**Gilles Tremblay**, (Arvida, Québec (Canada), 6 September 1932)

Marie-Thérèse Lefebvre

Composer and musical pedagogue who made a significant contribution to the development of musical composition in Quebec in the second half of the 20th century.

After studying at the Montreal Conservatory (Conservatoire de musique du Québec à Montréal), he attended workshops at the Marlboro School of Music (Vermont) in the summers of 1950, 1951 and 1953. He lived in Paris from 1954 to 1961, where he enrolls into the piano studio of Yvonne Loriod, takes analysis courses with Olivier Messiaen, attends workshops on Ondes Martenot and counterpoint lessons with Andrée Vaurabourg-Honegger. He attends the Darmstadt International Summer Courses in 1957 and 1960 and works at the GRM (Groupe de recherches musicales) led by Pierre Schaeffer. He is involved at this time in the networks of French new music and frequently meets Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Iannis Xénakis. He returns to Québec in 1961 and is appointed professor of analysis and composition at the Montreal Conservatory, a position he occupied until his retirement in 1997. His courses at the Conservatory were inspired by Messiaen’s famous analysis class in Paris. Tremblay found connections between master works of western music that linked the past to the present, from Gregorian chant to the polyphony of Guillaume de Machaut, Monteverdi or Mozart, through to the 20th century. His courses were extremely influential to two or three generations of composers in Quebec.

In his works composed from around 1965 at the rate of approximately one work per year, also established links with traditions of the past and the present. *Cantique de durées*, presented at the Domaine musical in Paris on 24 March 1963, *Souffles (Champs II)*, premiered by the Société de musique contemporaine du Québec (SMCQ) 21 March 1967 and *Centre-Élan*, electronic tape music composed for the Quebec Pavillon of Montreal’s Expo ‘67. Traces of his travels in the summer of 1972 to the Far East (Japan, Korea, Philippines, China, Java, Bali, India) can be heard in *Oralleluiants*, premiered in Toronto 8 February 1975, in *Traçantes, auprès, au loin…* and in *Fleuves*, premiered by the Montreal Symphony Orchestra on 3 May 1977 par l’OSM conducted by Serge Garant. He was named « composer of the year » in 1978 and the series of LPs « Anthology of Canadian Music » devoted to his music was released in 1983.

After the premiere on 12 October 1992 of *AVEC, wampum symphonique*, he was named a member of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French minister of culture, Jack Lang.

In 1994, he composed *L’arbre de Borobudur*, a work that incorporates a Javanese gamelan and western instruments. In 1998, he composed *Les pierres crieront* for cello and orchestra, and in 1999 *À quelle heure commence le temps* on a text by Bernard Lévy. His opera, *L’eau qui danse, la pomme qui chante et l’oiseau qui dit la vérité*, with a libretto by Pierre Morency (based on stories by Madame d’Aulnoy) was premiered in November 2009. His last work, for mezzo and orchestra, *L’origine,* on a text by Fernand Ouellette, was commissioned by Radio-France, and premiered by the Montreal Symphony Orchestra on 15 February 2010.

Tremblay’s works often contain (Christian) religious references, particularly to biblical texts. It is impossible to separate the spiritual strivings of the man from the activities of the composer, whose works reflect a quest for meaning and an understanding of the sacred dimension of the work of art. Nature is understood in his works less as an ecological entity than as a way to access the divine. In this way, Tremblay’s process could be compared to that of Jacques Maritain or perhaps even more closely to Teilhard de Chardin, whose cosmic vision of the world appears as a slow progression towards the spiritualisation of matter. From a purely musical point of view, Tremblay’s production, coeval with structuralism, and while always extremely personal and of its time, nevertheless refuses to break with the history of musical language and tradition.

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