

A close-up, black and white portrait of a woman with dark hair and bangs, looking down. She is wearing a black top with a gold zipper. The background is dark.

RAW ELEGANCE

YING-HSUEH CHEN
PERCUSSION



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RAW ELEGANCE

PRIMORDIAL PERCUSSION
SOLO WORKS ON SKIN, WOOD,
AND METAL

01

IANNIS XENAKIS (1922-2001)
Rebonds (b & a) for solo percussion

11:23

02

PIERLUIGI BILLONE (*1960)
Mani.Matta for marimba, 2 log drums,
woodblock, and China gong

19:04

03

TOKE BRORSON ODIN (*1982)
Maskine for 14 pieces of metal

19:39

TT 50:08

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ABOUT
RAW
ELEGANCE

The recurring theme of my performances and projects is bringing people from all walks of life and of all ages back to the source of life – *mystery*, through any styles of music, and with this CD, primordial contemporary music. For me, being in touch with mystic powers is the key to bringing out fully the groove and universality in contemporary music, as mystery transcends polarities, time, and physical dimensions.

The title *Raw Elegance* came from my many years of fascination with and exploration of different combinations of polarities. *Raw Elegance* is one such polarity which was inherent in me but became more

and more pronounced as I gradually found peace with the extremes in myself over the years, as part of my journey towards maturity.

Raw Elegance sums up the general polarities in my personal style and taste on the stage: I am a woman percussionist with a slim physique, yet by nature I perform with primitive power, intuition, and speed.

Here, I present three timeless European contemporary works: Xenakis's *Rebonds*, Billone's *Mani.Matta*, and Odin's *Maskine*; skin, wood, and metal. This album is a trilogy in itself. These three architectural works bring people in trance in their own unique ways, and I believe the originality and universality of the works will one day make them a tradition.



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“The listener must be gripped and
whether he likes it or not,
drawn into the flight path of the sounds without
special training being necessary.
The sensual shock must be just as forceful as
when one hears a clap of thunder or
looks into a bottomless abyss.”

IANNIS XENAKIS

IANNIS XENAKIS

REBONDS

(1987-89)

“An immense abstract ritual, a suite of movements and of hammerings without any folkloristic ‘contamination’, pure music full of marvellously efflorescent rhythms, going beyond drama and tempest. A new masterpiece.”

– Jacques Lonchamp

Iannis Xenakis’s pioneering integration of architectural and mathematical knowledge enables the listeners and performers to come even closer to the mysterious force of nature. Mathematics is one small aspect of nature, and the intricate layers of mathematics behind everything in nature, a flower or a human body for example, is overwhelming beyond reason.

Therefore, for me, Xenakis’s work is to be performed from a place beyond the rational mind, beyond the polarity of mathematics and primitivity, ancient and modern.

For *Rebonds*, the natural force of the rebound has to be integrated into the piece, musically and technically. Moreover, the persistent fortes and fortissimos denote savageness. The essence of Xenakis will not be brought out fully without a dark primordial force supporting its dense structure.

The piece is written in two parts, *a* and *b*, to be performed without a break, though in no fixed order. The whole made up of these two distinct sections will have a very different impact depending on the starting point, *a* or *b*. On this album, the order is *ba*.

A quote from Xenakis to sum up the above:

“To make music means to express human intelligence by sonic means. This is intelligence in its broadest sense, which includes not only the peregrinations of pure logic but also the ‘logic’ of emotions and intuition. My musical techniques, although often rigorous in their internal structure, leave many openings through which the most complex and mysterious factors of the intelligence may penetrate.”



PIERLUIGI BILLONE MANI.MATTA

(2008)

"Mani", hand;
"Matta", artist
Gordon Matta-Clark
(USA, 1943-1978)

Mani.Matta, a monumental work which literally breaks every taboo about how a composer is supposed to write for marimba, enabling the utmost exploration of the timbral possibilities of wood. Pitched wood can be made unpitched by pressing with one hand, transforming the character of the wood, as if one comes closer to the source of sonic phenomena. Marimba is the centre instrument, and the lesser pitched instruments: the two log drums, the woodblock, and the gong, which are worn by the performer, become an extension of the marimba, with extensive technique applied. A groundbreaking masterpiece.

About the composer:

"Billone is one of those rare magicians with the power to suspend the laws of linear time. Listening to his music, one feels one is entering a cultic space."

