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CD 'Disappearing in Light' by Wim Henderickx and HERMESensembel

Marie Dumont in The Bulletin, July 1st, 2011

Sometime around the turn of this century, Flemish composer Wim Henderickx, on a trip to the Himalayas, sounded a mighty gong in a Buddhist temple. The experience, he claims, was hugely inspirational and sparked his Tantric Cycle, an extended series of musical works that attempt to bridge Eastern and contemporary Western aesthetics and coax us into meditation.

Henderickx, one of the most exciting experimental composers on Belgium's new music scene, has recently completed the cycle. Meanwhile, the French label Harmonia Mundi has released a CD of part five of the series. *Disappearing in Light*, a marvel of precision and expressive colours that was composed and premiered three years ago.

Alternately taut and contemplative, the work depicts a slow progression from darkness to light - imagine Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* revisited by Stravinsky or Messiaen. Performed by the HERMESensembel conducted by Henderickx himself, it opens with furious scratching on a viola the moves on to some faint tapping and breathing and pure, meditative melismas sung by the mezzo soprano Mireille Capelle. Here's an exceptional artist who can, in the same breath, sing treacherous intervals and plead in a raspy voice. The words vaguely evoke some Eastern tongue but that's a well-contrived illusion - they belong to no known human language, thus sealing the work's mystery.

The CD also includes Henderickx' *Raga III*, which almost manages to make the viola sound like an Indian sarangi, and a piece called *The Four Elements*, where I thought I could hear firing cannons.

Captivating, and positively weird.

See www.wimhenderickx.com