

***FIELD*: A FILM AND VIDEO DATABASE AS A MUSICOLOGY SOURCE ON ELECTROACOUSTIC MUSIC**

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Abstract

For musicologists, sources are not only sounds, scores, papers and books. Too often, film and video documentaries on electroacoustic music of the 20th and 21st centuries are unavailable, or at least difficult to find. The main goal of this article is to present a new project begun last 2008: the compilation of a database devoted to filmed documentaries about the process of composing, interpreting and instrument making since the beginning of this music. Filmed concerts of operas are out of the *corpus*. The purpose of *FIELD* (Film on ELeCtroacoustics Database) is to provide a tool for musicologists to more easily find the specific videos sources needed for their research.

In a first instance, the project has focused on these kinds of documents around electroacoustic music in France, especially in important institutions as Ircam, GRM, INA and CDMC. This restricted scope should permit a reflection on how to enhance the methods involved in the project, for example, how to refine the different fields of the database. The research initially explored the video documents at Ircam in Paris. This was the occasion to focus on the methodology of the entire process, from identifying and viewing the cartridges or DVDs to the database.

Then, the research will be extended throughout the rest of French territory and *in fine* to the whole world. Moreover, the database will be published on the Internet.

Introduction

A few years ago, during a project for Ircam on an analysis of *Les Chants de l'amour* by Gérard Grisey, a video realized by Andras David was recovered. Besides the score, the recording and the papers on this subject, this video documentary on VHS, produced by Ircam in 1995, is entitled *La genèse d'une œuvre*. The documentary contains interviews of Gérard Grisey himself and Jean-Baptiste Barrière who helped him to program the software CHANT. The video shows the team working on the project at Ircam. This filmed document gives a sense of somehow being a witness to the mood in the studios.

So, a documentary gives to the musicologist some precise details on the composing process and reveal something less scientific but equally important that we could call the ambience, the mood or the surroundings of such a process. Unfortunately, this extremely important document was not listed in the Ircam Médiathèque. Working on other topics related to electroacoustic pieces, electronic instruments and the art of interpretation with such devices, musicologists need to be aware, as Marc Battier has written [1], of the danger of loss for sources in electroacoustic music studies. More precisely, the lack of a database focusing on filmed documentaries available in the world has to be noticed.

Furthermore, in the article "The Analysis of Electroacoustic Music: from sources to invariants", published in *Organised Sound* in 2006 [2], we have presented a reflection on the importance of sources in musicology. The main idea was to show how a part of the musicologist's work is to find some invariants, some stable concepts or models in all sorts of sources. To succeed in this research of invariants, a greater number of sources are needed, and filmed documentaries are too precious to be missed.

FIELD (Film on ELeCtroacoustics Database) is essentially a database of filmed documentaries on electroacoustic music. *FIELD* is funded by the French Agence Nationale de la Recherche (National Research Agency) for the next four years (2009-2012) as a part of the larger program entitled *Filmer la création artistique* (Filming Artistic Creation), to be held at Rennes 2 University in France.



Figure 1 : a screenshot of the video documentary on *Les Chants de l'amour*.

1. Electroacoustics and films

1.1. Around the art of filming documentaries

Filming is primarily an art at the crossroads of different fields, including moving images and sounds. These two elements can be divided into multiple values such as framing, color, camera movement, words, sounds and music. Each element evolves in a structured manner in time and participates in the formal construction. The advances in technology have increased by up to tenfold the expressive possibilities and the precision of meaning.

These enhancements are those of quality (ease of production, reproduction and distribution), but they also cause real disruptions in the expression. For example, in multimedia documents, the hyper-structuring of the links between different videos sequences add a new dimension, interactivity, and breaks the temporal linearity of the narration. The interactive document published by Ircam as a supplement of *L'Inouï #1* in 2005 on the opera *Avis de tempête* by Georges Aperghis is a good example of this interactive multimedia way of structuring.