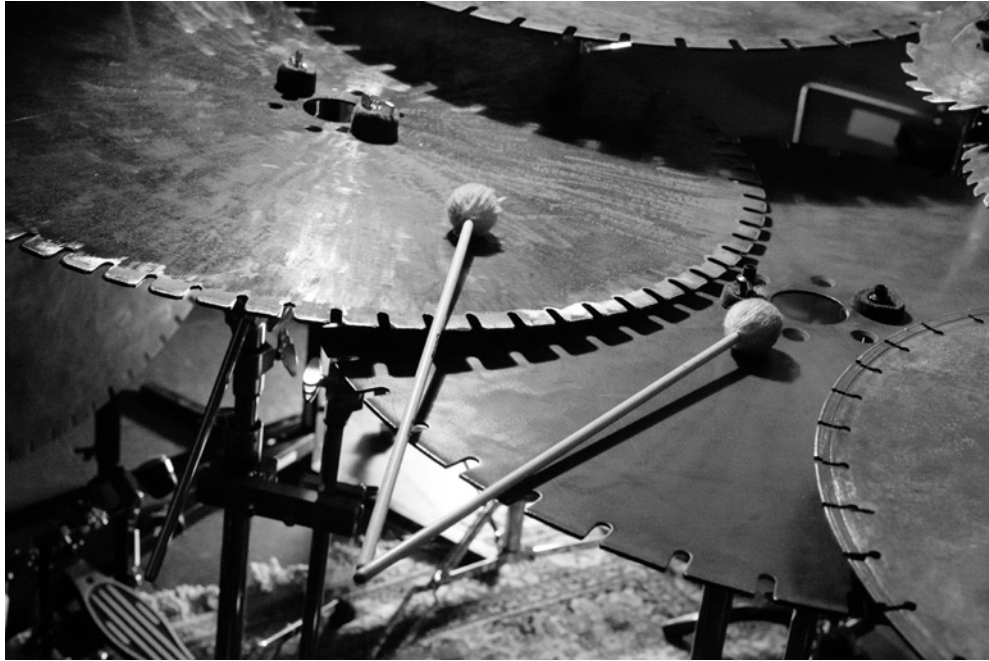
– Heinz Rögl

"... his radical methods have led him to explore uncharted sound worlds and to develop idiosyncratic instrumental and vocal techniques. Nevertheless, the concurrent roots of these sources of inspirations lie in an archaic world – a sacred universe – where, as if for him, the most progressive standpoint of modernity would be when music itself reaches its own phenomenal essence."

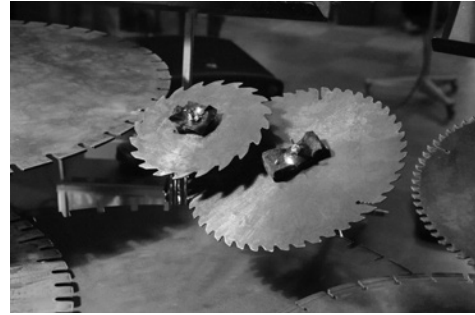
– Philippe Albéra

A Special thanks to Billone for his work and to percussionist Christian Dierstein, to whom this piece was dedicated, for his superb performance of the piece in Graz in 2011. The enormous originality and other-worldly feeling of void in this piece moved me so profoundly I longed to play it for years afterwards.

– Ying-Hsueh Chen



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TOKE BRORSON
ODIN
MASKINE

(“MACHINE”, 2012)

Maskine was commissioned by me in 2012. Growing up in a wood factory in Taiwan with constant sounds of machinery, I told Toke during a casual conversation that I imagined a piece which sonorously depicts different gears moving simultaneously, and at that moment I realized that the ideal composer for realizing such a piece was right in front of me.

