

Telecoms, spaceship doors and singing animals: *La Fantarca* and Roman Vlad's electronic music

Joanna Helms

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

At first glance, it may seem that composer Roman Vlad (1919–2013) had only a superficial and passing interest in electronic music. He wrote only one fully electronic piece, and his remaining work with electronics appeared within larger works for radio, television and film – paling in comparison to the rest of his prolific catalogue. To completely dismiss Vlad's electronic output on this basis, however, would mean to overlook a substantial current within his musical life in the 1950s and 1960s. Vlad was an active commenter on electronic music in print and broadcast media, and his attention to major debates and developments extended far beyond his direct compositional experience in the field.

This article examines Roman Vlad's 1966 television opera *La Fantarca* (dir. Vittorio Cottafavi) in light of his engagement with electronic music not only as a composer, but also as a musicologist and public commenter. Vlad's use of electronics in *La Fantarca* constituted his final and most substantial electronic work, in which he implemented attitudes toward composition and the role of electronic music in visual media that he had developed over the previous fifteen years. Understanding the ways in which Vlad incorporated electronic effects in *La Fantarca* represents an important step towards understanding the role of electronic music in his wider career.

VLAD AND ELECTRONIC MUSIC

Vlad took an early interest in the activities of post-war European electronic music studios as a musicologist and writer. In September 1955, he published a review of the first issue of contemporary music journal *Die Reihe*, specially dedicated to electronic music and particularly the activities at the Studio für Elektronische Musik in Cologne.¹ After commenting on the arguments put forth in the issue – focusing particularly on the blending of serial and ‘traditional’² styles in electronic music – Vlad writes that he was initially underwhelmed by hearing seven compositions produced at the Cologne studio:

We thought we would hear something that human ears had never experienced before, and that these new sounds would be highly differentiated in quality. After listening for a few minutes, all these marvels of sound seemed boring because there was a common denominator in the *timbre* which reminded us of the unauthentic qualities of the Hammond organ.³

Despite his disappointment, Vlad expresses hope that electronic instruments might produce more diverse sounds in the future.

Vlad was among the first composers invited by Luciano Berio to visit the Studio di Fonologia Musicale (henceforth SdF) at the RAI broadcast centre in Milan in December 1955.⁴ Whether or not this first visit took place, Berio maintained his interest in speaking to Vlad about the possibilities of the new studio; he wrote again on 28 April 1956 saying that the studio would be operational in about a week and that he wanted to discuss them with Vlad as soon as possible.⁵ Vlad was subsequently invited by Mario Bevilacqua, the director of RAI’s Torino headquarters, to a presentation of electronic music at the SdF on 8 May 1956.⁶ The presence of a presentation programme and other materials among Vlad’s papers at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia) suggests that he attended, hearing several early pieces by Berio and Bruno Maderna along with pieces prepared elsewhere by Pierre Schaeffer, Pierre Henry, Vladimir Ussachevsky and Karlheinz Stockhausen.

Vlad’s first composition to incorporate electronic elements was his 1959 radio opera *Dottore di vetro*.⁷ His first opportunity to work more extensively with electronic equipment, however, arose in September 1960, when he was offered a commission and residency at the SdF.⁸ Vlad completed this commission over just two weeks, from 16 to 31 January 1961, reworking and manipulating compositional material from his cantata *Le ciel est vide*. The resulting piece was *Ricerca elettronica*, Vlad’s only piece for tape alone.⁹

That same year, Vlad was invited to participate in the Congresso internazionale di musica sperimentale, a conference organised by critic and RAI administrator Alberto Mantelli in conjunction with the 1961 Festival Internazionale di Musica

