

The WIRE # 265 / UK / March 2006

Janel Schaefer has a unique gift for seeing process in spatial terms: he's a student of architecture who once mailed a sound activated dictaphone to himself so it would catch all the noises made in transit through the postal system. The traversing of distance itself becomes a vital element in the composition. Not surprising, then, to discover that the four parts that make up Migration, originally created as a soundtrack piece by Noemie Lafrance, are given titles that relate only to their destinations.

The longest and most ambitious is "To Nairobi To Manaus To Walton!", a subtle and delicately worked intertwining of field recordings and effects lasting more than 28 minutes. As befits such a one-way journey, the piece creates drama out of expectation, its most remarkable moment coming somewhere near the middle, where Schaefer includes a recording of dawn breaking on the Amazon; when a radio is switched on the signal grows stronger as the light increases. Both "To Oval To Cologne" and "To Lourdes To Madrid" transform the extended swelling of sustained organ notes into a grand swirling of tones; the former into dry clusters of static swept from the left channel to the right, and the latter into gentle gamelan loops. "To New York To Eugenie To Perth" build into a deirious cacophony, only to fade out softly on the subdued trilling of distant birds, which seems an entirely appropriate conclusion to a work patterned upon notions of instinctive flight. One of Schaefer's best works to date.

Ken Hollings

VITAL WEEKLY # 511 / Holland / February 2006

Our beloved busy architect (and daddy now) is of course Janek Schaefer, who has released a whole catalogue of CDs and strange pieces of vinyl for such fine labels as Kraak, Mutek, Sirr, Staalplaat, Fat Cat and his own AudiOh! label, and some which I forgot. Here he makes his first appearance on Bip-hop. It contains a piece of music which acts as a soundtrack to a dance by Choreographer Noemie Lafrance. Dancers were attached by bungee cord so they could lean forward into open air and defy gravity - hovering above the audience. Much like the dancers above the audience, the music is inspired by birds, which migrate above us and culled from Schaefer's library of field recordings comes the sounds of Nairobi, Madrid, Perth, New York and Madrid - to mention a few. The piece, divided in four parts, starts out softly in the first two parts, with carefully processed field recordings, but with lots of small events happening. In the next two piece things start to work into a mighty crescendo of organ like sounds (thanks to Lourdes) and orchestral sounds in the final 'To New York to Eugenie to Perth'. Here is where things take off and starts flying around (including sounds of a helicopter). Quite a captivating piece of work here. Even without a dance it sounds great. (FdW)

TEXTURA / Canada / April 2006

If ever a recording cried out for a DVD presentation, it's Janek Schafer's Migration. In the absence of visuals, one struggles to mentally conjure the 2005 performance Noémie Lafrance created for the Liz Gerring Dance company presented at a space opposite NY's Grand Central Station. Attached by bungee cords that allowed them to hover over the audience, dancers positioned themselves on window ledges inside the Whitney Gallery sculpture court and performed to the accompaniment of Schafer's heavily-edited field recordings.

The subtly evocative, twenty-eight minute opener “To Nairobi to Manaus to Walton” begins with ripples of gouged vinyl noise suggesting a boat adrift at sea. This seeming journey down the Amazon unfolds unhurriedly, the listener serenaded by bird sounds before entering more unsettling territory where radio waves buzz and thrum. Schafer pays especial attention to the mix throughout, as sounds pan back and forth, the movement of noises mirroring the imagined positioning of the voyager. Still, as much as the piece demonstrates Schafer's mastery as a sound artist, the piece is finally more a work of sound sculpture than music per se.

The second half exerts greater impact. The extroverted “To Oval to Cologne” focuses less on the manipulation of pure field recording elements and more on arranging organ filigrees and drones into bold splashes of carnival noise that cycle magnificently. If anything, “To Lourdes to Madrid” is even more impressive. Here, steely Lourdes organ drones stream alongside fiery embers that loudly crackle and pop. Choir fragments and organ tones drown within dense industrial haze and clatter during “To New York to Eugenie to Perth,” the hallucinatory, even nightmarish piece that ends the album.

