

UNDIVIDED TIME

A quelle heure commence le temps?

Le Nouvelle Ensemble Moderne

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I used to be aware of movement as a kind of humming. I'd watch molecules dance as children rode rocking horses, or the stars turned. I don't know why I used to see this, except that it seemed reality was showing itself, and that the surfaces of my eyes, my skin were like that of timpani, the beat of the world amplified within, and the rub of my own muscles underneath lumping the surface into gestures and words outside.

Bernard Levy's libretto asks, "When does time begin?"-- surely a question resident in our flesh: I listen *now*, but when does *now* begin? If I sing, does the *now* start when a note leaves my lips, or in my breath preparing to sing? As I listen to *you*, is this your heart beating, the memory of it, or the anticipation that I hear? It is all these things, and especially in Gilles Tremblay's piece. Strings pull microtones out of a single harmonic point, splintering its substance. A thousand eggs crack the sky.

And when the boat's sail sings, and baritone Michel Ducharme's vocal chords thicken and thin out like beaten canvas; when his voice pitches so finely within the orchestral frothing, so that you don't hear so much as see the pitch at which it levels, billowing: when the voice spews seawrack, or breaks, yelping, flotsam splintering into soprano from its base [a chocolate, foaming sound], my surface, too, is these. Membrane carries the memory of an undivided time.

A,e,o,i...no less that the beginning of all life, all sounds, dropping like pearls. So, too, once, my daughter at three months, exploring a range high to low and in-between, rearranging an enormous aural experience as we traveled in the car.