

## Music above all else

**Michèle Reverdy has given all her musical manuscripts and archives to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. These documents cover all her activities as a composer, radio producer, author and teacher: a gift of nearly 100 musical manuscripts, but also books of sketches, correspondence, programmes, posters, press cuttings etc. Michèle Reverdy's gift represents an invaluable collection concerning the music of our time.**

Born in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1943, Michèle Reverdy arrived in Paris at the age of three. She discovered her vocation as a composer when she was a child, at a performance of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* at the Opéra-Comique. After school and higher education, she attended the classes of Olivier Messiaen and Claude Ballif at the Paris Conservatoire where she obtained *premiers prix* in counterpoint, analysis and composition. She made close and long-lasting friendships with certain composers (Henri Dutilleux, Pierre Boulez, Franco Donatoni, Peter Eötvös ...) and remained in particular contact with Messiaen, to whom she showed her scores. She dedicated her *Météors* for orchestra (1978) to him and devoted two books to his music.

From 1979, she was resident for two years at the Casa de Velázquez in Spain, where she began writing her first opera, *Le Château*, after Kafka. Completed in 1986, the work has never been staged. Some years later, she gained her first stage success with *Le Précepteur*, an opera based on a text by Jakob Lenz, premiered at the Munich Biennale in 1990.

### Producer, composer and teacher

On her return from Spain, Michèle Reverdy resumed her activity as a producer for Radio France, where she had worked since 1977, and notably developed a series of programmes for France-Culture on great contemporary composers. She met many performers and composers in the context of Radio France's association with contemporary music festivals. From 1983, she taught analysis and later orchestration at the Paris Conservatoire. In 1995, she was awarded the SACEM Grand Prix for symphonic music, for the whole of her output. Lyons Opéra commissioned a new stage work from her, *Médée*, based on the text by Christa Wolf, premiered in 2003 in a production by cinema director Raoul Ruiz. In 2006, she also wrote a book about her compositional activity: *Composer de la musique aujourd'hui* (Composing music today) (ed. Klincksieck). In 2014, Emmanuel Reibel and Yves Balmer devoted a book to her: *Michèle Reverdy compositrice intranquille* (Michèle Reverdy, a restless composer) (ed. Vrin), which "raises the veil on a very appealing creative world, rooted in a mysteriously haunting past, for which the musician's work table constitutes the tireless outlet".

### A central figure in the music of our time

Michèle Reverdy's catalogue currently includes 93 works, beginning officially in 1974 with *Canto Jondo* on three poems of Federico Garcia Lorca.

It includes music in all possible genres: vocal music, chamber music, large orchestre, musical theatre (*Le Nom sur le bout de la langue* in collaboration with Pascal Quignard, *Le Roi du bois*, words by Pierre Michon, *Lettre des îles Baladar*, words by Jacques Prévert, *Ficciones*, words by Jorge Luis Borges), opera (not only *Le Château*, *Le Précepteur* and *Médée* but also *Vincent ou la Haute Note Jaune*, after letters written by van Gogh to Theo, premiered in 1990 at Alessandria in Italy, *Le Fusil de chasse* after Yasushi Inoué, premiered by the Péniche Opéra in 2000, *Ombres du Minotaure*, an opera for shadow theatre, in collaboration with the Swiss writer Julien Mages, premiered at Vevey in January 2019) and opera buffa (*Le Cosmocomiche*, words by Italo Calvino, premiered in March 2019 at the Théâtre Liberté in Toulon).

The music of Michèle Reverdy is performed throughout the world by the best international groups.

### Mathias Auclair

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