

Ariadne

monodrama-installation for voice, five performers and live electronics

text by Daniele Bellomi

electronics developed with Etienne Demoulin at IRCAM

(2020-2021)

The story of Ariadne is a tale of multiple abandonments, of absences. A common point among the numerous versions of the myth, the island of Naxos welcomes her and imprisons her in its circularity with no way out marked by sea and sky. In it, there is nothing but a condition of space-time suspension marked by pain and suffering that none of the surrounding divine presences are willing to alleviate.

Everything begins from the formless sound mass of the audience gradually filling the space between the five musicians and the augmented instruments, placed around the perimeter of the hall, and the central scene where Ariadne lies. The noise articulates itself, becoming sea and air at once, expanding or contracting space over the course of three movements interspersed with dark parentheses – a sort of suspension within suspension – that break temporal sequence to focus on awareness, defragmentation, and the reconstruction of a truth/identity capable of transcending others' narratives. With the dense text of Daniele Bellomi as accomplice, this monodrama presents itself as an immersive installation where traditional boundaries between audience and performance dissolve to push towards a new collective dimension of music theater, where each participant becomes an essential component of this search for form and meaning within the sound and physicality of the bodies generating it.

Unstable polyphonies of mental, physical, and acoustic spaces.

This work was commissioned by Schallfeld Ensemble with the support of Ernst von Siemens Musikstiftung, in co-production with IRCAM – Centre Pompidou. It is dedicated to Anna Piroli, Daniele Bellomi, Etienne Demoulin, and the friends of Schallfeld Ensemble.

Time changes the memory of things

for solo piano

(2019-21)

There are works that unintentionally end up resembling strange travel diaries that accompany us over time and transform with us. *Time changes the memory of things* is one of these.

In May 2019, I was in Vienna, and in the midst of writing a piece with electronics that was struggling to progress and beginning a work for orchestra born amidst a thousand personal difficulties, I was

offered the opportunity to use a studio where I would have a space all to myself for a couple of weeks. From the moment I arrived, my attention was drawn to an extremely dilapidated grand piano abandoned in a corner, a remnant of over a hundred years that had passed through various hands after surviving two world wars, only to be brutally smeared with the most improbable colors by its eccentric previous owner. Everything suggested it was unusable, yet its uneven and excessively resonant sound seemed to bear the weight of its past and open up restless acoustic spaces, both familiar and disorienting. Needless to say, within a few days, that devastated instrument ended up catalyzing all my energy, pushing me to write a page that was completely unusual for me but necessary. As the months passed and the pandemic began, that unfinished work continued from time to time to occupy space on other music stands and other pianos, acquiring new elements each time that gradually transformed it into a distorting rereading of itself, aimed at a laborious search for identity. Each modification tended to blur the contours and distance the particular acoustic image that had stimulated the writing, until the work, now totally transfigured, began to take shape as the impossible pursuit of a memory lost in recollection.

Form as a space of reminiscence that deteriorates as it surfaces.

Diptych #1

for violin and live electronics
(2017-21)

The two works that compose this modular diptych inspired by the poetry of Christian Bök are part of a larger cycle still in progress. It is possible to perform the first piece as a standalone work, to play both pieces with only about ten seconds between them, or to intersperse them with other works within the same concert; however, the order of performance must always be respected.

Diptych #1 was written for Lorenzo Derinni and Davide Gagliardi and is dedicated to them.

I. Each mirror infects itself

With their relentless proliferation at every scale of magnitude, each unit identical to the next, fractals both attract and unsettle us. Perhaps it is the vertigo that any double has always conveyed, but the cold precision of unceasing replication has something monstrous and inhuman about it that only the contemporary age has come to realize.

Lost between two opposing abysses that refract it endlessly, an object between two mirrors shares the same hypnotic unease as a fractal. In the play of refractions, one gradually loses consciousness of what is on this side and the other side of the mirror, of what is real and what is not, to the point of losing the perception of individuality within the mass of replicas. It is from the sound produced by this totality that this work begins, a work whose form has been conceived as a path of contamination, erosion, implosion, and finally escape to find the center between two imaginary mirrors.

II. with the abyss of its own dream

Born simultaneously as a continuation of **Each mirror infects itself** and as an intermezzo for the monodrama-installation **Ariadne** (2021), this work has from the outset configured itself as a sort of negative of its predecessor for the same ensemble. While maintaining the idea of an object placed between two mirrors and some common materials, this second part of the diptych changes the

investigative perspective, giving a completely different meaning and context to what was heard in the other work. If before the idea of being lost within a somewhat linear path prevailed, now we find ourselves part of a suspended mental space, outside the time of the narrative.

Evolution gives way to contemplation, which gradually reveals the depths capable of infinite refraction of one mirror reflecting into another: the form becomes a dynamic observation of a stillness that loses itself.

Essere aura

for solo flute
(2022)

Every sound is a trace of an action. Even when it is not possible to see it, we can easily imagine which bodies interacted and how to generate what we hear. Our talk of the roughness or smoothness of sound refers precisely to this internalization of movement, which allows us to orient ourselves in the world and make sense of the infinite stimuli we receive. However, it happens that sometimes this unconscious reconstruction of the causes of sound deceives us, leading us to imagine phenomena quite different from reality, and it is from these perceptual illusions that this work was born.

