

Ernesto Rubin de Cervin: Scenes from his Cultural Biography

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Ernesto Rubin de Cervin Albrizzi (1936–2013) was a Venetian composer, teacher, cultural producer, liaison and writer. The following paragraphs provide a preliminary biographic sketch of the man based on the examination of the archive, Fondo Rubin de Cervin (henceforth FRdC), housed at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini (henceforth FGC), and on material from interviews with his closest friends. A spotlight on his early years and his later activities, they reflect not only an active and dynamic composer, but also a man of great culture with a multifaceted career, important professional entrees, intellectual relationships and multiple interests, identifying him as an important actor in the cultural life of his time, both within Venice and beyond.

EDUCATION AND EARLY ARTISTIC EXPERIENCES

Rubin de Cervin's history is unavoidably linked to Venice: his surname Albrizzi belonged to the aristocratic environment whose prestige emanated from family members, such as Girolamo and Giovan Battista Albrizzi (seventeenth century

pressmen and editors considered to be the ancestors of modern journalism) and the charismatic *salonnière* Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi (1760–1836).

When he was a child, he lived with his parents and siblings in the sixteenth-century Palazzo Bonomo Albrizzi in the San Polo quarter, and showed a predilection for music, beginning his study of the violin at the age of five.¹ After this first approach to music, in 1951, Gian Francesco Malipiero steered him towards a composition course at the Venetian Conservatory “Benedetto Marcello”, where he had Bruno Maderna as a solfège teacher.²

After high school, in 1955, he chose to embark on a musical career and moved to Florence. He studied there under Roberto Lupi, and privately under Luigi Dallapiccola, whose classes in those years were a meeting point for young musicians eager to study the twelve-tone technique and the works of Schoenberg and Webern. In 1957, Ernesto Rubin de Cervin moved to Rome to complete his diploma under the guidance of Virgilio Mortari and Goffredo Petrassi, and finally graduated in 1960. The reason for his transfer to the Roman conservatory is not sufficiently clear, although it is presumable that the young Rubin de Cervin wanted the opportunity to encounter the other great tutelary deity of aspiring composers, Goffredo Petrassi.³ Furthermore, in those years of great turmoil, Rome attracted many other young composers, such as Franco Evangelisti, Aldo Clementi, Mario Bertoncini, Ennio Morricone, Paolo Renosto, Daniele Paris, Egisto Macchi, Vinko Globokar, Domenico Guaccero, Alvin Curran, and Larry Austin. The capital represented a fertile ground for the musical avant-garde, artistic research, electronic music (Studio R7, Istituto Sperimentale di Poste e Telecomunicazioni), improvisation – the collectives Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza (GINC) and Musica Elettronica Viva (MEV) – and for musical contamination with literature and new pictorial tendencies.⁴

His contact with the Roman environment and the protagonists of the Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza (Franco Evangelisti, Mario Bertoncini, Ivan Vandor and others, attested by several letters housed at the FRdC) was probably one of the most significant factors that contributed to the maturation of avant-garde tendencies in Rubin de Cervin’s first artistic phase. The inclination towards indeterminacy can be found in his *Op. 6* (1964) for piano, *Divinità I* and *II* (1966 and 1967) and in *Op. 8* (1968). In this first creative period the composer also wrote a few graphical scores, of which *Op. 6* for piano solo represents the best example.

Furthermore, Rubin de Cervin’s participation in the avant-garde tendencies of the early 1960s, with the typical osmotic relationships between the arts, led him to experiment in the field of musical theatre through two pieces: *Words, words, words* (1964) and *Divinità I* (1966). In these scores, calligraphy is used as an expressive

FIGURE 1. Ernesto Rubin de Cervin, *Divinità I*, autograph manuscript. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Ernesto Rubin de Cervin.

fi

Solo Non la stacca, carogna degli infamati esiti,

Solo non le umane leggi, accesi frutti della circostanza,

Solo il popolo neppure - nessuno,

Solo cosa - parumato con pietà dal solitario.

