

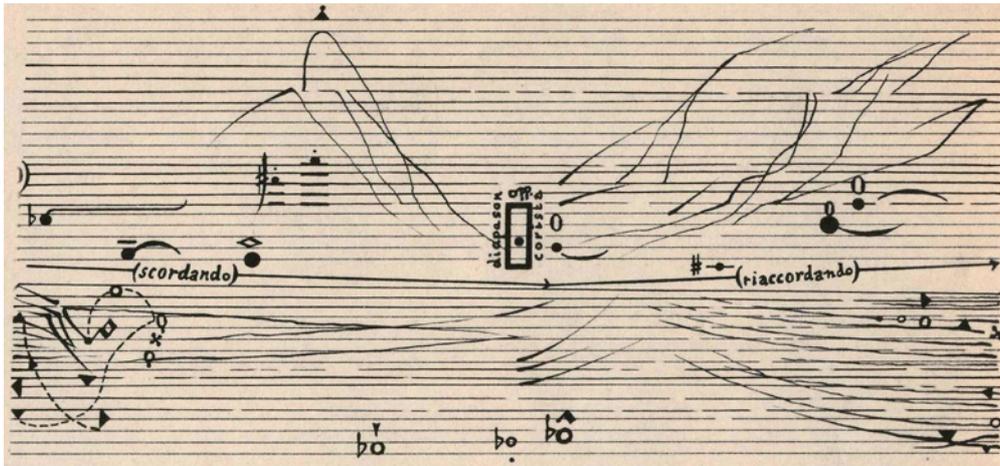
Galerie Mario Mazzoli

## Re/Presenting Music #2

group exhibition

12 September – 17 October 2015

opening friday, September 11, at 7 pm



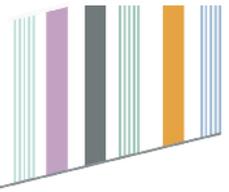
Sylvano Bussotti, Rara Eco Sierologico, 1964, ink on paper

Galerie Mario Mazzoli is pleased to present the group exhibition *Re/Presenting Music #2*, which will include works by: Sylvano Bussotti, Yannis Xenakis, Adriano Guarnieri, Enore Zaffiri, Christina Kubisch, Agostino Di Scipio, Giuseppe Chiari, Roberto Pugliese, Stefano Trevisi, Martin Daske, Franco Donatoni, Marianthi Papalexandri-Alexandri, Marco Visconti-Prasca, Roberto Paci-Dalò.

Rumor has it that after the premiere of his piece *Per Orchestra*, Franco Donatoni attempted to commit suicide. He did so because he was so disappointed by the performance that he thought he could not bear the shame of such a public failure. The idea for the upcoming show at GMM, “Re/presenting Music #2”, came from this anecdote. More specifically, the story spawned a reflection on the disjuncture that occurs between the artist's creation, as it is pictured in his mind, and the way this is transmitted to and perceived by other people.

I do not wish here to enter into a deep examination of hermeneutical questions about text interpretation, but I do find the issue particularly interesting in relation to performance, and specifically with regard to musical performance, as in the case of Donatoni. I am interested in the peculiar solutions that people devise to translate their musical thoughts into visual elements, in the hope that performers will be able to accurately reproduce such thoughts.

Historically, improvements in musical notation served this exact task: the introduction of tempo markings, expression markings and dynamic markings sought to accompany the performer through the infinite routes of interpreting the musical text. Nonetheless, the above mentioned disjuncture has always been present, even after the invention of such markings. At the beginning of the second movement of his op. 90, for example, Beethoven writes *Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorzutragen* (i.e., “Not too fast, and very cantabile”). Supposedly Beethoven had something quite specific in mind, given a certain margin of variation.



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It is quite common, however, to hear concert-goers brutally fighting over whether the pianist's interpretation was too *geschwind* or not, and musicologists intensely debate what the composer actually meant with such an indication. Even in a classical piece such as op.90, indeed, interpretation is far from obvious. At least, as far as classical music scores are concerned, there is little room for debating pitch production.

The emission of sounds tends to concern musical writings that are not precisely codified or that are very complicated: ancient scores, non-western scores, and most certainly, contemporary music scores. One can imagine how the problem of score reading has been multiplied with the increase of the musical surface's complexity that characterized the last century. With regards to contemporary music the issue is often nothing short of pure hell.

As the demand for sounds that could not be produced through standard performing techniques increased, so did the number of idiosyncratic scores, displaying all kind of different signs and symbols in the hope of achieving the production of a certain sonic effect. Since part of the musical research of many composers had as a main goal that of creating new sonorities, each author tended to develop his own symbols in order to represent his own music.

In the last decades, composers' attempts to achieve some level of graphic communication that could help translate their musical vision into a palpable, understandable mean have been countless. Some of these are stunningly elaborate, and some of them even transcend the necessity of "communication" with the performer: they are made as a kind of visual guide for the listener, for different purposes (these are normally called "listening scores"). Since these kinds of graphic "translations" are often very peculiar, at least from a visual point of view, it is not unusual to see them collected in an exhibition setting. Starting from John Cage's famous book *Notations*, from time to time we are confronted with these sorts of displays, putting together all kinds of different musical visualizations. In a way this was also the case with the GMM show *Re/Presenting Music #1*.

As *Re/Presenting Music #2* focuses on the specific issue of the composer-performer relationship, it is a bit different from typical graphic scores exhibitions, or, I should say, more specific in its scope. Everything exhibited in the show is meant to be performed, and rather than simply admire the artist's graphic ability, the visitor will be called to reflect upon how distant or close the sonic result is to the graphic depiction. Indeed, the pieces exhibited will also be played back in the gallery, and in some cases performed live.

Stylistically, the exhibition cuts across many of the last century's musical styles: examples of structuralist, spectral, minimalist, improvised, concrete, aleatoric, and post-modern music will be presented. The selection of works is wide enough to present a variety of ways artists face their relation to the performers: while some composers go through the painstaking process of including every possible detail in the hope that the performer will follow their indications impeccably, some accept the fact that the loss in translation will be inevitable and they embrace it as part of their aesthetic, assuming that the performance will entail a certain amount of improvisation. While some scores are rigidly normative, some function more as guidelines for the performer.

From the hand drawn staves of Adriano Guarnieri to the sculptural *Folianten* of Martin Daske, from the oneiric scores of Sylvano Bussotti to the math driven works of Yannis Xenakis, and including of course Donatoni's *Per Orchestra*, the collection of works will inspire a reflection on the musical creative process—from setting the pen on paper to the sonic output—and on the disjuncture that is inherent in it.

Text by Mario Mazzoli