

## *A life-long line of sound*

Ennio Chiggio

*She for whom we cannot wait / will teach it to us/ She shines,  
unsure, remote/ She whom we don't allow to come to us /  
doesn't wait for us,/ doesn't come to us,/ doesn't care about  
us,/ remains unresolved./ She doesn't belong to us,/ doesn't ask  
about us/ doesn't remember us,/ doesn't speak to us,/ We don't  
deserve her ...*

H.M. Enzensberger

When you separate from your friend, your companion-at-arms, you experience that agonizing tear, the linguistic emptiness that comes into being with a subject you can no longer activate, 'energised' by your phonetic, speech function. You start collecting all the bits and pieces that make it possible to engage in a posthumous dialogue based on memory and on listening again. You come up with a threnody – a funeral dirge – the acoustic form of separation, of not belonging, a 'music of the future' borrowing the title from a poem by H.M. Enzensberger that, as an epigram, bears witness to the suffering at missed encounters at the end of a life.

So I'll try to recreate sound, in contrast to the 'silence' imposed by non-existence and reconstruct through dissonances a subject who never de-composed while I was listening, in that mystically she was always in the process of composing. In fact, her flight to the future became more essential during her last stay in Bassano and keeps anyone from gaining access to her inspired withdrawal in the overturned space-time of her *Zimmermusik*... Teresa Rampazzi, she goes on composing «till the last sound», as Gianni Di Capua aptly called a testimonial dedicated to her on the radio, while she doesn't remember us... doesn't talk to us! She sends acoustic numbers...

These notes, which I found hard to write because of the continuous interaction of levels, are an attempt to explain to the reader how it was possible that sometime in the 60s, people from different disciplines, with different backgrounds and strong cultural and innovative orientations, met to create groups and cultural associations of that politically extreme, leftist orientation known as extra-parliamentarian. The rea-

sons for that behaviour are accidental, but also trivial in a certain way. Shared symbols and meeting places fuelled the urgency and need that brought together young people anxious for forms of expression free from familial and institutionalised hegemony in political and academic life, predicting in larval form what would become more explicit in '68 along the lines of Marcuse. In this spirit of 'collectivism', some people got involved who weren't suffering at all from this kind of 'youthful discontent' and who already demonstrated a pronounced maturity, but who associated with certain positions, topoi, and shared «formative paths». In fact, the 60s were characterised by the presence of visual, musical, literary, and political groups that shared a politically widespread «spirit of subversion», a theoretical telos capable of practical action. As a consequence, the members brought together blending into a common mission their individual experiences over the preceding years in other places to search for a homogenous composition.

Dialogue about aesthetic experiences centred on what G.C. Argan called «the technological future of art» at the famous Conference at Verrucchio in 1964, in which the entire problematic of events generated by 'machine' repetition mixed with visual and acoustic experiences into a theoretical whole.

Today we can see and emphasize the individualistic nature of the members in the actions of these groups, since this side of the problem produced, on the one hand, a co-ercive process that encouraged the people to seek each other out to produce something more than just a mere summation of thoughts and, on the other, the constant rejection of collective behaviour, which explains the break up of or abrupt defections from working groups, in a continuous and fluid, even perverse, blending of subjects, if you will!

It was in this ideologically charged climate of the «death of art», as Argan affirmed in the spirit of Hegel, that I met Teresa Rampazzi. She came from experience in the Pozzetto Circle and the Enne Group, to which I also belonged. As I have already written during those years in other contexts, she came to do an audition. It was a fateful encounter. Teresa's enthusiasm was contagious. I was young and full of curiosity and I showed her the equipment I was working on... she told me about the Bartók Trio and the people she met in Darmstat, about Maderna, about Cage and so we started to meet frequently. We saw each other even more often since we both attended the same meetings on political activism. In fact, we often distributed leaflets in the morning in front of factories; and there we talked about politics and music.

I think Teresa Rampazzi was involved in the political, musical and visual Avant-garde for all the reasons connected with futuristic-dadaist activism and, as I said during a farewell held in her memory at the 'Pollini' Conservatory, she took part in them just to amuse herself. Actually she was fascinated by the strong confrontational semantic action that characterised her companions, their capacity for linguistic and literary dilation and control of going 'beyond'. This experience of emotional-affective instability that she put into practice in the construction and later deconstruction of languages filled her with subversive courage, which she began to feel in her own body, in her private life where she exercised musical hegemony above all else.

And it was in this equable climate that music was indispensable; every one listened to music in the Rampazzi household – husband, children, and friends – during the pe-

riods in both Verona and Padua, mixing visual art, architecture, literature, and science in continuous topics of conversation. On Teresa and her husband Carlo's sound reproduction system, we listened to all the 'contemporary' music we could get on records and, after they got a tape-recorder, the first tapes she managed to get from composer friends. At the same time, we worked systematically on ancient music from gradual antiphon up to post-Webern ethereal textures with mutual exchange of material.

These encounters were always exceptional, since we were examining the past in order to glean the structuralism, which would allow us to reproduce the organising weave of a Perotinus or a Bach, the warp and woof of motets and madrigals up to the acoustic density of a Stravinsky or a Varèse.

I'm underscoring the 'romantic' in Teresa Rampazzi, since with her action always predominated over thinking so as to continually produce a kind of dissimulation in every working moment. The discussion was always 'open work'. For those who didn't know her personally, it's worth pointing out that Teresa suffered from hyperthyroidism, which made her life rather difficult and unstable. She outdid herself in everything or managed to achieve the most incredible performative excesses. She didn't sleep much at night and, therefore, had all the time in the world to read extensively, on both literature and music often in the original languages (she knew German and English well and recently had taken up Russian...) and to listen to music at night, something which often made her intolerable in the family. A family that she often over-looked. This made the domestic panorama rather unstable. Some biographical episodes from the Veronese and Paduan periods were part of extremist behaviour designed as a kind of 'surprise' attack by which she liked to shake up the foundations of the bourgeois world she belonged to.

