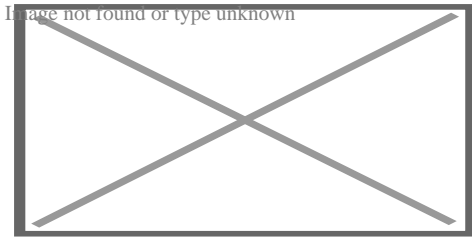




Other Minds Festival: OM 23: Sound Poetry - The History Channel, 9 of 17



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Description

The 23rd Other Minds Festival, focused on the art of Sound Poetry, took place in San Francisco at the ODC/Dance Theatre over the course of six days (April 9-14, 2018); OM's longest festival to date which included five concerts and a day of lectures and workshops. This year's line-up brought together old and new masters from several countries, all well representing the "intermedium between poetry and music": Beth Anderson (US), Mark Applebaum (US), Tone Åse (Norway), Jaap Blonk (Netherlands), Alvin Curran (US/Italy), Sheila Davies Sumner (US), Enzo Minarelli (Italy), Amy X Neuberger (US), Ottar Ormstad (Norway), Aram Saroyan (US), Susan Gilmore Stone (US), Anne Waldman (US), Taras Mashtalir (Russia); Lily Greenham (Denmark), Pamela Z (US); Michael McClure (US), Sten Sandell (Sweden), and Clark Coolidge (US).

April 11, Concert 2 - The History Channel

Other Minds Ensemble joins various guest artists for virtuosic performances of Italian Futurism, German Dada and radical literature from Austria, France and the United States. The concert begins with Enzo Minarelli performing several works by Italian Futurists Fortunato Depero and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. Randall Wong deliver's Cathy Berberian's glossary of onomatopoeia, "Stripsody" before Lawrence Weschler introduces his grandfather Ernst Toch and the American premiere of Toch's "Gesprochene Musik" in its final, original German form. Also premiered is Weschler's re-working of Toch's "Geographical Fugue" into a "Medical Fugue", starring various disease names.

In the concert's second half, Jaap Blonk performs one of sound poetry's benchmark pieces, "Ursonate" by Kurt

Schwitters and historic tape pieces such as Gertrude Stein's "If I Told Him" (a portrait of Pablo Picasso) and French sound poet Bernard Heidsieck's "La Poinçonneuse" are heard. The evening concludes with a performance of "Capital Capitals", a collaborative effort between American composer Virgil Thomson and author Gertrude Stein. The Other Minds Ensemble as vocal quartet, with pianist Sarah Cahill perform.

FILIPPO TOMMASO MARINETTI

Dune (parole in libertà) (1914)

Zang Tumb Tuuum: Adrianopoli, 1912 (1914)

Filippo Tommaso Emilio Marinetti (1876–1944) was an Italian poet, editor, art theorist, founder of the Futurist movement, and the author of the first Futurist Manifesto (1909) as well as the Manifesto of Futurist Cooking, and the Fascist Manifesto. For Marinetti, it was time to be done with traditional syntax and to use parole in libertà (words in freedom, unconstrained by standard typography). This is exemplified in such poems as Zang Tumb Tuuum, an account of the Battle of Adrianople rendered into vocal text and utterances, and Dune, an evocation of the colors, stench, and noises of the desert.

FORTUNATO DEPERO

Subway, (1939)

Verbalizzazione astratta di signora, (1927)

Grattacieli (Skyscrapers, 1929)

Fortunato Depero (1892–1960) was an Italian futurist painter, writer, sculptor and graphic designer. His verbalizzazione strata ("abstract verbalizations") explore a nonfigurative and abstract language. Despite the lack of concrete meaning, Depero considered it the "poetic language of universal understanding."

Depero's Subway is an evocation of New York in the industrial age, rendered graphically as a poster and an essay into Futurist typography. The swirling "text" depicts the sights and sounds of underground travel. As with most contemporary Futurist art, it could also be interpreted in sound.

Verbalizzazione astratta di signora (the abstract verbalizations of a lady, 1927) is an example of a poem/score in free verse which invites the interpreter to play with the textual fragments, onomatopoeia, and to make the very letters audible. The bits and pieces of words are Italianate, but mostly recombined into imaginary words.

