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Federico Incardona and Giovanni Damiani

ABSTRACT: Together with Sciarrino and Casale, Incardona and Damiani are the most important composers trained at Palermo University's Musicological Institute.

Federico Incardona (Palermo, 1958–2006) reconciles the social commitment of Berg and the political tension of Nono with the sublimated eroticism of Szymanowski. If Nono's works, like those of Evangelisti in a different way, blend dodecaphonic dialectic with the corporeity of the sound of Varèse, Incardona blends Evangelisti's sonorous cosmogony with the erotic immediateness of Bussotti. But his principal reference point is Mahler. His music is rich in meaning and strong emotional intensity, concentrated and sublimated: it is like "processes of denuding of the melody, carnal embraces between the parts, dodecaphonic series modelled on the body of the loved one" (Spagnolo). Its "new linearity and temporal tension", is wedded to the "absolute primacy of expression and emotion", in full awareness of the "deep unity of emotion and knowledge" (Lombardi Vallauri). Indeed, in the intense expressionism of his music, dodecaphonic construction is always at the service of a dialectical discourse which is dense and deep, but – in his last works – clear and fluid like a melody by Bellini. "Infinite melos", Marco Crescimanno defines it: harmonic richness and dense heterophonic complexities are blended; the counterpoint is based "on the superimposition of manifold variations on the same figure, with precise control of the vertical encounters on its melodic-harmonic hinges".

Born into a dynasty of engineers and architects, Giovanni Damiani (Palermo, 1966) is himself an engineer and architect, but in sound space. Rather than music, his works are organized Sound: "embodiment of the intelligence inherent in sounds themselves", in the manner of Varèse, and specifically "sound vegetation", in the manner of Bartók. His most important work, *Salve follie precise* (1998–2004: on a libretto in verse by Francesco Carapezza, based on *Semmelweis et l'infection puerpérale* that Louis-Ferdinand Céline wrote between 1924 and 1929), represents precisely the germination of life (of algae from water, of grass from rock, of man from woman, of sounds from Sound) and the threats of death that surround it, that is to say of regression of the animal and vegetable kingdoms to the mineral kingdom. In it Damiani exclusively uses, as previously in the great symphony *Matrice/Organon* (1995), natural harmonic sounds. We thus assist at harmonic germination; Sound generates sounds, the Note generates notes. If Damiani as a musicologist follows on from Réti, as a composer he follows on from Schenker. For him the note, seen as pure Sound internally structured *a priori*, is everything: the universe of artistic creation in sound space is only unfolding of the tension internal to the note itself. Everything (melody, tonality, polyphony, harmony), as Cesare Brandi wrote, "comes from the very nature of the note, which is, in the stratification of harmonics, tonic, isolated note (of a melody), vertical chord and horizontal encounter of polyphonic lines".

KEYWORDS: Federico Incardona, Giovanni Damiani, University of Palermo, Post-serial dodecaphony, Heterophony, Natural harmonic sounds, Abstract expressionism, Sound vegetation, Thought in sounds, Sound architecture

Looking at it from the beginning of this third millennium, the history of musical production in Sicily appears to us like four big luxuriant oases, across broad savannas or even deserts: Hellenic antiquity, the splendour of the Norman kingdom (1130–1266), the golden century around the year 1600, and the second half of the 20th century. Between this and Alessandro Scarlatti, who in 1672 emigrated from Palermo at the age of twelve, the only really outstanding composer was Vincenzo Bellini (b. 1801-d. 1835) from Catania, at least until history does justice to the Trapanese Antonio Scontrino (b. 1850-d. 1922).

Decisive at the beginning of the 20th century were the ideas and works of Alberto Favara, not so much as a composer but more as a pioneer of ethno-musicology and the renewal of teaching: it seemed that he had failed when in 1922 he died of a broken heart after having been deposed as director of the Palermo Conservatory. But his four disciples remained: Giuseppe Mulé, a mediocre composer, Gino Marinuzzi, an excellent conductor and composer; Ottavio Tiby, a musicologist, and Filippo Ernesto Raccuglia, an organizer. Tiby married Favara's eldest daughter, continued his studies on the Renaissance, and in 1957 published his big *Corpus di musiche popolari siciliane*, while Raccuglia opened up Sicily to the new European music.

