

Riccardo Bianchini and electronic music

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...01-16-1969. Sometimes it seems to me that the music I write doesn't have a beginning or end but is simply the transference into our dimension of music that always exists without interruption in another dimension, something like an infinite tape that is always running which is attached to a loudspeaker every once in a while...

I'm leafing through Riccardo Bianchini's diaries; he wrote this thought when he was 23 years old... 5 years later, in 1974, he would begin teaching electronic music, first in Pescara, then in Milan and finally at the Conservatory of Rome, where he died unexpectedly on June 9, 2003, as he was getting ready to go into the classroom. Bianchini has always been linked to musical research, to passion for experimentation, to a profound knowledge of the relationship between science and music. As a composer, teacher, researcher he was very open, profoundly human, dedicated and vital. Looking at the diaries from his younger years that his wife Ambretta kindly showed me a few days ago, I discover many unknown aspects of a composer who was generally unaware of competition and power, from both political and human points of view. And perhaps it was for this that the newspapers wrote very little about him at his death (with the exception of a nice article by Nicola Sani in «Diario» N. 24).

I remember the first lesson that I gave after Riccardo's death: «a student brings me his analysis of a beautiful piece, by coincidence *Mortuos plando, vivos voco* by Jonathan Harvey... The outline of it is on a piece of paper that stretched the length of the classroom, perhaps it reached the balcony... it reminds me of the score of *Incontri di Fasce Sonore* by Franco Evangelisti (the first to hold the chair of Electronic Music at Rome) on the same type of paper that reached into space, a piece that Riccardo introduced to me when I was a student... then my mind returns to the present and my student... we look at his 'papyrus' while we listen to the piece by Harvey again, composed with the re-elaborated sounds of bells and a child singing... When the piece is over, the students look at me, waiting for my feedback on the outline written with such effort. But my mind has wandered again to the suspended sounds of the coda and the text... I got to know these pieces with Riccardo, like thousands of others introduced to electronic music through his work, often subdued, calm, but constant and full of effort and enthusiasm...».

Even in the music world, many do not recall his death, have forgotten that in reality Riccardo Bianchini gave an enormous impulse to the spread of new music and, in particular, to electric-acoustic music through his teaching, numerous broadcasts on Radio-Rai from 1983 to 1991, texts, and compositions.

I'm looking at the book we wrote together and I think of how strange it is that it didn't all disappear with him; they were all closely connected for me, together with all the reminders of the days for entire months spent together writing, amusing ourselves and trying passionately to improve... it is strange the moment when objects remain (like his voice on the sound samples) and the people who created them have left mysteriously...

...4.6.1966 ... reading the poetry of Neruda, especially Le alture di Machu Picchu, I thought of the huge abandoned temples often built in the mountains, the Andes [...]. Those temples with long empty corridors, in which the slightest sound is amplified and echoes a thousand times over, on a fairy-like, silent stage, where old men, priests, warriors, merchants, Inca peasants also move around, a people who have always attracted me even though I know little of them. People whose lives progressed peacefully, who have probably waged very few wars, given that they didn't have enemies in their sphere of influence. And what remains now: abandoned cities built with monumental stones in high, almost inaccessible places. I would like to go, some day...

Riccardo Bianchini never saw Machu Picchu, but he achieved that desire, expressed when he was 20 years old, to see the Andes because he taught in many universities in Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile (where he co-founded a festival of new music that will soon be dedicated to his memory.) He deeply loved the people and nature of South America and showed that his interest was not simple curiosity but a profound love for the places and cultures that at 20 years old he didn't yet know, but already loved in his imagination. His work experiences were less straightforward than his image might lead one to believe. Twenty-seven years on from that page in his youthful diary, Bianchini wrote *Machu Picchu* for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, 2 trumpets, French horn, trombone and electronic sounds. Inspired by Neruda's *Alturas de Machu Picchu*, especially the phrase «aire en al aire, y el hombre, donde estuvo?...» («air in the air, and man, where will he be?») For Bianchini each piece was also the result of discovery, both technical and expressive, and few composers in Italy have maintained such a profound and deeply experienced relationship between scientific and musical aptitudes.

There are people who leave a barely perceptible yet profound mark on this earth. Riccardo Bianchini's mark has touched numerous people in a professional, human, and artistic way. The testimonies and letters left on various sites dedicated to him are proof of this. Yet he would be the first to dismiss with a quip what is instead proper recognition of his importance in the Italian musical world.