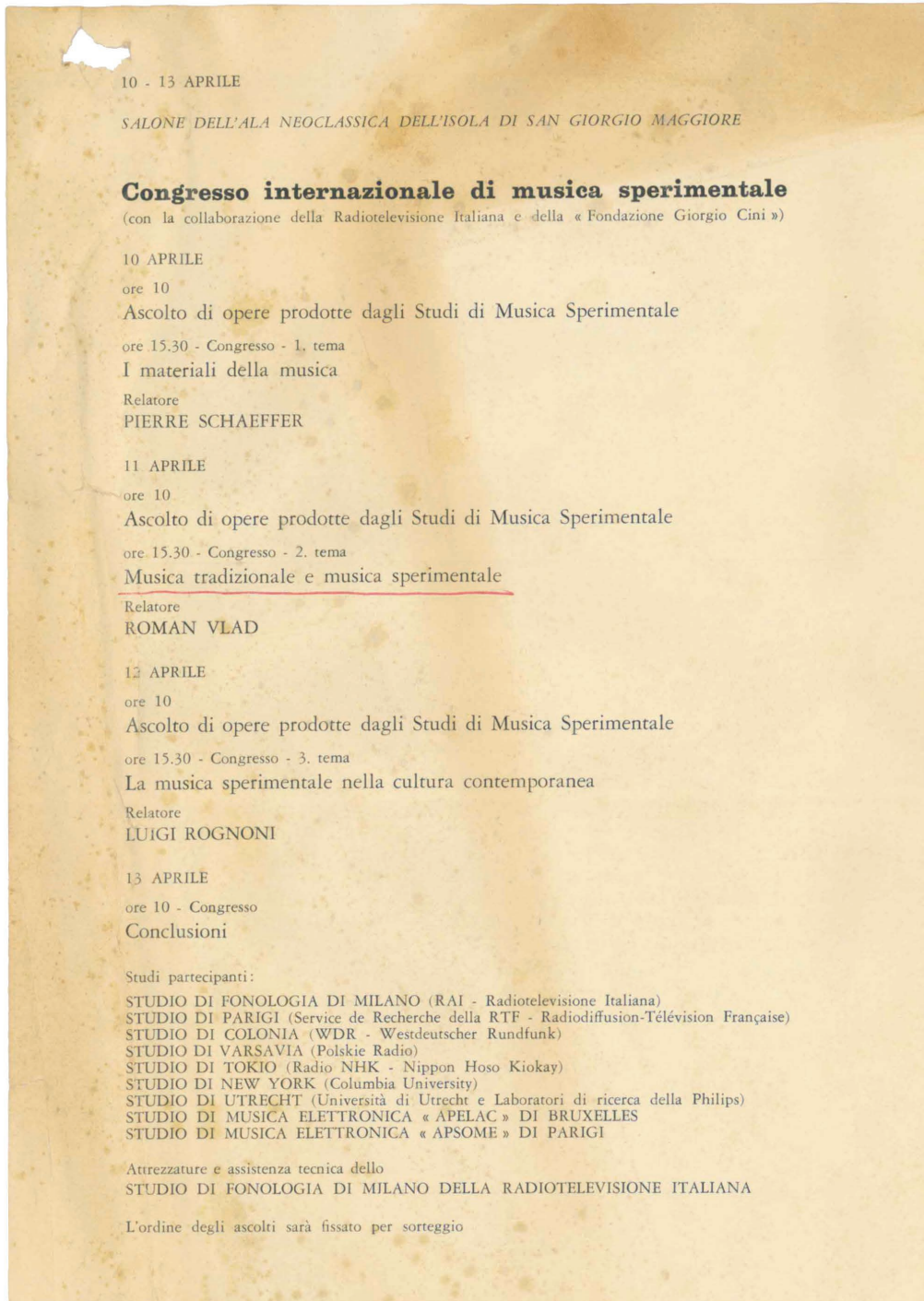
Contemporanea di Venezia (FIGURE 1). Attendees included representatives from state-subsidised studios in Paris, Cologne, Warsaw and Tokyo, as well as the Columbia University Computer Music Center, Philips Laboratories and others – arguably the most substantial gathering of personnel from post-war electronic studios to that point. Vlad's talk, titled 'Musica tradizionale e musica sperimentale [Traditional Music and Experimental Music]', addressed the nature of experimentalism and the issue of electronic music notation.¹⁰ Among other arguments, Vlad pointed to the necessity of experimentation with electronic means *before* an electronic work could be fully planned. He also took issue with the application of the term 'experimental' to describe all electronic compositions, emphasising that most contemporary electronic music was actually planned in advance by adapting techniques from instrumental and vocal composition.¹¹

Vlad's involvement with these debates was not limited to specialist circles. He contributed several pieces to the Roman weekly *La Tribuna* in the early 1960s touching on electronic music.¹² Over the course of the next several years, Vlad was involved in numerous activities that brought electronic music to the general public. He wrote and delivered an introduction to a series of radio broadcasts of electronic music composed at the SdF, which aired on the RAI Secondo Programma in four weekly instalments from 29 December 1961 to 19 January 1962.¹³ In February 1963, Vlad presented a public concert in Milan for Gioventù Musicale (the Italian branch of Jeunesses Musicales, an organisation focused on youth engagement in music) of works produced at the SdF. Several years later, in 1967, he wrote liner notes to *Elektron 3*, a commercially released recording of works from the SdF.¹⁴ All of these activities were directed at helping listeners – ranging from avant-garde enthusiasts to complete novices – understand what they heard.

