

TONGYEONG INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL  
2002.3.8-16

Fanfare & Memorial  
序奏와 追想

2002 통영국제음악제

2002년 3월 8일(금)-16일(토) 통영시민문화회관

## Tongyeon International Music Festival 2002

### MARIO BERTONCINI

Mario Bertoncini, born in Rome/Italy, is one of the major revolutionaries in the history of contemporary music. Studies (1951 - 61) not only in musical faculties (composition with Geoffredo Petrassi, piano with R.Caporali, and electroacoustic music with G.M.Koenig) but also in classical philosophy, destined him to be a pure multitalent. Being a hailed piano virtuoso since the late Fifties, he has been working with famous conductors like Bruno Maderna, but was rather sceptical about the already weakening serialism of that time. He always searched for new methods of composition and different sounds.

The piano with its limits in intonation and sound-producing techniques was the first subject of his experiments in 1961. Putting the hairs of the violin-bow through the piano strings he managed the tone being continuous, made it possible to play crescendos and alter the qualities of the tone while it was sounding. This became the most important parameter of Bertoncini's music, while the old ones, melody and rhythm, which had been the object of total determination in Serialism, lost their meaning.

His ideas became the fundament of post-serial avantgarde - numerous composers adapted them to their own work. And in the latest musical developments of the youngest generation of musicians who no longer feel stuck to academic procedures, Bertoncini is the main inspiration. This is best proved by today's vivid experimental music scene centered in Berlin, where he has taught for more than 20 years as a professor at the Hochschule der Kuenste (College of Arts).

1965 - 72 he joined the experimental improvising composer's group "Nuova Consonanza" (among others Franco Evangelisti, Fredric Rzewski or Ennio Morricone) as pianist and percussionist. An improvisational music far from Jazz, which avoided all the rules and effects of conventional music. To think in sounds was Bertoncini's main impulse. The work of this group was meant to purify the idea of music.

From exploring the sounds of prepared instruments (that is, to change the sounds of musical instruments through fixing objects on them, like screws between piano strings) he started to construct totally new instruments: wind harps (driven by nature or pressed air), bowed metal sticks, archaic looking electric lyras, tens of meters long strings, which are plucked, bowed or struck; he even designed (Spazio Tempo, 1970; Cemetery of Elephants with 5 pianos, 1995) installation-like stages of his sounding objects, which are to be played in theatrical-like performances. Which leads to his wide spectrum research of multimedia and the "Theatre of Reality", that has nothing in common with "realism" but with musicians or acting persons making things happen.

His self-made instruments are constructed just to be used for one composition. Their often beautiful visual appearance is one aspect, the right way getting its possibilities into shape, the other. Although his "Suite", which Bertoncini will perform in his Tongyeong-Concert, is based on the prepared piano, the structure of this composition is strictly connected to the unique alteration.

Listening to Bertoncini's music is different. One has to tune his ear to the magic drones and sounds. The drama of this music is three-dimensional: Space, density and combination.

*(NEW:)* If one listens to the recorded improvisations of Nuova Consonanza, one will be astonished about the short durations. This is also typical to Bertoncini's compositions, while most of those who use similar techniques (Terry Fox, Ellen Fullman etc.) need much more time. For them the sound is subject of reception and experience, but Bertoncini takes experience for granted. His music is based on european history and theories of music.

Although Bertoncini has a deep understanding of John Cage's work - he is one of the most important interpreters of Cage's "Sonatas and Interludes" - he differs widely to the American pioneers who are influenced by Zen-Buddhism and Asian "meditative" music. Bertoncini's compositions are in no means arrangements for meditation.

Although his music sounds rather "avantgardistic", he feels more close to the experimental way of composing and invention of Domenico Scarlatti (whose Sonatas are longtime highlights of his pianistic efforts) than to his own contemporaries.

One of the reasons for Bertoncini to build new instruments or Sound-Objects is, that he wanted to abandon the shallow tempered system, which has destroyed the understanding of harmony and sound during three centuries. Of course, Bertoncini was not the only musician or composer, who was aware of this lack of sensibility: Giacinto Scelsi, one generation older, got to be a brother in mind. Scelsi had abandoned the piano in the fifties - his "AITSI" for electronically enhanced piano, written in 1970, which Bertoncini performs frequently, could be regarded as a homage to his young friend and is the only exception in his pianoless late work. Scelsi used the conventional spectrum of instruments, strings, reeds, brass and percussion, and made the musicians explore the sounding universe of microtonality.

Bertoncini did not count that much on the "virtuosi". He joined the sound spectrum with his beautiful objects, to electronic devices (he is holder of some patents) and preparation of pianos and string instruments and made this integral part of the composition.

His lecture will discuss the relationship between all these musical forms and techniques, the theory of "Bottega d'arte", where learning and doing are one thing, and he will explain some of the Instruments by sound and video samples as well as the special needs of writing scores.

Matthias R. Entress