

The meta-language in Francis Dhomont's *Novars*.

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Abstract

In 1988, the music community celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the birth of *musique concrète* and the thirtieth anniversary of the *Groupe de Recherches Musicales* (G.R.M.) founded by the father of *musique concrète*, Pierre Schaeffer. For this occasion the G.R.M. commissioned several compositions, one of which was Francis Dhomont's *Novars*.

The aim of this paper is to examine and highlight the aspects of *modernity* in *Novars*, rather than suggest an analytical scheme of the piece. In *Novars*, F. Dhomont uses extensively three main sound sources, derived from Pierre Schaeffer's *Etude aux objets*, Pierre Henry's "door" sound type and Guillaume de Machaut's *Messe de Notre Dame*. The composer creates a piece that brings together a unified triptych of sound worlds and eras, relating the *ars nova* of the 14th century to *musique concrète*, P. Schaeffer to Philippe de Vitry and P. Henry to G. de Machaut, in an effort to demonstrate that *musique concrète* is the *ars nova* of our time.

The deconstruction of such diverse sound worlds is an apotheosis of modernism. P. Schaeffer, P. Henry and G. de Machaut lose both their historical references and aesthetical content and become nested functions and comments that, although reflect the three different personalities and their eras, remain, at the same time, inseparable structural and formal elements of *Novars*. The three sonic worlds are transformed into timeless sound objects of a *meta-language* that make statements about statements. Thus, *Novars* demonstrates the modernity of our era shifting gradually "...from the voice of Dhomont (derived from Schaeffer) to the voice of Schaeffer (in the light of Dhomont), passing through a middle ground where the two become intriguingly entangled, and with the ghost of Machaut ever present". (Lewis, 1997).

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Theodore Lotis studied the guitar, flute, music analysis and composition in Greece, Belgium and the UK. His music has been performed at festivals and conferences in Europe, Australia, America and Asia, and has received a number of awards and distinctions at Bourges (France, 2000), Sculpted Sound Composers Competition (UK, 2000), *Metamorphoses* (Belgium, 2000, 02), Luigi Russolo (Italy, 2000, 02), CIMESP (Brasil, 2001) and *Jeu de temps / Times Play* (UK/Canada, 2002). He was awarded the first prize at the *Concours International de Spatialisation pour l'Interprétation des Oeuvres Acousmatiques*, in Brussels, sponsored by the Fonds Européen des Sociétés d'Auteurs pour la Musique. He has completed a Ph.D. in Music at the City University, London, thanks to grants from the British Academy (Arts and Humanities Research Board), and the Foundation A.S. Onassis. Theodore Lotis has been teaching electronic composition at Goldsmiths College, University of London (2001-2003), the Technological and Educational Institute of Crete (2003-2004) and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (2004-2005), Greece. He is currently lecturing at the Ionian University of Corfu, Greece. His music has been released by *Empreintes Digitales*.