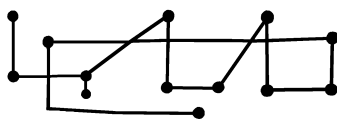


HUGUES DUFOURT’S “MANIFESTO  
OF THE MUSIC OF OUR TIMES”:  
NARRATIVES WITHOUT  
HISTORY IN *L’AFRIQUE*  
AND *L’ASIE D’APRÈS TIEPOLO*



JANN PASLER

MANY MAJOR WORKS by French spectral composer Hugues Dufourt (b. 1943) have been inspired by paintings—from Rembrandt’s *Le Philosophe* and Goya’s *La Maison du sourd* to Jackson Pollock’s *Lucifer*.<sup>1</sup> Since 2005, the composer has been attracted to Tiepolo’s huge frescos on the vaulted ceiling of the Würzburg Palace (1752–53) because he has found in them an “*Ars poetica* of the music of the future.” “Flux, swirling, lateral tensions, swelling, projections, and various degrees of distance are the new categories of these poetics,” he explains in the program notes for the recording of his Tiepolo-inspired

works (Dufourt 2010a, 14). Translating almost unconsciously into musical terms his visual perceptions of the images and their three-dimensionality, reinforced by the architecture and the large sculpted characters bordering their frame, he observes “an entire range of tempi, a spectrum of speeds, of turbulences, teetering spaces, overhanging structures, interwoven axes and loops.” Here was a kind of material for which he had been searching: “explosive, unstable, and evolutionary,” calling for a new musical “grammar” (Dufourt 2011). And if, as he explains, “Twentieth-century music essentially built duration out of its abstract constructions, attempting thereby to avoid ‘an empiricism of intimacy,’” his first of four works inspired by this fresco, *L'Afrique d'après Tiepolo* (2005), “marks a return to the intuition of time and to the concrete perception of change” (Dufourt 2010a, 13, 21). *L'Asie d'après Tiepolo* (2008–09) focuses in turn on the “dramatic and pale figures, fragmented levels, bitterly realistic situations, and entanglement of contorted and anonymous bodies,” all animated by an “immaterial wind” that seems to “bend everything and draw it towards itself” and is dominated by “a form of expressive acceleration” (Dufourt 2010a, 14). Inspired by the frescos, as if a “manifesto of the music of our times,” the composer sets out to explore sound at its liminal edges.

Grammar suggests rules and processes based on an organizational principle, but what does this mean when its purpose is to generate and maintain constant flux? Can such a work have narrativity in that “it allows a perceiver to develop expectations, grasp together events, and comprehend their implications,” whether of a narrative or non-narrative nature (Pasler 2008, 36–37)? But how does this function in such a work that reconceives musical space and time? And what about narrative in a work that reconceives musical space and time, and when the impetus is frescos that Svetlana Alpers and Michael Baxandall (1994, 42) describe only as “para-narrative?” The frescos may call on the viewer to recognize the “human elements” in making sense of the sensual experience, but, as in Assyrian reliefs, it is the “mobile play of perception rather than its capacity to stop and focus that is addressed.”<sup>2</sup> Our encounter with the images changes as we move up the staircase and as the light flooding the space evolves from one moment to the next. Through an experience of the imagery over time, narrative may or may not emerge in the meaning one ascribes to the fresco’s perceptual effects.

If we look to Dufourt’s previous compositions, we might expect that his music might show little concern for narrative, shunning “moments of anticipation capable of creating desire for what comes next.”<sup>3</sup> Yet,

when questioned, Dufourt admitted that these works have narrative in the sense of Cassirer's symbolic forms.<sup>4</sup> That is, it is less important that his music refer to some external reality, than it produce a world of its own (Cassirer 1946, 8). To understand this, we must look at how the elements of music and the new technologies of sound point to one another rather than to plot, thought, or character; that is, how motivic gestures, rhythms, instrumental textures, and harmonies create the interplay of stasis and turbulence, transparency (or pure sound) and distortion, "the identical and the ambiguous."<sup>5</sup> Such a sound world, characterized by instability and a dialectic of continuity and discontinuity, has been important to the French spectralists.<sup>6</sup> As Dufourt explains, change here is no longer linked to the idea of "trajectory"; rather, it results from "imperceptible transitions, indeterminate passages" and can be "multidirectional" (Dufourt 2010b, 118; 2010a, 21). As in any microanalysis of sound phenomena, timbre and acoustics are fundamental, dynamic parameters.

If at the micro-level Dufourt deconstructs sound as Tiepolo deconstructs color (Alpers and Baxandall 1994, 46), playing with the boundaries between commensurable and incommensurable sound, on the macro-level he builds form—the "becoming [*devenir*] of the texture" (Dufourt 2010b, 118)—through traditional elements of narrative. Continuity is assured through a relentless pulse as well as the omnipresence of the piano and its central idea—narrative agents that begin pregnant with possibility and then undergo transformation, albeit unpredictably. For Dufourt (2008, 18), "To write is to transform, that is, to establish correspondences and introduce relationships of equivalence or substitution and logical rules deriving from implications." In both works, transformation operates both in the moment-to-moment succession of musical ideas, sometimes as "contrary predicates," and through an exchange of materials or their function from one section to the next. The former supports non-narrative processes implying no "thematic or tonal dialectic" or "hierarchy either between the notes of the patterns or the patterns themselves" and forcing one to "concentrate fully on the extended present" (Pasler 2008, 40–41). The latter, as in many narratives, plays a structural role—drawing the parts into relationship, helping to define ends of sections, and bringing closure to the work as a whole.<sup>7</sup> Calling on the narrative competence of the listener to make sense of its moment-to-moment flux, the composer thus not only unleashes musical tensions, but also tames them and, in doing so, shapes the chaos of sound into perceptible form.

These works are also expressions of Dufourt's meditations on the continents not only as depicted by Tiepolo, but also as understood

today. Full of pottery and tents, Tiepolo's *Africa* has no permanent structures, in contrast to the architectural references in the fresco depicting Europe; its allegorical female lies sensually draped on a seated camel while turbaned merchants engage in the commerce of people, animals, and commodities. For Dufourt, Tiepolo's *Africa* can be summed up as "crushed [*écrasé*]," its time not yet the time of Hegelian or Marxian self-consciousness. In Tiepolo's *Asia*, the allegorical female and the enchained slave next to her are twisted and contorted, ever in movement. Dufourt, likewise, sees Asia as "in a frenzy." He thus understands these cultures, at least during Tiepolo's time, as turning in place, not yet part of history. Working with such concepts at the core of *L'Afrique* and *L'Asie d'après Tiepolo* allowed him to explore an ontology of being, time as space, but one that resists objectification and remains dynamic, albeit without teleological progress. At the same time, the role of narrative in the articulation of musical form, particularly through the structural use of the piano in *L'Asie*, can be heard as expressing a kind of imperialist desire to impose order.<sup>8</sup> As such, these works offer a implicit critique of history in the west and of western imperialism, with its power to conquer and shape as well as obliterate time.

#### TIEPOLO: SPACE AND AN ART OF OPPOSITIONS

The Residenz in Würzburg, as Dufourt points out, was one of the largest construction projects of the period. The architect Balthasar Neumann used this as the occasion to enact a "geometric mode of thinking" in the way he "conceived and combined volumes as well as orchestrated surfaces and depth effects." Dufourt cites art historians' description of his "innovative handling of structures" and his "resolution of spatial problems" as "syncopated interpenetration." Resonating with his own aesthetic, Dufourt notes, Neumann "liked *ampleur* [large, enveloping spaces], not *la pompe pittoresque* [picturesque pomp]." To support Neumann's vision of a "grandiose structure of universal significance," Giovanni Battista Tiepolo was commissioned to create a "monumental" ceiling fresco over the central staircase depicting Olympus and the Four Continents.<sup>9</sup> With long, narrow representations of Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Europe over the molding on the four walls, Olympus at the center, "god of light," evokes "an impression of irresistible and dizzying emergence from the depths" (see Example 1). The composer calls this a "mythological portrayal of the sunrise" (Dufourt 2010a, 12).