Thus progress found a solid base in Palermo when in 1958 Ottavio Ziino founded the Sicilian Symphony Orchestra and Luigi Rognoni established the Institute of History of Music at the University. Ziino initiated the *Giornate di Musica Contemporanea* (1959–1963), while Rognoni immediately chose as his assistant Antonino Titone, who in 1959 founded the *Gruppo Universitario Nuova Musica* and its concerts, and then the *Settimane Internazionali Nuova Musica* (1960–1968), in which the *Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana* was involved from 1962 to 1965. During those festival weeks international attention was captured by five Italian composers, who were always to maintain strong bonds with Sicily: Girolamo Arrigo from Palermo (b. 1930), Sylvano Bussotti from Florence (b. 1931), Aldo Clementi from Catania (b. 1925-d. 2011), Franco Donatoni from Verona (b. 1927-d. 1997) and Franco Evangelisti from Rome (b. 1925-d. 1980); the careers of three Sicilian composers also began during those weeks of new music: those of Turi Belfiore from Syracuse (b. 1917-d. 2005), Francesco Pennisi from Catania (b. 1934-d. 2000) and Salvatore Sciarrino from Palermo (b. 1947).

Sciarrino was the first composer who, from adolescence, trained by diligently attending the Institute of History of Music and the *Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana*; after him came Federico Incardona, Giovanni Damiani, Armando Gagliano, Marco Crescimanno and other young Palermitans trained in the same way. However, contacts with the Institute were also fundamental for two young composers from Catania who are achieving European renown just now: Emanuele Casale and Angelo Sturiale.

The other assistant chosen by Luigi Rognoni after Titone was Paolo Emilio Carapezza, who in 1970 was to succeed him as the director of the institute: he at once collaborated with Titone and Francesco Agnello on the organization of the

Settimane Internazionali Nuova Musica, and – together with Titone – founded *Collage. Rivista internazionale di nuova musica e di arti visive contemporanee* (1963–1970). He was then the general editor of the corpus of *Musiche Rinascimentali Siciliane* (the first twenty-five volumes were published between 1970 and 2007); and – together with Elsa Guggino – introduced the teaching of ethno-musicology at the University. In issue 7 of *Collage* (1967) there were the early works of Sciarrino, then just twenty years old, together with a fragment by the fifty-year-old Belfiore and a posthumous *ricercare* (1591), based on a folklore tune, by Pietro Vinci. Incardona, Damiani and Casale, like Vinci before them, in their musical creations triangulated contemporary life with Renaissance polyphony and Sicilian folklore: Favara's project finally seemed to be realised.

In the meantime, at The Vincenzo Bellini Conservatory of Palermo, one of the six Italian historical conservatories, at the school of Eliodoro Sollima, who was also the patriarch of a musical family, there arose a constellation of composers, among them his son Giovanni Sollima, as well as Marco Betta and Francesco La Licata. The first two impregnated Anglo-American minimalism with Mediterranean auras, in contrast with the radical composers of the Institute. Fascinating for its delicate colours, La Licata's star followed a sound orbit of its own. La Licata was also an excellent conductor: his *Zephir ensemble*, which played new music very well, was created at the Institute in 1988. The ensemble was also the twin of the *Studio per la musica antica "Antonio Il Verso"*, which revived ancient Hellenic music and Sicilian Renaissance music.

Jazz music also developed in Palermo: in 1956 the *New Jazz Quartet* was formed, and soon it became a *Trio* formed by Enzo Randisi, Claudio Lo Cascio and Gianni Cavallaro. In 1964 it was renamed the *Modern Art Quartet* when John Lewis in person became a member of it. Lo Cascio then founded the *Centro studi sulla musica jazz "Django Reinhardt"* and conducted the *Big band* of the same name, while Ignazio Garsia founded the *Brass Group* and conducted the *Sicilian Jazz Orchestra*. Lastly, amid free jazz and radical new music there emerged three excellent improvisers: Miriam Palma (voice), Gianni Gebbia (clarinet and saxophone) and Lelio Giannetto (double-bass). In the last fifteen years Giannetto has also kept alive the Palermo tradition of new music, organizing – as the head of the *Curva Minore* society – *Il Suono dei Soli* festival.

In 1967 music by Vinci and Sciarrino was published together under the title "The Sicilian polyphonic school", representing the fulfilled hope of a new golden age of Sicilian music, but also as a symbol of the two tendencies that were beginning to predominate in musicological studies at the University of Palermo: new music and Renaissance. Together with myself, during those years Sciarrino was scoring the *Ricercari* of Pietro Vinci and Antonio Il Verso, to be published in a critical edition in *Musiche Rinascimentali Siciliane*. Following the example of what Malipiero did with Maderna and Nono, and what Maderna did with his disciples (including myself), I initiated him into the theory and musical practice of the Renaissance.

Thus the Institute started to raise new composers and to revive early composers. After Sciarrino, nurtured on the musical practice and theory of the 16th century, two other excellent Palermitan composers were trained there in the same way, Federico Incardona (b. 1958-d. 2006) and Giovanni Damiani (b. 1966); Sciarrino emigrated when he was just twenty, the others remained as teachers: Incardona at the University, Damiani at the Conservatory.