Migration takes the listener on a provocative trip, though Schafer interestingly displaces the emphasis from the first half's more literal evocation of a geographical locale to an inner psychological journey in the second that flirts with derangement and psychosis more often than not (naturally, one is reminded of Marlowe's journey—mental and physical—in Heart of Darkness). Having noted the difference in character between the work's two halves, one wonders whether the dance piece revealed a similar change in character—a question best answered by those lucky enough to have witnessed the original performance.

<http://www.textura.org/>

BOOMKAT / UK / January 2006

World renowned sound artist Janek Schaeffer composed this record for a site-specific project which involved dancers balancing on window ledges at the Whitney Gallery in New York (attached by bungee cords). His music was apparently influenced by the migration patterns of birds which he watched from his Thames-side flat in London, which linked to the dancers perching in New York somehow. Made up of several field recordings taken from different countries; Migrations comes across as less difficult as one might think. Each recording seems to be quite heavily processed, with synthesized elements drifting in and out of subtle found sounds and traces of familiar scratches and creaks. This is a record which in all its artistic minimalism also comes out the other end as quite beautiful, at times resembling the work of Philip Jeck or even Fennesz. Recommended for all you beards looking for something a little friendlier than usual from your experimental stew.

<http://www.boomkat.com/item.cfm?id=20234>

THE MILK FACTORY / UK / March 2006

With a penchant for architecture, the sound collages of Janek Schaefer are often the outcome of a deconstructionist methodology: essentially, Schaefer breaks apart pre-existing reels of tape with the intention of digging through and underneath them so as to uncover

their fundamental, hidden parts. Once isolated, such components are then manipulated, organized and layered into elaborate blocks of sound that are thoughtfully connected and exquisitely detailed.

This hour-long composition - which was initially constructed as a soundtrack for a site specific dance choreographed by Noemie Lafrance - is largely devoid of conventional rhythms and harmonies, and instead takes as its fulcrum the development of minute tones and textures. That being said, the moods explored in the ensuing compositions lie in neither of these terms in themselves - on the contrary, they are born of their relation. Put differently, the granular particles of sound that are on display here are of a finite quantity and stand in a network of differences such that the timbre and fibre of the sound changes depending upon the other patterns with which it is embedded. As such, all of these percolating details are thoroughly enmeshed much in the way the elements in a painting are intricately interconnected.

On the first composition, plaintive birdcalls are shrouded in a distended cacophony of Elysian bell tones, vague liminal noises, and a low-end hum that gradually shifts the dynamic of the piece, as it takes on a more upfront, immediate, altogether humid aura. When Schaefer shifts back and allows pieces to grow sparse yet again, he demonstrates fine judgment and a high level of technical skill in the manner in which he is careful to maintain form and tension through subtle clusters of granular sound and filtered organ chords looped to infinity. Near the end, these fragments of sound gather together and coalesce into a slightly discordant roar of paranoid ambience. Even taken away from the artist's intentions, the markings of this document are elegantly arranged, and imbued with enough substance to induce a wealth of interpretations.

http://www.themilkfactory.co.uk/reviews/jschaefer_migration.htm

TOUCHING EXTREMES / Italy / January 2006

Originally conceived as a soundtrack for a site-specific dance by Noémie Lafrance, "Migration" is also a fine specimen of Schaefer's audio documentary, music that crosses the boundaries between a sheer description of a trip - being it real or just imaginary - and the uncomfortable sensation of standing in front of a giant door introducing to an oneiric world where acoustic phenomena have the same importance of magnetic attraction in opposite poles. Through his well known ability to squeeze evocative images of sonic biology from the manipulation of locked vinyl grooves and competent sampling, Schaefer creates textural experiences that can be sublime - throbbing underground pulses accompany our heartbeat; organ loops depict the movement to a superior sphere - or, in some case, a tad more predictable, with natural/environmental sounds and city noises (which, thanks to Janek compositional dexterity, are nevertheless equally pleasing). Everything seems to spring from an extraordinary dimension, alimeted by many unknown forces in conjunction with a strong interiority.