Vlad's public work addressed many of the same themes that he discussed in his specialist writing and speaking, with the addition of expository information suitable for a general audience. His 1961 radio introduction, for example, included a brief history of electronic instruments and the founding of the electronic studios in Paris and Cologne, an explanation of the distinction between *musique concrète* and *elektronische Musik*, and descriptions and recordings of sine waves and white noise. But here Vlad also lucidly presented his view that the term 'experimental music' should only be applied to 'a way of composing that organises its material in order *to experiment* with it, without being able to foresee the concrete and final results of the experimentation itself', as opposed to the carefully planned compositional approaches he believed characterised most electronic music.¹⁵

At the time of *La Fantarca's* composition, Vlad thus had developed a clear set of attitudes toward electronic music, despite his limited compositional experience.

FIGURE 1. Programme for the Congresso internazionale di musica sperimentale, Venice, 10–13 April 1961. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad



IL CONGRESSO INTERNAZIONALE DI MUSICA SPERIMENTALE

Dal 10 al 13 aprile si svolgerà nell'Isola di San Giorgio un Congresso Internazionale di Musica Sperimentale (concreta ed elettronica).

Il Congresso - realizzato in collaborazione con la Radiotelevisione Italiana e con la « Fondazione Giorgio Cini » - si propone innanzitutto di presentare alcuni saggi maggiormente rappresentativi della produzione dei più importanti Studi di musica sperimentale che da qualche anno sono in esercizio presso alcuni Organismi radiofonici, Enti culturali e Organismi industriali. Questa rassegna - accompagnata da presentazioni - avrà luogo la mattina dei giorni 10, 11 e 12 aprile.

Nel pomeriggio delle stesse giornate e nella mattina del 13 aprile saranno discussi i seguenti temi riguardanti la musica sperimentale.

1. - *I materiali della musica.* Questo tema avrebbe potuto anche formularsi - secondo una dizione cara alla scuola sperimentale francese che fa capo a Pierre Schaeffer, direttore del « Service de recherche » della Radiotelevisione francese - « Liuteria tradizionale e liuteria nuova »: nel senso di un'indagine intorno a un nuovo modo di produzione dei suoni o, meglio, di produzione di nuovi elementi costitutivi del linguaggio sonoro (*objects sonores* = oggetti sonori, componenti sonore).

2. - *Musica tradizionale e musica sperimentale.* È un tema strettamente collegato al precedente, anche se consideri il problema da un punto di vista meno specificatamente ristretto a un'osservazione analitica delle componenti elementari del linguaggio musicale. Esso dovrebbe tendere piuttosto a illuminare i rapporti, le equivalenze, le opposizioni tra la musica che si vale direttamente, per concretarsi in suono, degli strumenti tradizionali e della voce umana, e la musica che invece può essere prodotta attraverso lo sfruttamento dei mezzi proposti oggi dai mezzi elettronici. Il problema della notazione e della messa in partitura della musica sperimentale è un aspetto strettamente specialistico: quello, tuttora aperto, della possibilità di una stesura su carta (partitura musicale) di ciò che sarà il prodotto sonoro finito e impresso sul nastro magnetico. Ma non solo della possibilità, sebbene anche della necessità o meno di questo precedente stadio di definizione, che è proprio della musica tradizionale: nel senso che è sostenibile l'identificarsi (nella musica sperimentale) dell'invenzione con l'esecuzione, dove il nastro magnetico diverrebbe la sola sede in cui l'idea del musicista può trovare la sua oggettivazione editoriale e sonora (quest'ultima beninteso con l'ausilio di volta in volta di un magnetofono rivelatore).