Federico Incardona (b. 13 May 1958-d. 26 March 2006) reconciles in his music the social commitment of Berg and the political tension of Nono with the sublimated eroticism of Szymanowski. If Nono's first works, like those of Evangelisti but in a different way, blend dodecaphonic dialectic with the corporeity of the sound of Varèse, Incardona blends Evangelisti's sonorous cosmogony with the erotic immediateness of Bussotti. But his principal reference point is Mahler.

In the history of the symphony, Incardona is to Mahler as Mahler is to Beethoven: with progressing epic power, dramatic effectiveness and lyrical catharsis. But the process is one of expansion from Beethoven to Mahler, of contraction from the latter to Incardona: in any case with nothing to lose, but always enriching and deepening, and treasuring the intermediary tradition. With Beethoven the symphony becomes a musical-philosophical *summa*, and Mahler adds eschatology and opens up the gates of paradise: music as "thought in sounds", development of discourse, could go no further. With an erotic impetus Incardona transfuses into music – with the resources of free post-serial dodecaphony – life itself: human soul and body, cosmic soul and body.

He himself traces out his formation as follows:

Rigorously self-taught, he identifies his linguistic-cognitive trajectory in close exploration of the work of Mahler and of the Second School of Vienna. In Webern he recognizes not so much the superstition of the number but rather, in accordance with the reading of Maderna and Nono, the radiant synergy of rigour and emotion, the ethical achievement of Romanticism. He sees as something fundamental frequentation of the Institute of History of Music at the University of Palermo and subsequent friendship with Paolo Emilio Carapezza, Angelo Faja, Francesco Pennisi, Aldo Clementi, Antonino Titone, Michele Canzoneri and Aurelio Pes.

He studies both the musical patrimony of the Sicilian Renaissance (Pietro Vinci, Antonio Il Verso) and the extreme manifestations of contemporary compositional thought: Kagel, Donatoni, Evangelisti, etc. Under the guidance of Paolo Emilio Carapezza he listens for the first time to *Due voci* by Sylvano Bussotti: the work, which is to remain indelibly impressed in him, peremptorily bears witness to the possibility of continuing to think in music after Webern. (Incardona 2004, 1)

Hence the music of Federico Incardona is music of flesh and of blood: a living, beautiful, big and powerful body and a big and generous soul; just like him. His music is rich in meaning and emotional intensity, concentrated and sublimated: Marco Spagnolo (2008, 3) experiences it as "processes of denuding of the melody,

carnal embraces between the parts, dodecaphonic series modelled on the body of the loved one.” Stefano Lombardi Vallauri (2007, 7) notices its “new linearity and temporal tension,” wedded to the “absolute primacy of expression and emotion,” in full awareness of the “deep unity of emotion and knowledge;” hence the greatest intensity of expression in the attempt to attain and maintain the apex “at all instants of the formal development:” an endeavour that succeeds, thanks to the conciliation and even coincidence “between construction and expression, coercion and freedom, objectivity and subjectivity,” with consequent resolution of the “dialectics [...] intrinsic to dodecaphony.” Indeed, in the intense expressionism of his music, construction is always at the service of a dialectical discourse which is dense and deep, but – in his last works – clear and fluid like a melody by Bellini. “Infinite melos” is how Marco Crescimanno defines it. Harmonic richness and dense polyphonic complexities are blended in a single melodic line; the counterpoint is based “on the superimposition of manifold variations on the same figure, with precise control of the vertical encounters on its melodic-harmonic hinges” (Crescimanno 2007, 19). The complex heterophonic multiplicity does not serve to adorn the monody, but to constitute it.

We find this compositional process reduced to the minimum in the 1999 work *Tre frammenti* for solo violin (“to and for Alessandro Zambito”). These are three lyrical songs from Alberto Favara’s *Corpus di musiche popolari siciliane* (1957, numbers 526, 544 and 9); the composer behaves like a Meistersinger deeply rooted in this folklore: he assimilates it and manifests it in its own variants. Heterophony is here reduced, as in ancient Hellenic music, to a single counterpart; not in quality, but only in quantity of layers, it differs from that of the great symphonies by the same composer. “Incardona’s face”, as Marco Spagnolo happily puts it (2008, 1), admirably blends “very new music and perpetual tradition;” the former derives from the latter, which continues luxuriantly: both the violinist the work is dedicated to (who plays it so well), and the three young musicologists that I mentioned above, are also composers, disciples of Incardona. And the two main young Sicilian composers, Giovanni Damiani and Emanuele Casale, declare that they are his disciples.