In an attempt to define acoustic areas, we started working with Teresa on radio recordings. The RAI Third Programme was, in fact, enlightened in its transmissions for an attentive public of musicologists. That work went on for almost ten years, listening to thousands of pieces of music from Festivals or contemporary music events, which the Radio Station faithfully recorded.

This work enabled us to make incursions into and bold comparisons with historical material, along with a masterly capacity to 'excogitate' the formalising structure of the musical event that we were transferring in our 'sound objects'.

Here I want to remind everyone of the intensity of participation and 'driving force' that was evident from the very first beats... and always involved all the members in hidden emotional states. The exchange of ideas and editing techniques began immediately with a first experimental 'collage' that I edited with her help for the 1964 Biennale d'Arte in Venice in the space reserved for the Enne Group. Today, we have only a fraction of all of that and several tapes of recordings we wanted to take inspiration from. This came much before the formalisation we later gave to our collective work in "Nuove Proposte Sonore" in 1965, presented at the Galleria La Chiocciola in Padua, which had exhibited works by the Enne Group. The same coming together occurred during the historic exhibit in Lodz, Poland with the transmission of an NPS soundtrack and the catalogue presentation by Pietro Grossi.

I should underscore that Teresa Rampazzi's wilful character, forged as I've said by the excesses of the avant-garde with her subtle, cutting irony, her (romantic) habit of

making justifying notes to every throbbing trope, made her a presence in every little event at the NPS studio. For this reason, we shouldn't ignore the role played in the life of the studio, as in all things human, of the mastery of the means of sound production, which determined the essential primacy of Teresa's leadership and produced initiatives that too often wandered a field of the collective assumptions.

In a 1968 essay, a sort of first examination of our collective work, I pointed out how the *Nuove Proposte Sonore* already contained all the roles and ideals typical of the avant-gardes, i.e., the impulse toward 'the new', forgetting that from *Ars Nova* until today many tendencies in music have moved away from that definition.

The reaction that I set in motion with Teresa's complete support was to eliminate all the sounds that were not controllable and verifiable on an instrument, to avoid what a series of clarificatory writings dating from 1965 and 1966 prescribed. I was elaborating a theoretical maturity and group practice, able to delve deeper into the concept of 'sound object', borrowing the definition from visuality and specifying it better and, in this sense, the procedure that envisioned 'continual experimentation' came into being.

We hardly worked in those years. While I devoted a lot of attention to the methodological aspect of the 'sound object' and the working procedures inherent in experimentation, Teresa entertained and wove ties with other experimental realities in Italy and abroad.

In this way of working, too, the two souls diverged, on the one hand, the stubborn, angular, almost aphoristic writing of the theoretician; on the other, the well-edited, tasteful, accurate text, in the style of the ironic bourgeois game of seducing the late-comers with the promise of the back row! The series of articles published for «film special» bears this out.

Teresa Rampazzi was perfectly comfortable using the Audiogram, a 'precise' instrument for annotating and rendering interpretable the sound events and their organisation, but was completely impervious to all the technology that didn't serve the rapid flow of notation that marked her poetics! My diligence alone resulted in the first successful hand-written, trial scores being printed and so becoming the daily tool for annotation for several years until the time when the use of the synthesiser required new symbols of representation. It was always clear that I was the one to write the scores, since I was more adept at the visual. In reality, it was the creative climate: Teresa never started from a certain kind of notation in order to 'understand'. If anything, she always started from acoustic material that was swirling around in her head until she reached a 'writable' form on the audiogram and which were a diaspora of bits of paper and procedural notes that floated around the studio up until then.

As we've seen, Teresa Rampazzi's existential vitality, which carried her to a firm extremism, made her go beyond the collective decisions she found limiting for her individual creativity and react 'theatrically' to the hard discipline of the group's rational postulates. Individualities broke out in a rash and, let's say, healthy way and were capable of damaging the relationship. In 1968 after long discussions with the other members, I left the group when I sensed that it would be impossible to rectify such contradictions and decided, with a certain relief on Teresa's part (I think so now!), to

cut out a role as theoretician for myself, continuing to write on the phenomenology of composition.

Important changes occurred in the group that year. Members entered and exited, even though the process of 'open experimentation' had been set in motion (though not in real practice,) for which apparently innocent coming and going some would later pay however. We tried to face pragmatically these facts and internal movements, thanks to Teresa Rampazzi's solution to start courses that would provide continuity with new recruits under the collective label, in the vain certainty that many would arrive automatically at a 'new', collective way of working around a logo and adequate electronic instrumentation. It didn't happen this way. Instead, with Vidolin and De Poli, a brotherhood came about that endures to today. At the end of the NPS adventure, a 'collected paper' was published in 1977 with them and Teresa bringing together all the official documents of the group.

When the NPS equipment was transferred to the Conservatory at the creation of the Chair of Electronic Music given to Teresa, her desire to disengage herself, also exasperated by her suffocating involvement with Computer Music at the Centre of Computational Sonology at the University of Padua, became more and more apparent.

At that time I had disengaged myself from the technological constraints imposed by the early punch-card computers and interfaces. Unfortunately, many read this decision as a conceptual rejection. This wasn't so as the compositions I've published since 1985 using computational procedures testify. Because of the very ineffability of human behaviour, first Assisi then Bassano became metaphysical places... places I cannot revisit!