

Et ainsi (1993)

Et ainsi (1993) consists of five songs based on texts extracted from a large unfinished poem by Stéphane Mallarmé. The poem was intended as a memorial to Mallarmé's son Anatole who died in childhood at eight years of age. However, it was left incomplete at the time of the poet's own death. The numerous existing sketches for the work were collected and first published in 1961 under the title *Pour un tombeau d'Anatole*, and later published in English translation by Paul Auster as **A Tomb for Anatole** (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983).

As Auster himself has noted these fragments are really:

... the raw data of the poetic process. Although they seem to resemble poems on the page, they should not be confused with poetry per se. Nevertheless, more than one hundred years after they were written, they are perhaps closer to what we today consider possible in poetry than at the time of their composition. For here we find a language of immediate contact, a syntax of abrupt, lightning shifts that still manages to maintain a sense, and in their brevity, the sparse presence of their words, we are given a rare and early example of isolated words able to span the enormous mental spaces that lie between them ...¹

I was attracted to many of the same attributes to which Auster refers, as well as to the fact that the text, as it exists, is indeed not a poem but a series of sketches. Often the texts include notes about the structure the poem might take on and these too are included as texts in my songs. I was drawn to Mallarmé's fragments: words and phrases as yet un-refined and un-formed in any traditional poetic sense.

Since the texts are actually fragments of a single projected poem, I conceived the individual songs as fragments of a larger work. Thus the songs reflect backward and forward upon one another. I tried deliberately to avoid creating a set of clearly and distinctly separated songs. I felt that it was important to make the separation between each song less distinct than would usually be the case with a typical song cycle since these four texts are actually fragments of sketches of the same incomplete work.

As with all of my music the silences within some songs are as long as silences that separate those songs from one another. Also, the same pitch cells recur from one song to the next creating a fluid connection. I want to project the sense that, though these are separate songs, their texts are actually fragments of the same projected poem and hence part of the same source. One might say that each text projects a different view of the poet's thinking about the piece, a window on his creative process as the different elements of the piece come in and out of focus, yet never congeal into a totality. I hope that the songs though separate will be perceived as themselves fragments of an unfinished whole. These songs neither grow nor develop, neither individually nor as a set. They constitute a succession of instances.

The work is scored for soprano and large chamber ensemble (flute, oboe, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, piano, violin, cello, percussion). This ensemble is divided into four groups (group 1: oboe, soprano; group 2: trumpet, trombone, piano, violin, cello; group 3: percussion; group 4: flute, clarinet, percussion). These four groups are dispersed spatially around the concert hall and among the audience. The spatial dispersion is intended not so much to bounce sounds around the concert hall, but rather to localize certain types of sounds (or components of sounds) in specific locations, while at other times dispersing those same sound types over a broader spatial field.

1. Paul Auster, Introduction to **A Tomb for Anatole** by Stephane Mallarmé (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983), p. x.

The five texts are:

No. 1 *nouveau*

(3
immortalité
---ou le mien
nouveau---

(3
immortality
---or mine
new---

Pour un tombeau d'Anatole
fragment 125 of the North Point Press Edition
translated by Paul Auster

No.2 ...*pas seulement*

Quoi, ce que je dis
est vrai -- ce n'est
pas seulement
musique -----
etc.

What, the thing I am saying
is true – it is not
only
music -----
etc.

Pour un tombeau d'Anatole
fragment 192 of the North Point Press Edition
translated by Paul Auster

No. 3 *que cela se puisse*

(I
moi ---
peut-être ---
l'ambiguïté
que cela se puisse!

(I
myself ---
perhaps ---
the ambiguity
this can produce!

Pour un tombeau d'Anatole
fragment 136 of the North Point Press Edition
translated by Paul Auster

nous

(son regard

(conscience)

- longtemps
regardé pendant
maladie

ou alors
triomphe
après

3^e partie

rupture entre I et II
et entre <II et IV>
II et III
tout se rattache

us

(his look

(conscience)

- for a long time
watched during
sickness

or then
triumph
after

3rd part

break between I et II
and between <II and IV>
II and III
everything connects again

Pour un tombeau d'Anatole

fragment 181 of the North Point Press Edition
translated by Paul Auster

No. 5 *...pour*

I cri de mère
fleurs
 cueillies pour
 tombe, laissées là

III
tombeau
 père ---

I mother's cry
flowers
 gathered for
 tomb, left there

III
tomb
 father ---

Pour un tombeau d'Anatole
fragment 98 of the North Point Press Edition
translated by Paul Auster