
CONCERTS AT THE UNIVERSITY

Spring - Summer 2016

Saturday 30 April 2016

8pm

Reid Concert Hall

Alvise Vidolin · sound projection

Mary Dullea · piano

Programme of works by **LUIGI NONO**.



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

Concert of works for tape and instruments by Luigi Nono
(1924-1990)

Ricorda cosa ti hanno fatto in Auschwitz (1966), tape [12']

**Y entonces comprendió (1970), "acousmatic restitution" of a piece
for 3 sopranos, 3 actresses, choir and 4 CH tape [30']**
(courtesy of / thanks to 'Casa Ricordi - Milano')

... sofferte onde serene ... (1976), piano and tape [14']

We are thrilled to be joined in this concert by live electronics and sound projection luminary Alvis Vidolin, and pianist Mary Dullea. Alvis has played an enormously important role in the development and performance of electronic music both within his native Italy and abroad. He is particularly well-known for his collaboration with Italian composer Luigi Nono, three of whose works will form our programme. Joining us from London but originally from Ireland, Mary specialises more and more in the music of our time. We are particularly excited that she will perform with Alvis the poetically charged and enormously challenging ... *sofferte onde serene* ... (suffering, serene waves).

Ricorda cosa ti hanno fatto in Auschwitz for tape (1966)

Tape conjures reality, and at the same time masks its source. The sound of a cry or a gong may enter our consciousness as a visceral connection with the outside world, or it may be distorted and manipulated beyond recognition. In this work, with the title *Remember What They Did to You in Auschwitz*, we hear a jumble of vocal and electronic sounds whirled around the room; some are distant and barely audible, some close and aggressive. There are no clearly discernable words and no underlying text. But the vocal utterances, always in motion, seem like they should be comprehensible, if we could only listen closely enough.

Nono created the work from taped interludes that he had composed for Peter Weiss's play, *The Investigation (Die Ermittlung, 1965)*. This "documentary play" was based on the first Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt, Germany, which had begun two years earlier and were still ongoing. At a time when awareness of the Holocaust was just beginning to seep into public consciousness in Germany, Weiss's controversial work used verbatim testimony from witnesses at the trial. The director, Erwin Piscator, who had pioneered avant-garde political theatre in Berlin before the war, asked Nono to write the music, suggesting that, since "the horror of the concentration camp cannot be portrayed [on stage], I thought of a chorus, such that the music would be for voices alone; in effect, the voices of the six million dead." Nono did not create traditional "incidental music" for this tricky assignment, but rather a series of brief snippets of taped sounds, ranging in length from 8 seconds to a little under 2 minutes, that interrupt, augment, and comment on the scenes. He prepared these with the help of Marino Zuccheri, sound engineer of the Studio di Fonologia in Milan (RAI), who also assisted in the process of adapting the *Ermittlung* material to create *Ricorda*, a continuous 11 minute piece with a coherent dramatic arc.

Ricorda employs a vivid sonic vocabulary derived from sources including solo soprano (Stefania Woyrowitz), the Children's Chorus of the Piccolo Teatro, Milan, a mixed chorus, electronically generated sounds, and instrumental sounds (woodwind, brass, and percussion). In addition to the *Ermittlung* material, other sources include recordings made for *Diario polacco '58* as well as recorded excerpts from several of Nono's earlier works, including *Cori di Didone* and *La fabbrica illuminata*, as Matthias Kontarsky has pointed out. Nono and Zuccheri manipulated the pre-existing sounds by combining different material on simultaneous tracks and by recording identical excerpts at slightly different speeds, leading to multi-layered echo effects. The electronically generated sounds include high pitched hissing and whistling, which Carola Nielinger-Vakil associates with the "death by gas" passage in Weiss's play. Although the chorus and solo voice do evoke a special "human" quality, in Nono's composition the acoustic and electronic material are blended, sometimes to the point of being indistinguishable. Rather than setting up an opposition between humans and technology, Nono shows how they are mutually interdependent.

From the start, Nono intended the work to have a spatial dimension. As he wrote to Piscator, the tape should be "diffused in the hall with various speakers (right-left-front-back-above and so forth)." The resulting multidimensional sound, like memory itself, is sometimes near, sometimes distant, sometimes clear, and sometimes indistinct. Nono's composition is not a commemoration of the Holocaust or a memorial to its victims, but rather an acoustic space that sets listeners' imaginations into motion, leading them to confront the unthinkable, while refusing to allow any retreat into the safe space of complacency.

