



Music **BEST OF 2008**

Ryoji Ikeda

RYOJI IKEDA IS A PARIS-BASED JAPANESE VISUAL ARTIST AND COMPOSER OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC. HE IS CURRENTLY EXHIBITING THREE NEW WORKS INSPIRED BY A SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS WITH HARVARD NUMBER THEORIST BENEDICT GROSS AT LE LABORATOIRE, A GALLERY SPACE IN CENTRAL PARIS DEDICATED TO ARTIST/SCIENTIST COLLABORATIONS.



1. Karlheinz Stockhausen, Japan, 1977.
3. Céleste Boursier-Mougenot, *From Here to Ear* (detail), 2008, wood, lino, dirt, seeds, electric guitars, chrome stands, tube amplifiers, guitar cases, birdhouse, finches. Installation view, Galerie Xippas, Paris. Photo: Frédéric Lanternier. 7. Puppet at entrance of *Rubato ma glissando*, Maison de l'Architecture, Paris, 2008. Photo: Christophe le Flot.



1 **Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928–2007)** With his passing, we lost one of the most important composers of our time. Most musicians today have been influenced by him, whether they realize it or not.

2 **Opening ceremony, Beijing Olympics** Whatever your feelings on spectacle, billions of people watched 2,008 performers drumming in perfect unison on August 8. Have we ever before witnessed an event such as this?

3 **Céleste Boursier-Mougenot, *From Here to Ear* (Galerie Xippas, Paris)** When I entered the gallery, birds were flying, chattering, and hopping along amplified electric guitars. Everything was so peaceful. I took this for a thoughtful homage to John Cage, who used to say, "I am for the birds, not for the cages in which people sometimes place them."

4 **Christian Marclay and Flo Kaufmann, *Tabula Rasa* (Club Transmediale at Maria am Ostbahnhof, Berlin)** For this performance, Marclay first stood onstage playing with the tone arms and needles of an empty, retro turntable. Kaufmann recorded Marclay's sounds, cut a vinyl record of them in real time, and handed the final product to Marclay—who placed the record on his turntable and started the procedure over. I witnessed the process of creating entropy out of the empty.

5 **Evelina Domnitch and Dmitry Gelfand, *Camera Lucida: Sonochemical Observatory* (National Art Center, Tokyo)** For their installation—a three-dimensional "sonic observatory" that transforms sound into light via a phenomenon known as sonoluminescence—I stood in a dim room and soon began to perceive a group of subtle, glowing patterns (made of fine bubbles) moving in a large, liquid-filled glass ball. When a certain sound frequency was emitted, the motion became highly complex. One of only a few artworks I've seen that successfully bridge art and science.

6 **Carsten Nicolai, *334m/s* (La Fondazione Volume!, Rome)** Nicolai is an excellent visualizer of sound. In Rome he took his method further: Translucent tubes were filled with propane and then lit on fire, setting off a chain reaction that concluded in an explosive boom—a manifestation of sound's speed.

7 **Annette Messager and Gérard Pesson, *Rubato ma glissando* (Festival d'automne at Maison de l'Architecture, Paris)** Here audiences were welcomed to the garden of the Maison de l'Architecture by a giant, convulsing man—in actuality a white balloon inflated by strong blasts of air—before entering the venue in a somewhat ritualistic manner. Inside, the solemn show featured fragments of puppets hanging from the ceiling and wired to six masked musicians, who performed with toys and other bizarre objects. The rapt audience sat in a twenty-minute wonderland.

8 **Gisèle Vienne, *Kindertotenlieder* (Songs for Dead Children) (Théâtre de la Bastille, Paris)** Musicians Stephen O'Malley and Peter Rehberg played a wall of noise as unmoving dancers stood on a stage designed to look like an icy wasteland. I didn't realize that the performers were actually mannequins until they were brutally destroyed by the real ones. I felt strangely comfortable with this nihilistic production, a sharp contrast to Mahler's sentimental original.

9 **Nine Inch Nails, *The Slip* (The Null Corporation)** After Radiohead's "pay what you want" strategy for a digital edition of 2007's *In Rainbows*, Nine Inch Nails provided its own new album in a similarly novel way. *The Slip* is even available gratis in a higher-than-CD quality—in 24/96 WAV files. It's a symbolic model for today's music situation: Are songs getting cheaper than air?

10 **Patti Smith, live concert (Fondation Cartier, Paris)** To be honest, I was a little perplexed upon learning that the "godmother of punk" would perform in such a fashionable museum. She was amazingly vivid, however, and it was a joy to share the moment with an adoring audience whose ranks ranged from teenagers to Smith's own peers. □