EXAMPLE 1: TIEPOLO'S *OLYMPUS AND THE FOUR CONTINENTS* AT WÜRZBURG

In the two works he has so far written in response to Tiepolo's frescos, *L'Afrique* and *L'Asie*—they too commissions (from the Westdeutsche Rundfunk de Cologne and the Ensemble Recherche)—Dufourt is not so much drawn to the triumphant figure of Olympus and his heavenly entourage, or to the opposition of heaven and earth so prominently on display, though arguably at times his music seems to aspire to the sublime. Instead, he takes as his titles the four continents, that is, the parade of humanity there witnessing the sun and its light, along with the animal kingdom and various modes of human interaction, emblems of knowledge, and cultural mores. Each “continent” has its own characters and symbols. In *Africa* (Example 2), Dufourt sees “groups of traders and smokers, a camel, pearl merchants, and an immense blue-and-white striped tent, then the allegorical figure, *Afrique*, along with the god of the Nile” (Dufourt 2010a, 13). What he doesn't mention is the opposition of female and male, black and white, young and old that both structure and complicate this scenario. Besides the young black slave on the far left and the old white God of the Nile on the far right—these framing the tableau—a fully-clothed, turban-covered, bearded, large-bellied, light-skinned older male dominates the left half of the fresco, and a bare-breasted, shapely, younger black woman the right half. Moreover, this gender opposition is reinforced by the similarly dressed black man, also bearded and with a tall hat, perhaps a tribal chief who is standing beside the large merchant, while behind *Afrique* is a veiled white girl, possibly a slave. The surrounding context suggests the nature of their power. For the male, brute strength, with its capacity for abduction and domination, is here suggested by the leg of a prisoner in shackles and a large animal with huge muscular hind legs, his upper body here oddly covered with a large rug, perhaps to suggest his domestication.



EXAMPLE 2: TIEPOLO, *OLYMPUS AND THE FOUR CONTINENTS: AFRICA*

For *Afrique*, straddling a comfortably seated camel, her physical beauty is such that a handsome, elegantly-attired black man kneels before her, with incense in one hand and umbrella in another, as if courting her. What are we to make of all this, with the tableau's central characters facing away from one another? The space, divided almost equally into two parts, emphasizes their irreconcilable differences, and yet allows each a place. Are we expected to encounter them, reflect on them, one after the other, or experience their simultaneity? There is no action, but there is movement, with bodies twisting, arms raised, and the winds ever blowing.

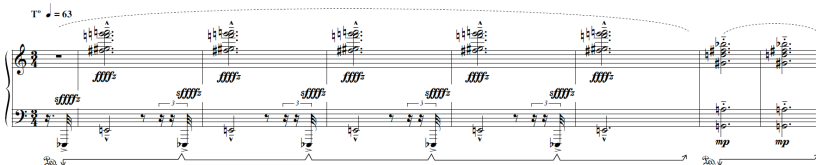
Dufourt recognized the complexity of this scene, but it was not the picturesque elements that appealed. And neither was he interested in forging musical emblems of Africanness, be it with the sounds of a marimba or tam-tam, or with tunes borrowed from this part of the world. Nothing about the music signifies Africa or acts as an indexical sign to it. Tiepolo, too, eschewed any reference to musical instruments in his African tableau, unlike elsewhere in the fresco where Native Americans have their drums and Europeans play string instruments. Indeed, Dufourt is not an Orientalist, a hyper-charged position no longer tenable in the twenty-first century, nor a voyeur like Pierre Loti or Victor Segalen anxious to dream and thus escape the constraints of western culture, nor a rational modernist like Félix Regamey, intent on portraying aspects of modernity on these continents. Yet, like Saint-Saëns in his own *Africa* (1892), a fantasy also featuring the piano in dialogue with other instruments, Dufourt takes care to express the diversity and coexistence represented in this fresco and a certain kind of dynamism associated with African life. As he points out, "a work that does not encounter the Other, encounter Otherness, develops only according to immanent and peaceful parameters."<sup>10</sup> Otherness, at its essentialist core, challenges us to come to grips with difference and potentially conflict. The idea here is to respond to Otherness without the loss or collapse of heterogeneity—a risk often associated with narrative.<sup>11</sup>

Difference as duality, audible throughout Dufourt's *L'Afrique d'après Tiepolo*, is fundamental. Whether intended to mirror the various binary oppositions in the fresco or not, duality—unassailable and yet irreconcilable, as in the frescos—characterizes the entire work at several levels. Most importantly, registral oppositions of extremely low and extremely high pitches as well as temporal oppositions between extremely fast and extremely slow notes dominate throughout, both in simultaneous as well as successive articulations. Whether consciously or not, these echo the omnipresence in the fresco of both the earthly beings on the four sides, depicted as close to the viewer,

and the heavenly ones, increasingly distant as one looks to the center. The perception of difference in how they occupy the space creates the remarkable experience of depth and height.

In the initial measures, the piano's very low bass thirty-second note, Eb<sup>3</sup>—its *ffffz* sound maintained by a depressed pedal—serves as an upbeat to the chordal cluster of E<sup>-2</sup> / F<sup>#3</sup> G<sup>#3</sup> / F<sup>4</sup> G<sup>4</sup> A<sup>4</sup>, spanning six octaves, also played *ffffz*, and lasting the entire measure in 3/4. With its registral and temporal oppositions, this musical idea—a short, low-bass appoggiatura on an upbeat to a much longer chord-cluster on a downbeat—is the central one in the composition, serving as the basis of the musical phrases that follow and ensuring continuity and coherence (Example 3). We immediately hear it repeated five times in the relatively slow tempo of ♩ = 63. This ritual-like stasis allows the listener to focus on its timbre, consisting of registral extremes. With them, Dufourt shows that even the sounds of a single instrument can seem irreconcilably different, refusing to fuse, and how even the piano, the quintessential western instrument, can play with the boundaries of sound and noise. While the dissonance and extreme dynamic levels produce tension, this insistent registral juxtaposition also leaves the center almost empty—the middle register, also spanning six octaves—as in Tiepolo's depiction of Africa where little bridges the gulf between *Afrique* and the merchants. Occasional short arpeggios that rapidly traverse this terrain attempt to negotiate this space, but ultimately serve to reinforce its barrenness. These registral and temporal juxtapositions thus open a sound-space of potentiality, like the space created by the arched ceiling over the staircase, or in the tableau framed by the black slave on one side and the white god of the Nile on the other.

For Dufourt, the most important duality in the fresco comes from the juxtaposition of light and dark, the result of not only Tiepolo's



EXAMPLE 3: MM. 1–7, *L'AFRIQUE D'APRÈS TIEPOLO* BY HUGUES DUFOURT

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design, but also the constantly shifting light in the hall. The fresco for “*Africa*,” located on the vault’s side, receives the most direct and complex light through the immediately opposite west window and the north window to the left” (Dufourt 2010a, 13). Perhaps this is why, ironically, in one of Tiepolo’s earlier sketches, the image of *Afrique* appears in full sunlight, with the ominous gray clouds instead over the allegorical female representing *Europe*. In his final version, however, Tiepolo shrouded this side of his fresco in clouds, thereby changing the meaning of the tableau. Neither he nor Alpers and Baxandall have remarked on the opposition of light and dark in the fresco as echoing or emblematic of the racial oppositions underlined in the visual structure. Yet, in his program note, Dufourt brings a certain political consciousness and historical awareness to his interpretation that suggests that he may have intuited this connection. Responding to the melancholic, even ominous tone, Dufourt observes:

*Afrique*, who is already in the clutches of the European thieves, is illuminated by a dull light. In the midst of these pale clouds, one no longer recognizes the sunny, shimmering paradises of rural culture. The sky seems oppressive. My music evokes the pale sun of Tiepolo’s *Africa* and its thick, sulphurous clouds. The musical work is defined by the use of color (Dufourt 2010a, 13).