<http://spazioinwind.libero.it/extremes/touchinghome.htm>

TAPAGE NOCTURNE - RADIO France / France / January 2006

Né à Londres en 1970, le musicien JANEK SCHAEFER, combine dans son art son héritage génétique de petit-fils et fils d'inventeur avec sa formation d'architecte. Au rayon des inventions il est (entre autre) le concepteur du Tri-phonic, une platine munie de trois bras synchronisables. En ce qui concerne son attrait pour l'architecture il voue une véritable

passion pour la morphologie des sons qu'il modèle, fluidifie et assemble pour créer des constructions et des paysages sonores assez uniques. Janek Schaefer a conçu il y a quelques mois la bande son d'un ballet intitulé Migration et imaginé par la canadienne Naomie Lafrance. La chorégraphe souhaitait une ambiance sonore aérienne destinée à des danseurs suspendus au-dessus du public. Janek Schaefer a choisi de s'inspirer des oiseaux migrateurs de son jardin et d'utiliser une fois de plus des ambiances sonores enregistrées au cours de ses ballades et de ses voyages. Des Fields-recordings qui, à la suite de complexes manipulations, nous font plonger dans un monde parallèle entre électro abstraite et musique concrète.

LIENHYPERTEXTE http://www.radiofrance.fr/chaines/francemusiques/emissions/tapage/emission.php?e_id=18&d_id=215000051&arch=1 http://www.radiofrance.fr/chaines/francemusiques/emissions/tapage/emission.php?e_id=18&d_id=215000051&arch=1

BLOW UP # 94 / Italy / March 2006

Mettete un particolarissimo spettacolo di danza site specific commissionato dal Whitney Museum of American Art, coi performers appesi tramite cavi elastici ai davanzali di un grattacielo sito di fronte alla Grand Central Station di New York. Aggiungete un'altrettanto inusuale colonna sonora a base di field recordings che allude esplicitamente al mondo che ci sovrasta e alle evoluzioni delle specie migratorie che allietano (influenza aviaria permettendo) quanti hanno l'abitudine post-prandiale di scrutare pigramente l'orizzonte. Protagonisti la coreografa Noemie Lafrance, i danzatori della Liz Gerring Dance Company e il compositore Janek Schaefer. Il quale ultimo per un'ora secca manovra da par suo, in evocativi saliscendi di densi tramestii elettroacustici e crescendo orchestrali, registrazioni ambientali raccolte ai quattro angoli del globo. Tutto molto efficace, ma per non esimersi dal ruolo di rompicatole ci chiediamo cos'è che distingue in definitiva una registrazione raccolta in luoghi esotici come - mettiamo - l'amazzonica Manaus e un'altra effettuata sul più banale terrazzo di casa propria? (7/8) Nicola Catalano

COD@ # 119 / MCD # 33 / WRECK THIS MESS / France / May 2006

La danse contemporaine est de plus en plus friande d'expérimentation musicale. Mais à l'exemple des installations sonores, les bandes-son ou compositions exclusives qui accompagnent les ballets sont parfois indéchiffrables sur disque; tant ce genre de textures acoustiques est inséparable de sa "mise en situation"... Un CD étant dénué du contexte, du mouvement, des visuels et, en l'occurrence, des corps qui structurent ce type d'environnement sonore. Pourtant l'écoute cette "migration", conçue à l'origine pour la chorégraphe Noémie Lafrance, n'en est pas moins évocatrice. Les 5 pièces qui composent ce digipack ont été rassemblées pour former un véritable album. Entre field-recordings ("To Nairobi to Manaus to Walton" / "To Lourdes to Madrid") et plages dark-ambient ("To New York to Eugenie to Perth"), Janek Schaefer nous entraîne dans un univers musical à part. Un paysage abstrait, si ce n'est abrupt, esquissé avec textures granuleuses, des bruissements insolites, des drones, des bruitages numériques, des bourdonnements étranges, un soupçon de musique concrète, quelques cliquetis numériques, une atmosphère post-industrielle et des gazouillis d'oiseaux... LD