Grattacieli (Skyscrapers, 1929) is another work from Depero's time in New York (1928-1930), a Futurist/Art Deco typographical depiction of the modern metropolis.

FILIPPO TOMMASO MARINETTI

Savoia, (1917)

Savoia is the surname of the Italian monarchy in Turin, and dedicating a poem to Savoia is meant as an unambiguous tribute to war and to the monarchy itself. The visual layout and typography of the poem depict both the concept of flight and velocity coupled with the trajectory of a bomb.

Enzo Minarelli, voice

CATHY BERBERIAN

Stripsody, (1966)

Randall Wong, voice

Cathy Berberian (1925–1983) was an American mezzo-soprano and composer based in Italy and the wife of composer Luciano Berio (1950-1964). Berberian was a peerless performer of contemporary avant-garde music including works by Berio, Bruno Maderna, John Cage, Henri Pousseur, Sylvano Bussotti, Darius Milhaud, Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, and Igor Stravinsky, many of the pieces written specifically for her. Stripsody is

undeniably Berberian's best known work. Knowing her own abilities, she exploits her vocal technique to the fullest, using onomatopoeic and comic book sounds as well as sound effects (as in creaking doors, clocks, and animals). The score itself is often referred to as a model example of graphic notation. Rather than a staff, there are three lines indicating low, medium, and high ranges. Rather than notes, the score is made of little cartoonlike scribbles, and there is little in the way of time or rhythm instruction. While the sounds are clearly delineated, Stripsody offers considerable interpretive freedom.

BERNARD HEIDSIECK

La Poinçonneuse, Passe Partout No. 2 (1970), historic tape

Bernard Heidsieck (1928 –2014) was a French sound poet, frequently associated with various movements throughout a long career including the Beats, American Fluxus, and minimalism, but remained apart from any of these artistic groups. La poinçonneuse (The Ticket Puncher) is a sound poem with two characters shot from the point of view of an omnipotent narrator. The scene is a man who each morning has his metro ticket punched by a female metro worker, who holds a deep infatuation for the commuter. Each morning the same scene plays out where the man has his ticket stamped by the metro worker who then brings his attention to the fact that he dropped something. The paper “dropped” is a note written by the metro worker detailing her feelings for him.

ERNST TOCH

Gesprochene Musik (1930), U.S. premiere

o-a

ta-tam

Fuge aus der Geographie (Geographical Fugue)

Valse (1962)

Ernst Toch (1887-1964). Austrian emigré composer, fled the Nazis in 1933 and, as with many of his contemporaries, eventually settled in Southern California where he composed music for films. At the University of Southern California Toch was a professor of both music and philosophy. Post-1950, Toch returned to the concert stage, composing seven symphonies, the third of which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. His oeuvre includes symphonic, chamber, choral, stage, piano works, and four operas.

Gesprochene Musik is a set of three pieces for speaking chorus which premiered at the Neue Musik Berlin, 1930 and included his most performed work, the Geographical Fugue (a classical, albeit spoken, strict fugue on place names). Part of a program, Originalwerke für Schallplatten (original works for record albums) during which Toch employed a phonograph to play prerecorded sounds onstage. The suite was recorded at 78 rpm but played back at a much faster speed resulting in something akin to “Alvin and the Chipmunks” performing a proto-rap song. There is no surviving copy of the disc. The first two movements, “O-ah” and “Ta-tam,” explore the possibilities of vowels and consonants, respectively. We owe the survival of the Geographical Fugue to the intercession of John Cage who convinced Toch to give him the right of publication in Henry Cowell's periodical, *New Music*. Geographical Fugue has since entered into standard choral repertory in its English version. Choreographer Christopher Caines reconstructed the first two movements from archival materials at UCLA as the score for his dance piece, *Spoken Music* (2006), albeit not in its final version. This evening's performance is the American premiere of *Gesprochene Musik* in its final, complete incarnation in its original German.

Toch's Valse is a later work (1960), a parody of cocktail party chatter (which he reportedly loathed). It is peppered with fragments of small talk and inanities.