#### COLOR, NARRATIVE, AND MUSICAL FORM IN *L’AFRIQUE D’APRÈS TIEPOLO*

Inspired by the Tiepolo fresco, color is the composer’s mode (what is being “imitated,” in the Aristotelian sense) as well as his means and manner of “imitation.” It is the “evocation” of Tiepolo’s colors, a technique for producing the evocation, and the manner in which the evocation is produced. The variability of cloud colors in Tiepolo’s fresco inspired the constant variability of Dufourt’s musical colors. Other than the highly resonant individual bass note appoggiaturas in the piano, most notes are never heard alone in their pure state, but rather “colored” by pitches or pitch classes a semitone or tone away, thus producing dissonances that rub against one another without bristling like “cactuses.”

As it arises from both light and interaction with other colors, color poses not just the question of difference, but also that of coexistence. This coexistence can result from the simultaneous juxtaposition of sounds that perceptually remain distinct, as noted above, or new sounds resulting from their fusion, often the product of sophisticated

methods of writing. For example, flutter-tongued flutes sometimes double the vibraphone oscillations in the same registral space, adding complexity to the sound, while later the clarinets and English horn add depth to it. Moving beyond Tiepolo's clouds to his human figures, such hybrid sounds seem to argue for the benefits of coexistence among likes, even if they point to the impossibility of fusion among unlikes—a notion with significant racial implications historically, especially in Africa.<sup>12</sup>

But clouds are not just about color. Clouds are never static; they move—and often at different rates. Like the unstable nature of light itself, ever changing from morning to evening, Tiepolo's clouds assure an inherent vitality. What impressed Dufourt in the frescos was how “space alternately swells up and narrows, expanding or breaking apart” (Dufourt 2010a, 13). Moreover, on the concave surface of the arched ceiling, as Alpers and Baxandall (1994, 128) point out, the figures lean in one direction or another depending on the viewer's position.<sup>13</sup> Similar processes characterize the treatment of timbre in *L'Afrique d'après Tiepolo*. Dufourt likewise understands color and its perception as dynamic. Building on the timbre-chords of Varèse and Messiaen and the recent theoretical work of psycho-acousticians, he views instability and irregularity as essential to musical timbre (Dufourt 2010b, 116). And as with the principal figure in each fresco, his principal musical idea in *L'Afrique d'après Tiepolo* also appears somewhat different from one moment to the next. Commenting on this, the composer explains,

The sound's substance has its own dynamism that polarizes and rhythmizes the space even before it becomes the object of the composition. Composing consists in suggesting dynamic impressions with movements without actually shifting them. The new dimensions are depth, transparency, fluidity, and luminosity (Dufourt 2010a, 13).

The music challenges the listener to follow these subtle timbral variations, as they are consubstantial with the musical process that gives rise to the work's form. As Dufourt points out, “space is no longer the idea of immobility. It is form in all its power. . . . Musical form is a mold made of masses and empty spaces, forces and qualities in flux” (Dufourt 2010a, 21).

The first section of *L'Afrique d'après Tiepolo* (mm. 1–74), for piano solo, is a good example of the importance of color, this kind of composing, and the nature of transformation in the work. With each iteration, the chords, shifting between *p* and *mp*, begin to move melodically, articulate textural and rhythmic variants, and suggest the

occasional cadence, even if, harmonically, the pitch classes and pitch clusters (around E and E $\flat$ ) change minimally. Moreover, as the composer points out, “one and the same chord can seem homogeneous on the surface and heterogeneous deeper down: at first lively and lucid, and then raw and dark in its convolutions, reflecting a tension that is just beginning to arise” (Dufourt 2010a, 13). The rhythmic regularity of the central idea is also made dynamic by slight temporal variations—a delay and shortening of the chords by an eighth triplet, by three sixteenth triplets, by one quarter note, and by their collapse even to single notes (at mm. 40 and 42), as well as by their expansion by various temporal intervals in the measures that follow.

Transformation—essential to the work’s narrative processes—helps to define the end of part one. A peripety, in the Aristotelian sense of “a change by which the action veers round to its opposite” (Aristotle 1984), gives the section its shape. The appoggiatura itself evolves from the short resonant bass notes or quick rising arpeggios into longer chords, now, significantly, in the middle register. From mm. 45–53, they remain around the same pitches (F $^{-1}$  E $\flat^1$  G $^1$ ) but extend in length to more or less a quarter beat, then to more than a half-note. These middle-to-upper register chord progressions, once established, then alternate with the central idea. Chord-clusters (now as E $\flat^{-1}$  C $^1$  G $\sharp^1$ ) end the section by breaking into their arpeggiated form, *ffff*. This gives melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, and dynamic substance to this heretofore barren sound-space. Part one not only begins a process that the rest of the work will continue, it also suggests that tension produced by color, texture, and rhythm can be followed by resolution, if you will, in those same terms, even if partial and momentary. Such transformation, as in many narratives (Pasler 2008, 35–36), depends on mutually entailing implications within the elements themselves, or what Dufourt calls “logical rules deriving from implications,” here a kind of timbral gap-fill.

In part two (mm. 75–124), the composer returns to the central idea and his exploration of registral extremes in the piano, but this time in dialogue with the vibraphone. The opening arpeggiated upbeat appoggiatura in the piano flows almost imperceptibly into the grace-note appoggiatura of the vibraphone on the downbeat of the next measure. Then the vibraphone’s chords, sounding as tremolos wavering between its own registral extremes, underpin and in part double the piano’s chordal clusters, supporting a sound now able to last longer than one measure. As such, the composer treats the two instruments as one. They continue to move together even when the appoggiatura-to-chord idea changes into two dotted half-notes, or four measures of variations on the appoggiatura followed by four measures of chord-clusters. Yet

the electronic sound of the vibraphone cannot fuse with the pure, acoustic sound of the piano. This contradiction constitutes a third form of binary opposition in the work. It results not from the registral or temporal differences in the notes, but from within sounds as produced by two incompatible technologies. Through their shared function as part of the same melodic gestures, Dufourt nonetheless shows a way to bridge their differences.

In this section, transformation again comes in the form of a peripety, an exchange of roles between the instruments. At m. 109, the vibraphone, playing solo, takes over the piano's opening gestures, as if it can stand in for the piano. Ironically, given its technology and previous function in the piece, this instrument turns the short-long rhythm and spaced-out intervals of the central idea into a kind of lilting melody of two-measure groups (in each of them, two eighth-note chords followed by a half-note chord). The piano loses its earlier preeminence and, when it returns, is reduced to an accompaniment of long single notes in the low bass that end on E<sup>-3</sup> in the section's final measure. After a kind of cadential descent a fifth lower on A<sup>-4</sup>, the next part begins again with the piano.

