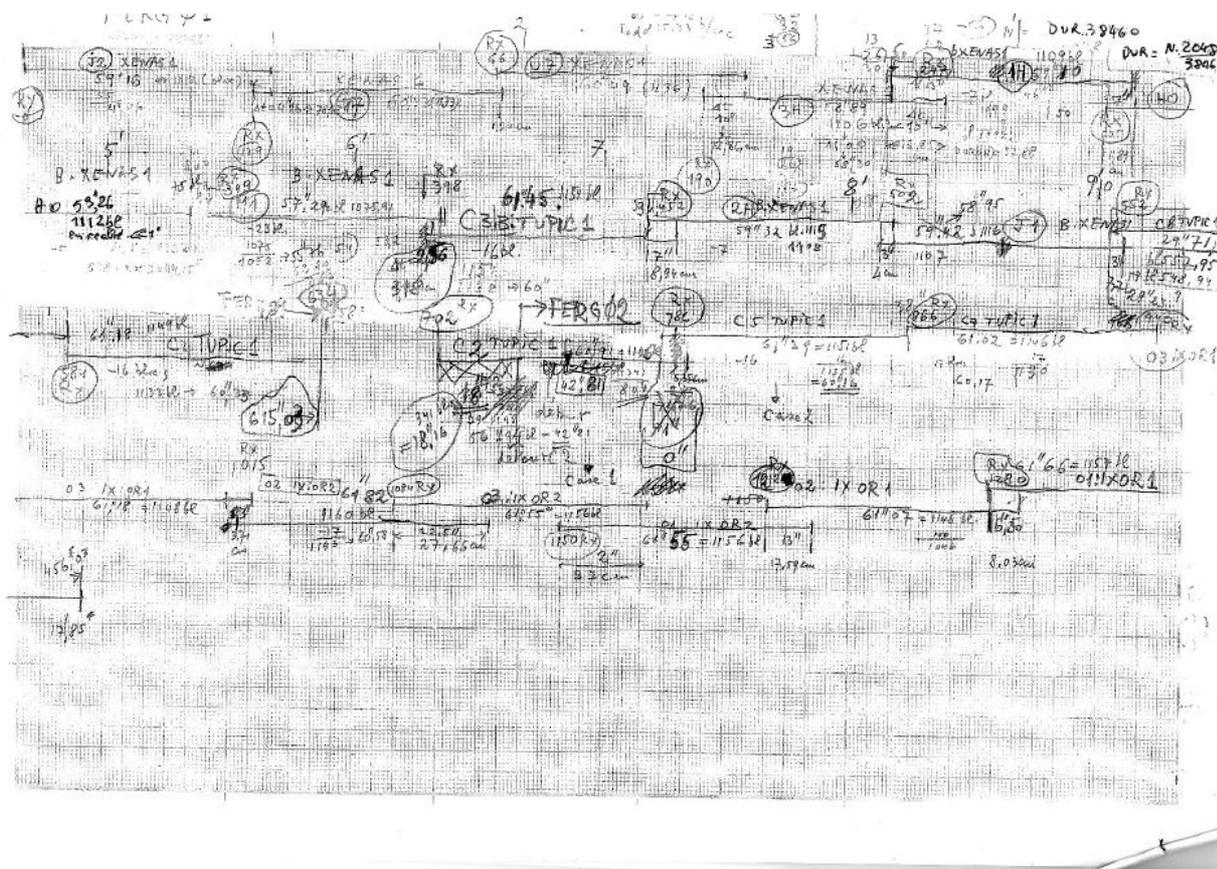


Figure 11 : Archives Xenakis (Tolbiac), Xenakis 574: document on graph paper accompanying the tape.

Sons	durations according to the A3 sheet that accompanies the tape: this duration corresponds to the durations of the 21 sounds of the Xenakis 574 tape	sound name from the A3 sheet that accompanies the tape
1	59.16''	XENAS1 – J2
2	60.33''	XENAS1 – G7
3	60.49''	XENAS1 – U7
4	58.89''	XENAS1 – 3H

5	59.10''	XENAS1 – 1H
6	44''	XENAS1 – HO
7	57.29''	XENAS1 – M1
8	61.45''	TUPIC1 – C3
9	59.32''	XENAS1 – 2H
10	59.42''	XENAS1 – J1
11	29.71''	TUPIC1 – C8
12	61.18''	TUPIC1 – C4
13	60.91''	TUPIC1 – C2
14	61.29''	TUPIC1 – C5
15	61.02''	TUPIC1 – C7
16	manque [60'']	IXOR1 – 03
17	61.82''	IXOR2 – 02
18	61.55''	IXOR2 – 03
19	61.55''	IXOR2 – 01
20	manque [55'']	IXOR1 – 02
21	manque [60'']	IXOR1 – 01

Table 1 : From Xenakis Archives (Tolbiac), Xenakis 574: second document on graph paper accompanying the tape.