Solo ma umanità contratta, ragionata

Tutti scottando in piedi

Tutti Monta orecchi ciò che nessuno ha mai osato!

means, as if to say that how the word is written influences how the word is said. At the same time, the spatial dimension of the lines on the sheet influences the temporal dimension, with the equivalence of 1 line = 10 seconds, so that the prose is combined with the musical treatment of time (FIGURE 1).⁵

The year 1968 represents a decisive juncture in his production because at that moment he stopped composing for 8 years, resuming again in 1976. Due to this hiatus, his artistic production can be clearly divided into two phases: the first one, defined by the author himself as ‘conceptual’, is characterised by his experiences in musical theatre, improvisation and graphical scores. In the second one, Rubin de Cervin developed the so-called ‘figuration’ theory and technique.⁶

BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF AN ARTISTIC PROMOTER

After his formative years in Florence and Rome, Rubin de Cervin went back to his hometown and began to construct a network of relationships with different musical institutions, which led him to start working in the press office of the Biennale Musica. He started out preparing concert programs in 1964, an activity that he officially carried out until 1968; then for another two years he collaborated as an external assistant to the director, Mario Labroca.⁷ Moreover, the Biennale was also a springboard for some of Rubin de Cervin’s pieces such as *Op. 3* for nine instruments, which premiered in 1961, conducted by Bruno Maderna; *Op. 6* for piano, performed by Pedro Espinosa; *Tre calchi sull’adagio della I Sonata per violino solo di J. S. Bach, Sestetto*, which premiered in 1979; and *Dono n. 5* for six instruments, conducted by Maurizio Dini Ciacci in 1995.

During the same time, in the late 1960s, Giovanni Volpi di Misurata, the son and heir of the count Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata who founded the Venice International Film Festival, decided to establish a cultural foundation dedicated to his father. The FGC, founded by Giuseppe Volpi’s dear friend, the count Vittorio Cini, served as a model.⁸ Thus, similarly, Giovanni Volpi thought of connecting a physical place in Venice to his Foundation: in this case, the Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari. One of the first interventions he commissioned was the restoration of the two antique organs manufactured by Giovan Battista Piaggia (in 1732) and Gaetano Callido (in 1795). In the early 1970s, Rubin de Cervin was nominated as secretary at the Foundation and, by the same, as artistic director of the Festival Internazionale di Musica Organistica [International Festival of Organ Music] to be held in the Basilica dei Frari. The festival represented the main activity of the Foundation and its aim was to appreciate the recently restored historical instruments, while at the same time promoting contemporary music.

The first edition was held in 1971, and on this occasion, *Arabesque* by Salvatore Sciarrino was commissioned and performed. Over the years, also *Manualiter* by Aldo Clementi in 1973, and *Toccata da chiesa* by Fabio Vacchi in 1977 were commissioned by and premiered at the Festival.

The Volpi di Misurata Foundation also intended to sponsor the project for a new organ based on a commission given by Rubin de Cervin to the notorious architect Carlo Scarpa. On 10 May 1970 a committee organized by the Foundation met in Palazzo Albrizzi, and Scarpa drew his first sketches of the instrument. In September 1971, the project was ready and presented to the Venetian Curia; in January 1972, Scarpa's project was given to the Venetian Superintendence, which in turn sent it to the Ministry of Culture in Rome for approval. At the time, Ernesto Rubin de Cervin was anxious to see the organ completed and wrote to Scarpa about the next festival edition in 1973, 'Stockhausen has accepted to compose a piece for us, but he wants to work directly on the new instrument'.⁹ Despite the efforts and the willingness of the professionals involved, the project for the new organ remained unaccomplished. In a lecture given in 1976 at IUAV in Venice, the architect explained that the project experienced some technical problems due to the vibrations the instrument would have produced and the damage that these vibrations would have caused to the works of art housed in the Basilica.¹⁰ Consequently, the project was stopped and the new organ was never realised.¹¹

A CASE IN POINT: 'DANZA '75'

A case in point demonstrating Rubin de Cervin's commitment to promoting high-level cultural activities is manifested in *Danza '75*, an event we can consider as a forerunner to the Dance Biennale officially inaugurated in 1998 under the direction of Carolyn Carlson.¹² On 4 August 1975, Rubin de Cervin wrote to his friend, a Regional Council member and cardiologist at the University of Padua, Sergio Dalla Volta (FIGURE 2):

Danza '75 in the project of the creators (Maurice Huisman and Maurice Béjart, it should be remembered once again) should have had the double and profound meaning of a meeting and a celebration: meeting of young dancers from all over the world, already professionals and still students, meeting of companies, choreographers, choreologists, maître de ballet, and dance party in the sense of celebration, review and study of an art that is becoming essential and crucial in the culture of these decades, also for its diffusion. Just think that in 1974 its spectators in the United States were more numerous than those of the prose theatre.¹³

This is how the composer described the kermesse that ended the month before in Venice, and yet he was drawing conclusions on what had happened in the twenty-three days when the city hosted Danza '75. The project, in collaboration with the Venice UNESCO department in the figure of Joseph Martin, was intended as a sort of ballet Biennale, hosting performers from all over the world,

FIGURE 2. Letter from Ernesto Rubin de Cervin to Sergio Dalla Volta, 4 August 1975. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Ernesto Rubin de Cervin.