Part three (mm. 125–189) features three timbral groups—a duo of piano and vibraphone, a trio of strings, and a trio of winds—treated as distinct groups, but also capable of exchanging material and roles. This section begins like the other two but with the central idea of appoggiatura-to-chord-cluster proceeding much more slowly, the former extending to an entire measure and the latter to three measures. Moreover, from mm. 125–142, the piano holds the gong-like opening bass note for two, four, and five measures, while the wind and string trios answer each appoggiatura with phrases of three to four chord-clusters. This new pattern is subtly different from what we've heard before: under the last measure of the chord-clusters, the piano moves down a semitone for a measure, and then, in the last measure of the second phrase, up an octave. These shifts are supported by a change in the pedaling. The winds and strings here interact as counterpoint, with associations within three pairs of instruments resulting in new timbral colors. For example, each phrase by the flute and violin begins a semitone apart, and when the flute plays F<sup>#2</sup> C<sup>3</sup> F<sup>#2</sup> G<sup>2</sup>, simultaneously the violin plays E<sup>2</sup> B<sup>b2</sup> A<sup>1</sup> G<sup>b2</sup>. Simultaneously, each phrase in the English horn begins a tone or semitone away from that of the viola, but then reverses direction, leaping down a fourteenth and then back up a thirteenth, a gesture echoed in the viola's leap down of a thirteenth. The clarinet and cello begin in parallel motion, a tone away, but then also divert, with the cello rising an eleventh to

counterbalance the viola's descent. When the vibraphone enters, it joins the chordal clusters in the winds and strings, leaving the role of the appoggiatura to the piano alone.

Beginning in m. 143, Dufourt associates distinct meters with the two parts of the central idea: 2/4 for the low bass piano appoggiatura (with the bass slowly dropping from  $E\flat^3$  to  $B^4$ ) and 3/4 for the chords in the instrumental ensemble (each lasting one measure). After their rapid alternation comes an extraordinary duet between a series of dynamically shaped tremoli chords in the vibraphone (in 2/4) and chordal harmonics in the strings, also subtly shaped by dynamics into phrases (in 3/4). Eventually the winds and piano add to the chordal and timbral texture almost inaudibly, *ppp*. Such metric alternation draws attention to the duality within the central idea and the various ways the composer uses musical color to shape our perception.

At the mid-point of part three (m. 155), the metrical alternation continues, albeit gradually elongating each metrical grouping and adding measures in 4/4. But perception of the central idea is inhibited as the ensembles break away from one another and establish distinctive independent gestures, rhythms, and timbres. The piano becomes the only instrument in the very low register, returning to the low  $A^4$  where part three began and proceeding to the lowest note in the piece,  $C^4$ . But its first low bass appoggiatura, rather than being sounded, is implied: that is, held over from the last note in its previous iteration. The strings, all playing high notes beyond their normal registers, articulate only chord-clusters lasting five or six measures, each animated by subtly shaped dynamics (from *pp* to *p*, or *mf* to *pp*). This special string timbre remains constant until the end of the section. The winds punctuate the long string clusters with their own shorter ones, but with staggered entries and a counterpoint of dynamics. For example, the clarinet reaches *mf* at its middle point while the flute plays *forte*. The vibraphone, with each of its tremoli shaped dynamically, is the only instrument that moves through a quicker succession of chords, helping to articulate the meter (see Example 4). The distinction of these timbres and timbre-masses facilitates perception of their contrasting rates of movement, "paradoxical temporalities" held together by a "common meter and metronomic pulse," a technique Dufourt first explored in *Saturne* (1979).

With these four timbres, the composer builds form through a process he calls "tilings (*tuilage*)."<sup>14</sup> "Tilings" address the problem of form made of different densities and volumes, sound oppositions and sound fusions of various sizes, shapes, and colors, suggesting a response to the way architecture and painting relate in the hall. Like

The musical score is for measures 176 through 184 of the piece *L'Afrique* by Hugues Dufourt. The score is written for a large orchestra and includes parts for the following instruments:

- Pc Fl. (Piccolo Flute)
- C. angl. (Clarinet in A)
- Cl. (Clarinet in Bb)
- Vcl. (Violoncello)
- B. (Double Bass)
- P. (Piano)
- Soloists (String Soloists)
- Vl. (Violins)
- Vla. (Violas)
- Vcl. (Cellos)
- B. (Double Basses)
- Vla. (Viola)

The score includes various dynamics and performance markings. Key dynamics include *p* (piano), *mp* (mezzo-piano), *pp* (pianissimo), *f* (forte), *dolce* (dolce), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). Performance markings include *2do. q* (second quarter) and *2do. q* (second quarter). The score is written in 4/4 time and includes a key signature of one flat (Bb).

EXAMPLE 4: MM. 176–184, *L'AFRIQUE D'APRÈS TIEPOLO* BY HUGUES DUFOURT

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Neumann's "syncopated interpenetration," it describes not only the way the four instrumental timbres here build on one another and interpenetrate, but also the succession of phrases that layer one on the next, similar to the effect of the various superimposed tiles ("*tuiles*") that make up roofs. That the same musical idea recurs throughout helps to make *tuilage* audible, just as the use of the same tile on a roof would render visible any pattern made with it. Through time, however, these distinctions collapse into the flux of form. The different rates of motion among these four timbres, the quiet dynamics of long notes in the piano and strings sounding at the very edges of the possible, and the subtle dynamic shadings of each instrumental ensemble—sometimes in contradiction with one another—result in such distention of the central idea as to make it virtually inaudible. The effect of tilings, like the shifting clouds in the fresco, thus points to a tension in the piece between the non-narrative structures that organize its flow and the stronger sense of narrativity imposed on the piece by sectional contrasts.<sup>15</sup>

In the rest of the piece, the timbral and temporal aspects of the central idea continue to be explored in myriad ways, including micro or structurally significant transformation. There are exchanges of earlier functions, such as at m. 189, between the piano and instrumental ensemble, when the strings take on the *appoggiatura* and the piano/vibraphone the chord-clusters, and in m. 212, with the cello now moving in its low register and the piano exclusively in its middle register, after which, at m. 225, the piano returns to its low register to accompany the winds and strings in increasingly complex counterpoint. Occasionally the timbral groups reinforce one another, blurring their functional differences, especially with the return to long notes being held for many measures beginning in m. 199 and creating tension by virtue of their length. In m. 283 the string ensemble breaks up, and the texture is transformed with its pizzicato violin and viola quarter-notes, heard with whole-note chord-clusters in the cello, piano, vibraphone, and winds. At other times, instrumental areas sound independently of one another and do not progress at the same rate, such as accompanying the return of the central idea in mm. 314–372. Despite the local-level transformations that characterize the end of each major section, the main musical idea never develops into something else. In other words, although duality may be inherent in the central idea, and there is change, there is no development, no progress. Without a second idea, a counterpart with which to engage in dialectical conflict, there can be no internal struggle and thus no genuine growth.

But there are interludes, moments when the central idea briefly retreats. Mm. 321–325 is one such interlude, with the shift to 4/4 and *sul ponticello* writing in the strings under rapid vibrato tremoli in the vibraphone, dynamically shaped from *pp* to *mf* to *pp*, and then with trills in the flute, English horn, and violin. Mm. 340–347 is another, with the sudden shift to *forte*, 3/4, and its remarkable superimposition of flutter-tongue trills in the woodwinds, doubled by tremoli in the vibraphone, over trills in the somewhat lower strings and a trill on D<sup>3</sup> in the piano, increasing from *p* to *f*. Like the clouds in the fresco that in some places move from the background into the foreground, these interludes provide space for timbral exploration for its own sake and prepare the listener for the explosion of timbral innovation at the end of the work.

