

## L'UNIQUE TRAIT DE PINCEAU (A SINGLE BRUSHSTROKE), (2008)

**Philippe Leroux**

for Saxophone and Orchestra. Duration : 17 mn

Commissioned by *Arsenal de Metz* and *Orchestre National de Lorraine*.

Premiered on Feb. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009, at the *Arsenal de Metz* (France), by Claude Delangle (saxophone) and the *Orchestre National de Lorraine*, conducted by Jacques Mercier.

Instrumentation: 2.2.2.2 - 2.2.2.1 - 3 perc, hp – Strings

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When I was about fifteen, I lived with my parents in the Vallée de Chevreuse. One day as I was returning from Paris on the train, I saw a flight of crows in the sky. I was very tired and fell asleep. I woke up a little later in a train heading the opposite way. It was incredible: I saw the flight of birds continue in exactly the place where I had left it when I fell asleep, as if time had stopped. Yet because the train was going the other way, I knew that time had to have passed between the two moments. It was as if there had been a temporal breach, during which an enigmatic action had occurred, out of the reach of my consciousness.

Subsequently, that experience had a great influence on my way of looking at music. *L'unique trait de pinceau* (A Single Brushstroke) is a piece composed along the lines of a great ascending movement broken with long silences representing those breaches. They reveal the blank part of the sound page with the idea that the true music may be the one which unfolds mysteriously in our inner listening within these silences: silences of memory and the summary of what we have just heard. In the spirit of the *Single Brushstroke* by Chinese painter Shitao, I have tried to present a single musical motion, a perpetual ascension, but in a non-linear way, in elastic time.

The piece also explores the relationships between the soloist, small instrumental groups and the orchestra, each one a metaphor for the relationships that exist between an individual, their immediate environment and the crowd. In league with a Bénédicte Delesalle film project, these relationships appear through ideas of light associated with that of glass, water as a symbol of organicity and the town as a structural component governing transit and circulation.

The saxophone - light or angel - is both active and reflexive. It can be defined as a character that anticipates, summarises and comments on the activity of the other instruments, or contemplates that activity in many cadences - each cadence being preceded by a short interlude, a sort of breath interrupting the great ascending movement. The relationship of soloist to orchestra is primarily that of the individual to the group. They undergo an influence and even deconstruction - including that of their instrument - caused by the society surrounding them, but are reborn each time, more firmly asserted and having developed their relationship with the world, which they sometimes support. The orchestra as a social symbol sometimes revolves in a loop, repetitive in its behaviour. As for the saxophone individual, they *continue to move on*, surrounded by little instrumental groups with whom they maintain a relationship of proximity.

Preceded by a three-day contemplative phase, then written rapidly in a single movement from start to finish, *L'unique trait de pinceau* - like glass that is always alive because it flows endlessly - ends in the inaudible regions of the ultra-high, heralding a future return to sound.

The work is dedicated to Claude Delangle.

**Philippe Leroux**