"Danza 75" nel progetto degli ideatori (Maurice Rasmussen e Maurice Béjart, giova dirlo ancora una volta) avrebbe dovuto avere il significato duplice e profondo di incontro e di festa: incontro di giovani danzatori di ogni parte del mondo, già professionisti o ancora studenti, incontro di compagnie, coreografi, coreologi, maitres de ballet, e festa della danza nel senso di celebrazione, di rassegna e di studio di un'arte che sta diventando essenziale e cruciale nella cultura di questi decenni, anche per la sua diffusione, ove si pensi che negli Stati Uniti i suoi spettatori sono stati nel '71 più numerosi di quelli del teatro di prosa.

Proposto dapprima ad Avignone, pensato quindi per Montréal (in concomitanza con le Olimpiadi del '76), il progetto è stato infine accolto da Venezia. Sede migliore non poteva trovarsi sia perché, oltre a mille ben note ragioni, Venezia da sempre sa far diventare festa ciò che altrove non è che festival, sia perché è una città di solitudine difficile, dove gli incontri non soltanto non sono evitabili ma costituiscono la quintessenza dei rapporti sociali quotidiani. D'altro canto, recente era l'esperienza del Festival dell'Unità, che aveva dimostrato come tutta la città potesse divenire un teatro generale e in senso stretto, in cui i vari luoghi scenici si collegavano in un itinerario o si ~~articolavano~~ articolavano in un palcoscenico unico ma multiplo o polivalente, quasi in un'utopia di Ronconi. Per queste ragioni il primo progetto di "Danza 75" prevedeva, per ciò che riguarda le compagnie, sette luoghi scenici, due solo dei quali erano teatri propriamente detti: Teatro La Fenice, Teatro Verde, Piazza S. Marco, Cortile di Palazzo Ducale, Campo del Ghetto Novo, Campo S. Polo e Campo S. Lorenzo. Non furono che esigenze di bilancio a costringere il Comitato Organizzatore a rinunciare agli ultimi due luoghi scenici (e quanto al Palazzo Ducale, non si trattò di rinuncia bensì di rifiuto della direzione del Palazzo a concedere, come per il passato, l'uso del Cortile a scopo teatrale).

workshops, exhibitions – everything oriented to enhance the city of Venice with its theatricality and the culture of dance. Overall, eighteen ballet companies from thirteen different countries came to Venice along with a total of 45.000 spectators dispersed from 14 June to 6 July. Danza '75 represented an important goal for the Italian dance environment and transformed the whole city into an open-air ballet stage: many of the 49 shows were held in Piazza San Marco, Teatro Verde and Campo del Ghetto Nuovo.

The event was of great artistic interest thanks to the participation of renowned ballet companies and choreographers such as Maurice Béjart and his company, Martha Graham, the Nederlands Dans Theater, together with ethnic dancers from Africa and Asia. To give a better understanding of the relevance of the kermesse, we could simply list the members of the Artistic Committee: Maurice Huisman (President), Maurice Béjart (Vice-president), Dame Ninette de Valois, Floris Ammannati, Luciano Berio, Massimo Bogianckino, Pierre Cambier, Luca Ronconi and Ernesto Rubin de Cervin, who was officially nominated by the city's mayor, Giorgio Longo, as the general coordinator of the project.¹⁴ The composer had been playing such a role unofficially since he got in touch with Huisman in Venice, when the latter informed him about the project he was starting to plan together with Joseph Martin, the chief of the Venetian department of UNESCO.¹⁵

Despite Danza '75 obtaining favourable results in terms of audience, in a letter to Dalla Volta, Rubin de Cervin complained about the weighty absence of Balanchine and the Russian ballet school. An attempt was made to organise a second edition in the two years that followed, which unfortunately remained only a good intention. Nevertheless Danza '75 opened new insights to the subject: the comparison with the great international dance schools brought an awareness of the limitations in technical, choreographic invention and schooling of the ballet that reigned in Italy, where the main schools were part of the *Enti lirici* [lyrical theatres], rooted in the often-stereotyped ideals of classical ballet and further constrained by their lyrical programming. In the above mentioned letter, the composer yearned for the establishment of a national dance company that could be open to international innovations, with choreographers, qualified and foreign *maîtres de ballet*, as far as an artistic and professional conscience, a technical quality, a new style and a general attitude had formed a creative, open, non-provincial outlook in the dance school which was to support the new national company. The realisation of such a dynamic context for dance in Venice would occur only later, in 2003, with the first edition of the International Dance Festival of the Biennale under the direction of Frédéric Flamand.¹⁶