After a long, relatively static, and quiet chordal section (mm. 373–442), the last major section of *L'Afrique d'après Tiepolo* (mm. 443–493) unfurls a frenzy of musical activity, beginning with music marked “*extra dure*” in the composer’s hand. It is as if, in the last fifth of his piece, the composer’s focus shifts—like the perspective of the viewer while climbing the stairs of the hall—from the magnificent procession of the clouds to the figures themselves. Highly original timbres abound in writing that makes it difficult to know which instruments are performing. An incommensurability of sound challenges rational expectations. As in the fresco, such writing plays with the limits of order and chaos. Shrieking glissandi in the strings, scraping up and down the vibraphone—a colonization of the entire sound universe—suggest the conflict of life on earth, driven by desire, frustration, anger, and other strong emotions. For example, beginning in m. 443, the central idea returns in the alternation of the piano appoggiatura and the instrumental chord-clusters, but everything is *fff*. Moreover, the technologies producing them range from super-high trills in the woodwinds, playing *fff*, to double glissandi in contrary motion in the vibraphone, *ff* to *fff*, to extreme registral oppositions in the piano at *fff*, to six parallel glissandi in the strings, rising and then falling, *fff* to *fff* or *fffz*. The string glissandi destabilize the sound as do its very high notes, extremely difficult to perform. These superimposed timbres continue until m. 466 when the trills shift to the low bass of the piano under oscillating seconds in the clarinet, thirds in the English horn, and fourths in the flute. Here the strings turn to chord-clusters, alternating from one string to the next and articulated at erratic intervals. At m. 474 glissandi return in the strings, but as if to fill the space between these chord-clusters—in other words, another gap/fill process, while the winds and piano dialogue with their short and long chord-clusters (see Example 5).



EXAMPLE 5: MM. 471–74, *L'AFRIQUE D'APRÈS TIEPOLO* BY HUGUES DUFOURT

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In the work's climax in mm. 481–491, the central idea alternates with measures in which all previous distinctions between instrumental groups dissolve in a shared texture of continuous motions, with a succession of rapid, parallel, arching arpeggios in one-measure phrases, each of which expands from *rfz* to *ffff*. This shift in the work from slow, subtle transformations of color to sudden, dramatic explosions and extremely animated rhythms leads to the critical moment, so important in all narratives, after which everything is different, i.e. a transformation with significant formal implications. While the sound-space is completely saturated in mm. 489–491, churning with oscillating octaves or arpeggios in all parts, in m. 492 the piano returns abruptly to A<sup>4</sup>, *ffff*, then the other instruments stop on a long tremolo chord, and finally the piano, now alone, returns to the opening idea, but in the middle register.

With the frenzy at an end, a kind of catharsis follows—a slow, lyrical duet between the piano and clarinet (mm. 494–511), functioning as a coda. Here, instead of articulating the work's characteristic registral oppositions, the two instruments come together in dialogue. After its

middle-register *appoggiatura*, the piano moves in chord-clusters, mostly in the two outer registers, and, therefore, in a reversal of how these appeared in the work's opening. This leaves to the clarinet the middle register where it almost suggests the human voice—although a voice, as the composer points out, “without consequence,” a voice in the desert that “speaks to no one.” In bringing closure to the work, this moment of quiet lyricism can be understood as cynical, an empty gesture associated with narrative *dénouement*, or as comforting, a release from the work's relentless tension. I hear this as similar to *Afrique*'s gesture of openness, her eyes raised and looking hopeful, her left arm lifted and gesturing outward as if addressing the heavens. Or is it Europe, the fresco to the right, or the viewer? Or what comes next? Possibly the future? In any case, the final measures ready the listener for the next adventure.

As we have seen, color in *L'Afrique* results from harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic interactions not only within each timbral group, but also between them. New sound colors emerge from the juxtaposition and interpenetration of contrasting instrumental families, each with distinct technologies for their sound production, and from the effect of distortion caused by variations in the nature of the central idea from one moment to the next. If the individual gestures in continual flux and the *tuilage* create the effect of non-teleological heterogeneity, what holds the work together and renders its complexity comprehensible are its narrative elements: one basic idea—its two parts treated as narrative agents undergoing constant change—and structural transformations, often involving peripeties and, after its climax, signaling the end of the work.

Flux and form in *L'Afrique d'après Tiepolo* also depend upon its slow, deliberate pulse, to which the *appoggiaturas* draw attention throughout the work. If the chord-clusters point to the possible influence of Schoenberg's “Farben” movement from his *Five Orchestral Pieces* (1909), it is also because of their similar unfolding in time. This is the paradox of space becoming time and time becoming space. But with color as both the subject and the medium of the music, there is no Bergsonian melody. Sonority, which takes attention away from the dialectic of consequence, does not push forward to something else. It invites immersion. Yet, the pulse also draws us in—indeed, it is slow enough to regulate the listener's breathing. Dufourt refers to this as “the clock of eternity,” its repetitiveness taking the place of any directionality and thus of history. Its regularity, never rigid—arguably responsible for a continuity that is, as Dufourt puts it, “more profound than the apparent discontinuity of its phenomena”<sup>16</sup>

—suggests the “ontological time” of the universe, to cite Pierre Souvtchinsky (1939, 312–13), as opposed to the “psychological time,” or time of becoming or desire, associated with the human psyche. Ontological time underlies and makes possible the experience of all other kinds of time. Gisèle Brelet called it the essence of time itself, “pure time.”<sup>17</sup> Music of ontological time absorbs human subjectivity because it requires submission to the music. Brelet once saw social implications in this kind of music, an expression of the living reality of social experience as opposed to individual duration. Along with the containment of the musical frenzy by the sectional shifts, especially at the piece’s end, the pulse in *L’Afrique d’après Tiepolo*, which the composer calls “obsessive,” contributes the experience to which Dufourt refers in thinking of Africa as “crushed,” in the sense of forced into submission.

#### *L’ASIE D’APRÈS TIEPOLO: COEXISTENCE AND CONTRARY PREDICATES*

The second of Dufourt’s works written in response to the Tiepolo frescos raises a number of questions. Does the choice to begin with Africa and Asia, leaving the Americas and Europe for later, imply a certain chronology of cultural development, even a hierarchy of races, as was believed in earlier centuries and theorized most clearly by Gustave Le Bon in his *The Psychology of Peoples* (1894)?<sup>18</sup> If this had been their interest, those who commissioned his music might have chosen *L’Amérique* as Dufourt’s next work since Native Americans, also previously considered a “primitive” people, dominate this tableau. Whereas in Tiepolo’s *Africa*, cultural production is restricted to rugs, pottery, arrows, an umbrella, and temporary, makeshift tents, in his *Asia*, alongside arrows and umbrellas, are references to a more advanced society as well as specific times and places. As Dufourt points out in Tiepolo’s *Asia*, again expressing a political and ethical response to the subject:

Here, various historical worlds coexist side-by-side or engage in conflict: one can make out Golgotha, hieroglyphics in stone, the snake of Asclepius, an obelisk, a pyramid and Egyptian princess, a tiger and its prey . . . and in the foreground, above all, the crowd of tied-up slaves, prisoners lying on—or subordinates throwing themselves to—the ground. . . . Their being escorted by soldiers is surely a reference to the military significance of the Asian continent [sic], but it is also obvious that, here, the theme of captivity is

being treated together with that of voluntary servitude (Dufourt 2010a, 13).

On the left side then, we have violence, with a man killing a tiger next to enchained prisoners, naked and writhing; on the right, civilization begins to take shape (see Example 6).

