

David Worrall: *Harmonie du soir* (1995)

This work is a setting of the last four lines of Charles Baudelaire's 1857 poem *Harmonie du soir* (Evening harmonies):

*Un coeur tendre qui hait le néant vaste et noir,
Du passé lumineux recueille tout vestige!
Le soleil s'est noyé dans son sang qui se fige ...
Ton souvenir en moi luit comme un ostensor!*

(A tender heart that hates the huge black void,
Is gathering to itself all traces of the luminous past!
The sun has drowned in its congealing blood...
And like a monstrosity your memory shines in me!)

All the sounds in the work originate from a single reading of these lines of the poem. The (speaking) voice was separated into its voiced and unvoiced components. Using Fourier techniques, these components were then subjected to a number of different frequency analyses. Controlling the analysis window size and shape in unusual ways caused the Fourier analysis to act in a highly non-linear and sometimes bizarre manner. The results of these analyses were then time dilated using both phase vocoder and non-interpolating techniques and resynthesised. The collection of different timbres were then filtered and resynthesised before the final mixture was assembled.

The work has four easily identifiable sections. The first and (shorter) third sections are based on unvoiced sounds; the second on the original sound with the voiced and unvoiced components in tact, and the final longer section uses just the voiced components compressed together. Time dilations are $19/\pi$, $19/e$, 19, and 31.

The original voice is that of Katy Pallier, to whom the work is dedicated.

Technical details: Neuman U87 microphone, Sony PCM 2700 DAT recorder. DSP on Macintosh and SGI computers using SVP (IRCAM), Soundtools and MIX.