In 1977 Federico Incardona entitled his first work *Mit höchster Gewalt*,¹ and he dedicated it to Franco Evangelisti (another great composer who had a short life and enjoyed prolonged fame) giving a reason that was as deeply enigmatic as it was openly dialectical: “to him it owes everything, and at the same time nothing.” Three years later, on 6 March 1980, a little more than a month after the death of Evangelisti, in the Palermo newspaper *L’Ora* he wrote an article, *Oltre i confini della musica*. In it, among other things, we read:

¹ He declares he took the title from an indication “in the middle of the first movement of Mahler’s *Fourth*” (Tarnaku 1999, 30).

Evangelisti [...] does not start like all his contemporaries from an attempt, through the creation of a utopian language, to find the order that in Webern was only possible as a hyper-subjective act inverted through excess into apparent objectivity. Nor [...] from reconsideration of compositional structures devastated by Schönberg's desire to unite intellect and expression in a single dazzling alchemic act: what he always pursued with strenuous avidity was the unheard flash of sound purified of all hedonism, the fermenting of incredible mirages from simple structures, even elementary ones. His most important works: *Ordini* for 16 instruments, *Random or not random* for orchestra. This music admits no comments: it must be performed, it must be listened to. (Incardona 1980, 6-7)

And thirteen years later, in the concert programme of the *Seminar and Concert for Franco Evangelisti*, organized and introduced by Incardona himself:

Almost fifteen years have passed since that death and many more, if they were verifiable according to unconventional parameters, now separate me from the sound universe of Evangelisti: a composer that together with others in my mind, that of an apprentice, engraved sorceries and impotences, also giving me a zero degree of stammering writings whose echo is not yet spent, if it is true that my so-called first work *Mit höchster Gewalt* (1977) owes everything to him, and at the same time nothing.

From the stammer, a shaky one but also one marked by an unappeased wish for destruction of the historical connections of musical Language, there emerged at the end of this piece of mine a precise intervallic sequence, almost a melody [...] From those rubbles I started a journey that I discover to be endless among the intervals and the form that governs them: serialism or "composition with notes" studied in the *Five pieces* op. 23 by Schönberg. (Incardona 1993, 7-8)

It is not difficult to account for Incardona's enigmatic declaration that his music "owes everything and at once nothing" to that of Evangelisti; admitting that their works are well known and their different, indeed radically opposite, constitutions are guessed at. The music of Evangelisti is energetic: his utopia is to attain pure creative energy, pre-cosmic, pre-material energy. "The unheard flash of Sound", that Incardona perceives in the music of Evangelisti, is connected to the concept that Evangelisti (1991, 130) borrows from Marius Schneider (1970, 58): "Priority of Sound in the Cosmos [...] the power of vibrating sound". For Incardona, instead, music is "thought in sounds" (Webern 1963, 33): discourse, λόγος, *verbum*: concentrated and sublimated discourse, supreme poetry, even philosophy. His last symphonies, *Per fretum febris* (2000) for double-bass recorder, baritone-saxophone, children's choir and orchestra, and *Ho chiesto alla polvere* (2003) for large orchestra, resounded in that Politeama theatre in his city where, with *Mit Höchster Gewalt*, he had debuted a quarter of a century before; in them he fully realized the Socratic intuition, pursued by Beethoven and Mahler, by Schönberg and Webern, that music is the supreme kind of philosophy. Indeed, in the intense

expressionism of his music, construction is always at the service of a dialectic discourse that is dense and deep but limpid and fluid like the ancient Hellenic monody of the *Delphic Hymns*.

And the distance from Evangelisti seems to increase even further because of the fervent eroticism, which his music is wholly steeped in, like that of Sylvano Bussotti, and which manifests itself starting with the titles (*Avec un morne embrassement, Ritratto di giovine, Postludio alle notti*): *musica humana* against *musica mundana*. But “incorporation of eroticism in sound,” Incardona declares (1995, 26-27), “occurs through a fierce rule, which is that of serialism.” And Marco Spagnolo (2007), one of his favourite disciples, comments:

The preys seized by his staffs are forces, epiphanies of pure energy. Paraphrasing a well-known expression of Paul Klee, we could say that his music makes it possible to listen to the captured forces, makes them sonorous.

That is the reason why Incardona’s music “owes everything and at once nothing” to Evangelisti. If Evangelisti performed the miracle of reconciling Varèse with Webern, Incardona performs the perhaps even more difficult one of reconciling Evangelisti with Bussotti.