Whereas an earlier version of the fresco featured, left of center, only the female allegory *Asie* atop a magnificent, ivory-tusked elephant, in the final version Tiepolo added a second allegorical female, perhaps an “Egyptian princess” in front of a tall obelisk on the far right. Given what surrounds her, I see the latter as an allegory of knowledge. If *Asie*, turbaned and looking like a peasant, lies side-saddle across the elephant, her arms and feet in the air as if she could slide off at any moment, her counterpart on the right stands tall, arms at her side, her strength and nobility reinforced by the towering obelisk behind her. To the final version, Tiepolo also added images signifying death and renewal: the burial sites of pharaohs, the hill where Christ died and Christianity began, allusions to the invention of writing, and the symbol of medicine. Thus, although Dufourt (2010a, 13) sees the allegorical figure of *Asie* “as an emblem of science and monarchy,” the associations of science, I would argue, lie with the princess.

As in African tableau, this one is dominated by binary oppositions. If the two sides of Africa opposed a white man and a black woman, here the two extremities juxtapose nature, suggested by palm trees, and human culture, represented in structures in cut stone with significant historical value. Just off center, *Asie* has her arm raised toward the heavens, like *Afrique*, but her eyes are directed in back of her and down at the conflict below. The principal visual oppositions in this tableau thus concern the center and the difference presented at the far



EXAMPLE 6: TIEPOLO, *OLYMPUS AND THE FOUR CONTINENTS: ASIA*

right. Whereas around *Asie* there is chaos (swirling lines with never a right angle), symbols of war (arms raised with lances and hammers), and human captivity, accompanying the proud female in front of the obelisk are rationality (straight lines and cubes respecting the laws of perspective) and peace (with someone raising the torch of liberty). Even if the theme of western civilization returns in the tableau of Europe with its Grecian temple, bishop with his scepter, soldier with his canon, artist painting the world (a globe), and ensemble of musicians, Tiepolo chose to have his name appear under this tableau carved in stone: “batia Tiepolo, 1753.”

Just as the title of the fresco is somewhat misleading, given the imagery, the opening of Dufourt’s *L’Asie d’après Tiepolo* is also surprising. As we have seen, Tiepolo’s references are primarily to the Middle East, long considered by Europeans as the “Orient.” But Dufourt’s music, rather than referencing this Orient with sinuous arabesques or microtones, instantly transports us instead to the Far East.<sup>19</sup> For this work, the composer selected a number of Asian percussion instruments: chromatically tuned sets of Philippine *trom-pongs*, Japanese *rin gongs* (brass bowls used for meditation), four gongs from the Beijing Opera, and one from Thailand, along with cowbells, *crotales* (antique cymbals), and a bell tree. As with his *L’Afrique*, in *L’Asie* Dufourt explores various oppositions and fusions of timbral colors. Here, however, the aural conflicts take place not principally between high and low pitch registers, but between the metallic, relatively chaotic timbres of the Asian instruments in simultaneous and successive juxtaposition with the purer, more disciplined timbres of the Western instruments. If at times the Asian instruments are buried in the sound world along with everything else, it’s in part because of the surfeit of individual gestures and independent movements by all the instruments in the ensemble, each hyper-expressive, whether extended or momentary, whether overblown, extremely animated, or merely insistent. The composer here focuses on giving voice to competition along with using his ensemble to experiment with new sound fusions. Amidst all this, the main audible element of structure is those low bass notes on the piano, memorable in *L’Afrique*, which return to create a foundation.

The work is built of three instrumental combinations, perhaps inspired by the visual juxtapositions in the fresco: woodwinds (flute/bass flute, Oboe/English horn/baritone oboe, and B♭ clarinet/B♭ bass clarinet); percussion (those listed above, plus the vibraphone); and strings (violin, viola, cello). Each has its own distinct timbre and moves at its own rate. Both the figures in the fresco and these instrumental groups are structurally distinct, though they can relate to

one another in various ways, be it through their proximity, similar shapes, or shared gestures, or because we cannot understand one without understanding the other. The piano is not part of these, but contributes to each at various times, playing both a supporting and structural role in the work.

In the first third of *L'Asie d'après Tiepolo*, the three instrumental groups develop one at a time and then proceed independently, though simultaneously. The opening percussive attacks on screechy gongs and a bell tree, each held for at least a measure and followed by long silences, recall music for Chinese theater and establish a kind of ritual atmosphere, calling us to attention. With more of the same come slight variations, whether by semitone sliding, appoggiaturas, or the addition of the vibraphone. Their tone and relative stasis, ironically, recall not *Asie*, but the stance of the Egyptian princess and the stone structures next to her. When the flute and oboe enter in m. 11, it is with a totally different timbre: chord-clusters played *fffz* in the high register with multiphonics, and followed by clarinet tremoli arching up and down two octaves. If these draw the listener up into the ether, suggesting the blue sky above the princess, the piano enters *ff* at m. 12 to provide a foundation—as it did in *L'Afrique*—with its low C<sup>2</sup> and the first of a series of long lapidary chords recalling the stone bricks in Tiepolo's tableau. At m. 13, as the rest of the percussion takes over from the gong/bell-tree chords, the strings begin a series of frenetic gestures that we heard towards the end of *L'Afrique d'après Tiepolo*, but in a very different form. Here perhaps the composer is thinking of *Asie*, twisting and turning, teetering on her perch, with the writhing prisoner below her. These timbres, in competition for the next ten measures, establish the principal ideas of the work.

With these string figurations, Dufourt was perhaps resonating with Alpers and Baxandall's observation (1994, 42) that meaning in the Tiepolo frescos can "take a masochistic turn," particularly in the images of servitude. With the slave at the middle of the fresco, his arms and legs spread open like a spider, Tiepolo not only uses a circular gesture at the wrist to suggest bondage, he also depicts one hand in shackles wrapped around the other hand without them, drawing in the role of painter and painting in the depiction of the interconnectedness between enforced and voluntary slavery. For these art historians, the "cold and impersonal passivity" of such figures is among its most important effects. Dufourt, too, admits being taken aback by the accumulation of contorted bodies, bodies in motion, and heads being crushed. Like Tiepolo, he uses his technologies to suggest meaning: brutal sounds distorted through "complex ways of writing;" ever-changing,

compressed sounds and sounds that turn in place, many performed at screechingly loud dynamic levels.

An important form this masochism takes in the music is what the composer calls “the fusion of contrary predicates.”<sup>20</sup> Contrary predicates are propositions and their opposites, such that a subject cannot normally be both at the same time. In his music, some contrary predicates come from the writing, some from the manner in which the sound is produced. We have seen this on a more limited scale in *L’Afrique*, but here it is used more extensively. A clear example is in mm. 13–22 where the concept of contradictory pairs can be heard between the dynamics of the violin and viola, the two rates of motion, and the dynamics of these strings and other instruments (see Example 7).

While the violin strums chords built of stacked fourth and fifths, decreasing in dynamic intensity from *fff* to *p*, the viola simultaneously strums two stacked sevenths, a semitone away, *increasing* in intensity from *mp* to *fff*. This fusion of dynamic opposites, proceeding in one-measure phrases, repeats until mm. 18 and 20–21 when the violin and viola exchange their roles. Adding to the complexity are the slightly different speeds at which the violin and viola move in mm. 13–22 and regular exchange of their rates of movement, beginning with 7 chords against 6 in one measure and immediately exchanging to 6 against 7; 7 against 8, then 8 against 7; etc. Dufourt creates another layer of contrary predicates between the measure-long, uni-directional dynamic movements in the violin and viola and the measure- or half-measure-long crescendo-decrescendo patterns, *mp-fff-mp*, in the flute, clarinet and cello in mm. 13–17 and 20, interrupted by the decrescendo-crescendo patterns, *fff-pp-fff*, in the cello mm. 18–19. The cello, moving independently of the other strings, also has an important role in this section’s timbre, with its rising and falling arpeggios, played as harmonics, and its rising and falling double glissandi, echoing the dynamic movement in the realm of pitch.