RUBIN DE CERVIN AS LECTURER, ESSAYIST AND WRITER

The Fondo Rubin de Cervin documents other activities of the composer, and at the same time, his relationship with the artistic and cultural elite. The tournées of conferences to USA and Canada in 1970 and to South America in 1972 are indicative of his ties, to be investigated, with Italian diplomacy and of Rubin de Cervin's selectivity (preferences and biases) within the world of contemporary music. He lectured in the embassies and cultural institutes in the main cities of the two continents: New York, Ottawa, Lima, Caracas, Brasilia, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

The 1972 conferences dealt with Italian music of the twenty century. According to an unpublished typewritten text for his speech (FIGURE 3), Rubin de Cervin tried to reconstruct a sort of genealogy among Italian composers, starting from Gian Francesco Malipiero as the progenitor, followed by a second generation with Goffredo Petrassi and Luigi Dallapiccola and then a third with Luciano Berio, Luigi Nono, Franco Donatoni, Sylvano Bussotti, Marcello Panni, Giuseppe Sinopoli and Salvatore Sciarrino embodied the newest generation, the youngest. Through an historical excursion across four generations, the author tried to find the common thread connecting the Italian composers, despite their huge diversity of language. He gave himself the difficult task of investigating the quintessence of the *italianità* [Italianness] in their works:

The essence of Italian music is harmony: [...] Hence the balance of relationships, the measure in the choice and use of materials, the adaptability of thought to the performer, the elegance that derives from it, the love for the instrument; but above all, this calm identification of man with sound translates into voice, and therefore into singing: singing as melody, merely singing, or singing as action, or as choral issue. [...] These very characteristics are also found in the generation of composers, who became known after the end of the war and in what is emerging in the last few years.¹⁷

The essence of Italian music is found in the *cantabilità* [singability] of classical origin, derived by a long line of composers stretching back to Luca Marenzio, Claudio Monteverdi and Domenico Scarlatti. At the conference Rubin de Cervin offered some examples: Scelsi's *Okanagon*, Castaldi's *Filarmonica*, *Gold*, *Schoenberg*, *10 Discanti* and *Sigla*, Clementi's *Reticolo 11*, Donatoni's *Per Orchestra* and *Souvenir*, Bussotti's *The Rara Requiem*, Baggiani's *UBUung*, Panni's *Per le 10 dita*, closing with *Opus Scir* by Sinopoli and *Berceuse* by Sciarrino. We may overestimate Rubin de Cervin's modesty, due to the fact that he did not choose to mention any of his own compositions; however, it's important to remember that he stopped composing between 1968 and 1976 due to an artistic crisis. As

FIGURE 3. Ernesto Rubin de Cervin, Paper on Italian music of the twenty century, typescript, p. [1]. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Ernesto Rubin de Cervin.

Signorá e Signori,

il tema di questa mia conferenza è la musica italiana contemporanea. Ma che vuol dire musica italiana? Esiste una musica italiana che si differenzi da una musica tedesca o francese? Che cos'è peculiare ai compositori italiani? Che cosa danno e che cosa ricevono? Quanti sono? Chi sono? Che cosa fanno?

A leggere le cronache musicali dell'inizio del Novecento, ad esempio quelle di Romain Rolland, si possono vedere le enormi differenze tra la vita musicale tedesca e quella francese, tra quella italiana e quella inglese; ognuno di questi popoli aveva un modo suo proprio di pensare la musica, di fare la musica e di viverla. Una partitura di Mahler o di Reger era tanto 'tedesca' quanto una di Debussy era 'francese' e un'opera di Puccini era italiana. Se ci si esprime in un modo così rudimentale e, se si vuole, sciocco, è per indicare quella stratificazione di atteggiamenti spirituali e di abitudini pratiche che si era andata formando all'interno di ciascun popolo dal primo Cinquecento in poi e, con processo accelerato, dalla Rivoluzione francese. La musica, come tutta la cultura, era divenuta una delle bandiere (ma anche una delle armi) nel cui nome i popoli europei si affrontavano e si combattevano. Ma poi le cose sono andate come sono andate: a somiglianza dei rispettivi eserciti, tutte le varie culture nazionali sono uscite massacciate dalla contesa, ragion per cui molti ritengono che si debba ricominciare daccapo e che la rottura con la tradizione sia la conditio sine qua non perché la musica riviva secondo verità. Per gli europei - ed è questo un dato di fatto che vi prego di non dimenticare se vorrete comprendere le personalità e le opere di cui farò cenno più avanti - per gli europei la storia è ormai maledizione. E' una maledizione che perseguita, che abbatte, che distrugge, come un nuovo peccato originale.

