

THIERRY PÉCOU, composer

Born in Boulogne-Billancourt in 1965, Thierry Pécou studied orchestration and composition at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique (CNSM) in Paris. He was a scholarship holder at the Casa de Velázquez in Madrid, winner of a Prix Villa-Médicis Hors les Murs, and has received many prizes for his compositions, which have been commissioned by leading institutions and performers.

In 2010 the Académie des Beaux-Arts awarded him the Grand Prix de Composition Musicale of the Fondation Simone et Cino del Duca, and he received the prize for best new music premiere 2010 from the Syndicat de la Critique Théâtre, Musique et Danse (French Critics' Circle). The recording of his *Symphonie du Jaguar* was distinguished by the Grand Prix 2010 of the Académie Charles Cros and a Diapason d'Or of the year 2010. His works have been performed at such festivals as Présences at Radio France, Umeå Opera in Sweden, Gaudeamus Muziekweek, the Moscow Autumn Festival, New Music Concerts in Toronto, the Foro Internacional de Música Nueva in Mexico City, Automne en Normandie and the Ambronay Festival in France, the Bath International Music Festival in England, the Tampere Vocal Music Festival in Finland, the Shanghai Spring Music Festival in China, and such venues as the Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall and Izumi Hall Osaka in Japan, the Arsenal de Metz, the Opéra de Rouen Haute-Normandie, and the Salle Pleyel, Théâtre de la Ville and Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris.

This composer is one of the few musicians to combine the act of composition with its embodiment on the concert platform. He frequently performs his own works at the piano, in chamber ensembles, or as soloist with orchestra in his piano concertos (*Tremendum* and *L'Oiseau innumérable*). In 2009 he founded the Ensemble Variances to constitute a platform for encounters between contemporary creation and music of oral tradition.

Very early in his career, Thierry Pécou embarked on a singular personal itinerary, far removed from notions of avant-garde and post-modernism which focus solely on the aesthetic history of the Western world. As one creation follows another, the composer has gone out to meet cultures distant in space and time: the languages and imaginative world of pre-Columbian America and Amerindian societies in the *Symphonie du Jaguar* and the cantata *Passeurs d'eau*, the Greek myths that inspired *Les Filles du feu*, the traces of Africa and America in *Tremendum*, *Outre-Mémoire* and *L'Oiseau innumérable*, as well as ancient China, Tibetan spirituality, and others too. In his encounters with these traditions, Thierry Pécou 'dreams of making the whole world resonate', and seeks to restore music to its dimension as *ritual*. Conceived in this way, music invites, absorbs the listener. Musical form then becomes inseparable from body movement. The shape, the gesture of the instrumentalist and in some cases the dance participate in the same exchange of energy that

characterises Afro-American cults such as the Brazilian *candomblé* or Amerindian shamanic rituals.

His music takes its place amid the epic sweep of the *Tout-Monde* (Total world) predicted by the Martinique poet Édouard Glissant, which is not a uniform whole but the unpredictable multiplicity of all our singularities. For Thierry Pécou, complexity is not the aim of an art: it results from listening to the world. Thus the compositional virtuosity heard in *Vague de pierre* is juxtaposed with the incantatory repetition of simple melodic formulas, just as, around an island, a uniform band of sand runs alongside the tangled vegetation of the mangrove.

Thierry Pécou is also capable of sculpting sound towards silence in order to unveil and overcome another silence: the silence to which the peoples and the cultures that fell victim to Western colonial expansion were reduced. It is through metaphor and invocation that *Nawpa* offers up resistance to the destruction inflicted on the ritual music of the ancient Andean civilisation of Tawantinsuyu. It is through the force of its poetic intention and the dexterity of its writing that *Outre-Mémoire* revives the forbidden memory of the victims of the slave trade.

For Thierry Pécou, to write is to find oneself face to face with the Other, in his or her fragility and suffering. Yet substance and musical form and their reception cannot be circumscribed by a system or reduced to the expression of an ideology. They accompany the composer's thought but acquire their own existence, which goes beyond the gesture and the moment of creation.

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