Such contrary musical gestures are highly dynamic, almost frenetic at the speeds in which they take place, but impel no movement forward. They produce not just auditory frustration, but also pain from not only their loud dynamic level, but also the excessive alternation between very soft and very loud. On one level, they are a musical equivalent to the contradictions of the self-defeating prisoner at the foot of *Asie*, in voluntary and involuntary slavery. On another, as Kant’s contrary predicates give rise to consideration of the “sum-total of all predicates,” this music uses such occasions to push the limits of what is possible in a composition. If the prisoner can embrace both states

[illegible]EXAMPLE 7: MM. 19–21, *L'ASIE D'APRÈS TIEPOLO* BY HUGUES DUFOURT

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without contradiction or neutralization, what might it mean for music to do something similar; that is, to work with hybrid sounds, sounds that fluctuate between object and sensation—all this without depending on computer manipulation? In this sense, the sound world of *L'Asie d'après Tiepolo* recalls the contradictions and the possibilities being explored in contemporary physics.

Just like one discovers the fresco only gradually when mounting the huge staircase, Dufourt's music requires effort to experience it fully as meaning unfurls only over time. Three levels of the musical discourse in *L'Asie d'après Tiepolo* must be confronted: micro-phenomena, macro-phenomena, and musical form as articulated by traditional means. The composer was thinking of computer music when he explained the first of these, which refers to the "elaboration of thin textures, more or less dense, more or less narrow:"

The micro-analysis of the sound phenomena shows that the useful information is situated in the irregularities or deviations of the structure. . . . Anomalies, gaps, accidents, the many perturbations that compose the morphology of musical sound explain the singularity of instrumental timbres, of which the attack and the decreasing amplitude are the fundamental parameters (Dufourt 2010b, 107, 117).

In acoustic music, he understands performance gestures as particularly important in shaping the sound and how we perceive it. Dufourt thus builds much of his sound out of glissandi, pizzicati, and *sul ponticello* in the strings, multiphonics in the winds, and trills and tremoli in all the instruments, whether Eastern or Western, all of which complicate the perception of pitches by emphasizing their dissolution. In the opening measures, the performer must hit the gong and then execute a slight glissando up a tone. This destabilizes the notion of a single pitch. In m. 137, the flutter-tongue trills in the bass flute and baritone oboe, an augmented fifth apart, as well as in the bass clarinet—to be played "ferociously" as well as *ff*—create a strong aural counterpart to the furious piano figurations and string parallel glissandi with which we hear them. Then there is the over-blown flute with the Chinese gong, harmonics on the oboe with the noise of the percussion, and the clarinet harmonics played as a glissando. In m. 107 Dufourt even asks for tremoli *between* the *trompong* and cow bells, alternating on the same pitch. This idea returns to characterize mm. 221–239, with tremoli between the vibraphone and, successively, each of the other percussion instruments, and then throughout this

instrumental group in mm. 252–271 (see Example 8). Such techniques produce hybrid sounds that could be thought of as sounds with shadows, giving the timbres and their harmonies remarkable depth and breadth.<sup>21</sup> Heard in simultaneous and successive juxtaposition with conventionally produced pitches, this results in Dufourt's dialectic of the “identical and the ambiguous.”

At the macroscopic level, the work is built of phrases, often shaped dynamically, that expand and contract from one instrumental group to another, and from one part of the piece to another. For example, the similarly-moving arabesques in the cello and clarinet in mm. 145–154, which stand out from the texture otherwise full of trills in the other strings and winds, are then echoed by similarly-shaped arabesques in the piano, violin, and viola, forming a kind of duet between the two, and later a kind of imitative counterpoint between these figurations within the winds and finally between the marimba and bass clarinet (see Example 9). There is also the structuring role of various phrase lengths in this work, for example, the measure-long dynamic shapes of part one, such as in the string patterns in mm. 13–22, that return in the flutes in m. 107–119, but grow to three measures in length. In much of the piece, there are also “very different speeds of unfolding [*déroulement*], types of development, and writing”—“paradox temporalities”—held together, as in *L'Afrique*, by a “common meter and metronomic pulse.” In many ways, the composition is like the fresco, whose formal principle Dufourt (2010a, 14) refers to as a “capriccio,” foreshadowing Goya's *Capricchos*, that is, “a fantastical amalgam of disparate elements, a unique recomposition of submerged worlds, and a morbid depiction of prison-like spaces.”

EXAMPLE 8: MM. 229–236 *L'ASIE D'APRÈS TIEPOLO* BY HUGUES DUFOURT

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The musical score for Example 9, measures 150-152, is presented for a large ensemble. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Flûte basse (Bass Flute):** Measures 150-152. Dynamics: *ff*, *ff*, *fff*. A melodic line with a 11:8 ratio is indicated.
- Harmonica baryton (Baritone Harmonica):** Measures 150-152. Dynamics: *ff*, *ff*, *fff*. A melodic line with a 11:8 ratio is indicated.
- Clarinete contrebasse (Bass Clarinet):** Measures 150-152. Dynamics: *ff*, *f*, *fff*. A melodic line with a 11:8 ratio is indicated.
- Marimba:** Measures 150-152. Dynamics: *fff*, *ff*, *mp*, *mf*, *mf*. A melodic line with a 11:8 ratio is indicated.
- Piano:** Measures 150-152. Dynamics: *f*, *ff*, *ff*, *ff*, *ff*, *p*. A melodic line with a 11:8 ratio is indicated.
- Violon (Violin):** Measures 150-152. Dynamics: *ff*, *ff*, *fff*. A melodic line with a 11:8 ratio is indicated.
- Alto:** Measures 150-152. Dynamics: *ff*, *ff*, *fff*. A melodic line with a 11:8 ratio is indicated.
- Violoncelle (Cello):** Measures 150-152. Dynamics: *ff*, *f*, *fff*. A melodic line with a 11:8 ratio is indicated.

The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, sixteenth notes, and dynamic markings. The measures are numbered 150, 151, and 152 at the top of the page.

EXAMPLE 9: MM. 150–152 *L'ASIE D'APRÈS TIEPOLO* BY HUGUES DUFOURT

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In *L'Asie* the piano is the marker of structure in the work as well as its pulse. Recalling the central idea from *L'Afrique*, the piano uses a low bass appoggiatura and long chord-clusters to articulate the pulse and the measure downbeats. We hear this first throughout part one (mm. 1–128). In part two (mm. 128–168), which begins and ends with frenzy in the instrument, the piano echoes the micro-techniques of the other instruments with its own trills, pedaling, and other quick, oscillating figuration. It ends this section by breaking out of the short figurations with a three-measure-long, chromatically-rising line in the right hand and trills in the left hand, then something similar reiterated for four measures, all part of the tension that leads to the end of part two. Part three begins in m. 169 when the texture collapses to the piano's low E<sup>-3</sup> appoggiatura, *fff*, followed by its chord-cluster F<sup>-1</sup> E♭<sup>1</sup> D<sup>2</sup> F<sup>#2</sup>, the piano momentarily alone in the sound-world but playing *ffff*. The piano drops out in part four (mm. 227–279), exclusively for the percussion, but returns in part five at m. 280 where its chords and regular pulse provide a context for the string and woodwind phrases to play off the measure. Because Dufourt composes at the piano, because this instrument has a special status in the work—not one of the three instrumental groups in conflict—and because the piano gives the work solidity and formal shape, one might think of the piano here as the voice of the composer. And yet, despite having the “main role from the beginning to the end” and “exhibiting acoustic vehemence, it never manages to arrive at an authentically personal formulation” (Dufourt 2010a, 14).