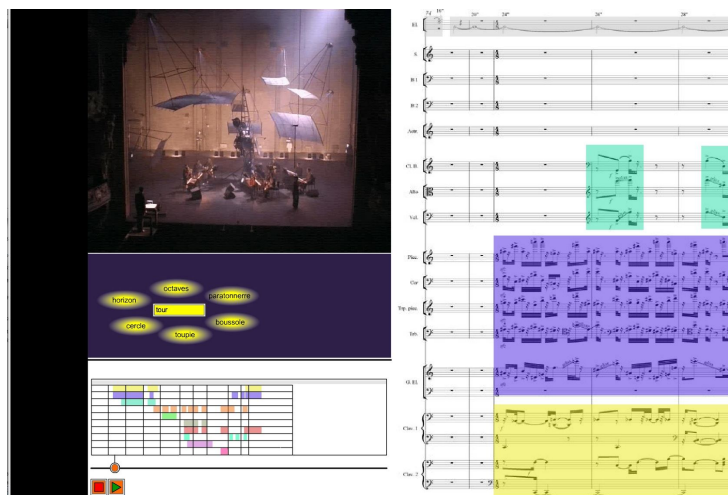


Figure 2 : a screenshot of the supplement of *L'Inouï #1*.

All these documents could be studied as creations themselves. Technical and aesthetic points of view on these objects are not to be forgotten. The act of composing, of conducting a rehearsal, or using new instrumental devices is shown in different ways in video documentaries.

1.2. Determining the scope of the study

It is important to mark the boundaries of the corpus to be studied. On one hand, the process of artistic work is at the heart of the research. On the other hand, the idea is to focus on the relationship between machines and music.

Soundtracks are excluded from the study, as well as music that blends with film or video creations (musicals; works by Brian Evans; *Three Tales* which is a documentary opera created by Steve Reich in 2002 with visuals by Beryl Korot, the wife of the composer; *Perfect Lives* by Robert Ashley, first published on VHS in 1994 with visuals by John Sanbor. The sound synthesis drawing on film as a result is also out of the research field (Rudolf Pfenninger, Oskar Fischinger, John and James Whitney, Norman McLaren...). However, documentaries on the realization of this kind of synthesis are to be taken into account.

Of course, the well-known films recreating operas (the Losey's *Don Giovanni*, Bergman's *Magic Flute* or *Medea* by Pier Paolo Pasolini) are beyond the scope of the project. The musical performance can also be showed as creation (e.g. *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*, directed in 1993 by François Girard, with Colm Feore, Derek Keurvorst and Katya Ladan; or *The Great Caruso*, directed in 1951 by Richard Thorpe, with Mario Lanza, Ann Blyth and Dorothy Kirsten), but are not documentaries, even if sometimes fictional documentaries.

The documents that are on interest in this project are specifically documentaries and non-fictional films. All non-fictional filmed objects that raise awareness about issues relating to artistic process are concerned. The concept of artistic process has to be understood, for instance, as the ways a composer works on a new piece, explaining or analyzing some older pieces. Another field focuses on the art of conducting rehearsals or working on interpretation. Finally, the conception and the use of new electronic devices or gestural interfaces by musicians are also related to the database.

In order to limit the investigation to a particularly complex and fruitful musical corpus, it will specifically focus on electroacoustic music. As a result, the period of these filmed documentaries runs from the 1950's up to now.

For instance, *Mastering the Theremin*, first published on VHS in 1995 by Big Briar & Little Big Films, in which Robert Moog guides the public through six lessons in theremin technique as virtuoso Lydia Kavina performs, is an eligible item for the database. Indeed, this document was recorded in New York in 1976, then enhanced and released in 1995 in VHS and then in 2004 as a DVD. □ This is not a concert, but a nice documentary on an electronic instrument.

Another example could be viewed in the multimedia DVD *From Kafka To K...*, an exploration of Philippe Manoury's electronic opera *K.*, edited at Ircam. This time, the document is valid because of its analytical approach to the opera. Though the video recording of the opera is not sufficient to keep the item, the details given on the musical work validate its choice for the database.

2. Description of the database

2.1. The main goals

In order to establish the first version of the database, it has been necessary to think how to:

- formulate and try to validate a set of assumptions for this study;
- identify the physical and virtual storage locations of the documentaries;
- establish a list of parameters to classify the items;
- disseminate this knowledge base using modern methods for publishing through on-line channels.

Our initial objectives involve defining the *corpus* itself. Difficulties appears because musical genres or styles often are not definite in absolute terms. Its past and promise are described by authors as Joel Chadabe [4]. However, the boundaries of electroacoustic music are not as clear as imagined at a first glance. Is the use of an amplified instrument a sufficient condition to regard a music as electroacoustic? Where are the limits between electroacoustic music and popular music? Anyway, a reflection on this kind of questions is beyond the scope of this project.

