

Marie-Hélène Bernard is an eclectic composer who needs a variety of genres (instrumental works, mixed pieces, electro-acoustic music, educational partitions) to feed her creative spirit. She has developed her work independently, creating a personal style that seeks simplicity and a certain lyricism. Sound color as well as vocalization, often associated with poetry, play an important role. Her path towards composition has been atypical : after her studies in the field of science, she radically changed course and attended the university in Pau, and then Paris VIII and Paris IV Sorbonne (where she obtained a PhD in music). At the same time, she studied electro-acoustic music with Jean Schwartz at the E.N.M. in Gennevilliers, composition with Sergio Ortega at the E.N.M. in Pantin and musical writing with Christian Accaoui.

Her music has been played in Europe, the USA, Canada, Chile, Korea, Taiwan and Japan. She was an artist-in-residence at the following studios : GRM, La Muse en Circuit, GRAME, CIRM, SCRIME in Bordeaux, the « Grande Fabrique », MIA and Césaré. She has received commissions from the French Ministry of Culture (« Chemin de Poussière » with the ALEPH Ensemble, « Sept Etoiles », « Un chemin de sable blanc ») ; from INA-GRM (« Dans les plis de la caverne » with Gérard Buquet, « Gexin/Cœur de Pigeon », which received a prize from IAWM in 2010, « Les ailes du phénix » with Wu Wei, « Une hirondelle dans la narine du grand bouddha », « Boa Sr » which was a selection by France for ISCM in 2018, « Variations pour des arbres et leurs soupirs ») ; from France Musique radio (« Hanshan » with the Fleur de Prunus Ensemble and « Gosan » for the series « Alla Breve ») ; from the Détours de Babel and FUTURA festivals : from the studio Césaré : the Asian Art Ensemble (Berlin) : the Marcelle and Robert de Lacour Foundation : the Shanghai Conservatory : Orchestre National de Lyon (Chantiers de Création) : the Pôle Supérieur de Bourgogne.

Her works are edited by Babel Scores.

Marie-Hélène Bernard likes travelling and learning about other arts and cultures : attracted by Asia, in 2003 she was a prize-winner of the « Villa Medici fuori muri » which allowed her to stay in China for several months to record the sounds of Beijing and deepen her knowledge of Chinese traditional instruments. As a second time prize-winner of the « Villa Medici fuori muri » in 2013, she went to Korea, which was the inspiration for « Un chemin de sable blanc », in collaboration with the video artist Robert Cahen. Thus, she was able to develop several projects with Asian musicians (such as Wu Wei, who plays the mouth organ, Dai Xiaolian who plays the zither guqin, Fumie Hihara, who plays the lute shamisen, Cho Jooseon and Kwon Songhee, Korean singers of pansori). This kind of collaboration led her to do research on a kind of notation which is sufficiently adaptable so that it does not constrain the gesture of the musician and allows for attaining the ideal of simplicity as elaborated in the traditional Asian esthetic.

Marie-Hélène is interested in everything that deals with sound and likes to work on soundscapes and their transformation. Also of interest is the creation of programs for radio as well as installations and sound environments for exhibitions. In 1991, she was welcomed to France Culture by René Farabet where she produced more than a dozen programs for the Atelier de Création Radiophonique, and other documentaries for France Culture. She received a stipend from SCAM (Société civile des auteurs multimédia) in 1992 and 2003. Her interest in ethnology and her desire to bear witness to what is happening in the world also feeds her creativity, as for example, in a recent sound installation « Etoile de Babel » which evokes the languages under menace in the world. Her love for nature inspired her last performance « Variations pour des arbres et les soupirs », with the violoncellist Deborah Walker and the actor François Clavier, which came about after a long period of field recording.

She shares her time in France between the Ile de France and the region of the Cévennes.