http://www.wtm-paris.com/kroniks/kro_jschaefer.html

MUSIC SCAN / Germany / April 2006

Wenn sich zwei Ausdrucksformen aufeinander beziehen beziehungsweise voneinander abhängen, ist es oft problematisch, wenn ein Teil davon wegfällt. Dies ist auch bei der "Tanzmusik" von Janek Schaefer namens "Migration" der Fall, wobei man sich diese Tracks auch problemlos ohne die visuelle Komponente anhören kann. Leicht macht es einem Janek Schaefer dabei allerdings bewusst nicht immer. Langsam zähe Drones und nicht minder eindringliche Hochfrequenzen treffen hier aufeinander und erschaffen über weite Strecken eine eher düstere und fast bedrohliche Musik, die sich nicht immer mit den außermusikalischen Bezugspunkten und Zuschreibungen des Beipackzettels korrelieren will. So vernimmt man eher ein bedrohlich verstörendes Klang sammelsurium, das sich erst durch die zahlreichen Field Recordings wieder in ein optimistischeres Licht kleidet. Wo man sich zu Anfang mit einem etwas strengen Minimalismus präsentiert, öffnen sich die Tracks zunehmend hin zu einer dichteren klanglichen Fläche, die Kontinuitäten stets den dekonstruktivistischen Brüchen vorzieht und schon allein deshalb am Stück gehört werden sollte. Man sollte sich hier von der ganzen Hochkulturgestik und dem entsprechenden Legitimationsbemühungen inklusive Museumspräsentationen nicht abschrecken lassen, denn im Prinzip handelt es sich hier um ein gelungenes Ambient/Drone-Album mit einer Menge Field Recordings und einem erstaunlich vielseitigen Klangspektrum, mit dem man sich getrost auseinandersetzen sollte. 7/10 http://www.music-scan.de/Templates/reviews_team.php?id=6286

CALEIDOSCOOP / Holland / February 2006

De tweede cd dit jaar op het Bip-Hop label is die van de experimentele elektronica-specialist Janek Schaefer. Hij heeft al een indrukwekkende discografie opgebouwd en weet toch altijd weer te verrassen. Zo heeft hij met Philip Jeck, beide met Pools bloed, ruim een jaar terug nog de ijzersterke cd Songs For Europe gemaakt. Maar er is onnoemelijk veel, dus zal ik me concentreren op zijn nieuwste wapenfeit Migrations. Dit is een soundtrack van een uur bij een dans choreografeerd door Noémie Lafrance. De eerste twee composities bestaan uit zorgvuldig samengestelde, bijna symfonische elektronica vol glitches en nachtelijk tropische regenwoudgeluiden. Het is een ambient-achtig en bovenal bloedstollend klanklandschap dat eerder gemaakt lijkt voor mystiek bewegende subatomen dan dansers. Het lawaaiërende eind van de tweede composities vol orgeldrones zet de toon voor de laatste twee tracks. Deze bevatten een mix van orgeldrones, glitch, musique concrète, elektroakoestische muziek en allerhande geknetter. Continu beweeg je van het ene geluidspel naar het andere; de muziek beweegt zich als dikke lava langzaam voorwaarts. Dit tweede gedeelte is net als het eerste bloedstollend, maar er zit nog een angstaanjagende component bij door spookachtige stemmen en de dissonantie. Geweldig wat een kracht van deze muziek uit gaat! Schaefer toont zich een geluidskunstenaar die zowel kan werken met microscopisch kleine geluiden als massieve geluidsmuren. Ik kan me er nog steeds geen dans bij voorstellen, maar met deze muziek alleen al moet het een adembenemend spektakel zijn.

<http://www.subjectivisten.org/caleidoscoop/archief/002167.php>

TERZ / Germany / February 2006

Von den ruhigeren Tönen zu den ganz ruhigen: das Thema Migration ist mittlerweile - durchaus nicht immer adäquat und in all seiner widersprüchlichen Komplexität - vom Rand an die innere Peripherie gesellschaftlicher Diskurse angekommen. Schaefer's Klangkunst, im Frühjahr 2005 live präsentiert unter der Choreografie von Noemie Lafrances durch die Tänzer von Liz Gerrings Ensemble, die an Bungee-Seilen hoch über den Köpfen des Whitney-Galerie-Publikums performten, vollzieht das Spektrum von internationalen und kontinentalen Bewegungen auf eine nachvollziehbare wie gleichsam verstörende Weise. Zwischen Zugvögelgesang und Güterwaggon-Containerverschiebe-Bahnhofgeräuschen entwickelt sich ein immer intensiver und packender werdendes Szenario.

