

**V. Rizzardi and A. De Benedictis (editors). *New Music on the Radio, 1954-1959*. Rai-Eri 2000. 360 pages with CD. ISBN 88-397-1142-2**

**P. Donati and E. Pacetti (editors). *C'erano una volta nove oscillatori...* Rai-Eri 2002. 205 pages with CD-ROM. ISBN 88-397-1206-2**

<http://www.teche.rai.it/multiteca/docs/0002/oscillatori.pdf>

<http://www.teche.rai.it/multiteca/docs/0002/page09.html>

*'I shall leave you now and two loudspeakers will take my place'*. In October 1952, at the Museum of Modern Art of New York, conductor Leopold Stokowski stopped his concert with this phrase. What followed was a concert of 'tape music' by Ussachevsky and Luening, the first of its kind in the United States (see *Musicworks* 82, winter 2002). Young Luciano Berio was present. He did not think much of the music, but was impressed by the sounds he heard. He went to Columbia University, where Ussachevsky told him what he needed to know to replicate his techniques. Essentially, he was transforming existing sounds, in the case of this concert from a piano (and probably other sources). Meanwhile, Bruno Maderna had frequented the German school of Meyer-Eppler, Eimert and Stockhausen, whose Köln studio had been established in 1951. Berio commented that the two schools represented two polarities: the subtractive one, based on existing sounds from which 'different musical functions could be derived'; and the additive one, based on combining sound waves. In both cases, sounds were recorded on sections of analogue magnetic tape, which were spliced together to compose music. Another European pole of experimentation at that time was in Paris, where Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry had been developing their 'musique concrète' in their studio founded in 1948, but contacts with that group were established only later.

In 1955, the Radio Italiana (Rai) established the Studio di Fonologia Musicale, under the direction of Berio and Maderna (although a laboratory existed before and some pieces have earlier dates). The studio had nine oscillators, a reason of pride at that time, and a very capable technician, Marino Zuccheri. The day work of the studio was to produce sound effects and occasional music, mostly for radio programs. At night, it was the time for experimentation and composition of innovative music. Most of the international musical avant-garde went through the studio at one time or another, and many produced works there. The first of the two books contains a lively interview with Zuccheri that includes interesting remarks on the work methods of these musicians, among others John Cage who composed *Fontana Mix* there.

Berio left after about five years, to continue his musical career with different styles of music, but the studio continued to be frequented for several years by Maderna and, longest of them all, Luigi Nono. Unfortunately however the equipment was not updated, and Zuccheri describes the lonely demise of this forgotten space when he closed the door on his retirement day in 1983. Synthesizers, samplers and computer control were by then widely available, and their advantages with respect to the previous equipment were clear, although they led to different music styles. By then, Zuccheri had worked with many musicians and Umberto Eco suggested that some electronic pieces going under other

names were really his. The only piece bearing Zuccheri's name ('Parete') was presented in the Italian pavilion of Montreal Expo 1967 and has been made available recently on LP.

In 1996, Maddalena Novati was given the keys of a cabinet containing the studio's tape archive. She found about 400 tapes for 200 hours of listening, which she has been cataloguing, restoring and converting. It was the beginning of a new interest in the Studio and its history, which has led to these two books.

Both books contain a wealth of interviews and historical as well as critical materials. The first book has a CD with two radio shows, result of collaborations between Berio, Maderna, singer Cathy Berberian (the 'tenth oscillator'...), ethnomusicologist Roberto Leydi, and writer Umberto Eco. The first of these shows is 'Ritratto di Città' (1954-55), a poetical portrait of a day in Milan including musical interludes and sound effects; and the second is 'Omaggio a Joyce' (1958), a study of semantics, onomatopoeia and musicality in literature and especially in Ulysses' episode on the Sirens. This second show includes the six minutes 'Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)' of Berio and Berberian, a piece that is aware of Stockhausen's innovations (especially the 'Gesang der Jünglinge' (1955-56)) but develops them in new directions. Apparently, neither show was broadcast by Rai at the time. The second book has a CD-ROM (compiled by Novati) which is an excellent demonstration of the potential of this medium. It contains (approximately...) 180 sound examples by 50 composers for 4 hours of listening, 29 video clips for 50 minutes (mostly interviews with musicians), many photos and biographies, and a database system to help the researcher organize the search space. Almost half a century later, it is very interesting to hear how the early electronic musicians were addressing questions regarding the role of the new medium and the place of the new music in musicological, historical and sociological terms. At an early stage there was a concentrated interest in pure electronics, while later the interest shifted towards integration with the traditional orchestra. Maderna had led the way here with his 'Musica su due dimensioni' (1952). This CD-ROM offers an opportunity to listen to examples of these distinct musical styles that have almost disappeared from recording catalogues. The choice of the examples has been inspired more by the idea of giving a broad view of the activities in the studio than by the idea of illustrating its best output. Some examples have purely documentary value; others are too short to do justice to the full work. A few of them can also be heard on the URL given above.

While the first book is bilingual (English-Italian), the second one, as well as the accompanying CD-ROM, are in Italian only. So the video interviews of Cage and Stockhausen are dubbed in Italian...

---

Luigi Logrippo is an Ottawa computer scientist with an interest in 10 centuries of musical innovation.

(Article appeared in MusicWorks, spring 2006)