2.2. Choice of parameters

One of the main difficulties encountered in establishing a structured collection of records is to develop a model for the knowledge with a list of elementary areas clearly defined. The creation of such a set of patterns has been done in two stages: a first essay was developed with the goal of organizing the beginning of the viewing and the study of several videos at Ircam. Then, this set of fields was enhanced and expanded video after video. This method finally allows a better result. However, the recordings already made in the database had to be modified with a particular concern for consistency.

The first draft of the database has been realized with Excel. The illustration below is a screenshot of this first version.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
numéro de la cassette VHS	catégorie	titre	environnement	titre du document audiovisuel	œuvre écrite	compositeurs originaux	analyse et travail du compositeur	direction musicale	direction scénaristique	technique (appareils, paramètres)	commentaires tirés de la médiathèque, de la préparation de DVD à la lecture de Claire Maréchal	réalisateur	producteurs	date de tournage	date de sortie	durée	format	état de conservation	
1																			
10	8	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 1 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 1 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 1 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 1 - 1992 DX														
11	10	Séminaire "Recherche et Création Musicale" développement sans "l'usage analytique" 01-04-94	Séminaire "Recherche et Création Musicale" développement sans "l'usage analytique" 01-04-94	Séminaire "Recherche et Création Musicale" développement sans "l'usage analytique" 01-04-94															
12	11	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 2 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 2 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 2 - 1992 DX															
13	12	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 3 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 3 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 3 - 1992 DX															
14	13	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 4 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 4 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 4 - 1992 DX															
15	14	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 5 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 5 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 5 - 1992 DX															
16	15	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 6 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 6 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 6 - 1992 DX															
17	16	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 7 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 7 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 7 - 1992 DX															
18	17	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 8 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 8 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 8 - 1992 DX															
19	18	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 9 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 9 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 9 - 1992 DX															
20	19	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 10 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 10 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 10 - 1992 DX															
21	20	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 11 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 11 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 11 - 1992 DX															
22	21	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 12 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 12 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 12 - 1992 DX															
23	22	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 13 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 13 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 13 - 1992 DX															
24	23	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 14 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 14 - 1992 DX	Stran-Maschke 14120 - 14 - 1992 DX															

Figure 3 : a partial overview of the Excel version of the database.

The set of fields concerns two domains: the technical characteristics of the video itself, and its more notable contents. Presently, the main parameters are as follow:

Document characteristics

- title of the document;
- director, film-maker;
- producers;
- date of the realization;
- duration;
- location of the document;
- original format and available format (recordings on VHS are often digitalized on DVD or into a virtual juke-box in the library).

Elements of contents and related comments

- pieces quoted in the document;
- composers quoted in the document;
- type of documentary: focused on the composition process, on the rehearsals and the interpreter's work, on the new instruments, tools and devices;
- filming technique or practical method: interview with or without the composer, pedagogical demonstrations;
- comments, notes, remarks by the library database, on the record sleeve, by the musicologist.

As listed above, the technical characteristics include material facts like the used format, and contextual features such as the names of directors and producers.

In order to facilitate the database inquiries and to improve the sorting of the database, FileMaker is presently used, as shown on the illustration below.

Field Name	Inquiry Value	Response Value
Titre_Document_Audiovisuel		Boulez - Répons
Producteur		INA, Col-ima-son, Ircam
Réalisateur	Cahen	Robert Cahen
Date	1985	1985
Durée		43'
Type_Enregistrement		mise en image de l'œuvre
Esthétique_Cinéma		Images artistiques sur l'œuvre entendue
Format_Origine		VHS
Compositeur	Boulez	Boulez
Œuvres_Citées		Répons
Analyse_Travail_Compositeur		non
Analyse_Travail_Interprète		non
Organologie_Travail_Luthier		
Commentaires		V100004401 [commentaire de Bruno Bossis :] Images artistiques sur une interprétation de l'œuvre, pas de documentaire. [Commentaire de Claire Marquet :] Répons de Pierre Boulez, œuvre pour six solistes, ensemble instrumental et dispositif électroacoustique, fut créé en 1981. Robert Cahen filme les musiciens, y ajoute des vagues, des feuillages, et détourne ce matériel visuel. Il découpe, ralentit, multiplie, fait éclater l'image, créant un univers fantastique qui accentue l'aspect intemporel et quasi impressionniste de la musique.
Ville		
Institution		
Localisation_Institution		M, j, b, dvdc, c
Mot_cle		

Figure 4 : inquiry (on the left) and response (on the right) of the database in FileMaker.