### 5.3 Analysis

Two characteristics are immediately striking in the UPIC sounds of *Pour la Paix*. First of all: their roughness. This is due to the UPIC itself as well as the fact that Xenakis took these sounds as they were and did not try to smooth them out during the mix. We find this roughness in the other pieces for UPIC (*Mycènes alpha*, 1978, *Taurhiphanie*, 1987-88 and *Voyage absolu des Unari vers Andromède*, 1989). However, in *Pour la Paix*, the roughness is accentuated by the presence of the narrators, and, even more, of the choirs.

From the morphological point of view, these sounds are very varied, ranging from quasi-harmonic spectra to noises of various types. This is an important difference compared to other UPIC coins, in particular *Mycènes alpha*, which is more homogeneous. For an overall analysis of UPIC sounds, cf. Solomos (2015). Here, let us only note that there are several types of noises (for example noises close to those that Xenakis will produce later with the GENDYN program: this is the case of sequence 6), several sound morphologies (sliding or static sounds in particular) and several types of textures (isolated sounds, polyphonies, tree structures, etc.). Note also that there may be recorded and reprocessed sounds (notably a harpsichord in sequences 5, 7 and 26).

It is also interesting to note that sometimes the combination of short sounds produces sorts of sound objects – in the Schaefferian sense of the term – which are exceptional in the electroacoustic music of Xenakis. For example, sequence 12, very short (3''), repeats the same short compound sound three times, consisting of a kind of explosion followed by a rapid glissando towards the treble lead-

ing to a fairly simple high sound. Or, sequence 28, longer (17") consists of three parts that form a sound object.

Finally, note that some sounds are included. In the table, repetitions or similarities are indicated by underlining the sounds. In some cases, a sound can be transformed: this is the case with sequence 18 (which slightly speeds up sequence 14).

#### **5.4 Relation to the text**

The second thing that strikes is the illustrative side of some of these sounds. The genre of radio creation seems to impose it: the narrators read the text, the UPIC sounds, to a large extent, illustrate parts of the text. Insofar as certain sequences are very brief and interspersed just after a sentence to illustrate it, the piece even produces an effect that can do it a disservice. Be that as it may, Xenakis has totally indulged in his descriptive vein, perhaps more than in any other play. To Bálint Varga's remark: « The UPIC material has a way of ending abruptly, as if cut off" (*in Varga, 1996: 172*), Xenakis replies: "Yes, it's a kind of comment in between sentences and it illustrates indirectly the message of the words" (*ibid.*). We can speak of illustrative, descriptive or figurative sounds; one could also use the expression "sound commentary" that Xenakis used for *Oresteia*. As it has been said, the first work consisted first of all in making the collage of the selected texts of Françoise Xenakis. Then he added some hints about the music. These indications often go in the direction of the illustration.

A few examples: in sequence 2, the choppy sounds at the beginning and the end wonderfully illustrate the sentences "By chopped sentences" ("Par phrases hachées") or "Where one hangs, shoots, massacres" ("Là où l'on pend, fusille, massacre"); the very brief sequence 4, with its noisy sliding sound, could illustrate the words "the sand covers them" ("le sable les recouvre"); the sounds resembling voices in sequence 18 clearly evoke the "grinic of joy" referred to in the text (the same sound, transposed, in sequence 22, illustrates the "he laughs"); in sequence 29, the part between 00'29" and 1'28" could correspond to the text "the bubbles are the bottom of the pond that opens" ("les bulles c'est le fond de l'étang qui s'entrouvre").

However, not all UPIC sounds are illustrative. Rather, entire sequences constitute pure music. This is the case of the first, which lasts 1'. As for the very long sequence, the 29th (5'37"), if there are descriptive passages, others are not: this is particularly the case of the long end (from 3' 06'), which prepares the final explosion, whose role is rather dramatic: through a stable sound, it provokes an anxious expectation.

### **6. The assembly / about the performance**

*Pour la Paix* is a mixed piece (electronic and voice), but of a complex mixity, because there are three totally heterogeneous elements: the narrators, the choir, the UPIC band. In fact, Xenakian project does not consist in putting sound universes together, but, starting from the text, in framing it musically – either by illustrating it in an almost literal way, as is the case with certain UPIC sequences, or by extending it musically, in particular with the choirs – by using these two sound and musical means which are the human voice and electronics. Between these three entities, a game of combinatorics is woven, exploring all the possibilities: alternation, superposition of two or three. The diagram of **figure 13** provides the sequence of this assembly.