Se Romain Rolland tornasse a visitare gli stessi paesi musicali di cui scrisse settant'anni fa, vedrebbe una situazione completamente diversa: il sinfonismo e il formalismo sono morti in Germania, l'impressionismo e l'orientalismo sono defunti in Francia, e in Italia sono avvenute già da tempo, tra il giubilo generale, le esequie del melodramma. La società europea è divenuta uniforme, omogenea: tutti fanno più o meno le stesse cose, la stessa musica, hanno i medesimi problemi, si organizzano nello stesso modo. Se c'è una critica da fare ai nichilisti è che non c'è più nulla da distruggere: la tradizione è già morta, intendo dire quella tradizione che era legata alle condizioni culturali, politiche e sociali specifiche di ciascun paese. Stando così le cose, i compositori europei, già abbracciatisi nel '50 ai favolosi Ferienkurse di Darmstadt, hanno a un tratto scoperto che se nessuna divisione spirituale profonda esisteva tra loro, era tuttavia sorta un'altra idea

libra, l'altra, Patraschi, da una decina d'anni va sorprendendo tutti scrivendo fantastiche e pregevoli pagine aleatorie.

indicated previously, in that period he focused on different activities, serving both as artistic director at Volpi di Misurata Foundation and general coordinator at Danza '75. The persistency in the text of the works by Castaldi, portrayed as a contemporary Erik Satie, might suggest that Rubin de Cervin intended to avoid a traditional description of the Italian musical avant-garde by referring to the highly celebrated Luigi Nono and Luciano Berio among others. Castaldi provided a particular case characterised by ironic musical collages and reworked versions of past and more famous pieces now depleted of their original meaning.¹⁸ The quoted works by Castaldi are infused with an iconoclastic taste and declare the 'end of the art' due to the present lack of originality. In the same vein, Rubin de Cervin may have intended to highlight the pessimistic view of some Italian composers, Aldo Clementi and Franco Donatoni, towards music's further development. In Clementi's music the atmosphere is dense, the counterpoint very subtle, but all remains static in a swarming way: the music is nothing but the slow description of its own process of decline. Donatoni takes a similar pessimistic approach. Often coping with depression, he denied that music could be a language in the sense of the European tradition. Donatoni believed that music was a mere and cold elaboration of pre-existing materials.¹⁹

The presence of Scelsi together with that of Sciarrino – at the time in his early twenties – in the selection of authors that were discussed, demonstrates Rubin de Cervin's deep knowledge of the Italian music scene. In those years Scelsi's works were rarely performed in Italy; he was certainly better known and performed in France and in the United States. Because of his nonconformist attitude and his experimentalism beyond any pattern – recall the improvisations with Ondiola and the obsessive exploration of a single note – Italian composers considered him almost as an imposter. Scelsi's figure, and his acceptance as a composer would be restored in Italy only at the end of the 1970s.

On the other hand, the relationship with Sciarrino was more articulated. From a young age he was a *protégé* of Rubin de Cervin's family.²⁰ He was particularly close to Maria Teresa, the wife of the Venetian composer, to whom he dedicated the organ commission *Arabesque* (1971) and *Amore e Psiche* (1973). As can be read in the typescript, Rubin de Cervin considered Sciarrino to be the response to negative music and to silence, which many contemporary composers thought the art of sounds was destined to:

To those who asked him where he could go with this having so early reached apex of refinement, mastery, precision and wisdom, Sciarrino replied: "The more I deepen the sound, the more I discover that we still know nothing about it". I think this is the best answer to the philosophy of negative music, to the theory of the loss of language, to aphasia, to silence, which many believe is the fate of our music.²¹

The speech is completely devoid of any reference to electronic music, which in Italy had prominent laboratories in the Studio di Fonologia della Rai in Milan, and the experimental Studio R7 in Rome, established in 1965, where composers such as Franco Evangelisti, Egisto Macchi and Domenico Guaccero played an active role. Perhaps electronic music was considered too far from the *cantabilità* of the Italian music that was depicted at the beginning of the conference. Perhaps, it needed to be more compatible with the human part of the musical expression. Rubin de Cervin himself had never used electronics in his work.

