

Mars II, about the music.

The score of the pianist consists of a variation between phases of stasis (a sort of *sûr place* of an alternating sixth) and developmental 'cells'. Extremely slowly and in constantly renewing cycles, these developmental cells evolve algorithmically towards the scale phase. Each cycle is mirrored with every new accidental note that is introduced. Very gradually, the score becomes increasingly virtuosic, the input of the piano robot fluctuating in numerous waves, which interpellate or challenge the pianist to a greater or lesser extent. Throughout the whole first part, the first cell, alternating between two notes, undergoes an algorithmic metamorphosis in the *Des* major scale.

In the scale phase, the final sprint, the pianist finds himself in a state of physical urgency in which he must use all his remaining energy to lose himself in a fundamental element of his craft: a scale etude. The constant use of the same scale here is also pursued algorithmically in a seeming attempt to compete with the effortless playing of the machine. The scale phase is completely made up of self-emulating scale loops that gradually and in a circular movement come to span the entire piano keyboard (in contrast with the long first part, in which the pianist only uses the middle register, *ges - es2*) and implodes into a soul-wrenching motif that finally dissolves into complete silence. In the wake of this implosion, the piano robot develops a tremolo, first inaudible, adumbrating the minor key from the root *bes* in octaves and fifths, gradually spreading out over the whole keyboard. On top of this, the pianist formulates a dramatic octaval melody interspersed with snatches of tremolo in an attempt to drown out the robot.

The intuitive interplay between pianist and automatic piano evolves towards an inevitable clash: the hypervirtuosity of the robot makes it impossible for the pianist to continue. In the end the keys are blocked.

This is accompanied by a blackout of the space, the robot continuing to play, but so quietly that only the sound of the keys is still audible, with the occasional, very gentle touching of the strings. In the darkness one hears the robot's dismayed search for some kind of stability. This ultimately comes in the form of a high note, the strings for which have been dampened inside the piano, taped off beforehand. This irregular, slowing and almost soundless metronomic ticking continues through to the end of the performance.

After this blackout begins the second part: a prolonged three-part epilogue. The first part consists of an initial, tentative communication between piano (robot) and pianist. The automatic piano seems to discover itself with a slowly descending exploration of certain notes, while the pianist answers, ascending in a mirrored fashion from the lower end of the keyboard. The second part of the epilogue is semi-conversational, the pianist and the robot teaching each other a number of minor chords and hesitantly attempting to formulate a shared melody. In the last part, the pianist takes a definitive step back, now simply observing the piano as it produces its own melancholic melody.