

Tristan Murail - Biography

A French composer born on March 11, 1947 in Le Havre, Tristan Murail received degrees in classical Arabic and Maghrib Arabic from the National School of Living Oriental Languages as well as a Bachelor's degree in economic science and a degree from the Paris Institute of Political Studies. He entered Olivier Messiaen's class at the Paris Conservatory in 1967, and in 1971 received a first prize in composition. The same year, he was awarded the Rome Prize and spent two years at the Villa Médicis. During his formative years, he emulated aesthetics concerned with creating comprehensive movement of masses, volumes or sonic textures: electronic music, works by Iannis Xenakis, Giacinto Scelsi and above all György Ligeti.

After returning to Paris in 1973, he joined Michaël Lévinas and Roger Tessier, in founding the musical collective « L'itinéraire », which would become a precious laboratory for his research in the domain of instrumental composition, the use of live electronics and computer assisted composition. The same year, he composed *La Dérive des continents* and *Les Nuages de Magellan*, which are typical of his first style with pieces incorporating an uninterrupted sonic magma, without articulation or real evolution. *Sables* (1974) and *Mémoire/Erosion* (1975-1976) typify two of the composer's subsequent stages toward increased refinement.

In 1980, the composers from L'itinéraire took part in a computer music workshop at Ircam. This experience would have a decisive impact on the evolution of Tristan Murail's music, as he had begun using computers to increase his understanding of acoustical phenomena. In 1982-1983, he composed *Désintégrations*, his first experience with superimposed instrumental and synthesized sounds. With *Serendib* (1991-1992) and other works from that period (*La Dynamique des fluides*, *La Barque mystique*), his music attained an extreme state of subdivision, articulation and unforeseeable development. Between 1991 and 1997, he collaborated with Ircam, teaching composition and participating in the development of the « Patchwork » program as a compositional aid. He also taught at numerous festivals and institutions, in particular the summer courses at Darmstadt, the Abbaye de Royaumont and the Centre Acanthes.

Tristan Murail now lives in the United States and, since 1997, is professor of composition at Columbia University.

In 2009 at Marseille, Lorraine Vaillancourt conducted the Nouvel Ensemble Moderne of Montréal in the première of *En moyenne et extrême raison* for ensemble. *Les Sept paroles* for choir, orchestra and electronics, commissioned by NPS ZaterdagMatinee, Radio France and Ircam, was premiered in 2010 at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam with the Netherlands Radio Choir and Orchestra conducted by Marin Alsop, and later performed by the Radio France Philharmonic Orchestra and the Radio Netherlands Choir at Radio France in Paris, conducted by Pascal Rophé.