http://www.terz.org/texte/texte_02_06/honker.html

CRACKED / Austria / January 2006

Janek Schaefer is a name that I have come across off and on a lot of times over the last few years but never really gotten in touch with. No wonder, his highly varied work and vast output comes from labels as varied as Fat Cat, Mutek, Rhiz, Audiosphere and a whole bunch of others. This is his debut for Bip Hop and unfortunately it is such a highly contracted and conceptual piece, that I guess, it is not at all representative for his work. Unfortunately for me, that is. Moreover, I wonder if - regarding all I know about Schaefer - if there could ever be such a thing as a representative recording of him, in the sense that you could boil down Jimi Hendrix to "Foxy Lady", Bruce Springsteen to "Born to run", Akufen to a microspec sample or Marcel Duchamp to that one toilet. On the other hand, I wouldn't know where to start with Nick Cave ("The Mercy Seat"?) or Tom Traubert's Blues?" which are already questionable sources. I'd be completely out of answers for John Cage, Bela Bartok, The Melvins or any old classic composer. Whereas it is almost impossible to find a CD by Merzbow that doesn't give you a clear impression of what Masami Akita is about. Anyway, I guess I'll have to take a walk to my favourite store for electronic goods to get a handful of ideas of what could be representative. Any excuse is good enough. But it is late night right now and tomorrow is work, so that'll have to wait. In the meantime I'll try to give you the take on "Migration" as a singular piece of art.

Because definitely "migration" is more art than music, more installation than ambient soundscape and more theory than rock show. It is nevertheless a pleasant and intriguing listening experience. Scapes of sounds and noises evolve from out of nowhere, while other frequency ranges invade the listening space and leave again almost unnoticed. Like watching the world fly by from a train window there are no abrupt changes, at times the world feels at a complete standstill; then things seem to speed up quite a bit. The thundering sound of rain mutates into a high pitched flex. At other times silence is the sound you'll hear most. Or a crackling drone of pristine beauty. Or like standing in a crowded public place.

The official lowdown has this as a soundtrack to a site specific dance performed on window ledges opposite Grand Central Station on 42nd Street, NY (USA) on May 4th 2005. In this performance the dancers were attached to a bungee cord above the people walking down in the public sphere below them. Considering this kind of noisy or at least

high volume surrounding for the music, it is interesting to realize that Schaefer does not try to get the attention of passer-by's by confronting them with raw volume and harsh bursts or eruptions of noise (city officials would have protested against such an approach anyway, afraid to lose votes by startling too many commuters and good citizens), but his music blends in with the atmosphere of the place. At times consisting of nothing more than slow waves of white noise, I wonder how many people realized that the soundworld of a place they may be passing every day has changed.

Moreover, Janek Schaefer has expanded the concept to a more global and album-specific arrangement for this release, for instance by giving the tracks names of destinations and titling the album "migration". Thereby the release associates with a whole slew of interesting concepts, which are all reflected in the music here and there. Movement has become a central part of our society, where mobility is heralded almost dogmatic in business, career, communication and lifestyle. More people are on the move over longer distances for longer times than ever before. The same time borders both geographical and social are being closed down. The promise of freedom induced by the trainstation, the airport or the shipport has been belied by the official issues of homeland security and passenger safety. The individualist approach of cars and trucks has killed itself off by becoming a mass phenomenon. Nowadays people see danger in the concept of migration. Apart from some "elite" groups (either as artists, managers or refugees from war or economic plight) the regular folks have stayed within their homeground - with the excusable exception of holidays or commuting.

The migration theme also has an individual face for Janek Schaefer, he being one of the elites mentioned above, able to travel the world and gain a different viewpoint to regular people. And also recording sounds, noises and tones all over the place. I have no idea, if the destinations mentioned in the track titles, e.g. "To Nairobi to Manaus to Walton" or "to Lourdes to Madrid", come from the actual places where the sounds used in those pieces were recorded, or not. You certainly won't hear it.

