

In **Yevgeny Zamyatin's** dystopian novel *We*, the Adam figure D-503, chief engineer on a project to push out into the stars, obsesses over the square root of minus one. It is the source of all imaginary numbers, a calculation which can only be carried out in dreams, which are considered a sign of mental depravity in the One State. It seemed inevitable that **Franck Vigroux** – mathematician of dreams, oneiric engineer of sound – would one day turn for inspiration to Zamyatin's glass city and the quiet sonic and sexual subversions that go on within and outside its walls, where humans are still covered in hair. Vigroux's work as a composer/performer mixes high abstraction and sensuous physicality to a remarkable degree. His 2012 recorded version of *We* (*Nous Autres*) extends a vision of electroacoustic/noise music that parallels Vigroux's interests in philanthropy and activism.

This month, Vigroux curates a music and arts festival in Mende, southern France called *Les Instants Sonores*. That name chimes nicely with his own work, which is a far cry from the instant snores evoked by the dreamless mass of electroacoustic experimenters. "I'm doing a solo performance but also presenting an art piece on the music and poetry of Heiner Müller," he explains. "The festival comes in two parts, the first bringing together projects that can only really play out in theatres, while the second happens in the historic *Domaine des Boissets*, where spectators and artists will benefit from the kind of close proximity that favours listening, free exchange of ideas and a trade-off between different works. We'll be hoping to attract a public who've maybe never before experienced

contemporary music or noise. The programme pretty much squares with my own interests and tastes. I'm also voluntary curator at Arcueil [a Paris suburb] of a little festival called *White Noises*, to which I invite artists of every stamp – poets, plastic artists, video makers – to engage with experimental music."

Vigroux isn't an easy man to pin down. He's happy to describe himself simply as a musician – he uses guitar, electronics, programs – but also more intriguingly as a "metteur en scène en musique", and this latter interest has been extended into the film work in gutted factory spaces and other post-urban dreamscapes that has appeared so far as *Dust* (2007), the Gregory Robin-directed *Entrailles* (2012) and *Transistor* (2014), often with Vigroux as actor/performer. He describes himself as part of a generation of composers in France "who've been trying to regenerate music theatre or hybrid forms. I can't really analyse my 'philosophy', but I am particularly obsessed by the intrinsic nature of sound, which surprises me constantly. So I spend my time in the studio searching for sounds, using all sorts of machines and devices. For instance, I've just finished a record where I simply played an old guitar through an amplifier with very little additional in the way of effects but with a range of tones and overtones [accordages] – which then become the object of meticulous research."

If this sounds like a lonely act of resistance. Vigroux is an inveterate collaborator, working regularly with vocalist Ben Miller as *Transistor* and with Reinhold Friedl and Mika Vainio in other duo configurations, gravitating towards artists who seem

part of his own creative galaxy, a spiral community of post-rockers, independent dabblers in off-grid sound, new music types, Hörspielers and those who inhabit the outlands of jazz and improvisation. He works with video artist Antoine Schmitt as *Tempest*, creating audio-visual worlds that play with the idea of Bergsonian time as flow. Since 2003, Vigroux has run the *D'Autres Cordes* label, on which he put out his own modern classic *Triste Lilas* and *Camera Police* (the latter beginning a sequence of work tinged with references to surveillance that led directly to *Nous Autres*) but also recordings by a constellation of creative outsiders including Samuel Sighicelli, Elliott Sharp and Matthew Bourne, the latter two perhaps the only other artists of the moment with quite the same narrative sweep and dark theatrical flair.

Vigroux talks about the sense of "confirmation" and "conviction" (the French term leans both ways) he gets from fruitful collaboration. Although he owes much of his "real education in sound" to the researches of GRM and to the work of composer/philosophers as diverse as Bernard Parmegiani, Xenakis, Penderecki and Morton Feldman, he is also something of an autodidact who belongs to no obvious lineage, a situation guaranteed to provoke the One State, which likes its stylists to be slotted and numbered like D-503 and his female counterparts. □ Franck Vigroux and Reinhold Friedl's *Tobel* is released by *La Muse En Circuit*. *Les Instants Sonores* takes place in Mende, France between 11–15 June. frankvigroux.com
Brian Morton

D R E A M

E I E N N G E R

Franck Vigroux



French artist **Franck Vigroux** curates hybrid festivals of sound, theatre, film and poetry

Guillaume Belvéze