In the passage quoted above, which Evangelisti borrows from Schneider, there seems to be heard the *Credo* of the *Missa brevis*, that is to say the third part of the *Second Cantata* op. 32 by Anton von Webern on verses by Hildegard Jone, where – of course – the term *Wort* (Verb in my translation) is linked to the broadest semantic field of λόγος:

Schöpfen aus Brunnen des Himmels
nach Wassern des *Worts* ist das *Läuten*,
wenn so die menschliche Hand
zieht an den Krügen des *Klangs*.

To draw the water of the *Verb*
from the celestial sources is *Sound*:
from it man’s hand can draw
ampullæ full of *music*.

And Federico Incardona (1994) explains:

Then a confusedly heard, unheard universe manifests itself in its magnificence [...]. Music is therefore the law of pain taken to its most radical exhaustiveness: as the kite launched by calm hands into the skies indicates Other, music circumscribes the space of what *should be*: indicating it, *it saves the world* that indifferently swings in space and restores to beings and things their shine clouded over by weariness.

This echoes the Metzger/Riehn preface (1991, xvi) to Evangelisti’s book:

The final vision of Franco Evangelisti is suspension of knowledge in a new creativeness. Perhaps today it is a project *for saving humanity*, going well beyond the validity of musical structures.

This interpretation derives from Webern and is fulfilled in Incardona: for him the dodecapronic series is neither the bed of Procuste, nor the bookkeeper's rule, but on the contrary a perpetual source of nurture and growth, that is to say a creative principle: in short, it is *nomos* that nourishes not *lex* that forbids or imposes. The law, which for the Romans is *lex*, for the Hellenes is *nomos* (νόμος). The two terms testify a radically opposite conception: *lex* (root *leg/log*, as in λόγος, discourse, and legw, I say, or λεγω, I read) is the written formula *that is read* and *that must be read*; νόμος (root νεμ/νομ, as in νεμω, I distribute to each his own, νομευς, shepherd) is pasture, food. *Leges* are negative: they forbid or impose; νομοι are positive: they nurture. Just as to the highest degree the Romans developed law (*ius*, whence *iustus*, right) and jurisprudence (*iurisprudencia*) on which modern states are still founded today, and founded a universal political empire; so to the highest degree the Hellenes instead developed wisdom (σοφια, *sapientia*): the music, the poetry, the philosophy and the art on which we are also still nurtured today. On one side civilization, on the other culture: but the former is a rigid restriction, politically and imperially fertile, of the latter; the fact is that Latin *ius* (from *ious*) is radically connected with *iuvo* (I benefit, I help, I delight).

And it is precisely the series planned by Webern for his *Konzert* op. 32 (Figure 1), which his violent death prevented him from realizing (Rognoni 1966, 375), that for Incardona becomes primeval *Nomos*, the source of all his works. It is the most *expressionistic* series, profusely containing all the intervals practised and encoded as *affettuosi*, expressive and pathetic, in 16th-century polyphony: consecutive semitones, thirds and sixths. The neutral intervals (tone, fourth and fifth) are missing, as are the hard ones (harsh sevenths and the diabolic tritone). Considering it as circular, that is to say connecting the twelfth note to the first, it constitutes in miniature the acme of perfection of Webern's quasi-symmetry: two double pairs of ascending and descending semitones intercalated by a pair of sixths (ascending major, descending minor) and by a pair of thirds (descending major, ascending minor).

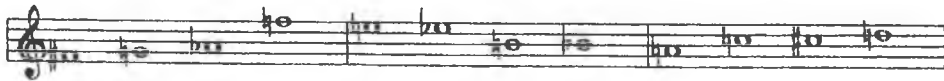


Figure 1: dodecapronic series planned by Webern for his unfinished *Kammerkonzert* op. 32.

From this expressionist series, *flebile* (plaintive) according to Zarlino (1558, 339-40), for his 1989 *Mehr Licht* (for soprano voice; violin and piano; flute, clarinet and horn; viola and cello; vibraphone/celesta, kettledrums, sistrum, four tam-tams and four tom-toms) Incardona derives a very harsh expressionist series (Figure 2), in which the semitones (alternately descending and ascending) are isolated and interposed by a pair of ascending minor sevenths and by a double pair of tritones (alternately ascending and descending); with two joints: minor third halfway through and perfect fourth between end and beginning.

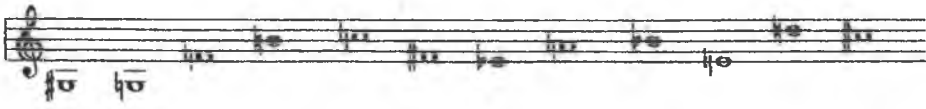


Figure 2: dodecaphonic series derived by Incardona from the webernian series of figure 1.