-Anne C. Shreffler

Y entonces comprendiò

Moments of magical life, of legend, of Cuban revolutionary struggle that made me understand 'Y entonces comprendiò' and love the life of the Cuban people: directly from my two-day visit to Cuba and from the fantastic creativity of Carlos Franqui, Cuban revolutionary poet. My work is dedicated to: Ernesto 'Che' Guevara and all the comrades of the Sierras Maestras of the world. The materials in this composition are entirely based on the human voice: both texts and pure sounds manipulated by various electronic techniques in order to create the continuum of my composition. Only in the second part did I decide to use metallic and electronic materials. In the fifth episode there are also three quotes from "Non consumiamo Marx" and the voice of Fidel [Castro] while he reads the last letter sent to him by 'Che' Guevara. In the performance there is the overlapping of three acoustic levels: live voices (the six voices and part of the choir); part of the choir, together with synthesised sounds, processed with filters and ring modulation; and voice recordings. The work of experimentation, research, and of initial recording of the voices always took place with the collaboration and active participation of the six performers and of the sound technician Marino Zuccheri (especially for the use of microphones). After that, the work of experimentation, choice, processing, and composition continued at the RAI 'Studio di Fonologia' in Milan.

- Luigi Nono

Acousmatic Restitutions

The project 'acousmatic restitutions of concert works by Nono' started in 2011 with "a floresta é jovem e cheia de vida" (1967), curated by Veniero Rizzardi and Alvis Vidolin. It aims at covering the entire voice-with-electronics productions of Luigi Nono realised in the 1960s at the RAI 'Studio di Fonologia' in Milan. The project, thus, aims to present works which were originally composed for live performers and multi-channel tape recording, replacing the performers with their

own 'copies' reproduced through different loudspeakers. This idea originates from the practical availability, for "a floresta é jovem e cheia de vida", of the individual recordings of the original soloist parts, which the composer used for the production. It was then possible to create a remix of these materials in order to use the same parts from the 1967 recording again, but in a listening context analogous to that of the concert. Why proceed thus? Besides the realisation of portable and affordable versions of works which would otherwise not be very easy to set up, this operation is an authentic restitution for it recreates, in the voice-with-electronics works by Nono, the presence of the original performers who, at that time, played a fundamental role in the creation of the piece. These performers were so involved in the creative development of the work that, during the performance, they only needed very few basic indications in order to be able to perform it. Nono, most of the time, did not even try to have a final score. "A floresta é jovem e cheia de vida" and 'Y entonces comprendiò' (1969-70) are now performable again after several decades thanks to an accurate work of philological reconstruction. But a large part of these works (insofar as they are 'acoustic texts') is indissolubly related to the contribution of the original performers. Listening to them from their voice is thus the best option. But, until now, in the historical recordings, an essential part of the works, that is the spatial listening dimension, was actually missing as it was only evoked through the stereo mix of the record. It is also important to underline that the 'restitution' of this spatial dimension does not simply take place through a surround simulation of a performance space 'reproduced' within another different listening space, rather, it is achieved by creating the exact configuration desired by the composer: Each channel, in fact, will be reproducing a specific musical 'part'. This allows the tape performer to achieve a profound interpretation of the work as, each time, they have to understand a particular space and act accordingly--this was also a fundamental performance praxis of the composer. Furthermore, this way of 'performing' Nono's music is not arbitrary, and actually has an important precedent: In 1964, a version of "La fabbrica illuminata" for soprano and four-channel tape was realised in which the voice of the original soloist (Carla Henius) was mixed to the two front channels of the tape in order to simulate a listening experience similar to that of the live performance. Unfortunately, except for "a floresta", there are no individual recordings of the original soloists that could have been mixed with the live performance tape part - now in its digital file reincarnation. For that reason we decided to do something more challenging and sophisticated, namely-and starting from the mix realised by Nono for the record-to extract the digital information relative to the acoustic spectrum of the soloist parts, so that they could be isolated and reproduced through one or more dedicated loudspeakers.

- Veniero Rizzardi

..... *sofferte onde serene* ... for piano and tape (1976)

This piece, whose title can be translated as 'serene waves, endured (or suffered),' literally, 'endured, serene waves' was created in 1976 at the RAI Studio di Fonologia in Milan. It marks the beginning of the composer's late creative period, in which, following series of works with overtly political themes, Nono moved to a more introspective style. Nono entertained a close friendship with the pianist Mauricio Pollini, with whom he also collaborated on "Como una ola de fuerza y luz" for orchestra, soprano, piano and magnetic tape. Both artists had suffered the death of family members during the year 1976, and the piece is as much a sign of appreciation for Pollini's playing as a catharsis for their mutual grief.

Nono was particularly fascinated with Pollini's sound and pianistic approach. The tape material was drawn from recordings of Pollini improvising on certain pitch collections provided by the composer. The fact that there was no score to the recording of the tape material shows Luigi Nono's particular interest in using recordings to capture the essence of Pollini's playing, his percussive attacks, extremely varied articulation, and also his spontaneous gestures. The piano recordings were also mixed with a recording of bells from the Giudecca in Venice, a very personal metaphor for the sense of inexorable passing of time. Nono described the tape part as 'neither contrast nor counterpoint' and the fact that the sonic material of the tape is drawn from pianistic sounds creates immense possibilities for a continuously evolving and subtle relationship between these two acoustic levels. The tape at times shadows and echoes the piano, but there are also moments of dialog and moments of conflict between the two actors. The transitions between these various relationships are often created by the piano and tape being in contrasting temporalities, pushing each other and creating the different 'waves'. While the relationship between piano and tape defines the different sections, these sections are made more distinct by use of unique pitch collections and registers. This results in a fragmentation that can be interpreted as a way to create the illusion of impermanence.