3. - *La musica sperimentale nella cultura contemporanea.* Il fenomeno della musica sperimentale come si inserisce nel quadro della cultura contemporanea? È un evento analogo a quello della pittura e scultura non figurativa o informale? A quali valori di fondo della nostra cultura è riconducibile? Ecco alcune domande alle quali la discussione intorno a questo tema dovrebbe suscitare delle risposte.

Oltre a numerosi musicisti e uomini di cultura, saranno presenti a questo Congresso, con opere e con loro rappresentanti, i seguenti Studi di musica Sperimentale:

Studio di Fonologia di Milano (RAI - Radiotelevisione Italiana)

Studio di Parigi (Service de Recherche della RTF - Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française)

Studio di Colonia (WDR - Westdeutscher Rundfunk)

Studio di Varsavia (Polskie Radio)

Studio di Tokio (Radio NHK - Nippon Hoso Kiokay)

Studio di New York (Columbia University)

Studio di Utrecht (Università di Utrecht e Laboratori di ricerca della Philips)

Studio di musica elettronica « APELAC » (Bruxelles)

Studio di musica elettronica « APSOME » (Parigi).

Lo *Studio di fonologia di Milano* della Radiotelevisione italiana fornirà le attrezzature e l'assistenza tecnica per l'ascolto dei nastri magnetici.

Alberto Mantelli

His commentary points above all to an interest in an electronic experimentalism based in *preliminary* experimentation with electronic means to facilitate planning, rather than the embrace of experimentalism as an approach to the final realisation of a piece. Given this approach to composition, *La Fantarca* sheds vital light on the furthest point of development of Vlad's relationship to electronic music. In composing the opera, he appears to have had both the compositional freedom and the previous direct electronic experience that would allow him to plan how electronic components would fit into the larger work.

THE OPERATIC ADAPTATION OF *LA FANTARCA*

Produced to be entered in the 1966 *Prix Italia*, Roman Vlad's *La Fantarca* is based on a 1965 short novel by Giuseppe Berto, who co-authored the libretto.¹⁶ The opera presents a Noah's Ark tale reimagined for the nuclear age: in the year 2250, the protagonists face an impending 'magnetic war' brought on by the competing production of energy by two warring blocs (in a clear Cold War allusion, and represented by the symbols of the Triangle and the Square). In the midst of the escalating arms race, it is decided that the Southern Italian 'resistance' to progress must be settled once and for all, to allow for the development of a fully advanced society. Accordingly, a group of *calabresi* – inhabitants of Calabria, in Southern Italy – are sent off in a rickety spaceship to colonise Saturn, taking with them their livestock and agricultural traditions.¹⁷ This unlikely voyage is cut short by ecological disaster: the feared magnetic war breaks out, causing total global destruction. Abandoning their voyage, the *calabresi* return to Earth to find that it is still habitable, though devoid of all previous life. They begin anew, becoming the basis for a new civilisation.

Despite the serious underlying subject matter, both the book and the opera are humorous in tone, lightly satirising the science fiction genre to comment on the nuclear arms race. As a literary work, *La Fantarca* displays both tangible unease in the face of Cold War tensions and a dark sense of humour about Italy's place in global politics – emphasising the nation's delicate position at the whims of major global powers. Its humour is demonstrated mostly through the representation of larger-than-life characters (for example, two stiff, obsequious bureaucratic figures aboard the spacecraft who constantly recite Triangle propaganda) and the ironic twisting of contemporary conflict into a fantastical situation. The novel's original illustrations, by Herbert Pagani, also point to the absurd, mixing industrial imagery reminiscent of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) with a surrealist sensibility evoking

the skewed perspectives of mid-century Italian artist Giorgio De Chirico and the stage design of his brother, Alberto Savinio.

This imagery is carried over into the operatic *La Fantarca* – if not quite on the scale of the elaborate sets of *Metropolis*. The sets are in fact largely non-descript, characterised mostly by the spaceship's clinical white halls. Because the opera is filmed primarily in close shots, its most striking visual aspect is the costumes, designed by Veniero Colasanti and Paola Murzi. The ship's officials wear trim uniforms of skin-tight, metallic cloth detailed with metallic tubing – not entirely dissimilar to the uniforms in *Star Trek* (1966–1969), only glitzier and a bit bulkier. The peasants in the ship's hold, in stark contrast, wear austere traditional styles evoking representations of Southern dress in films such as *La terra trema* (Luchino Visconti, 1948) – dark dresses, shawls and headwraps for the women; white shirts and dark trousers, vests and flat caps for the men. Of particular visual note is the opera's introduction: a six-minute choral sequence laying out the stakes of the global conflict, accompanied by contemporary dance and video art. This section combines costuming with video effects – with dancers' bodies visible only as synchronised black silhouettes in combat helmets – to establish an eerie backdrop to the rest of the opera.