Thanks to the notes in brackets in the typescript we know which pieces were played during the conference; and most importantly, we can read about the reactions of the public in the letters sent to the composer from the host institutions after his visit. These reactions were reported on the occasion of the conferences in Lima and Caracas. Such letters testify to an intense public debate ensuing in Caracas, whereas in Lima the audience was scandalised. The Director of the Italian Institute of Culture in Lima, Pietro Roversi, wrote:

Here the echo of your conference persists: every now and then someone stops me and, with an offended air, tells me: “But now that we are among us and no one is listening, do you still have the courage to argue that that was music? And Mozart, Beethoven, Rossini, where do we put them?” And I, mindful of Don Abbondio’s saying that when one has no courage can never get it, I reply that yes, that as a matter of fact, on the other hand, that in any case... and so on. In conclusion, in the mass of listeners there has remained an “inquietud” an annoying feeling of crisis and rethinking, and I believe that this is the best that can be obtained.²²

It is clear from these comments that in South America, as anywhere else, it was difficult for the audience to form a positive reaction to the musical avant-garde, even when its introduction was mediated and assisted by an expert.

To conclude this survey of Rubin de Cervin’s activities based on his archive, let us briefly consider his essay and literary production. It seems limited to certain periods or moments of relative freedom from other priorities. Music criticism can be found in seven published texts, which are different in length, approach and style depending on the destination, from theater programs, to literary journals and specialist publications. The list follows in chronological order:

- ‘Une exquise crise, fondamentale. Note su alcune concezioni del tempo di Karlheinz Stockhausen’, *Rivista trimestrale dell’Ente Autonomo La Biennale di Venezia*, XV/57–58, settembre 1965, Roma: Editalia – Edizioni d’Italia, pp. 68–73.
- ‘Una recente partitura di Pierre Boulez’, *Rivista trimestrale dell’Ente Autonomo*

- La Biennale di Venezia*, XVIII/63, gennaio–marzo 1968, Venezia: Stamperia di Venezia, pp. 31–33.
- ‘Arabesque di Sciarrino’, *Lo Spettatore Musicale*, 5, settembre–ottobre 1971, pp. 18–20.
 - ‘A proposito dei Quartetti di Gian Francesco Malipiero’, in: *Omaggio a Malipiero*, a cura di Mario Messinis, Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1977, pp. 79–84.
 - ‘Una lettura beethoveniana: il primo tempo della Sonata op. 57 per pianoforte’, in: *Nuova rassegna di studi musicali*, a cura dell’Accademia dei Concordi di Rovigo, Centro di studi musicali aggregato all’Università degli Studi di Padova, II/2, 1978, pp. 47–79.
 - ‘Tempus destruendi – Tempus aedificandi di Dallapiccola’, in: *Lungo il Novecento: la musica a Trieste e le interconnessioni tra le arti. Festschrift in onore del centenario della fondazione del Conservatorio “Giuseppe Tartini” di Trieste 1903–2003*, a cura di Maria Girardi, Venezia: Marsilio, 2003, pp. 307–313.

Ernesto Rubín de Cervin was more prolific in his production of short stories, publishing two collections, *Passeggiata al castello* (1989) and *Il ragazzo in tunica* (1995). The FRdC preserves fair copies of another collection, which remained unpublished at the time of the author’s death, with stories entitled: *Pastorale*, *La cortina di gala*, *Compianto*, *La Grande Fine*, *Stupenda visione*, *Neve*, *Festa di giovani* and *La lezione di composizione*.²³ Among them, *La cortina di gala* was published as text for the homonymous opera by the composer Luca Mosca, which premiered in 2015 in Rome.²⁴ The text was inspired by the Japanese epic poem *Gengji monogatari* written in the eleventh century by the courtesan and poetess Murasaki Shikibu.²⁵

In addition to essays and fiction, Rubín de Cervin was also accustomed to setting down his own thoughts, filling a dozen handbooks with personal considerations, aphorisms and poems concerning various subjects such as philosophy, politics, music and literary sketches. Many of these contain Italian translations of Dutch poems by Jakobus Cornelis Bloem, Jan Slauerhoff, Adriaan Roland Holst, Margarethe Vasalis, Hans Warren, Hendrik Marsman, and Gerrit Achterberg. Completely unpublished, these documents contain original fragments of his personality and thoughts; nevertheless, they have been rendered significantly inaccessible by his tortuous handwriting.²⁶

Finally, Ernesto Rubín de Cervin’s interest in philosophy is also evidenced by his friendship with Andrea Emo. He tracked down the bequest of 322 of Emo’s handbooks, which, by his own will, should have been burned after the author’s death. This discovery, in the mid 1980s, was fundamental to the restoration and

the study of Andrea Emo as a philosopher, later carried out by Massimo Cacciari, Massimo Donà and Roberto Gasparotti.²⁷

