

Composer Dimitri Voudouris
Work title NPFAl .3
Composed 2003
Duration 13min30sec

NPFAl. 3 – New Possibilities for African Instruments. [Third in the series of electro-acoustic studies.] NPFAl.3 is for African marimba and computer assisted processing.

The African marimba used in this work is a tenor marimba used traditionally as a rhythm instrument its keys are made of the kiaat wood and have traditional buzzers with gourd resonators. The marimba is tuned in Xhosa tuning with just intonation in Eb (with added A's) this is based on the harmonic series derived from the Xhosa Uhadi Bow suited for traditional playing. The western marimba is very different to the African marimba and one of the most distinctive features missing on the western marimba besides the different wood used for the keys and different resonators is the absence of the buzzers. The instrument was played with traditional mallets; the recording was processed and constructed on computer. Granular, algorithmic and subtractive sound syntheses were used in the construction of NPFAl.3. These procedures were not to defamiliarize the sound of the instrument but rather to explore the deeper analogies of organic identity in the construction of micro sound environments, focusing on capturing the physical properties of the instrument and its organic sound textures. The rhythmical content of such micro environments were developed to create an interplay with the source of the recorded material. It is clear that energy sets motion to occur by creating vibrations at a molecular level, such understanding allowed for the creation of tension buildup zones and fragility in the sound, fragility is directly related to density and pressure buildup at a given time allowing for explosive and implosive moments to occur. The different degrees in the implosive status of sound energy are sub-harmonic in nature and are felt rather than heard. The different degrees in the explosive nature of sound energy are extended to the left and right speakers in the stereo setup. NPFAl.3 has allowed me to explore electro-acoustic music in a similar way as a return to archaic origins of African music through the Jungian search of archetypes. [An inherited pattern of thought or symbolic imagery derived from the past collective experience and present in the individual unconscious] NPFAl.3 was further scored for a 5 octave Western marimba using prepared mallets, objects, hands, vocal clicking sounds and gestures with the electronic environment created on NPFAl.3 this version is called NPFAl.3+WM. and was completed in 2004. NPFAl.3+WM extend my observations of motion into an interlocking visual and audio performance, the sounds generated on the marimba would interlock with the electronic environment in such a way that the listener would struggle to distinguish the nature of the sound source. This experience has a deeper philosophical meaning, signifying the occultation of a source, thus rendering it inaccessible to profanity.