Like *L'Afrique*, *L'Asie* ends with transformation in the form of an exchange of instrumental roles, followed by a lyrical coda. The low bass notes, previously associated with the piano, can be heard in the bass clarinet in mm. 292–305, where, after the piano plays its last chord, A<sup>-1</sup> B♭<sup>2</sup>, this woodwind reaches down to F<sup>#-2</sup>, after which there is a full measure rest. When the coda begins in m. 307, the percussion, beginning with the cow bells and *trompong*, has replaced the piano, its role then taken on by the marimba, an instrument with which it had interacted closely in part three, “the melody produced using a different set of bows” (Dufourt 2010a, 14). Echoing the piano and clarinet duet in *L'Afrique*, the marimba—played with violin bows—and bass clarinet end the work quietly together, intertwining their pitches and pitch classes, often a semitone apart, characterized by large rising intervals spanning several octaves, as if trying to carry listeners up into the heavens.

For the last fifty years, French spectral composers have been exploring the “sound-space as a space of transitions” (Dufourt 2010b,

116). Most of the research and compositions have taken place with the aide of computers. In his music inspired by Tiepolo's frescos, Dufourt (2010b, 114, 116) brings his understanding of psychoacoustics and computer music to acoustic music, calling on our "cognitive and creative capacities" to navigate the "frontiers of fusion." Contemplating continents beyond the West freed the composer to work without the demands of Hegelian self-awareness and progress. There is constant flux in the material and the roles the instruments, timbres, and temporalities play, but no development, no self-glorification of the subject. Given the rate and dynamic level at which the musical ideas succeed one another in these compositions, the complexity of the micro- and macro-phenomena may be almost impossible to grasp in all their rich detail. But they do serve to focus the listener on the present, whether quiet and barely audible or screechingly frenetic. Narrative strategies of transformation and closure render this music comprehensible and, ultimately, pleasurable.

With its many emblems of Western achievement, especially in the arts, and a portrait of the Prince dominating the scene, we await Hugues Dufourt's musical response to Europe, the next commission, and finally to America. Will he pair these, as with *L'Afrique* and *L'Asie*, and if so in what ways? If, like the frescos across from one another, *L'Afrique* and *L'Asie* mirror one another, their proportions of slow, quiet movement or quick agitation reversed, how will the composer connect music referring to the other two continents, the one associated with human savagery, the other with refined sophistication? How will he address the boundaries of knowledge and ignorance, themes of domination, and especially the irony that America today in some ways has surpassed the technological achievements and progress previously associated with Europe? Finally, if Tiepolo's frescos foreshadow the global present and force us to come to grips with the interconnectedness of the continents and its peoples, how will Dufourt's works ultimately function as a quartet, four works in dialogue?

## Notes

1. Dufourt's works based on paintings are: *Saturne* (1979), referring to Panofsky's analysis of Durer's etching; *La Tempesta* (1977) to Giorgione; *Le Philosophe* (1991) to Rembrandt; *La Maison du sourd* (1996–99) to Goya; *Les Hivers* (1992–2001) to four paintings by Poussin, Rembrandt, Breughel, and Guardi; and *Lucifer* (1992–2000) to Pollock.
2. Non-western art offers remarkable predecessors of this. Alpers and Baxandall (1994, 44, 106) refer to the battle scenes in Assyrian reliefs as offering “an alternative to narrative intelligibility.” Accurate readings are impossible: every center is at the margins of something else. Accidental relationships and repetitions are everywhere. It's the “mobile play of perception rather than its capacity to stop and focus that is addressed.” The composer read this book as he wrote his music.
3. Albera (2007, 546), cited in Kaltenecker (2011).
4. Except where otherwise noted, references to the composer's ideas come from conversations with the author in fall 2010 and winter 2011.
5. In Dufourt (2010b, 116), the composer writes of the “play of colors” as permitting “the development of a dialectic of the identical and the ambiguous.”
6. The concept of spectral music first arose in a manifesto that Dufourt wrote in 1979 for Radio-France and the Société Internationale de Musique Contemporaine. It expressed the concerns about timbre and time associated with the group, L'Itinéraire, which included Michaël Lévinas, Tristan Murail, Gérard Grisey, Roger Tessier, and Dufourt.
7. For Todorov (1978), transformation is the essence of narrative, representing a synthesis of difference and similarity, and for Tarasti (2004), the minimal condition of narrative. Ricoeur (1984; 1985) sees transformation as responsible for configuration, turning a series of events into a coherent whole. See also Pasler (2008).
8. I'm grateful to Nick Reyland for suggesting an imperialist interpretation of narrative's role here.

9. As Alpers and Baxandall (1994, 110) point out, the Treppenhause *Four Continents and Apollo* at Würzburg was not unique, but a theme also used on a similar ceiling at the Schloss Weissenstein in Pommersfelden by Johann Byss in 1717–18. The idea of Apollo at its center came from Versailles.
10. Dufourt (1999), cited in Kaltenecker (2010, 16).
11. Thanks to Nick Reyland for this interpretation of narrative.
12. With increasing contact with the rest of the world came both self-consciousness about each people's cultural relativity and a preoccupation with racial "mixing." The French anthropologist Paul Broca (1864, 8–9, 12, 16–18, 25–28) argued that when racial hybridity results from "proximate species" as opposed to distant ones, "unions between allied races are fertile," that is, mixing closely-related varieties can have advantages. Put another way, when in contact, the stronger races were seen as necessarily absorbing the weaker ones. The French themselves exemplify "eugenic hybridity," a people "formed by the intermixture [*croisement*] of two or more races" that is "indefinitely prolific." Such discourse was important to colonialists who sought to extend their impact on the world. When the French first arrived in Senegal in the mid-nineteenth century, they promoted racial intermarriage as a way of assuring not only assimilation, but also stable and longterm influence on the culture. However, both Broca and Gobineau believed that among distantly-related races, mixing or fusion can threaten to erase the distinctions of difference. Hybridity eventually became a lightning rod for what was wrong with French assimilationist colonial policy from Africa to Indochina. See Pasler (2006).
13. Compare *Africa* from three perspectives on p. 128 and *Asia* as seen from the left and the right on p. 131.
14. "*Tuilage*" has traditionally referred to a singing practice in Brittany whereby one singer follows another by picking up on the former's last syllables, thereby avoiding any interruption. <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuilage>. Accessed April 21, 2011. Dufourt explained to me that the tiling paradigm came from John Chowning's *Stria* where it was a programming idea. Dufourt has turned it into a compositional procedure producing "dissonant harmonicity" or "consonant inharmonicity."
15. My thanks to Nick Reyland for this last point.

16. Dufourt (2010a, 13). See Pasler (1982) and Pasler (2004) for a similar phenomena in Debussy's *Jeux*.
17. See also Brelet (1949, 451) and Pasler (2009).
18. The decision to commission *L'Asie* next, according to the composer, was a collective one involving the director of the WDR and the Ensemble Recherche.
19. When questioned on this, Dufourt noted that Tiepolo, a Venitian, would have been aware of Marco Polo's Silk Road travels all the way to China.
20. This concept comes from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and Hegel's *Science of Logic*. Dufourt (2004, 61) explains, "Le principe de la synthèse instrumentale consiste précisément à réaliser une synthèse contradictoire, une synthèse qui ne peut pas s'achever car elle met en présence des prédicats contraires."
21. As Grisey once wrote, "sounds without shadows" are those that "reinforce the light of their harmonics." Cited in Dufourt (2004, 66).



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