Notes

- 1 Details on Rubin de Cervin's childhood were provided by his daughter Elisabetta Rubin de Cervin through a couple of interviews I conducted in September 2019.
- 2 Joachim Noller, 'Rubin de Cervin, Ernesto', in: *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Kassel: Bärenreiter Metzler, 2005, vol. 14, coll. 586–587: 586.
- 3 On the relations between Petrassi and Dallapiccola see Arrigo Quattrocchi, 'Dallapiccola e Petrassi: percorsi paralleli', in: *Luigi Dallapiccola nel suo secolo*, a cura di Fiamma Nicolodi, Firenze: Leo Olschki Editore, 2004, pp. 125–152.
- 4 Daniela Tortora, 'La musica d'avanguardia a Roma nella ricerca storico-artistica e musicologica', in: *Musikstadt Rom. Geschichte – Forschung – Perspektiven. Beiträge der Tagung 'Rom – die Ewige Stadt im Brennpunkt der aktuellen musikwissenschaftlichen Forschung' am Deutschen Historischen Institut Rom 28.–30. September 2004*, hrsg. von Markus Engelhardt, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2011, pp. 36–48.
- 5 See *New Music Theatre in Europe*, ed. by R. Adlington, New York: Routledge, 2019, and, for a focus on the Italian situation, Valentina Valentini, *Nuovo Teatro Made in Italy 1963–2013*, Roma: Bulzoni, 2015.
- 6 This partition is corroborated by some of his own statements: program for the concert held on 31 October 2000 at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini where the pianist Aldo Orvieto performed pieces by Rubin de Cervin and Camillo Togni, and the interview by Lea Vergine, *Gli ultimi eccentrici*, Milano: Rizzoli, 1980, pp. 177–187. For further information about Rubin de Cervin's figuration technique see Joachim Noller, 'Über das Primäre in der Musik. Zur Poetik Rubin de Cervins', in: *Zwischentöne. Positionen zur Musik*, hrsg. von Günther Friesinger und Helmut Neumann, Wien: Monochrom, 2013, pp. 75–82.
- 7 Conversation with Mario Messinis on 22 October 2019.
- 8 Vittorio Pajusco, 'Devozione e committenza: Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata ai Frari', in: *Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari. Immagini di Devozione, spazi della Fede*, a cura di Carlo Corsato e Deborah Howard, Padova: Centro Studi Antoniani, 2015, pp. 199–208: 206.
- 9 'Stockhausen ha accettato di scrivere un pezzo per noi e desidera lavorare direttamente sul nuovo strumento'. Letter from Ernesto Rubin de Cervin to Carlo Scarpa, 24 January 1972 (Roma, MAXXI, Centro Archivi Maxxi Architettura, Archivio Carlo Scarpa).
- 10 Pajusco, *Devozione e committenza*, p. 207. Carlo Scarpa's lecture is exposed in Franca Semi, *A lezione con Carlo Scarpa*, Venezia: Cicero, 2010, pp. 226–231.
- 11 Rubin de Cervin's correspondence with the architect Carlo Scarpa gathers some sketches of the project. In FRdC is also possible to find an unpublished report made by the organist Margherita Gianola *Un organo moderno per la Basilica dei Frari. Da Vincenzo Mascioni a Carlo Scarpa*, in which the relations between Scarpa and Fondazione Volpi di Misurata through Rubin de Cervin are reconstructed.
- 12 At the end of the festival Rubin de Cervin drafted a detailed report of the activities in the letter addressed to Sergio Dalla Volta on 4 August 1975.
- 13 'Danza '75 nel progetto degli ideatori (Maurice Huisman e Maurice Béjart, giova dirlo ancora una volta) avrebbe dovuto avere il significato duplice e profondo di incontro e di festa: incontro