This dodecaphonic *nomos* produces an enharmonic series (that is to say one through quarter-tones) of twenty-four notes (Figure 3), which constitutes the soul of the composition: it is embodied in a tenebrous and resplendent body of violin and piano (which sound incredibly like a big orchestra) veiled by the coloured transparencies of wind instruments, viola and cello, vibraphone and celesta, and percussion; and it dissolves at the beginning and the end in soprano voice:

It is the result of an inexhaustible process of instrumental sedimentations on the aural nucleus of an autonomous piece for violin and piano, composed and performed a year before. At the beginning and the end to the instruments there is added the voice, which intones first a verse by Kavafis and then the notes of an old Sicilian song. (Incardona 1994a, 236)



Figure 3: enharmonic 24 notes series generated from the dodecaphonic series of figure 2, and employed by Incardona for the composition of his *Mehr Licht*.

The composer succeeds in blending the deepest exploration of the most rigorous radicalism with absolutely new sonorous splendour, indeed in obtaining the latter from the former, leading to

that inexplicable wellbeing, that benefit that induces one to speak of beauty, but that in reality derives from the injection of energy through the medium of the ear. (Evangelisti 1991, 141)

Mehr Licht, the title of the composition, was “the cry of Goethe, the prince of poets,” the composer reminds us (Incardona 1994a, 236). But in the mouth of a Sicilian that cry takes on a new value, if we read the following meditation by the Pole Antoni Buchner, written and printed in Palermo in the same year 1989:

Instead of scientific, historical and critical, artistic or musical grandiloquence, we need – as always – a little more meditation and certainty. Mediterranean culture is founded on that simple and serene “Fiat lux”, on a just intention, since it has satisfied the desire: “And light was!”. Instead for northern culture we find more typical Goethe’s phrase “Mehr Licht” (“let there be more light”), the motto of the Enlightenment. It is not certain whether this desire will ever be satisfied. (Buchner 1989, 32)

Through an artistic dynasty that goes down from Goethe to Webern, to Evangelisti, to Incardona, from Germany to Austria, to Rome and Palermo, that desire has finally been satisfied.

Ho chiesto alla polvere is the title of Incardona's last symphony, performed in Palermo by *Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana* conducted by Marcello Panni in 2003. The title corresponds to that of the famous novel by John Fante, *Ask the Dust*, which had recently been translated into Italian. The *dust* is that contained in two cinerary urns: of his brother Marco, an ingenious painter, and of his father Nunzio, an illustrious philosopher. The score is for large orchestra with variegated percussion. It consists in impassioned alternations of ascents and apexes (*Steigerung* and *Durchbruch*, to use Mahler's terms). After two ascents and two apexes, the first by flutes and oboes, the second by *tutti*, we reach the heart of Sound: a throbbing open heart, rendered first by solo horns, then by horns and bassoons. Four times the palpitation recurs, the third time – halfway through the work – prolonged by the repetition of five bars (25-28 = 29-32): and each time it leads to a peak, but the second and the fourth are followed by depressions flowing back; lastly, the rise back up also involves the violins, which ascend to the hyper-acute to achieve the absolute peak, followed by the three last bars (62-64), where catharsis is finally achieved: and the heaven revealed to us at the end of Mahler's *Fourth* is echoed in it.

Born into a dynasty of engineers and architects, **Giovanni Damiani** (Palermo, 1966) is himself an engineer and architect, but in sound space. Rather than music, his works are organized sound: buildings, bridges and journeys, but above all gardens, in sound space; and not sublimated discourses of words. His music is not specifically art of the Muses, perfection of *λόγος*, linguistic discourse finished and intoned, but more generically "Sound humanly organized" (Blacking 1986, cap. I): more than Webernian "thought in sounds" (Webern 1963, 33) it is generically "embodiment of the intelligence inherent in sounds themselves" (Ouellette 1966, 11) in the manner of Varèse and specifically "sound vegetation" (Lendvai 1983, 33-67) in the manner of Bartók.

He is not a Dionysiac vates like Federico Incardona, nor Mercurial quicksilver like Salvatore Sciarrino, nor even an Apollonian craftsman of very fine timbre filigrees like Francesco Pennisi; but a Jovial alchemic constructor like his teacher Aldo Clementi. And yet his sound stars are not, as in the latter, those of a cosmos declining to extinction, but ones in powerful expansion: like those of Evangelisti. However, he does not share the latter's volcanic creative fury: that is to say, he is not with Hephaestus, the Cyclopes and the Titans, but – like Clementi – with Zeus or Jupiter (jovial: from Jove).

