

Exploring the sound of things

Luciano, 1979,
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I was born in Cambé, in Brazil. Although I lived in the city I grew up in close contact with nature since I went to the family farm on the banks of the Paraná river whenever I could. As a child I wanted to become an architect, probably because I already felt the need to create order. So I used to draw fences for the farm on graph paper. Even now orderliness is one of the keys to my work, since in Brazil life is pervaded by a such a vortex of energy and creativity that it verges on chaos.

I discovered the world of music through traditional Brazilian samba, but also through classical music. I still remember the emotion I felt when listening to Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* for the first time. Then there was always lots of music at home and with friends. In fact, there is an intense relationship with rhythm in Brazil, very different from Europe. I still notice this today when I teach music: whereas in Brazil it involves shaping and ordering the pupils' musical expression, in Switzerland the first task is to break the ice, since people seem to be frozen.

I approached music by listening; then I taught myself to play the drums, thus beginning to understand the form. My meeting with a percussion master, who played in a symphonic orchestra, allowed me to discover the kettle-drums, the vibraphone and the other percussion instruments.

At sixteen I decided to become a percussionist and my journey through this immense world began.

A percussionist has a very particular role in an orchestra, since he plays the most varied instruments: even a torn newspaper if the score envisages it. In this case I approach the paper trying to tear the newspaper pages in different ways, to obtain the right resonance. The study of the execution of a piece thus requires a lot of time, since I need to find intimacy with the material.

Even though I have a room full of percussion instruments, I now mostly play ones I create myself. I work particularly with fabrics, paper, plastic, polystyrene and metals, though I prefer natural materials.

In my research I explore the essence of sound in the materials around me, to then use the results in my compositions and musical performances. Many years of acoustic research have given me a certain knowledge of the potentials of materials to produce sound. So, even before using them, I often already have an idea of how to strike them to obtain the acoustic vibration I am looking for. Percussion is a physical contact-conflict between human and natural essences, creating a truth which wasn't part of my musical idea but which enriches it. This means that my work is not limited to looking for precise musical results, but also involves an exploratory part.

My music is intuitive; it arises from the wish to turn music into an idea. When I am asked to play in a certain place, such as the opening of an exhibition, I always make an inspection. I need to practice, I need time: I have to understand the space from an acoustic point of view and feel how the walls and floor reflect sound and how the people present absorb it. Even the percussion instrument I use contributes to the result. Lastly gestural expressiveness: in fact percussion instruments require a great knowledge and mastery of one's body: the movement, the wrist which can be more or less firm, relaxed or free, are all factors which contribute to a particular sound. Even my psycho-physical condition influences the quality of sound vibration, a bit like calligraphy.

I dedicate a lot of time to studying the timbre of the different objects I play, because to a certain extent timbre represents the sound essence of the object and material which form it. For this reason timbre can't be determined like the other sound parameters: in fact it has a complex, multidimensional magnitude.