Riccardo Bianchini

(23 giugno 1946 - 9 giugno 2003)

Studied piano and composition with Bruno Canino, electronic music with Angelo Paccagnini and Engineering at Milan Polytechnic Institute.

From 1974 on he taught electronic music at the Conservatories in Pescara and Milan, and from 1987 on at the Conservatory 'S. Cecilia' in Rome.

He taught various summer courses in Italy (Varenna, Città di Castello, and Montepulciano) and abroad (from 1995 as guest professor at Escuela Universitaria de Música in Montevideo, Uruguay, courses at LIPM in Buenos Aires, at National University of Córdoba, and at the National University of Cuyo a Mendoza, Argentina).

He worked with Feltrinelli and Ricordi publishing houses as translator (*History of Music*, Oxford, Vol. X, Henri Pousseur, *Electronic Music*, Charles Rosen, *Classical Style and the sonata forms*, R. Dick, *The Other Flute*) and essayist (Appendix to the Oxford *History of Music*, *La nuova musica in Italia*, entries for the Feltrinelli-Fischer encyclopedia) and published articles in numerous publications («Musica», «Musica domani», «Musica/Realtà», «1985 La musica», «Rivista IBM», «Perspectives of New Music»).

He is the author of *Computer Music – Manuale di informatica musicale* (unpublished) and, together with Alessandro Cipriani, of *Il Suono Virtuale* (ConTempo, 1998-2001-2003), the only complete manual published in Italian on the synthesis and elaboration of sound. The text was also published in an American edition (Virtual Sound, ConTempo 2000) and has been adopted for courses on synthesis of sound in various universities and conservatories throughout the world. In the field of informatics he wrote (together with others) Hypermusic, a self-learning software for music, and WShell, a series of programs for writing, editing, and generating Csound orchestra scores. From 1983 to 1991 he worked with RAI-Radiotre on contemporary music programs, including the International Forum (with James Dashow), a weekly program on contemporary music from around the world.

In Milan in 1977 he founded and directed the ensemble 'Edgar Varèse', a chamber music ensemble whose repertoire ranges from 16th century Venetian to contemporary music and in 1992 founded and directed Farfensemble, a similar group.

His compositions have been played and/or transmitted in, in addition to Italy, France, Germany, Sweden, Finland, USA, Cuba, Argentina, Uruguay, and Australia. Among the most memorable are *haiku* (1976) for piano and tape, *Roèn* (1982) for ensemble, *La principessa senza tempo* (1985) for flute and tape, *Rosengarten* (1986) for orchestra, *Chanson d'aube* (1986) for 12 brass instruments, *Preuss* (1989) for violin, cello and tape, *Machu Picchu* (1993) per 8 flutes and tape, *12 Preludi* (1980-1994) for piano, *Les damnées de la terre* (1996) for actors, soprano, flute, percussion, tape and projected images, *Canciones para las estrellas* (1997), in versions for tape and for piano and tape, *Montevideana*, (1999, 5:00), for tape, *Alle Menschen werden Brüder*, (1999, 7:40), for violin, loudspeaker, and quadriphonic tape, *l'Homme Armé* (2002) for 4 or 8 voices, live electronics and tape, ... *a las rocas, al mar, a las montañas* for tape (2002 - 3:00), *AD* for baritone, 2 flutes, 2 saxophones, bassoon, trombone, cello, piano,

percussion and tape-recording (in collaboration with A. Santoloci, P. Cangialosi, F. Severa, M. Zuccaroli - 2002 - 28:00). His compositions have been published and recorded on LP and CD by EDIPAN and BMG-Ariola. Bianchini was a member of the administration of the Association of Vertical Music and of the National Commission for the Study of Musicology (Ministry of Universities and Research.)

Compositions

haiku, (1976, 10:00), piano and tape.

Mirror, (1976, 05:00), flute and piano.

Collettivo II, (1976, 05:00), flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, violin, cello and piano. Edipan.

Due racconti, (1979, 05:00), 2 flutes, 2 clarinets, bassoon, viola and piano. Edipan.

La nave bianca (Preludio), (1980, 05:00), chamber music ensemble. Edipan.

La nave bianca (musiche di scena), (1980, 25:00), chamber music ensemble and male chorus.

Concerto aperto, (1981, 43:22), for cello, trombone, piano and percussion, double bass, drums, tape and live electronics (in collaboration with G. Liguori).