Quite aside from its science-fiction setting, *La Fantarca* deals with the *questione meridionale*, the long-standing issue of how the southern half of the Italian peninsula fits into the unified Italian state. Historically, this issue has been viewed with concern or disdain on the part of some Northern commentators, who viewed the South's poverty and supposed underdevelopment as a barrier to Italy's path to modern, developed European statehood. The issue holds additional political and symbolic significance in the South and for leftist commentators, who have associated it both with the contentious process of Italian unification under the Northern Savoy line, the exploitation of the South and the subsequent widening economic and cultural dominance of the North.¹⁸

Viewed in the light of the global nuclear arms race, and as treated by an author and composer who were not themselves *meridionali*, these issues take on a slightly different cast in *La Fantarca*. The story's (and by extension, the opera's) stance toward the *questione meridionale* is fairly ambivalent – it represents the Saturn-bound Calabrese characters in a neutral-positive, if occasionally paternalistic, light. Although the *calabresi* inherit the earth after the destruction of the warring blocs, *La Fantarca* never quite goes so far as to explicitly advocate for the restoration of Southern self-rule or radical redistribution of power within modern Italy. Instead, the Southern condition primarily serves to illustrate a rural Italian resistance to the global conflict between the two world powers and to provide a generic historical resonance with the issue of emigration, which has been a major force in modern Italian societal, economic and national development.

La Fantarca was the last of Vlad's works to feature electronically produced components. At the time of composition, he was experienced in writing music for radio, television and film (including the radiophonic opera *Il dottore di vetro* [1959]), as well as being a familiar presence on RAI networks as a presenter of musical programmes.¹⁹ Vlad had also already considered the possibility of writing an opera specifically for a film medium. Fifteen years earlier, in 1951, he discussed the challenges presented by the genre of film opera in an article titled 'È possibile un'opera da film? [Is an opera for film possible?]' Distinguishing between opera for film (*opera da film*) and opera which *has been* filmed (*opera filmata*), he asserts that an opera written for film should aim neither to sacrifice the musical form of a composition nor to lose a sense of dynamic visual pacing. The optimal scenario is to conceive of the work from the very beginning as destined for a visual medium, composing primarily brief, aphoristic phrases that can be used idiomatically to reflect the film's pacing. He writes that the composer should be directly involved in the planning of the overall work and that the director and screenwriter should accommodate the composer's vision, similar to the relationship between composer and librettist in stage operas.²⁰

Vlad appears to have been able to work under such conditions for *La Fantarca*. In his televised introduction to the opera's sole RAI broadcast on 1 June 1968, he says that the network approached him to write an opera for television, and that he himself chose the novel as his subject and contacted Berto to request his involvement.²¹ The adaptation of the script was thus made specifically for this project, and indeed there are many aspects of the finished opera that could only effectively be achieved through film – for example, the use of cuts to show that characters are located in different parts of the ship, a scene in which two characters flail around in a 'gravity-free' room (c. 49'), and the use of video effects to show the large-scale destruction of the magnetic war when the protagonists return to Earth (37'25").²²

Vlad described the work to viewers as an *opera buffa* for television²³ – but despite its comic elements, *La Fantarca* is based in serious global nuclear anxieties. Although peppered with amusing situations, the humour never quite approaches the slapstick nihilist absurdity of *Dr. Strangelove* (Stanley Kubrick, 1964). It would be difficult indeed to fully counteract the sombre nature of the opera's aforementioned choral introduction, in which the audience is earnestly reminded that an imbalance of power will lead to total destruction.