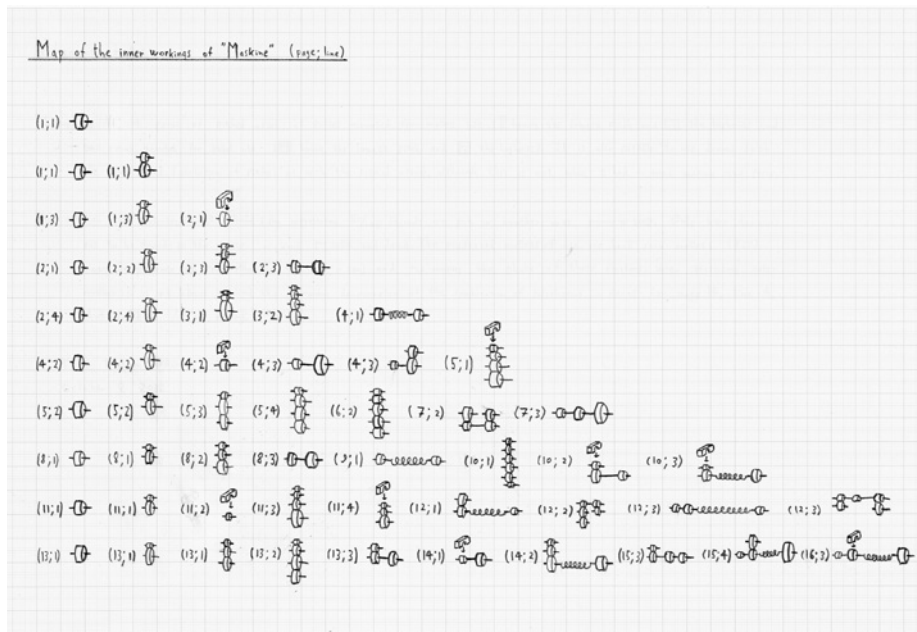
With its 19–20 minutes of continuous polyrhythms and up to six voices, *Maskine* requires tremendous technical, physical and mental endurance to play. The fourteen pieces of metal comprise ten pieces from saws, three pieces of high-pitched metal, and one metal plate, all of which the composer has recycled from a Danish summer house, streets, and various other places,

removing the sharp edges in order for them to be safe to play. The large saws were made to cut asphalt, yet they produce magnificent church bell-like sounds, which penetrate directly into the human biological system. The set-up is an artwork in itself.

Another masterpiece which evokes the feeling of “Ancestral Modernism.”

Words from the composer:

“*Maskine* is for 14 pieces of metal with varying pitch. It is a piece about how to transform a mechanical structure into music. The mechanical structure develops throughout the piece according to this map:



Each gear represents one layer of rhythm and each drawing represents one rhythmic structure.”

– Toke Brorson Odin, 2018



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A LETTER TO YING-HSUEH CHEN

There are some musicians, a special kind of human being deeply devoted to sound (to its existence, its development, its intellectual and spiritual growth), whose identity the modern and weak term “performer” is no longer able to describe.

These rare musicians Nature has endowed with her best forces and crowned with a special sensitivity and intelligence. A precious and exceptional gift. When they take care of a work, it seems that it was already imagined and destined for them, from the beginning.

Ying-Hsueh Chen is one them.

As a composer, I personally consider it an honour and a privilege to be in touch with a musician of this kind, whose practice renews in me each time, and once more in this recording of *Mani.Matta*, the deep reasons of my work.

*Pierluigi Billone,
Vienna, June 2018*

YING-HSUEH CHEN

(*1983)

Ying-Hsueh Chen is a visionary and multifaceted artist from Taiwan, internationally known for her extraordinary stage presence and groundbreaking interpretation of contemporary works. Based in Copenhagen since 2006, Ying-Hsueh enjoys a versatile career in classical, contemporary, and experimental scenes across music festivals in Europe and Asia.

As a soloist, Ying-Hsueh Chen has performed with, among others, the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra and the Danish National Vocal Ensemble. Having won several awards in USA and Denmark, Ying-Hsueh is recognized as one of the most pioneering artists in Denmark.

Her concerts have been broadcast on national and international radio and TV in Denmark, USA, Taiwan, and South Korea, and her performances have been praised by the New York Times and major Danish newspapers.

Always striving for impactful concerts, Ying-Hsueh regularly embarks on new quality-projects in which she collaborates with the most exceptional composers, musicians, and artists in virtually any genre. The *Ancestral Modernism* concert series, in which primordial sonic experiences are delivered by bringing out the universality of avant-garde and ancestral heritage, is a milestone among her projects.

Ying-Hsueh was educated at the Juilliard School and the Royal Danish Academy of Music. Blessed by many cultural influences worldwide, Scandinavian aesthetic has left a deep imprint on her Asian roots.

Percussionist Gert Mortensen was one of her most significant teachers.

www.yinghsuehchen.com



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Peter Helms

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Ying-Hsueh Chen

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