

**n-strumm-end-s;**  
January 19, 2005.

“The French zine *Octopus*, dedicated aux musiques libres et inventives - formerly off-, now exclusively online - this month organized the second edition of its festival. This year’s theme: Inventeurs d’instruments, instrumentists inventifs - inventors of instruments, inventive instrumentalists. The three part event started off with an evening at the Point Ephemere, precisely one week ago, on wednesday january 12th.

It was up to the American born and usually labeled ‘minimalist composer’ Arnold Dreyblatt, who moved to Europe in 1984 and is living and working in Berlin, to make this evening - through his first ever performance in France - into a memorable rather than a merely anecdotal one.

I think he succeeded.

Dreyblatt’s longstanding fascination is with the series of natural overtones (harmonics), that ever since the early 1970’s he has continued to explore within and through his sound works, in several ways, including of course dedicated, on the natural harmonics based, tunings.

Arnold Dreyblatt probably is best known for his adaptations and modifications of string instruments, notably the double bass. The second part of his performance was a ‘re-creation’ of an early piece from 1979, *Nodal Excitation*, here performed (“for the first time in 25 years,” he told us) as a solo on the adapted ‘excited strings bass’, a double bass on which he replaced the usual, ‘wound’, bass strings by piano strings.

Dreyblatt’s performance of the very rhythmic piece was as energetic as it was a sonic feast. After an introductory slow and softly relaxed bowing of the open strings (C) - both a welcome and a preparation - the piece continued to be driven along by a continuous up-tempo, four beat, percussive hitting of them, which gave it the organic, natural feel and pace of an early morning jog in the park, with the ongoing shifting and ringing of the overtones much like the dazzling stream of clear light and bright color sweeping by in the periphery of a runner’s field of vision. In built-up and structure this *Nodal Excitation* was - surely not so surprising - reminiscent of Charlemagne Palestine’s ‘Bosendorfer’ trip, somewhat less than a year ago in the Instants Chavires. Palestine’s hammering run along the piano’s well-tempered harp there brought forth clouds of bursting, clashing and ever intertwining harmonies, impressive in their inextricable density and complexity, like the smoke rising above a battlefield. Here, on the contrary, the but four strings accounted for a crystal c-clearness and an immense tonal transparency. Absolutely a classic of sorts. (Even though I think this is a music that one can only fully experience in a ‘live’-setting, for those that are interested in a ‘boxed’ taste of it: you can listen to and/or download recordings of performances of this and related Dreyblatt pieces at his web site.)”

SOUNDBLOG by HarS.