The flute, an instrument that only relatively recently discovered polyphony, is here transfigured into a microcosm where the two hands, the breath, and the vocal apparatus become independent voices that overlap and intertwine, giving rise to sudden electro-acoustic flavored perturbations and unexpected spatial-temporal expansions. The performer's gesture, pushed almost to the limit of articulative possibilities, frees the instrument's most hidden resonances to allow us to observe the flute from a reversed perspective, in which what is normally obscured by the classical sound comes to the forefront, revealing itself as the truest essence of this air vibrating through the metal: its aura. This work, written for and dedicated to Federica Lotti, was commissioned by the Pentagram Stiftung.

Wasteland_underlife

for five instruments and electro-acoustic device
(2022)

Enlarging the sound to the point of losing the perception of its being a continuum. Enlarging every detail to rediscover it as a standalone event, as an acoustic space barely inhabited by a few minimal presences. It might seem the most static thing imaginable, yet this sort of zero degree becomes the starting point to rediscover a discrete articulation of time that is born in the deepest folds of sound, made of pulsating spaces that transform, expand, contract, gain or lose energy. Connecting them is a raw electronic material, deliberately reduced to a minimum and almost entirely derived from electronic components destined for the landfill, filtered through the skin of a timpani and the steel of piano strings, in an attempt to achieve a possible integration with the unamplified instruments. Urban space cluttered with technological relics, a sign of past presence and present absence. Remoteness.

This work was commissioned by the Ensemble Suono Giallo with the support of the Ernst von Siemens Musikstiftung.

Wasteland_beyond

for twelve instruments
(2022)

Everything begins from the endpoint of *Wasteland_underlife*. A pulsed and granular sound, which there was the result of extreme acoustic dilation, here becomes the means to exit temporal suspension and explore sound material at its maximum degree of energy and articulation. Speed indeed reveals aspects of sound that alter our perception of time and relationships between things, and thus elements once formally relevant now become mere atoms from which an extremely unstable mass takes shape, barely segmented by its periodic expansion and contraction. Form as the breath of matter.

This work, commissioned by the impuls festival in Graz, was written for the Klangforum Wien.

Il buio è volume pieno

for accordion and electronics
(2023)

The accordion is synonymous with physicality. It is a prosthesis of breath, body, and the gesture of the person playing it. Observing how it expands and contracts in space means witnessing the movement of an organism that expands into the air through its vibrations, of which electronics are here a further extension. Starting from the simple crackling of the mute keys and a few other fragmentary elements, a non-linear path is outlined that explores through different degrees of energy and granularity some possible acoustic drifts of this complex and at times indefinable sound matter that invades space in an unstable manner, almost like a dynamic sculpture that evolves over time. The form, more than ever, will be primarily a tactile exploration of these sonic metamorphoses, this time entrusted to the hands of Carlo Sampaolesi, to whom the work is dedicated.

Wasteland_not yet

for nine spatialized and amplified musicians
(2022-23)

Restarting the exploration anew. Observing other drifts, other becomings. If before the direction was getting lost in noise at various degrees of energy, now the sonic horizon that emerges at the outset seeks immediately to foreground its own particular harmonic dimension. The color generated by violin preparations and everyday objects, converted into instruments and heavily amplified, expands in the hall, creating acoustical spaces that appear static and are explored within a vaguely circular temporality. Step by step, the sound material is metaphorically approached until the complete dissolution of discourse into a wave that submerges the audience, now lost in pure sound, on the boundary between installation and composed music.

Form as movement from and towards matter.

This work was commissioned by Ensemble Phace and Wiener Konzerthaus.

Extended II

for five instruments, resonators and live electronics
(2023)

Extended is a series of works where the form and materials of pre-existing solo pieces undergo various types of extension - in material, temporality, space, and sound evolution - with the aim of observing how these changes deform the originals, often leading them far from their original trajectory.

Where any trivial attempt at transcription would be senseless given the specificity of the materials used, the grafting of foreign elements causes destabilizations and adaptations that require different times and spaces to find new forms of equilibrium, much like in a living organism. From negligible efflorescences to articulated ramifications that deform the territory, making it unrecognizable, the phenomena generated by these induced mutations reveal aspects of the original sound material that remained unexplored and call into question its potentialities.

Thus, the events acquire new meanings and perspectives, while the form becomes the space in which to observe the adaptation processes of this music-organism to the prostheses imposed upon it.

Extended II, written for Collettivo_21 and MBZ – Musik Biennale Zagreb, is based on *Where the here and now of nowhere is*.

Monochromes

for two saxophones
(2024)

Venturing into a mostly uniform landscape means training the eye to orient itself based on otherwise irrelevant details. Minimal nuances and barely hinted shadows become fundamental aspects to distinguish the elements around us, giving them a space and a meaning they could not acquire except in that specific perceptual condition. The object of our observation thus becomes perception itself in its making, transforming, and disappearing. In other words, its ephemeral nature.

The very few emissions present in these brief pages for two saxophones appear by analogy as just as many nuances within a homogeneous acoustic space, observed for a few moments while something within it transforms without necessarily becoming something other than itself: "a white rabbit unseen in a snowstorm."

This work was commissioned by Livia Ferrara and Antonino Mollica for the 3rd European Saxophone Congress (Trento, 2024).