The earlier documents were recorded in analog formats. Indeed, a consequence of the work on this database is to check out the documents still kept only on analog tapes. The digitalization of the older ones is, as everybody knows, a matter of urgency.

The contextual domain is important as well. In the future, it will be possible to study the social and economic context of such documentaries around electroacoustic music.

More subjective are several of the fields that focus on the content. Whether the recording of all the comments given by authors, libraries catalogs, notices and recording booklets are considered as sources for the musicologist, it is utterly different for his own comments. But in each case, they are to be signed.

In the future, all these categories will have to be as stable as possible to avoid back working on all earlier references.

2.3. Expected results

The different French institutes in Paris likely to offer some references related to documentaries centered on electroacoustics (more precisely on the art of the composer, of the interpreter and of the instrument maker), are Ircam, INA, GRM, CDMC and a few other venues.

As said above, Ircam was at the heart of the process for developing the main features of the database. The quality of the multimedia library as well as the videos stored apart and not listed anywhere (more than 70, unfortunately almost all finally recognized as recorded concerts) were sufficient reasons to begin the work in this institute.

INA (Institut National de l'Audiovisuel: the French National Audiovisual Institute) in Paris is a repository of all French television and audiovisual archives. A problem occurs with the INA database because music is divided only between popular music and jazz. It seems uneasy to sort the entries with criteria as electroacoustic or contemporary music. GRM (Groupe de Recherches Musicales: Musical Researches Group) belongs to INA, but is fortunately devoted to electroacoustics. At CDMC (Centre de Documentation de la Musique Contemporaine: Contemporary Music Documentation Center), also in Paris, a lot of filmed concerts and operas are available, but also a few documentaries or interviews, for instance an encounter with the French composer Betsy Jolas (JOL-B-1, *Rencontre avec Betsy Jolas*, realized by Vidéo Reportage in 1997), or a series on the great rehearsal with Stockhausen (STO-K-1, *Les Grandes Répétitions : Karlheinz Stockhausen*, a program by Luc Ferrari realized by S.G. Patris), and Varèse (VAR-E-1, *1883-1965, Les Grandes Répétitions : Hommage à Edgard Varèse*, a program by Luc Ferrari realized by S.G. Patris). The "Bibliothèque du cinéma François Truffaut" contains, as the Forum des images, a great collection of films and DVDs. The exploration of all these institutions takes time. It has to be completed with references to documentaries that one can find in dictionaries or encyclopedias like the New Grove Dictionary.

Abroad, the absence of an entry for "video" is noticeable in the US database ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), which is focused on the domain of education. The text, in all its formats (paper, electronic) is in fact the most often privileged in the greatest resources centers. Specialized in electroacoustic music, the Electronic Music Foundation, based in New York, offers for sale the documentary quoted above: *Mastering The Theremin*. In EARS, the ElectroAcoustic Resource site of De Montfort University, the video documentaries on electroacoustic music seem to be missing. A search using the term "video" returns some art pieces (see [5]). However, in the future, the research has to be spread in Europe (see [7] and [9]), Asia (see [3]), and America (see [6] and [8]). The libraries and multimedia centers in North America, such as "La Médiathèque du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal" are numerous. Many videos are to be discovered and listed, such as the Canadian film documentary *Imagine the Sound* (1981). Some videos also exist on Berio and the studio of Milano etc.

Conclusion

Thought as a continuity of the multidisciplinary symposium *Filmer l'acte de création* (Filming the act of creation) that took place in Rennes in March 2007, this project, beyond the musically centered database, aims to study all the filmed documentaries that are concerned with artworks, artists and practices.

Using the database *FIELD* to explore how these films apprehend music work (composition, interpretation and instrument making), the following requirements are necessary:

- a strong willingness to compare different kinds of creative process, from an aesthetic point of view, obviously, as well as a historical, geographical and cultural perspective;
- new hypotheses on the evolution, the ruptures and the encounters between different styles and technologies throughout the twentieth century. Thanks to the movies and videos, the project will also reflect the desire, increasingly expressed, to keep track and to invent a memory of the creation process;
- a study of the relationship between various actors in a collective creation: technicians, composers, interpreters, directors and so on;
- an analysis of the production and publishing backgrounds in order to assess e.g. their educational, economic and social meanings.

Finally, the project *FIELD* is open to any and all collaborations with musicologists and institutions to spread and accelerate the process of constructing the database and to analyze its contents. In this goal, the comments in the database will be progressively translated and published on the web.

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