ERNST TOCH/LAWRENCE WESCHLER

The Medical Fugue (2014), World premiere

The Other Minds Ensemble: Kevin Baum, Joel Chapman, Sidney Chen, Amy X Neuburg,

Randall Wong, Pamela Z, voices

INTERMISSION

KURT SCHWITTERS

Ursonate (1932)

Jaap Blonk, voice

Kurt Hermann Eduard Karl Julius Schwitters (June 20, 1887 - January 8, 1948) was a German artist who worked in several genres and media, including sound poetry, painting, sculpture, graphic design, typography, and installation art.

Jaap Blonk writes: “At the source of Schwitters’ Ursonate or sonate in urlauten (primordial sonata or sonata in primordial sounds) are two Plakatgedichte (Poster Poems) by Raoul Hausmann, which provided the sonata’s opening line: Fumms bö wö tää zää Uu, pögiff, kwii Ee.

Schwitters used phrases such as this to provoke audiences at literary salons, who expected traditional romantic poetry, by endlessly repeating them in many different voices. In the course of ten years (1922-1932) he expanded this early version into a 30-page work, which Schwitters later considered one of the two masterpieces he created (the other one being the Merzbau in his house in Hannover, destroyed in 1944). As such, the Ursonate cannot be rightly considered a Dada work anymore, since Dada was inimical to the notion of masterpiece. The Ursonate has a structure similar to that of a classical sonata or symphony. It consists of four movements: Erster Teil (First Part), Largo, Scherzo and Presto.”

GERTRUDE STEIN

If I told him (a completed portrait of Pablo Picasso) (1934), historic tape

VIRGIL THOMSON/GERTRUDE STEIN (1917/1927)

Capital Capitals

The Other Minds Ensemble: Kevin Baum, tenor; Randall Wong, tenor; Joel Chapman, baritone; Sidney Chen, bass; with Sarah Cahill, piano

Like Rogers and Hammerstein or the Gershwin brothers, Virgil Thomson (1896-1989) and Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) formed one of the great collaborative teams of the 20th century. Their opera, *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1928) lays a legitimate claim to be one of America’s most important operas, or at least one of the most notorious. In all their collaborations, Stein’s verbal legerdemain finds an equal partner in the wit, elegance and, at first hearing, seemingly naïve, relentless, yet cunning diatonicism of Thomson’s writing.

From the liner notes on the original Columbia Records LP: The literary text of *Capital, Capitals* was written by Gertrude Stein in 1917; Virgil Thomson’s music was composed ten years later. As literature, it is a landscape piece, a picture of Provence in Southern France. This windy, warm and sunny land has been presented by the poet in the form of a four-way conversation. The speakers are the ancient capitals of Provence—Aix, Arles, Avignon and Les Baux. They speak always strictly in turn—one, two, three, four, three, two, one.

The music is concentrated almost wholly on verbal articulation. It offers no Provençal landscape of its own to compete with the poet’s rendering. It merely provides cadence and scansion for the text and the barest scaffolding of an instrumental support. It is not lacking, however, in ingenious solutions of knotty prosodic problems in solid, architectural planning. Its composition preceded by a year the completion of Thomson’s opera *Four Saints in Three Acts*, which also employs a text by Gertrude Stein. *Capital Capitals* broke historic ground in the setting of extended texts by this author, as well as in English musical declamation. Designed primarily to exploit the musical possibilities and peculiarities of the English language, the score is both a study in recitative and a preview of Virgil Thomson’s later achievements as an opera composer.

Capital Capitals, written in 1917, is an important historical document. But as such, it includes language or

viewpoints that may be objectionable to a modern audience. Other Minds and its performers do not support or endorse such views but do wish to preserve the integrity of the music and its historical value within the context of its time. It is the practice of Other Minds NOT to censor the work of artists. We trust you to make your own judgment about Capital Capitals, given the context in which it was created.

[Notes taken from printed program.]

People

Other Minds Festival (features)

ODC Theater (features)

Toch, Ernst, 1887-1964 (features)

Weschler, Lawrence (features)

Amirkhanian, Charles (features)

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