When he first appeared in the Institute at the age of fifteen, he asked me for new music scores, and especially for promptings from Cage; and he showed me the early fruits of his work as a composer: technological idylls, small unforgettable masterpieces, obtained from concrete noises and rudimentary domestic electronic apparatuses, and recorded on magnetic tape. In them I immediately admired the

construction skill, the regulated freedom, the command of sound space, then in miniature: I listened to them and I saw them as unheard and invisible scenographic sketches of sound matter, fresh, very new and amusing. That was how his creative genius played at that time.

The Institute of History of Music (today the musical section of the Department Humanities) of the University of Palermo then became the main place of his formation. There he met artistically and personally all the Sicilian composers mentioned above, as well as Sylvano Bussotti, another composer who was important for him, though antithetical, and Heinz-Klaus Metzger, a farsighted philosopher of music. There he also met my colleagues Nino Titone, the inventor in the 1960s of the *Settimane Internazionali Nuova Musica* and of the magazine *Collage*, and Amalia Collisani, the diamond tip of speculative music. There he met the first illustrious performers of his works: the pianist Massimiliano Damerini and the cellist Luigi Lanzillotta. There he studied and graduated in Letters with a degree dissertation on *Unity and variety in musical work*, based – with the motif analysis method of Rudolph Réti – on an examination of music over the millennia, from the Delphic Hymns (2nd century BC) to today. “Historia magistra artis”; but according to the aphorism of Rudolph Kolisch, so often quoted by Metzger, “tradition is permanent revolution.” So Friedrich Nietzsche (2003, 56) was right to admonish us: “The response of the past is always an oracular response: only as architects of the future, as wise men of the present will you understand it [...] only he who builds the future has the right to judge the past.”

An architect of the future, the composer Giovanni Damiani is one in sound space, in which he founds his utopian, or more exactly eschatological, vision; “*in paradiso voluptatis*” of his music, on the verses *An den Aether* by Friedrich Hölderlin, *Raum genug ist für alle*: “There is room for everybody. There are no paths. And free in the house big and small ones move.” In this 1994 composition, eight instruments (flute, low clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, double-bass and two gongs) and a woman’s voice (the golden chestnut brown one of Maria Chiara Pavone or the purple one of Marie-Luce Erard) resound together from different rooms, synchronized, but without a conductor: souls and bodies of the blessed, according to the image of Rudolph Steiner, are variously coloured bright sounds.

What music is there on earth
that can like ours resound?
Cecilia and her companions
are famous arch-musicians!
The angelic voices awaken the senses,
to rouse everything to joy, to joy!

Thus ended Mahler’s *Fourth Symphony* (1900) at the dawn of the 20th century, with its beautiful lights that everyone hoped for, with its infernal darkness that nobody even dared to imagine.

I have defined Damiani's music as jovial, but its origins go back to well beyond Zeus: certainly not to his father, Khronos, since it is certainly not saturnine; but to his grandparents, to Uranus and Gaia, heaven and earth. The fact is that Damiani's music is not animal but mineral: or more exactly somewhere between mineral and vegetable. Heaven and earth separated, before their union, are wholly mineral. But if the sky embraces the earth, illuminates it and warms it, whips it and caresses it with the winds, bathes it with rain and cloaks it in snow, then indeed it fertilizes it: and life is born, vegetable life. Let us reread the biblical story of the creation, the previous events and the seven days (*Genesis*, 1, 1-3):

0. *Chaos*: sky and earth.
1. *Fiat lux*: day and night.
2. *Firmamentum in medio aquarum* (firmament amid waters).
3. Earth and sea; grasses and plants.
4. Sun, moon, stars.
5. Fishes and birds.
6. Terrestrial animals; man and woman.
7. Conclusion and rest.

Incardona perceives his music in the extreme days of the creation. It springs up in the first: the exclamation of dying Goethe *Mehr Licht!* ("More light!") gives the title to a 1989 composition of his, which with its tenebrous splendour even flows "*super faciem abyssi*" of primordial *Chaos*; but it is embodied and given voice in the human animality of the sixth, where he incessantly perceives it, in vain seeking conclusion and rest.

Instead, Damiani's music germinates and ends in the central days, when sea and earth on the third day germinated "*herbam virentem... et lignum pomiferum*" under the sun, the moon and the stars of the fourth. Sigmund Freud (1977, 224), after having mentioned "the evolution of our earth and its relations with the sun", explains as follows: "At a certain stage a force, that we are not yet able to define, aroused life in matter." It is precisely around this point, from a few moments before to a few moments after, that Damiani's music germinates, flowers of Sound picked there immediately in the bud: for this reason it continually hovers between mineral and vegetable. His most important work, *Salve follie precise* (1998–2004: on a libretto in verse by Francesco Carapezza, based on *Semmelweis et l'infection puerpérale* that Louis-Ferdinand Céline wrote between 1924 and 1929), represents precisely the germination of life (of algae from water, of grass from rock, of man from woman, of sounds from Sound) and the threats of death that surround it, that is to say of regression of the animal and vegetable kingdoms to the mineral kingdom. In it Damiani exclusively uses, as previously in his great symphony *Matrice/Organon* (1995), natural harmonic sounds. We thus assist at harmonic germination; Sound generates sounds, the Note generates notes:

Sound like the sea, sounds like waves.