There are only six reference points for the piano and tape to align in the score, which leaves the performers with the problem of synchronization for most of the piece. One can interpret this possibility for flexibility as Nono preferring the natural indeterminacy of human interactions as the piece unfolds, rather than attempting to prescribe more precise interaction.

Since the different relationships between piano and tape in *sofferte onde serene* ... are an intrinsic part of the dramaturgical aspect of the piece, the tape part truly needs to be interpreted and performed. Despite the tape being a form of fixed media, this demands a form of listening with a transformative potential for the performers, and encourages a level of communication comparable to that of purely acoustic chamber music.

-Julia Den Boer

Sound director, computer music researcher, and live electronics interpreter, **Alvise Vidolin** has given his services to several important Italian and foreign institutions and has worked for several composers such as Claudio Ambrosini, Giorgio Battistelli, Luciano Berio, Aldo Clementi, Franco Donatoni, Adriano Guarnieri, Luigi Nono, and Salvatore Sciarrino, on the electronic realisation and performance of their works.

He is co-founder and staff member of Centro di Sonologia Computazionale (CSC - University of Padova) where he is conducting his researching activity in the field of computer assisted composition and performance. Co-founder of the Associazione di Informatica Musicale Italiana (AIMI) he was president of the same between 1988 and 1990. Since 1977 he has collaborated on various occasions with the La Biennale di Venezia with special responsibility for the Laboratorio permanente per l'Informatica Musicale della Biennale (LIMB). From 1992 to 1998 he collaborated with the Centro Tempo Reale of Firenze with responsibility for the musical production. He held the Chair of Electronic Music at "B. Marcello" Conservatory of Music in Venezia from 1975 until 2009 and he taught Electronic Music at the Accademia Internazionale della Musica delle Scuole Civiche in Milan, Italy from 1993 to 2012. He is a member of the scientific committee of Fondazione Archivio Luigi Nono and a member of the Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere e Arti.

He has published various scientific works and held conferences in the field of sound and music computing and he is working on the scientific potentials in composition and execution of music offered by informatic means and multimodal systems.

As soloist and chamber musician, Irish pianist **Mary Dullea** performs internationally at venues including London's Wigmore Hall, Casa da Musica (Porto), Shanghai Oriental Arts Centre, Phillips Collection Washington D.C., Symphony Space New York City, Palazzo Albrizzi Venice (Italy), Johannesburg Music Society and National Concert Hall Dublin. Festival appearances include City of London, Cheltenham, St. Magnus International Festival, Belfast International Chamber Music Festival, Brighton, Huddersfield, Corsham, Aldeburgh, Fuse Leeds and Sound Scotland as well as Belfast Festival at Queens, West Cork Music, Reggello International Festival, Lodi Festival (Italy), TRANSIT Festival (Leuven) and National Arts Festival (South Africa). Her frequent broadcasts include BBC Radio 3, Radio 4, RTHK, RTE Lyric FM, WNYC, Radio New Zealand and Sky Arts, Irish,

French, Austrian and Italian television. She was the Irish representative at EU 12 and 15 Piano Extravaganza Concerts in Salle Pleyel Paris, Palais des Beaux-Arts Brussels and in Luxembourg. Concerto appearances include RTE Concert Orchestra, KZN Philharmonic Orchestra and the BBC commissioned and broadcast piano concerto by Rob Keeley with Lontano.

A sought-after interpreter of new music, Mary's expansive repertoire covers the standard piano literature as well as an ever-increasing amount of 20th- and 21st-century compositions, many of which are dedicated to her. She has commissioned and premiered works from composers as varied as Michael Finnissy, Johannes Maria Staud, Michael Nyman, Donnacha Dennehy and Gerald Barryâ – notably with her piano trio, The Fidelio Trio and with violinist, Darragh Morgan.

Since 2008 she has been the curator of Soundings (an annual UK/Austrian collaborative new music festival) at the Austrian Cultural Forum London. In February 2015 she served on the jury of 'Schubert und die Musik der Moderne' International Chamber Music Competition in Graz, Austria. She is the Artistic Director and founder of 'Chamber Music on Valentia', an annual chamber music festival in Co. Kerry, Ireland.

Mary's own studies were at The Royal College of Music, London on the Edith Best Scholarship with Yonty Solomon and Goldsmiths University of London (MMus in Contemporary Music Studies). Her PhD in Performance from The University of Ulster focused on repertoire incorporating the use of the inside and the outside of the piano. Mary is Director of Performance at Royal Holloway, University of London.

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