<http://www.monochrom.at/cracked/reviews/Rev%20schaefer.htm>

STATION SERVICE / France / February 2006

Bande son d'un ballet orchestré sur la façade de la gare Grand Central de New York, « Janek Schaefer » se faufile depuis la station de métro, habille de sonorités campagnardes les dorures du Hall Principal. Chuchotements d'enfants, discours radiophoniques, chants d'oiseaux, les 44 quais se couvrent de photos sans visages, les 67 voies résonnent de souvenirs orchestrales. On imagine les grandes orgues rivalisant avec les cascades de drones, les papiers gras tournoyant dans les médulleuses imaginées par Oval, les kiosques à journaux devenant puits de lumières autour duquel se dessinent les ombres d'anciens voyageurs perdus et les vols d'oiseaux aux plumes charbons ardents.. Une féerie mélodiques commençant dans les airs pour un final trouvant son énergie dans les profondeurs de basses grésillant sur la limaille de fer..

MANAMANA / Hungary / January 2006

Schaefer mester igazi, régi motoros, olyan kiváló kiadók vannak már mögötte, mint a Fat Cat, az Asphodel, vagy a Mutek. A Bip-Hop is kiválóan illik ebbe a sorba, hiszen megkerülhetetlen, mint a modern elektronikus törekvések egyik fontos központja. A Migration című legújabb lemeze, ami egyébként a Liz Gerring táncársulat egyik darabjához

készült aláfestő zene tulajdonképpen field music-ként kezelhető még leginkább, hosszan kitartott hangok, gerjedések, távolról beszűrődő, torz rádiófoszlányok, pattogások, madárcsicsergés (ez utóbbi elég gazdagon). A számcímek valamiféle utazásérzetet erősítenek (to Nairobi to Manaus to Walton, to Oval to Cologne, stb) és ennek megfelelően mintegy varázsszönyegen repked a hallgató, nagy, üres területeken át, a civilizáció pedig értelmezhetetlen zajaival épp csak megérinti itt-ott (pontosabban az első fél órában éppencsak, a másodikban nagyonis). Az egész anyag pontosan egy órát vesz igénybe az életünkből. Akkor hallgassuk, ha nincs más dolgunk, viszont szeretnénk kikapcsolódni a világból, de nem egy mindent elmosó kellemes ambient párnával, hanem egy kábító hatású, rejtélyes audio-trippel. Utána meg egy jó alvás!

Suefo

<http://www.manamana.hu/kritika/kritika.html>

TIJD / Belgium / January 2006

In het voorjaar van 2005 vond aan de buitengevel van het New Yorkse Grand Central Station de performance 'Migration' plaats, een groots opgezet spektakel onder leiding van de choreografe Noemie LaFrance. Bungelend aan elastieken, scheerden dansers boven de hoofden van het publiek, net zoals (migrerende) vogels. Voor de soundtrack zocht de choreografe de Brit Janek Schaefer aan. Die is sinds goed tien jaar bekend met zijn vaak erg verstilde doch scherpe composities die hij voornamelijk op draaitafels creëert. Vaak werkt hij met niet meer dan een tiental bestaande (pop)platen. Na ze te bekrassen, beschilderen en vervormen ondergaan die zijn 'triphonic turntable': een zelfgebouwde platenspeler met drie uiterst gevoelige naalden en verschillende snelheden. Die basisgeluiden schikt Schaefer op zijn desktop tot een compositie. De dertiger vertrekt werk vaak vanuit een imaginair concept. Voor 'Migration' zijn dat, voortvloeiend uit de idee van de choreografie, noties van lucht(ledigheid), vliegen en beweging. Dat laatste vatte Schaefer letterlijk op door in de vier lange nummers tientallen veldopnames in te voegen, vaak van vogels. De registreerde hij tijdens zijn reizen in ondermeer Keulen, Madrid, Perth en New York. 'Migration' resulteert in een krachtige, uiterst melancholieke geluidenstroom waarin verschillende lagen zich tegenover elkaar spiegelen: het in loops gegoten, metalige krassen van de pick-up, stemmen en achtergrondgeluiden en - vooral - tonnen verschillende vogelgeluiden. In het eerste deel van de plaat houdt Schaefer het enigszins donker en ingetogen, maar in de volgende nummers verwarmt de sfeer tot broeierige, haast exotische hoogtes.