

Timbral Organization in Tristan Murail's
Désintégrations

and
Rituals by Anthony Cornicello

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ABSTRACT

Timbral Organization in Tristan Murail's *Désintégrations*

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Graduate
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By Anthony Cornicello

In this dissertation, I present a study of the harmonic and timbral structures found in *Désintégrations* by French composer Tristan Murail. Murail is one of the founders of spectral music, a musical style that emerged in France during the 1970s. In this study, I demonstrate how the harmonic and timbral elements in *Désintégrations* are fused and have a direct influence on the structure of the work.

Chapter 1 begins with an introduction to spectral music. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a clear definition of spectral music, and to investigate the music and technological advances that stimulated the musical style. The works of Debussy, Varèse, Ligeti, and Scelsi are examined for their contributions to spectral music, focusing specifically on their utilization of timbre. An overview of the technological contributions to spectral music is presented in the second half of the chapter. In this portion of the chapter, I explore computer music techniques and show the influence computers have had on spectral music.

Chapter 2 is a study of the timbral elements of *Désintégrations*. Timbre, in the form of the timbre-chord, plays an important role on the foreground,

middleground, and background levels of the work. In the first half of Chapter 2, each section of *Désintégrations* is analyzed for its timbral development. In the remaining section of Chapter 2, it is demonstrated how Murail's utilization of timbral transformations has shaped the middle and background levels of the work. There is also an investigation of the spectral classification, large-scale fundamental (root) motion, and rhythmic usage in *Désintégrations*. In the final portion of the paper, it is established that all these elements are used in combination to create the formal articulations of the piece.

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