Sound root, sounds twigs.

Sound trunk, sounds branches.

Sound wood, sounds leaves.

Sound sap, sounds fruits.

If Damiani as a musicologist follows on from Réti, as a composer he follows on from Schenker. For him the note, seen as pure Sound internally structured a priori, is everything: the universe of artistic creation in sound space is only the unfolding of the tension internal to the note itself. Everything (melody, tonality, polyphony, harmony), writes Cesare Brandi (1974, 350), “comes from the very nature of the note, which is, in the stratification of harmonics, tonic, isolated note (of a melody), vertical chord and horizontal encounter of polyphonic lines.”

Thus “from the very nature of the note” and precisely of the note C (the key of *Jupiter*, Mozart’s last symphony), from the gravest C of double-basses and double bassoons (the matrix) there is born and grows his symphony *Matrice/Organon*, for orchestra with recorded concrete electronics and live electronics. Turning the mineral genetic cell into a vegetable organism, it gradually rises, turns green and towers up. All its material derives from the “stratification of the harmonics” of C (Figure 4), in the end slipping, with imperceptible cataclysm, a tone down, to B flat. For this reason anyone listening to it for the first time is amazed and disorientated: the harmonic sounds, beyond the threshold of the first ones, that is to say beyond the notes C and G gradually repeated higher and higher, seem out of tune, wild; indeed, they are not tamed according to the historic scales (temperate, mesotonic, so-called natural), and likewise all the intervals, beyond the octave, fifth and fourth ones, prove eccentric and enigmatic. To enjoy them you have to overcome fear of the unknown, to enter the jungle.

Similar, but a great deal more complex, is the macrostructure of *Salve follie precise*, which germinates everything from the note D, the key of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*: both these works represent life besieged by death. There sensuality repressed by moralism fails to turn into perfect love and is manifested in sexual libertinism; here puerperal infection kills the source of nascent life.

Immersion in nature was the deepest aspiration of Mahler’s symphonies: the fanfares that resounded in the sonorous woods of the *Wunderhornsinfonien* are echoed, most evidently in sections C4 and C5, in the big *ficus magnolioides* of Damiani’s *Matrice-Organon*; this is the new plant that in our own day has germinated from the *Naturlaut*, from which those, over a century ago, had risen. However, in order to get back to nature Mahler and Damiani do not elude “condemnation to progress.” In tens of thousands of years we have moved further and further away from the paradise of *nature*, in order to tame with *culture* “a rebellious nature, desperate, nature subjected to the curse, accursed field” (Bonhoeffer 1992, 112). Man *has* to live: we are forced to accept the progress of culture, we cannot plunge



Figure 4: pitches diagram for Giovanni Damiani's symphony *Matrice/Organon*.

ourselves back into nature forever. But culture is nonetheless also cultivation of nature: of mineral, vegetable, animal and human nature.

Indeed, Damiani does not return to nature starting directly from Mahler, but above all treasures the subsequent expressionist and dodecaphonic evolution, especially that of Webern, as well as of his counterpart represented by Bartók and Varèse; and he fully exploits the quadrivial sciences: arithmetic, geometry, music (as science of numerical proportions: that is to say, mathematics) and astronomy and their most modern electronic applications. Thus his masterpieces, which seem to spring forth spontaneously from chaotic sonorous nature, are obtained through complex arithmetic calculations (numerical tables applied to

notes), geometrical ones (circles, squares, rectangles of notes and their radii, diameters, sides and diagonals) and mathematical ones (golden section and Fibonacci numbers: the fundamental laws of development of the vegetable kingdom); and they are realized by enacting every sound resource, vocal, instrumental, orchestral and electronic. Only so can one reach vegetable nature (*Matrice-Organon*), human nature (*Salve follie precise*) and astral nature (*Zodiaco*) deep down today. According to Heinrich von Kleist (1965, 345) “we must again eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, in order to return to the state of innocence” and thus find paradise again: only when knowledge is perfect, will the kingdom of grace be re-established. Culture is a necessity, art an essential consolation. Adam and Eva “*in paradiso voluptatis*” needed neither culture nor art. We instead need them more and more.

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