



thierry gauthier

the meeting
of forces—musical
and pictorial

BY RICHARD SIMAS

“MY ARTISTIC EVOLUTION,” Thierry Gauthier writes, “has been characterized by the intensity of impulse, immediacy, and the urgency to create; the quest for a paroxysm and the absolute; the same sense of urgency as found in the punk movement.” This is still true, he maintains, after two decades of work.

At first glance, he is the prolific and hot film-music composer who churns out tunes for movies, art videos, television series, documentaries, multimedia, installations, and multidisciplinary events. His curriculum vitae lists seventeen years of production and creation. He has performed in more than 250 concerts around the world, and his music is found on twenty different albums. He’ll be forty sometime next year.

Look more closely and you find that he is winning awards and mentions in the electroacoustic milieu’s most prestigious and savant events. Watch his most recent work, the fascinating *Portrait d’une Femme*, recently screened at a number of contemporary events, including the Electra presentation at Usine C in Montreal, and you will find a sophisticated and highly sensitive conceptual creator combining visual and audio components in an intimate tableau. Gauthier conceived, filmed, and scored the dramatically charged nine-minute work. “It’s composed of close-ups and macroscopic images of a woman. The multiplication of composite images of the same person tends to demonstrate the complexity of her personality. The work’s structure is based on four anatomical sections: the skin, hair, face, and head of this woman.”

Though his list of compositions shows a dizzying number of commissioned scores for video, film, and television, his focus at the moment is on art projects that integrate his own visuals and sound. A self-taught

musician and composer, he’s been formally honing his technical skills only recently, having completed in 2007 a diploma in computer-assisted sound design and a Bachelor of Music degree in electroacoustic music composition at the University of Montreal, where he is now completing a Masters of Music in electroacoustic music and video composition with Jean Piché.

Thierry Gauthier is both the prolific commissioned composer for an array of other people’s work and the exacting conceptual artist, with his own imposing vision, who



Video still from *Portrait d’une Femme* (2008), an abstract video-music composition made from close-ups and macroscopic images of a woman.

cites painters Paul-Émile Borduas and Jean-Paul Riopelle as influences. He lives in the Mile-End neighborhood in Montreal, and the back half of his apartment has been converted into a fully equipped and sophisticated sound-image studio. He says that when he left school at age fifteen to create, “It was absolutely clear to me what I wanted to do.” The difference now is that the forms have changed and the techniques have been refined. The source of those impulses is difficult for him to name and can only be truly understood in listening to his work.

His composing procedures are multiple, his technical tools in constant evolution. He admits to a need for absolute control over the variables when creating and it’s not

surprising that he favours strict formal constraints. Concerning his current research, he says, “I’m interested in the forces of pure lines and sounds, in the expressive powers of linear forms and the fascination that they produce. I am applying these principles to the audiovisual world, and attempting to make this language my own.” This is particularly apparent in his minimalist electroacoustic piece, *Cycles*, in which the uncanny simplicity and tight repetitive patterns are punctuated with granulated sound particles and microsounds that cyclically destabilize what appears to be a cold and unassailable universe.

Gauthier is currently at work on a series of audio-visual non-narrative and minimalist, abstract animations. These are derived from acoustic and electronic sound samples; microsounds; digitized abstract painting and sketches executed on graphic grid support; and photos and numeric images taken from actual and synthetic sources. It seems that Gauthier has combined the processes of deconstruction and reconstruction in a single, deft procedure.

His questions are as rich and insistent as his creations: “I am wondering about the stakes involved in this temporal and spatial synergetic art, [and] about movement, light, and intensity. My reflections also lead me to ask about the sense and the reception of such work on the cognitive and aesthetic level. It’s the meeting of these two forces, musical and pictorial expression, that interests me and provokes my work.”

Thierry Gauthier is an innovator of both form and content, particularly through the use of new processes that equally influence sound and image. Take the plunge into his world at <www.thierrygauthier.com/>.

Richard Simas is a Montreal-based freelance writer who won The Fiddlehead literary contest, short fiction category, 2008.

ON THE CD: *Cycles*