

Timelessness

Thierry De Mey



© Michel Grasso

Extract from Floor patterns



Percussions
de Strasbourg

« At the meeting point between music and dance,
the gesture is as important as the sound. »

Thierry De Mey

TEASER

[https://youtu.be/
r1Kr7ZQtES8](https://youtu.be/r1Kr7ZQtES8)

Composition & concept: Thierry De Mey
Musicians: Minh-Tâm Nguyen, Alexandre Esperet, Flora Duverger, François
Papirer, Thibaut Weber, Enrico Pedicone, Hsin-Hsuan Wu, Rémi Schwartz
Stage managers: Laurent Fournaise, Olivier Pfeiffer
Assistant to musical creation: François Deppe
Gestual coach: Manuela Rastaldi
Space Staging: Thomas Guerry
Detailed pieces: Floor patterns, Frisking, Pièce de gestes, Musique de tables, Silence must
be !, Timelessness, Hands*, Affordance

*Concept & choreography: Wim Vandekeybus / Concept & music: Thierry De Mey

Duration: 90'

Production & commission: Les Percussions de Strasbourg

Coproduction: Festival Musica

World premiere: 29.09.2019 @ Festival Musica

The composer has received a grant for the writing of an original musical
piece from the French Ministry of Culture.

With the support of Francis & Mica Salabert Foundation and the Aquatique Show

With Timelessness, Thierry De Mey has created a sort of self-portrait, combining old and new pieces in the same show. It is a project that took shape over time, which he describes as an «artistic and political manifesto». The composer's commitment is above all to the body and its development in musical practice. Where a taboo deeply marks our history, in particular by neutralizing the presence of musicians wearing black clothes, Thierry De Mey gives «visibility» to the performers and integrates into his writing the exposure of their gestures and postures. There is nothing simplistic about the resulting economy of means: for proof, one of his masterpieces, Musique de Tables (1987), in which the performers only have three tables. Hands, fingers, nails, palms and phalanges are the instruments of this body theatre. The Percussions de Strasbourg take over the score to bring out its formidable scenic and musical potential.



© Michel Grasso

Thierry de Mey the desire of Time

For over thirty years, Thierry De Mey composes with and for bodies. Successively caught through music, video and dance, the Belgian composer introduces *Timelessness*: a work, a show, a retrospective in the shape of a self-portrait.

You seem to navigate between two dimensions: your discourse tends towards abstraction, but the forms you produce are very corporeal, very embodied. How do you explain this?

The starting point of my projects almost always lies in the encounter between a rational, quasi-scientific or mathematical programme and an instinctive gesture, often directed towards or inspired by «chosen» partners: musicians, dancers or actors from other disciplines. It is the quest for a possible link between structure and its embodiment, between technology and the living, between mathematics and nature, between the scientific and the poetic. The concept itself is not enough; it must be embodied, verified in a sensitive experience shared by the listener, the spectator. The close link between my music and dance has allowed me to approach very simply the question of the sensual in art. «What is deepest in man is the skin» said Paul Valéry. Not that dance is a more sensual art, but it is an art where the body is necessarily more exposed than in other disciplines, it would be absurd

to deny it. This question of the place of the body at the centre of the practice of creative music has greatly evolved since the early 1980s when we were eccentric activists. When I talk about the body, I am talking about the body inhabited by a presence, inscribed in time and connected to other presences. And speaking of «presence» is all the more crucial today as the virtual seems to take up all the space. We live in a society that has placed sensuality and spirituality at the extremes, but you don't have to be a New Age guru to say that this opposition is outdated and unsuccessful. The idea of finding deep links between sensuality and spirituality is at the heart of *Timelessness*.

What does this title mean?

This is the name of the show as well as the title of the central piece of the project, of quasi-spectral aesthetics. Before naming it *Timelessness*, I had thought of calling it «The Seven Colours of Time»: time in all its meanings, physical time, mathematical time, metronomic time, human time, etc., until there is no more time, «timelessness». This time that has a certain point can no longer be thought of as an almost mystical idea, the order of meditation or orgasm, extreme states where time no longer exists, where one remains suspended, as in a dream: a pure presence. For me, this concept also directly echoes scientific theories: that of the Big Bang, the birth of time and space, or the vertiginous one. multiverse» and all these parallel dimensions that we will never cross, that evolve independently of us.

You will propose a kind of synthesis of your work by bringing together older and newer pieces in the same show.

Indeed, that was the original idea. We have been working with the Percussions de Strasbourg on a tailor-made interpretation of several pieces that are representative of my music. For example, we take *Frisking* (1990), a piece for percussion using wind instruments. But we chose to dispense with the saxophone, clarinet and trombone, and to reinvent sounds with gongs, blows into objects, etc. It's very beautiful, and in a certain sense, it's already another piece, a rewriting that calls for another involvement of the musicians. There will also be my visual and choreographic pieces, such as *Silence must be* (2002) and *Pièce de gestes* (2008).

You have always been interested in the conditions of production, the context of the concert and its ritual, and therefore in the staging of the music.

Yes, it's true. The premiere of *Silence must be !* in Brussels in 2002 was a big hit, because I asked the conductor who had just conducted Stravinsky's *Wedding* to turn to the audience at La Monnaie and to play the piece: eight minutes of silence and polyrhythm. Imagine the faces of the people in the room! *Musique de tables* is for its part a musical response to the *Arte Povera* movement by drawing on the least noble, most rejected and despised material - in this case, non-instrumental sounds played on three tables. With *Timelessness*, I wanted to go beyond the simple concert. The goal was to conceive different modes of perception, different types of listening within the same environment. The idea is that it never stops, that the pieces follow on from one another by multiplying the sound and visual

materials. In a way, this is my artistic and political manifesto: that of a kinesthetic, where the sense of movement is a desiring machine at the heart of the music.

