Interview with Gerard Pape by Giorgos Frangiskos

Gerard Pape was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1955. He holds a B.A. in Psychology and a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology. He has had private composition lessons with David Winkler, George Cacioppo and William Albright. He studied electronic music with George Wilson. Gerard has composed more than 70 works for orchestra, chamber music, and electronic works for instruments, voice and/or tape. His music has been performed in numerous festivals in the USA, Canada, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Austria, Greece, Roumania, Sweden, Australia, Mexico, Hong Kong and Japan and was presented in the International Computer Music Conference (ICMC) in Tokyo in 1993 and in Hong Kong in 1996. He has been granted ASCAP standard awards each year from 1992 through 2002. Several articles on music and on psychoanalysis have been published in well established journals. Pape directed Les Ateliers UPIC in Paris,founded by Iannis Xenakis in 1985, renamed CCMIX (Center for the Composition of Music Iannis Xenakis) in 2000 from1991 to 2008 . He recently founded the laptop orchestra called CLSI (Circle for the Liberation of Sound and Image) in Paris.

In what ways do you use technology in your music? How did your relation with technology begin and how has it evolved since?

Technology is always only a tool, a means towards the end of greater expressivity. I have worked with computer music technology since the mid 1980s and have followed its evolution culminating in my founding the CLSI (Circle for the Liberation of Sound and Image), a collectif of 8 composers playing written scores for laptop computers.

Technology is no more the prerogative of the rich or the computer specialists; Does this make music sound more uniform? How difficult is it to be different today?

No, the way composers use computers is different according to their aesthetics and technologies used. It is, indeed, difficult to be different today but not because of the widespread use of computers. Rather, it is because composers do not go deeply enough into themselves so as to discover their unique musical voice. Frequently, composers will imitate the music that they like or that they identify with, aesthetically speaking. This does not lead to finding one's unique musical universe.

Electroacoustic music appears to speak to the hearts of limited audiences in relation to other

electronic music genres; do you think this is the case and why? Can listeners be "educated" to appreciate the less popular genres? Is this a good idea in your opinion?

Yes, people can be educated. Pedagogy is important, that is, speaking to the public in a clear way to explain what the music is aiming at, what its expressive and aesthetic goals are. Teaching people how to listen and what to listen for is crucial.

Electroacoustic music is often used within other art forms, such as video or theatre. Do you feel that this is maybe where its future lies? Is this a way to attract more people to it or will this be to its detriment?

It is very useful to present this music with theater and video as it is an attractive way for people to be led into the music as the visual is more primordial for many people than the sonic. The danger is that music might be then perceived as merely incidental

Most of the artistic creations we'll be seeing and hearing in Electromedia works '08 will be made with the help of modern technology. Has technology opened up the doors of Art to more people, creators and audience?

Not technology itself but what it helps us accomplish, that is, to be more faithful to our musical essence, to our musical imagination whose needs are greater than what is possible with only traditional instrumental means.

Live electronics, live improvisation or jamming between electronic musicians, performers and even "laptop orchestras" seem to be becoming more and more popular. Could this approach of electronic music, incorporating the 'band feeling' bring more people into the this scene (in contrast to the more introverted 'acousmatic' music?

Yes, I think so. People like to see other people performing together, bringing music into being in real time as a social process or activity. But, tape music can also be performed in a lively way that addresses the feelings of the public, that is, by a unique performance that takes into account the space, the public, the moment...

Electroacoustic music is in a sense more democratic than pop music: You don't need a tremendously expensive studio to compose your music and no huge international record companies are likely to promote your works, so composers from around the world have more equal chances of being heard. Do you find interesting differences in the electroacoustic music composed in different parts of the world?

Yes, I heard a CD last year with electroacoustic music from Tibet, Lebanon, Africa.. It was recognizably electroacoustic music but fantastically different at the same time. Each piece brought the stamp of its own culture as well as belonged to the larger worldwide category of electroacoustic music.

Have you worked with any Greek composers of contemporary or electroacoustic music? Are you interested in such a cooperation?

I worked with Iannis Xenakis from 1991 to 2001, whose center I directed for 17 years. More recently I have collaborated with Andreas Diktyopoulos and Maria Aloupi, 2 very promising young composers of the new generation who love and respect the music of Xenakis. This creates a very interesting link between the generations of Greek composers that I hope to continue to cooperate with for many years to come.

What are your current interests and your future plans? Are you planning any cooperation with electroacoustic composers?

I have recently founded the laptop orchestra in Paris called CLSI (Circle for the Liberation of Sound and Image). It is a collective of 8 composers playing laptop computers who play only writtten scores and who interpret the works of their fellow composers. I hope to be a part of this electroacoustic ensemble for many years to come as composer and interpreter.