In the introduction, the chorus adopts the voice of the *Macchina del Potenziale*, the machine that measures the balance between the energy produced by the Triangle and Square blocs. The musical setting begins playfully, aligning the Triangle bloc with the tune of 'Yankee Doodle' and the Square bloc with 'The Song of the Volga Boatmen' – not-so-subtle musical references to the real global powers

they represent. During the announcement of the day's production, the repetition of these musical references is further juxtaposed with brief snippets of 'Entrance of the Gladiators,' a seeming commentary on the absurd nature of the competition. After the *Macchina's* final pronouncement of each bloc's production, however, the music takes a more serious tone, with each of the alternating voices intoning their lines at a plodding tempo over minimal orchestral accompaniment. Meanwhile, the *Macchina* and representatives from each of the two blocs remind viewers of the destructive potential of the conflict:

Chorus [*Macchina del Potenziale*]: I am an instrument of peace, as long as a balance of resources prevails. In the event of war, I am capable of universal death.

Voice of the Triangle: The mammals will die.

Voice of the Square: The insects will also die.

Voice of the Triangle: The reptiles will die.

Voice of the Square: The amphibians will also die.

Voice of the Triangle: The fish will die.

Voice of the Square: The microbes will also die.

Voice of the Triangle: The viruses will die.

Voices of the Triangle and Square: You will also die.²⁴

This dire warning is echoed by the visual presentation: groups of dancers representing each of the two blocs fall suddenly still, appearing in contorted and limp positions. At the end of the final line, 'You will also die [Morirai anche tu]', a row of silhouetted dancers in black bodysuits and helmets turn to point white-gloved hands at the camera before fading to grey.

Throughout the opera's introduction, a stark visual style is also achieved through the use of video editing techniques such as desaturation, use of high contrast, and the addition of artificial shadows to create an etching effect. The scene's use of avant-garde choreography, costuming and visual effects resonates with the staging of other operatic Cold War apocalyptic treatments, for example in Karl-Birger Blomdahl's mystical science-fiction opera *Aniara* (1959) and Igor Stravinsky's biblical drama *The Flood* (1962, originally televised in the US and later staged in Europe).²⁵

ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS IN *LA FANTARCA*

La Fantarca features more ambitious and varied compositional strategies than Vlad's previous work with electronics. Whereas *Ricercare elettronico* utilises a simple timbral palette of only three basic types of sonic materials – coloured noise, pure sine waves,

and mixed sine waves generated through additive synthesis – the electronics in *La Fantarca* offer far more diversity of timbre and type.²⁶ The opera audibly makes use of ring modulation, white noise, a pulse generator and pitch-shifting of pre-recorded sounds, in addition to a range of additive and pure waveforms.²⁷ These effects, produced at the SdF, would have been made using the same equipment available to Vlad roughly five years earlier when he composed the *Ricercare*.²⁸

It bears noting that *La Fantarca* reflects many aspects of traditional opera form, such as the organisation of the score into numbers; the use of *da capo* aria, recitative and group numbers; and traditional operatic scoring of primary vocal roles, chorus and orchestra. Despite these traditional elements, electronic music and effects are pervasive throughout the opera. It is rare for more than a minute or two to pass without electronics in the 56-minute work. Durations of the electronic sounds themselves range from brief effects of less than a second to incidental music lasting anywhere from thirty seconds to over a minute.

The opera contains a range of approaches to the composition and function of electronic sounds, which can be broadly categorised in three ways. First, there are diegetic, electronically produced sound effects. These effects seem to occur exactly as they would be heard by the characters, and they do not serve a musical purpose. Most are connected to functions of the spaceship, generally taking the form of very simple, brief melodies or *portamenti*. These sounds represent actions such as the outer ship doors opening and closing (17'07"), the telecom powering up and down to provide communication within the ship (e.g., 19'34", 30'06"), and the ship attempting and failing multiple times to blast off (sequence beginning c. 20'20").

Second, there is music made entirely of synthesised sounds. This music may be either diegetic or non-diegetic and generally appears in recitative scenes or between vocal numbers. Much of the musical material seems to be drawn from a very small number of discrete tracks either divided into sections to be used at different points in the opera or repeated entirely. The same short diegetic theme always announces the appearance of the Triangle on the telecom (e.g., 20'10"–20'14"), for example, and non-diegetic music similar to that heard under the introductory narration in the opera's first minute reappears just after the ship successfully takes off (after 21').

