

Le Pianiste (2008-09)

1. Les arpèges
2. Mi fa sol al mura
3. Glisser du vent

Program note for Le Pianiste:

When the gifted contemporary music pianist Marilyn Nonken suggested that I compose a group of pieces related in some way to the visual arts, I gravitated very quickly to the work of the celebrated 20th century Chilean born painter Roberto Matta (*b. Santiago, Chile, 1911, d. Citavechhia, Italy, 2002*). The youngest of the original surrealists and a protégé of André Breton, Matta played a central role in the evolution of both European Surrealism and American Abstract Expressionism. A visionary with an all-encompassing view of humanity and cosmology, his fluid, improvisational style took inspiration from anything and everything, the inner workings of the human mind, a lover's quarrel, a rose, wartime atrocities, and also music -- indeed, many of his works bear musical titles, titles such as *Contrepoint de la Lumiere, Intégrale du Silence, La Flûte de Feu, Melodio-Melodia*. A propos of his interest in music, in one of his notebooks he writes, "Perhaps music is a utopian creation that proves the possibility of an orchestral harmonicity, a society of human beings."

In this set of pieces, entitled *Le Pianiste*, I chose three of Matta's canvases as objects of contemplation from which to work, *Les arpèges*, *Mi fa sol al mura*, and *Glisser du vent*. It was inescapable that the piano writing in *Les arpèges* would explore the arpeggio as a musical trope. Likewise, *Mi fa sol al mura* adopts the tones mi, fa and sol as its theme, placing them in a highly chromatic, quasi-tonal context. The third piece in the set, *Glisser du vent*, is an impressionistic evocation of the wind. With that in mind, my goal in composing these pieces was not to attempt some kind of musical "translation" of Matta's works, but rather to use them as a point of departure, formal, textural, technical, affectual, for making audible the energies they inspired in my own imagination.