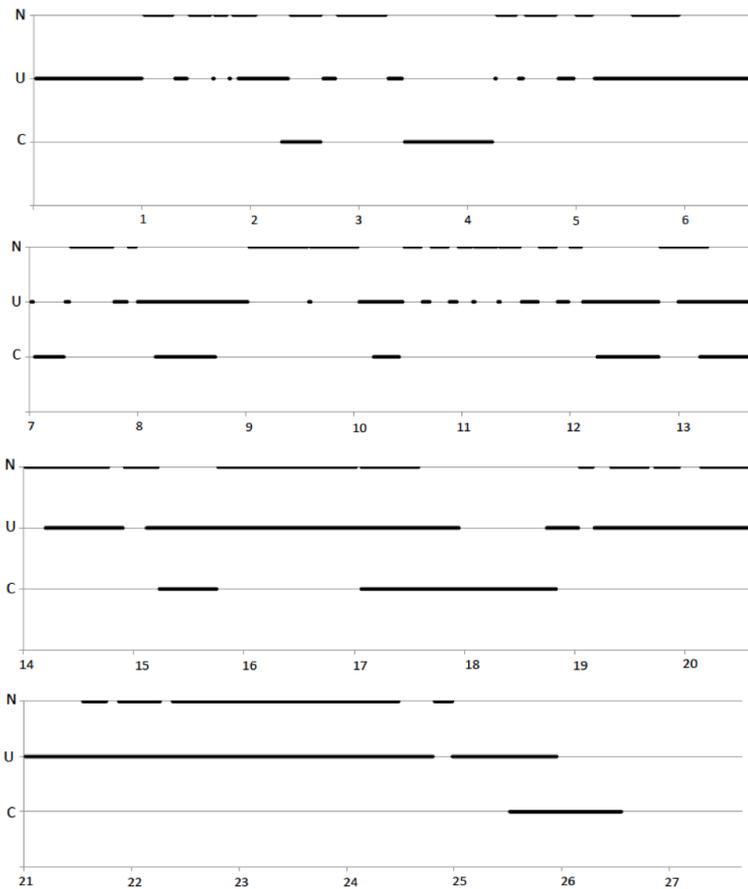


Figure 13 : Overall progress of *Pour la Paix*: assembly of the three components.

This assembly is very fragile, it sometimes hangs by a thread. Indeed, if the text provides an overall unity, the UPIC sounds and the choruses do not merge together or with the narrators. The risk is always great that each sequence becomes autonomous and that the work appears as a simple succession of heterogeneous moments. It will be noted, however, that there are two elements which contribute to give unity to the whole. On the one hand, of course, the narration, which leads to the final explosion. On the other hand, the fact that, from the fourteenth minute, the interventions of the UPIC band and the choirs lengthen, thus ending up making the impression of collage disappear.

Nevertheless, the assembly is fragile. This is perhaps why some listeners sometimes doubt the very tenor of the piece. This may have been the case with Xenakis himself. Let's listen once again to Daniel Teruggi in the interview he gave us:

“It must be said that *Pour la Paix* is an extraordinary work for Xenakis, it was radiophonic, text-based narration, an area in which he did not excel. He was quite tense and even worried during the production (it's an impression, I don't have any other references on the way he worked). At the end of the first minute of the work, we listen and he asks me the following question: ‘Is it good? What do you think?’. I didn't feel able to give the slightest opinion, as the personality (or the image of his personality and background) was so important to me. This continued until the end; the day before the concert we finish around 9 p.m., Françoise arrives to listen, she makes positive comments and we go have a drink at the Ondes (the only time he has invited me to something). There it was quite hard, he was completely depressed, wondering about the very interest of the piece, that surprised me so much, but hey, not knowing him, it may be a regular attitude with him at the end of each work.

You have to temper this feeling of failure. It is to a very large extent due to the radio version of the premiere, which is the version included in the CD from Fractal. Indeed, as James Harley (2004: 142) observes:

“In spite of the intensity of the texts, *Pour la paix* is rather disappointing as a radiophonic presentation. The sequences of material mostly succeed each other with little overlap, though the electronic sound do appear at times in conjunction both with the spoken and sung parts. There is also a lack of sonic depth and spatial organization that is troublesome considering the level of sophistication common in all kinds of broadcasts, not to mention other electroacoustic works including Xenakis’ own”.

More generally, it may be the radio version itself that may not be the best version. Indeed, a version on tape, frozen, will always tend to highlight the fragility of the assembly, that is to say the risk that the overall development of the piece may appear as an assembly without overall dynamics. The UPIC sounds contrasting sharply with the reciters and chorus, with the chorus parts often being worked out as self-contained musical entities (as well as some UPIC sound sequences) and therefore also contrasting in their own way, the fully concert version (reciters and choirs on stage) is preferable, because it provides a dramatic tension in which the contrasts in question can better take place. A scenic version, with dramatic elaboration, can amplify this tension and temper the editing effect, giving a dynamic. In any case, we must try to go in this direction: this is what we will try to do at the concert on April 19, 2022, at the University of Paris 8, with the Soli Tutti choir, under the direction of Denis Gautheyrie. For *Pour la Paix* is one of the most unique and perhaps most touching pieces by Xenakis...

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