- di giovani danzatori di ogni parte del mondo, già professionisti e ancora studenti, incontro di compagnie, coreografi, coreologi, maître de ballet, e festa della danza nel senso di celebrazione, di rassegna e di studio di un'arte che sta diventando essenziale e cruciale nella cultura di questi decenni, anche per la sua diffusione, ove si pensi che negli Stati Uniti i suoi spettatori sono stati nel '74 più numerosi di quelli del teatro di prosa'. Extract from the displayed letter to Sergio Dalla Volta (see FIGURE 2).
- 14 All the project activities are documented in the catalogue *Incontri internazionali della danza: Venezia, 14 giugno–6 luglio 1975: Danza 75. Sotto il patrocinio dell'UNESCO, con la collaborazione del Centro internazionale delle arti e del costume e dell'Ente autonomo Teatro La Fenice*, Venezia: Stamperia di Venezia, 1975.
 - 15 See the letter conserved in FRdC by Maurice Huisman, dated 7 January 1974, which indicates the beginning of the Rubin de Cervin's collaboration in the rising project.
 - 16 Dance department was inaugurated in 1998 as a new Biennale sector, under the direction of Carolyn Carlson, on the occasion of the amendment of the Statutes from 'personalità giuridica di diritto privato' to 'Società di Cultura'. Flamand was nominated director of the Biennale Dance Festival.
 - 17 'L'essenza della musica italiana è l'armoniosità: [...] Donde l'equilibrio dei rapporti, la misura nella scelta e nell'impiego dei materiali, l'adattabilità del pensiero all'esecutore, l'eleganza che ne deriva, l'amore per lo strumento; ma, soprattutto, questa calma identificazione dell'uomo con il suono si traduce nella voce, e dunque nel canto: canto come melodia, o come mera vocalità, oppure canto come azione, o come coralità. [...] E queste stesse caratteristiche si ritrovano anche nella generazione di compositori venuti alla luce dopo la fine della guerra e in quella che sta sorgendo in questi ultimissimi anni'.
 - 18 Renzo Cresti, *Ragioni e sentimenti nelle musiche europee dall'inizio del Novecento a oggi*, Lucca: LIM, 2015, p. 519.
 - 19 Typescript, pp. 4–5 (FRdC).
 - 20 Salvatore Sciarrino stated about his relationship with Venice on the occasion of the Golden Lion assignment: 'My bond with Venice is very strong. Ernesto Rubin de Cervin and his wife Maria Teresa were my first patrons as well as sincere friends. I lived in misery. In Rome I had no heating but luckily I spent most of the winters at Palazzo Albrizzi, their guest. Those winters spent in Venice are among the most beautiful and strange memories I have. Ernesto wrote the first essay on me [published in *Lo Spettatore Musicale*], which everyone has forgotten but I have not, in which he approached certain important Heidegger arguments to analyse my anomalous position. He wrote better and more rightly about me than Bortolotto, who instead loved the playful aspects, which do not exist, in my music'. See interview by Stefano Nardelli, *Il Giornale della Musica*, online published on 16 September 2019: <https://www.giornaledellamusicait/articoli/sciarrino-uneologia-del-teatro-musicale> [18 November 2020].
 - 21 'A chi gli domandava dove potesse andare a parare un lavoro che così precocemente aveva raggiunto vertici di raffinatezza, di maestria e precisione e sapienza, Sciarrino rispose: "Più approfondisco il suono, più scopro che non ne sappiamo ancora nulla". Credo che questa sia la migliore risposta alla filosofia della musica negativa, alla teoria della perdita del linguaggio, all'afasia, al silenzio, che molti ritengono sia il destino della nostra musica'. Typescript, p. 7 (FRdC).
 - 22 'Qui l'eco della Sua conferenza perdura: ogni tanto uno mi ferma e, con aria offesa, mi dice: "Ma Lei, ora che siamo tra noi e nessuno ci ascolta, ha ancora il coraggio di sostenere che è musica quella? E Mozart, Beethoven, Rossini, dove li mettiamo?" Ed io, memore del detto di Don Abbondio che quando il coraggio non c'è nessuno se lo può procurare, rispondo che sì, che in somma, che d'altra parte, che in ogni caso... e così via. Concludendo, nella massa degli

ascoltatori è rimasta una “inquietud”, una molesta sensazione di crisi e ripensamento, e credo che questo sia il massimo che si possa ottenere’. Letter from Pietro Roversi to Ernesto Rubin de Cervin, 12 May 1972 (FRdC).

- 23 Online published in the German translation by Joachim Noller: <https://www.ars-mimetica.org/literatur-und-musik/rubin-de-cervin/> [19 November 2020].
- 24 I am particularly grateful to Pilar García Colmenarejo, wife of the composer and teacher Luca Mosca, for the information about Rubin de Cervin’s late written production. The baron became gradually blind in his last ten years and was in need of help for reading, composing and of course, writing. Pilar García Colmenarejo assisted him and was personally involved in the phrasing of the text for *La cortina di gala*.
- 25 Rubin de Cervin’s interest in Japanese culture started from the mid 1980s – as stated by his daughter Elisabetta Rubin de Cervin – and peaked with a four month-long trip to Japan in 1986 following the ballet company of his friend Maurice Béjart.
- 26 FRdC houses 12 manuscripted handbooks, A5-sized. The Italian translations from Dutch were made thanks to the help of Dulcia Meijers, art historian and friend of the Rubin de Cervin’s family.
- 27 Which led to the publication: Andrea Emo, *Il dio negativo. Scritti teoretici 1925–1981*, a cura di Massimo Donà e Romano Gasparotti, Venezia: Marsilio, 1989.

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