Today, music can be heard everywhere and its functions are numerous, thanks in particular to the contribution of new technologies. Do you think that so-called «contemporary» music lags behind in the understanding and integration of these multiple listening modalities?

In my opinion, the main problem lies in the fact that the concert is still considered to be the most noble form of listening and the most noble function, towards which we must strive. On the other hand, for several years I have been calling for openness to other forms of listening, to other devices, and this includes the relationship with other disciplines and artistic practices. For example, since I have been supervising the composition course at IRCAM, I have been asking that the young composers' final concert integrate other disciplines. Until now, there has been a fairly obvious standardization effect in this obligatory passage. But why would we exclude a priori other disciplines - and therefore different forms of relationship to the world - in contemporary music?

Contemporary music seems to have locked itself into a context where it is no longer able to respond to the simple and plural moments of our lives. Why could we no longer imagine a piece of contemporary music on which we would like to party, entertain friends or dine alone? These are simple questions that have never been asked, yet they could help us to find a spontaneous relationship to the world and to others.

Interview by Stéphane Roth and Antoine Vieillard
for Festival Musica



© Christophe Urbain

Extract from *Hands*

« The audacious percussionists have appropriated the dance attached to some of these pieces; notably for Hands (1984) - the opening scene of What the body doesn't remember - in which they brilliantly perform Wim Vandekeybus' choreography. »

Thierry De Mey



© Christophe Urbain

Extract from Silence must be!



© Christophe Urbain

Extract from Timelessness

« Reflection on temporalities, spectral iridescence on instruments tuned in micro-intervals, entanglement of pulsations, waves, double clocks, gravitational waves and the spirit of the «Atlajala» which takes possession of the souls and bodies of the living creatures of the circular valley of Paul Bowles, or the ocean of Solaris... inspire this «interstellar» musical journey ».

Thierry De Mey - about his piece, *Timelessness*



© Christophe Urbain

Extract from Hands

Creation 2019

FROM 12TH TO 13RD OF NOV. 2018

RESIDENCY 1

Thierry De Mey's visit to Strasbourg for two days of meeting-experimentation with the musicians of the ensemble.

Place : Les Percussions de Strasbourg

FROM 2^D TO 3RD OF MARCH 2019,

FROM 8TH TO 11TH OF APRIL 2019

& FROM 1ST AU 5TH OF JULY 2019

RESIDENCY 2

Thierry De Mey's visit to Strasbourg for some time to work with the musicians.

Place : Les Percussions de Strasbourg —
Théâtre de Hautepierre

FROM 2^D TO 6TH OF SEPTEMBER

2019

FINAL CREATIVE RESIDENCY

Thierry De Mey and his assistant François Deppe's visit in Strasbourg for a residency to work with the musicians.

Place : Théâtre de Hautepierre

29TH OF SEPTEMBER 2019

WORLD PREMIERE

TIMELESSNESS

Point d'Eau, Ostwald-Strasbourg
Festival Musica

www.festivalmusica.fr

21ST OF NOVEMBER 2019

Archipel, Scène nationale de Perpignan

Festival Aujourd'hui Musique

www.theatredelarchipel.org

4TH & 5TH OF NOVEMBER 2020

Théâtre de Hautepierre, Strasbourg

Live@home

www.percussionsdestrasbourg.com

1ST OF APRIL 2021

Théâtre des Quatre Saisons, Gradignan

Festival DanSONs

www.t4saisons.com

3RD OF APRIL 2021

Le Parvis, Scène nationale de Tarbes

www.parvis.net

15TH OF MAY 2021

Muziekcentrum De Bijloke, Gand (Belgium)

www.bijloke.be

CONDITIONS

Set-up D-1

10 to 11 people on tour

Detailed technical rider on demand, included in
the disposal agreement.

Thierry de Mey Composer

Thierry De Mey is a composer and filmmaker. The impulses associated with movement and leaping are undoubtedly guiding forces in his work: he views rhythm as "a system that generates waves of falling motions and new developments." De Mey writes mainly for dance and cinema. In his work with choreographers Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker, Wim Vandekeybus, and Michèle Anne De Mey, he has stepped beyond his role of composer to offer valued collaboration in the invention of "formal strategies."

Les Percussions de Strasbourg

Founded in 1962, the Percussions de Strasbourg are world-renowned ambassadors of musical creation. With their exceptional repertoire, the group performs twentieth century masterpieces and commissioned new works with the same concerns: to bring life to a contemporary heritage while revisiting it constantly, and to continue to innovate in a context of artistic diversification.

Since its foundation, the group still stands at the heart of creation, thanks to its particular connections with contemporary composers and the diversity of its abilities in terms of musical formats: from duo to octet, from acoustics to electronics, from recitals to musical theater and dance, etc...

Having been dedicated more than 350 works, the group continues to maintain and develop its unique instrumentarium in the world. It has recorded many times and has received around thirty international awards, including a «Victoire de la musique classique» in 2017, which the Percussions de Strasbourg label won for its first record release, Burning Bright by Hugues Dufourt.

The daily commitment of the ensemble to educational activities is reflected in their various actions, particularly with the public in Théâtre de Hautepierre where the ensemble is in residence.



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Extract from Pièce de gestes

« A full success »

ResMusica

« Neither a concert, nor performance, but a true dramaturgical construction based on subtly linked « collages » and vitalized by performers that we discover in all their virtuosity as musician-dancer. »

Geneviève Charras

« The magic is complete and the audience captivated.

The pleasure reaches its peak. »

Le fleur du dimanche



© Christophe Urbain



Percussions
de Strasbourg

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