



"Jeanne of the Dark"

for 5 musicians
(e-violin, e-guitar, e-bass, percussion, voice and synthesizer),
electronics, video, light and laser;

music, video, light design and laser by **Terre Thaemlitz** and **Marko Ciciliani**;
performed by **Bakin Zub**;

Jeanne of the Dark– Introduction

In 1916 the legendary crime serial "Les Vampires" entered the movie theaters in France. Shot off-the-cuff by writer-director Louis Feuillade in 1915 in the streets and interiors of World War I Paris, "Les Vampires" was first banned by the police for glorifying crime. When finally released, it became a smash hit.

"Les Vampires" follows the exploits of a brazen and resourceful band of arch-criminals who rob the rich and transfix the elite of France. The core gangster figure is the irresistible Irma Vep (an anagram of "vampire"), personified by the actress Jeanne Roques, alias Musidora. Seductively garbed



in a black body stocking, Musidora is perhaps the first liberated screen woman, an idol of emancipated eroticism.

As she entered the screens in the *maillot noire*, with heavily kohled black eyes and sinister makeup, she not only created a landmark in film-history, but also gave rise to a new genre in film: The VAMP.

The Vamp personifies a complex crossroad of cultural images of gender and ritual. The idea of the femme fatale is transcultural and goes far back in history.

In the project *Jeanne of the Dark* composers and multi-media artists Terre Thaemlitz and Marko Ciciliani are embarking on an artistic investigation of the Vamp.

By taking the Vamp as the pivot point, they are deriving a palette of imageries and stylistic/cultural references, that are spanning from gender issues around the bad/good girl syndrome, across eroticism and the heavy metal genre to cannibalism.

Jeanne of the Dark – the form

Jeanne of the Dark is divided in 4 main blocks that are connected by shorter interludes. While the first three main blocks are written by Ciciliani for the group **Bakin Zub**, using light and laser as visual components, the interludes will be composed by Thaemlitz, utilising electronics and video. The first three blocks will each focus on a singular aspect of the Vamp:

"Vampire" "Eroticism" and "Cannibalism"

As diverse as these aspects are, the music will also be stylistically very different from each other, although identical in their formal organisation. The interludes will therewith form a stylistically consistent element which will eventually bridge to the fourth large section:

This last block will be composed by Terre and Marko in collaboration. It will use a literal superimposition of the first three larger sections as the basic material (hence, their identical formal organisation). By interlocking the otherwise stylistically contrasting elements, and bringing them to a new deconstructed entity, the manyfoldness of contrasting cultural threads that coexist in the image of the Vamp will be expressed.



At a core of that last section will also lie an excerpt from the silent-movie serial "Les Vampires", which will have film-realistic (in the sense of photo-realistic) ambience added as a musical but also narrative element. By using this faked original sound, the former mute state of this film excerpt will regain a present-day voice.

Jeanne of the Dark– the use of multimedia

In addition to music, the media video, light and laser will be used in this project. Terre Thaemlitz will use fragments of the original film serial "*Les Vampires*" as a point of departure for video processings. Marko Ciciliani will develop the light design. The latter will function as an extension of the video screen – adding an abstract and spacial component to it.

The laser will form another graphic element as a connecting link between the formalised use of lighting and the video components.

Light design and video will at first appear juxtaposed to each other: light during the larger blocks, video in the interludes.

During each of the first three sections and its following interludes, one basic colour will be used for light and video: red (eroticism), green (cannibalism) and blue (vampire).

In the last section they will be used simultaneously, in direct relationship to each other. This will eventually lead to the film scene that was mentioned above. This film scene will not only have newly composed and arranged ambience sounds added, but will now also be in colour: artificially coloured as a sum of the basic colour red, green and blue, that were previously used in isolation.

The idea is that this moment will have the effect of a new birth - a *renaissance* - of the film scene from 1915: in colour and with sound. A new image of the Vamp, although tailored with the visual material from almost a century ago, after the attempt had been made to unfold its semantics.

Jeanne of the Dark– zooming into the singular aspects

Vampire

The idea of the Vamp, which is synonymous with the *femme fatale* is inseparable from the dualistic patriarchic view of the female as virgin/whore. More specifically, a Vamp is a woman with a irresistible sex appeal who seduces males, deprives them of self control, and drives them to death while giving them utmost sexual satisfaction. She is also referred to as man-eater and/or vampire which carries cannibalistic connotations.

The outer look of the vampire which was popular at the beginning of the 20th century has a lot in common with the clothing codex of the Heavy Metal and Gothic movement but also to S&M fashion. This will form a bridge to Heavy Metal as a point of reference in this section. Heavy Metal emerged in the late 60s as a counter-movement to the intellectualized live-affirmative hippie movement.

Although in its texts Heavy Metal often addresses critical issues, its imagery and way of expression draws from ancient cults, seeking eternal truths in archetypical forms while deliberately placing an emphasis on the dark, demonic and dionysian sides of life, which are also present in the vampire.

Eroticism

Eroticism is an aesthetic focus on sexual desire. Erotic depictions have been created by nearly every civilisation, ancient and modern. In early times, erotic depictions were often a subset of the indigenous or religious art of cultures and as such were not set aside or treated differently than any other type. The modern concept of pornography did not exist until the Victorian Era.

The seductive power of Eroticism has since early times been associated with evil, which is also clearly present in the image of the Vamp. Every civilisation has developed a complex codex of behaviors in order to control the power of Eroticism and sexual drive.

Cannibalism

Cannibalism as "sympathetic magic" is a subset of the general idea of eating a totem to absorb its distinctive power, much as a tiger penis might be eaten to promote virility. By eating our enemy, we take his power into ourselves. Some also consider this idea to be at the root of the Catholic ritual of symbolically consuming the flesh of God at the holy communion.

Other than that, cannibalism was often unrightfully attributed to other cultures in order to emphasize their low moralistic value -- especially in colonial times when it was used as an argument to subdue other tribes. In this sense it is referred to as a barbaric act that is deprived of any sense of moral values.

The idea of Cannibalism adds an interesting aspect in the idea of the Vamp as the man-eating female, which is for example evident in the idea of the "Vagina Dentata".



Bakin Zub is:

Barbara Lüneburg (electric violin/viola)
Michael Blank (electric guitar)
Mark Haanstra (bass guitar)
Arnold Marinissen (percussion, voice)
Marko Ciciliani (composition, light, electronics, artistic director)

Guest:

Terre Thaemlitz (electronics, video)

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