Finally, there are a number of sounds that neither clearly belong to the categories of diegetic/non-diegetic, nor to those of music/effects, but rather fulfil some mix of these functions. Most of these sounds consist of manipulated recordings of animals – a fantastic elaboration of diegetic material. Vlad describes these sections in his autobiography as a 'chorus of animals':

I wanted to make not only the humans but the animals sing, and, to that end, I recorded dogs' barks, cats' meows, horses' whinnies, sheep's bleats, lions' and tigers' roars, elephants' trumpets and birdsong. Using electronic means, I adjusted each animal sound to correspond

to the frequencies that define the notes of our musical system. And with these 'domesticated' notes, I constructed a choral texture. This is an example of concrete music that is elaborated electronically.²⁹

An animal chorus is heard before or after every choral number (after 9', 23'37", and 34'22"), with the exception of the introduction. To describe these moments as having a 'choral texture' is slightly misleading: although many of the individual animal 'songs' do have distinguishable melodic contours, they fade in and out sequentially, with minimal overlap – and when the sounds do overlap, the effect is more cacophonous and chaotic than coordinated, and certainly not homophonic. Although animals are shown on screen, the recordings do not always perfectly match up with the particular animals shown at that moment or in that scene, casting doubt upon their relationship to the images that appear.

Are viewers meant to believe that the animals are really 'singing'? Are we meant to suspend our disbelief and imagine that animal song is an elaboration of their typical sounds, as we typically do for human singers in an opera? In any case, Vlad's inclusion of the 'animal choruses' might be explained by a desire to avoid too many non-musical effects. He expressed a distaste for electronic effects with no function beyond the 'merely practical' in his 1961 radio introduction, and his explanation of his technique seems to belie a concern with demonstrating the musical legitimacy of the use of electronics in his opera.³⁰

The performance score to *La Fantarca* does not offer many additional clues. The first of the animal choruses (beginning around 9') is indicated in the score only by the marking 'grugnito di maiale [pig's grunt]' (FIGURE 2) – in fact only one of several manipulated animal calls heard during this section, including those of donkeys, horses, cows, dogs and birds. Such a minimal marking might seem to suggest that the animal sounds were meant to serve only as diegetic sound effects. Within the broadcast, however, several of the animals' vocal parts in this chorus elaborate on a recognisable melodic and rhythmic motif, first presented by the donkey (EXAMPLE 1). This motivic compositional structure indicates clear musical planning on Vlad's part.

FIGURE 2. Roman Vlad, *La Fantarca*, performance score, no. 4 ('Inno al Triangolo'), p. 10 (extract). Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad

EXAMPLE 1. Donkey's motif in the first electronic 'animal chorus' of *La Fantarca* (c. 9'01"–9'05")

Despite Vlad's attention to musical construction, minimal notation also appears for many of the other electronic sounds in the score – most feature a textual description, if any, of the intended effect of the sound, and only a few indicate pitch collections or any remotely technical information. Evidently, Vlad

fully elaborated most of his electronic ideas only after composing the rest of the opera, and his notes for the planning of the electronic components have been lost.

La Fantarca represents the culmination of the development of Vlad's attitudes toward electronic music in its complex integration of a variety of electronic effects into a major work. To name a few of the themes that appear in Vlad's writing and speech on electronic music, the work demonstrates a measured approach to 'experimentation' based on the implementation of musical ideas to achieve electronic effects, and a desire to incorporate only a small number of sounds with no musical significance. This brief study has been only a first step in understanding the role of electronic music within Vlad's expansive career, and points toward larger questions such as how, if at all, Vlad's composition in other areas was affected by his work with tape and electronics. Despite his low volume of electronic music production, Vlad was nonetheless an active participant in a culture of exploration of the new possibilities afforded by the technologies of electronic instruments and media dissemination.

