

MOMENTE

(A black and white film by Gérard Patris, 1965)

Today, we're going to make a film on **MOMENTE**. One of my latest works. The "moments".

And I have been asked: "Who are you?"...

It reminded me of the first days when I arrived in Paris, in 1951. When I walked into the Conservatoire, there was a man who was yelling names. I wanted to attend the courses of Messiaen. And I was waiting in the corridor, like the other students. At the end, I hadn't heard my name. I was alone in the corridor. I couldn't speak French. I learned later, with the help of a chambermaid... And I asked the man: "Listen, Sir, you haven't called me... All the others are gone." "Well... yes!" he muttered, and he showed me a list with all the names.

So I looked at it, I looked, and I found my name: Stockhausen. He said: "But I've yelled that name ten times! I called: "*Stokozen*"!¹".

So I haven't understood that "*Stokozen*" was me...!

Young girl's voice:

There are people in the orchestra who applaud... What does it mean..., all these people applauding?

REHEARSAL

Oh, I intended to integrate a totally common sound phenomenon. Clapping is a reaction, when you listen to music. And I found very interesting to start this

¹ Of course, the man has pronounced it "à la française", with a French accent.

version of **MOMENTE** with applause which are transformed, little by little, rhythmically, in dynamics, with some fixed pitches sometimes.

At the end of the concert, the other evening, when people were applauding, you seemed very happy...

Yes, of course. Why not?

You appreciate the applause, don't you?

Of course.

People who scrape their feet, who slap on their knees, it's to make things pretty or to make music?

It's to make *actions*. To support the percussion.

REHEARSAL

So, it's a love work?

Yes! I was very much in love when I started composing this work. And I still am!

What does love mean to you? Doesn't it mean a little... loving oneself?

Of course. Love is a contact.

The work is dedicated to a woman, a young woman. And many passages are dedicated to this young woman. Some passages are from the great love songs of Solomon, the Song of Songs.

In some other parts, I used passages of letters I received during the period I was composing. I also used, in other parts, reactions of the audience during the performances of my previous works: howls, whispers, words as *Yes! No! Enough! Bis! Go out!* Etc.

Other parts with short poems... For instance, a quotation from William Blake, which is very dear to me:

*He who kisses the joy as it flies
lives in Eternity's sunrise...*

In a way, these verses may resume the essential meaning of the work, **MOMENTE**.

REHEARSAL

(large excerpt)

I started to compose **MOMENTE** in 1961. And it's not achieved, not finished yet. It will be a whole evening performance.

REHEARSAL

Discussion in German first, then:

Yes... We're talking about a problem concerning the solo voices, here, during the passage of the solo voices of the choir, we can never hear them, because of the noises that choir I and IV have to do... So, they have to make these noises much less loud. And he has to check if we can hear them or not...

There are no stories... in my life. And I started to compose a work with independent musical moments, like moments of life. As strong as possible! And after I have written a certain number of them with preparations, with means, with preparations of time, of space, of colours, of proportions for all these different moments, I thought: "OK, now that these independent events have been created, why not also care about their *meeting?*"

REHEARSAL

I started to compose **MOMENTE** in January 1962. During the first week, I planned out a general form. A group of moments is called "M-Moments", it means moments which are concentrated on *melodies*.

A second group, "K-Moments", (in German, we say *Klang*), moments concentrated on the sound, the *timbre*.

And the third group, moments concentrated on the *durations*, "D-Moments".

Then I took some pages of the score, I cut them and I slipped these pieces in slits I've cut in other pages... I call them *inserts*. In order to have, from time to time, a *memory* of what happened and to create a *hope*, from time to time. A hope for the moments to come.

REHEARSAL

Around the K, the same thing, a M with a component... A K with a component M... K with a component D... And... KM... KM(d)... Same thing here: a KD, a KD(m)... One already sees all this, as the influences of the other moments within a moment which is derived from a central moment.

Anyway, I didn't understand anything...

It's quite simple: when I compose, I think.

And when I talk, when I verbalize what I've done, I can only talk about my thinking.

*I've listened to **MOMENTE**. It gives shocks. Rather erotic shocks, aren't they?*

It's the reaction of the audience that makes you think it's erotic? Or what?

No... But it's... It's very intense and very...

It's possible! Why not?

When it causes a sensual reaction, it may come from the music, but I'm not aware of this aspect. I mean, I don't organize certain sensual effects, I just take care of the work's general organization.

REHEARSAL

REHEARSAL

I intend neither to be aggressive nor to be ugly. I'm only looking for musical means. And I try to compose them according to... according to the ideas I have as a composer. And afterwards, I see and hear how the audience reacts.

REHEARSAL
(very short)

So, you're not looking for scandal?

I don't think about it. It's a consequence. But I have to admit, after so many scandals, that it really disturbs me when I'm working! So, I'd rather work quietly.

REHEARSAL

I'm fed up with stories. With a work which develops from its beginning to a certain end, without... without having all possible directions... With a work where each thing

has its explanation depending only on what happened before, or on the hope of what will happen next or not.
I'm more and more looking for a *lyric* work.

In fact, your music is a little Wagnerian... You don't think so?

You think so?

Yes...

Ah? I wasn't aware of that at all...

No?

No. But if you say so...

REHEARSA
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(very short)

A work which can open itself to many different views, from the interprets, from the conductors... A work which is more *real* ! Which is not a story imagined by someone, which develops, but which *only* exists according to the degree of the presence of each event.

REHEARSAL

The whole work is an open work. As I said, no story developing from a beginning to a certain end, fatal or optimistic. It's an organism where each event is important!

REHEARSAL

Maybe I could add this: with **MOMENTE**, I've found a start. And I would definitely not say the problem is solved: it starts!

REHEARSAL

When I was ten, I became a boarder in a state school. Because my father has become soldier and my mother... had been poisoned. And there was no one left at home. Later, shortly after the end of the war, a man visited me and said: "I've heard your father. He was yelling. He was dying. And he was begging :"*Go away, go away... I don't need you anymore...*" It was quite a stroking impression, because I went away by myself... I had nobody anymore and I *wanted* nobody. Maybe is it important to do something without asking someone else what I have to do, without hesitating, and without asking permission, or asking if someone appreciates it or not...

REHEARSAL

Then I did many jobs. I worked in a farm... I conducted an amateur orchestra in a small light opera house, after the war. Then I studied. All by myself. I earned my living. I played jazz. Every night, during five years... At the end of my studies, I thought: I studied so hard how to write music in a traditional style, why not writing a composition which will be mine? I did it. During the performance, all my friends and the audience were totally... against me, if I may say... They were dismayed... It was a good sign. A new sign. Because I thought: so, this is a right direction! I have to carry on with this! Being alone and only doing what you can do.
And it's still not over!

REHEARSAL

It has... to appear to the listener as it appears to me, as something unprecedented, something totally unknown and inexplicable. As life is! Something I can't explain as a story which develops... in a normal way.

But on the contrary, something where each moment is important and makes us more and more understand there is no explanation! Even if I've talked about some moments of my life, they don't explain at all why I am a musician, and why I do what I'm doing.

Well... Let's go to work. It's better than talking!

(Transcription & translation: Paul
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