

ONLY CELLO

Valérie AIMARD, cello solo

III - Conversations with Roger LENOIR, sound recording

"The studio, the camera, microphones, lighting »

RL - Does the video recording make it easier to listen to music?

I'm very visual, I observe a lot, I watch a lot in life in general. It was no accident that I became a mime, the visual art « par excellence ». I like to see the physical approach of great musicians, how their body becomes sound. Of course I have listened to hundreds of records, but I have always loved filmed music, the great conductors, their gestures, movements becoming music.

For years, I never missed a season of « Classique en Images » at the Louvre Auditorium. I discovered so many great musicians there, who often became idols thereafter: Claudio Arrau, Annie Fisher, Joseph Szigeti, Ferenc Fricsay, Carlos Kleiber, etc, etc ...

The great masters who influenced me, György Sebök, György Kurtag, among others, all spoke of the physical approach to the instrument. They were looking for a very concentrate playing, but music was going through them. Bernard Greenhouse, my beloved master, when he played once could forget his cello. I felt like what was inside him went straight into the sound to reach and touch the audience. In his teaching, it was his whole approach, every move on the instrument was made for the music. Each gesture became musical.

RL - During your concerts, your shows as a mime, you are in the presence of an audience that listens to you, looks at you, even observes you. How do you relate to the camera (s)? with the microphones in front of you?

VA - I have been used to using the video for my personal work for a very long time. Especially for mime, the camera is an almost indispensable working companion. So I'm used to looking at the camera, observing myself, listening and critically looking at what I'm doing. I also had a hell of a practice recording a hundred works for Cello Kids, more ...in one take!

For a record, the physical presence of the musician disappears. You can record in socks, with your favorite sweater, if you are very tired it is hidden ! With video, you always have to look in good shape, not a thread that sticks out, take care of all the details, you can't hide anything, it's very demanding. Recording in the studio AND on video, it's not always easy to be completely committed, authentically inspired. I'm not the first to say that the studio is not the stage !

RL - It's a different situation than the concert ! Listening to yourself and looking at yourself is not a difficult exercise, but above all a rewarding one?

VA - There are moments of grace, when all the elements seem to come together by magic. There are miracles when the first take is the right one. When it starts to get stuck ... 5th take, 6th take ... then you have to keep a positive mind, always be

convinced that you can get there, that you will get there! It teaches you humility, you can't cheat and you have to find the resources to go after yourself.

The exhaustion you feel after recording is very deep, different from that of concerts, it is the culmination of a very long process.

It is ultimately when listening for editing, that the face-to-face with oneself can be painful. Sometimes you are disappointed, sometimes you blame yourself, and sometimes the day comes when you think "Hey, sounds great finally ! ». Sometimes you are touched by what you have done, a rare moment and all the more precious.

RL - Even carefully chosen and installed microphones are “coldly” objective. And the camera, observer, introspective ! You are alone, supervised and guided by listening to the sound recordist and the gaze of the cameraman, how do you feel about all this ?

VA - In this project there are a lot of factors, the sound recording, the framing, the lights, the edits, etc. I have a lot of imagination and often a strong, somewhat idealized vision of what I want to achieve. One of the difficulties is to achieve that with all these elements, the rendering corresponds to the inner idea; to be able to communicate my vision to the people involved in the project, while knowing how to integrate what they themselves bring.

I read a lot of books on great creators who talk about their work: Béjart, Diaghilev, Ariane Mnouchkine, and many others, directors, composers, opera conductors who lead everyone, the whole « troop » in their vision. At my level, I tried to take inspiration from it in the creation of these 2 channels that go a bit beyond just playing the cello.

RL - In your opinion, what can the simple staging bring, the lighting changing according to the pieces? Does it emphasize the atmosphere, or is it just an "image" to get attention?

VA - I have a great sensitivity to light, which I developed even more in the creation of my mime shows, light being the scenery of mimes. From the start, I had this idea of creating an atmosphere, a « decor » with the use of light. I am very grateful to David Tepfer, who hosts all the recording at the Atelier de la Main d'Or : passionate about sound recording, his listening to music also translates into lights. It's synesthesia ! It was wonderful to meet him and to be able to realize this first idea of light decoration.

It is true that the current trend is to create clips with huge scenery, « the Swan » by Saint-Saëns at the top of Mont Blanc, the Dvorak Concerto in a forest, even the Meditation of Thaïs barefoot in the sand. All of this probably opens classical music to a large audience, but everything is so sophisticated... that everything is false. It's not my conception of music.

I chose an extremely sober style of video, there is just the performer, the music and the cello. A sort of face-to-face with music. The image is reduced to the essentials, it is very authentic. Yes, I can be criticized for a certain austerity, but it is my artistic choice. For fantasy, you will have to come and see my mime shows!