Roèn, (1982, 05:00), flute, clarinet, bassoon, French horn, violin, viola, cello and piano. Edipan.

Riyàr, (1982, 05:00), piccolo, flute in the key of C, flute in the key of G, bass flute (1 flutist) Edipan.

Sedrùna, (1982, 5:00), piano in four hands. Edipan.

Tre quadri immaginari, (1983, 10:00), harp. Edipan.

Quattro canti: 1. "Di più cupi sentieri" (D. Villatico), 2. "La tierra que era mía" (J.G. Durán), 3. "I have done" (J. London), 4. "Im wunderschönen Monat Mai" (R.M. Rilke), (1980-1988, 12:00), soprano and piano. Edipan.

6 Preludi, (1980-1984, 11:00), piano. Edipan.

Due fogli d'album, (1985, 02:00), flute and piano.

Foglio d'album, (1985, 1:30), violin and piano.

La principessa senza tempo, (1985, 14:10), flute and tape. Edipan.

Alias, (1985, 5:00), 2 oboes and bassoon.

Chanson d'aube, (1986, 6:00), 4 trumpets, 4 French horn, 4 trombones.

Rosengarten, (1986, 05:00) violin and orchestra.

Our Faust, (1986, 17:00), clarinet, trombone, double bass and live electronics BMG-Ariola.

Arsól, (1987, 10:00), computer in real time and quadriphonic tape.

Divertimento, (1988, 8:20), 13 instruments quadriphonic tape. Edipan.

Somanón, (1989, 8:00), 11 strings. Edipan.

Preuss, (1989, 16:20), violin, cello and tape. BMG-Ariola.

Fànes, (1989, 8:00), flute and flute in the key of G (1 flutist).

Alberei, (1990, 6:00), saxophone quartet. BMG-Ariola.

Saluto a Pablo, (1990, 2:00), soprano, flute, and clarinet.

- Cuando sonó la trompeta*, (1990, 7:30), soprano and tape. BMG-Ariola.
- Klimt*, (1991, 10:50), flute, oboe, clarinet, violin, viola, cello, piano and tape. BMG-Ariola.
- Chanson d'aube II*, (1991, 5:00), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 French horns and 2 bassoons.
- Tre ricercari*, (1993, 5:00), 2 trumpets, French horns, and trombones.
- Machu Picchu*, (1993, 14:00), flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, 2 trumpets, French horn, trombone and tape.
- Poche note. per Enzo Porta*, (1994, 2:00), violin.
- 6 Preludi* (II quaderno), (1994, 11:00), piano.
- Il contrabbasso poteva non esserci*, (1995, 2:30), 2 flutes, oboe, piano and string quartet.
- Naste*, (1995, 2:00), flute and cello.
- Howl*, (1995, 6:30), female or male voice and tape.
- I dannati della terra*, (1996, 28:00), actor, soprano, flute, percussions, tape and projected images.
- Ghe Xe*, (1997, 5:00), flute in the key of G and piano.
- Aria di Albertine* (da "Doppio sogno"), (1997, 4:30), soprano, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, piano and string quartet.
- Canciones para las estrellas*, (1997, 6:30), tape.
- Canciones para las estrellas*, (1997, 8:00), piano and tape.
- Los pájaros del sueño*, (1998, 9:00), clarinet and tape.
- Montevideana*, (1999, 5:00), tape (sound landscape).
- How Deep the Sea*, (1999, 5:30), Jazz Band (4 saxophones, 3 trumpets, 2 trombones, piano, bass and drums).
- Alle Menschen werden Brüder*, (1999, 7:40), loudspeaker, violin and quadriphonic tape.
- Sottovoce*, (2000), tape.
- Primo Quartetto (Mendocino)*, (2000), for string quartet.
- Para parar las aguas del olvido*, (2001, 5:30), flute, clarinet (also bass clarinet), trombone and piano.
- Two pieces for a video*, for tape (2001, 1:05 - 1:10).
- L'Homme Armé*, (2002), for 4 or 8 voices, live electronics and tape.
- ...a las rocas, al mar, a las montañas* for tape (2002, 3:00).
- AD*, (2002, 28:00) for baritone, 2 flutes, 2 saxophones, bassoon, trombone, cello, piano, percussion and tape (in collaboration with A. Santoloci, P. Cangialosi, F. Severa, M. Zuccaroli).