Notes

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- 1 *Die Reihe*, 1, 1955.
- 2 'Traditional music' here and elsewhere in Vlad's writing refers to music in the classical tradition, i.e., composed for acoustic instruments and/or voice.
- 3 Roman Vlad, 'Die Reihe and electronic music', *The Score*, 13, 1955, pp. 23–24: 24.
- 4 Letter from Luciano Berio to Roman Vlad, 22 December 1955, in Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad (henceforth FRV). Vlad responded that he might be available between 12 and 14 January in a letter to Luciano Berio, 25 December 1955, in Associazione NoMus (Milano), Archivio dello Studio di Fonologia, Letter 19.
- 5 Letter from Luciano Berio to Roman Vlad, 28 April 1956 (FRV).
- 6 Letter from Mario Bevilacqua to Roman Vlad, 3 May 1956 (FRV).
- 7 Roman Vlad, *Vivere la musica: un racconto autobiografico*, a cura di Vittorio Bonolis e Silvia Cappellini, Torino: Einaudi, 2012, p. 225. The piece was edited by Bruno Maderna and Lucio Cavallarin at the SdF, though not composed there.
- 8 Letter from Giulio Razzi to Roman Vlad, 23 September 1960 (FRV). Several commissions were offered concurrently to other Italian composers; see *Nuova musica alla radio: esperienze allo studio di fonologia della RAI di Milano, 1954–1959*, a cura di Veniero Rizzardi e Angela Ida De Benedictis, Roma: RAI ERI, 2000, pp. 191, 287.
- 9 On the relationship between *Le ciel est vide* and *Ricerca elettronica*, see Daria Del Vaglia, *Ricerca in. . . . Ricerca elettronica sopra una serie di Le ciel est vide di Roman Vlad*, Master's Thesis in Music Disciplines, Conservatorio di Musica "G. Verdi", Como, 2010, 126 pp.

- 10 Henri Pousseur was originally invited to speak on the latter topic, as documented in the invitation from Italo Siciliano to Roman Vlad, 25 March 1961 (FRV).
- 11 Undated draft (FRV); recording of conference proceedings, in Biennale di Venezia, Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee (Venezia), A 5600006 and A 5600007. An edited version of Vlad's talk was also published in the catalogue of the 1961 musical Biennale.
- 12 See for example Roman Vlad, 'L'ingegnere e il balletto', *La Tribuna*, 24 April 1960, p. 30, and 'Il festival dei rumori', *La Tribuna*, 12 February 1961, p. 26.
- 13 Vlad's introduction is noted in the listing for the first broadcast in *Radiocorriere*, XXXVIII/52, 1961, p. 53.
- 14 *Elektron 3* (LP), Sugar Music, ESZ 3, 1967.
- 15 '[...] un modo di comporre che predispone il suo materiale appunto per *sperimentarlo* e senza poter prevedere dunque i concreti risultati finali della sperimentazione stessa'. This view in fact contradicted the title of the four-part series as published in *Radiocorriere*: 'Musiche sperimentali'. Roman Vlad, manuscript labelled 'Introduzione al ciclo di musiche elettroniche realizzate presso lo Studio di fonologia di Milano per il Terzo Programma della RAI', FRV, 12 pp.: unnumbered page titled 'INSERTO'. This and all other translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.
- 16 Giuseppe Berto, *La Fantarca*, Milano: Rizzoli, 1965.
- 17 Along with the rest of the South, Calabria is one of the regions of Italy from which the largest numbers of people have historically emigrated since the nineteenth century. According to statistics compiled in *Un secolo di emigrazione italiana, 1876–1976*, a cura di Gianfausto Rosoli, Roma: Centro studi emigrazione, 1978, pp. 356–365, emigration from Southern Italy (comprising Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise, Puglia, Sardinia and Sicily) peaked once in the first decade of the twentieth century, at 2.36 million emigrants, and again in the period from 1956 to 1965, at 2.86 million.
- 18 The case for understanding the *questione meridionale* in terms of the North's exploitation of the South was taken up by political historians and philosophers such as Giustino Fortunato, Antonio Gramsci and Gaetano Salvemini, among others, around the turn of the twentieth century. Gramsci's writings on the topic in particular, and his analysis of the situation as the capitalist hegemonic oppression of the working classes, have proven particularly historically significant in Marxist thought; see Antonio Gramsci, *La questione meridionale*, a cura di Franco De Felice e Valentino Parlato, Roma: Editori Riuniti, 2005⁴.
- 19 Vlad mentions his presenting activity in his televised introduction to the opera, and it is also referenced in a preview in *Radiocorriere*: '[...] Vlad is known to the general public not only as a composer, but also as a distinguished presenter of popular music programmes [Vlad è conosciuto dal grande pubblico, oltre che come compositore, come fine presentatore di trasmissioni musicali divulgative]'. Italo Moscati, "'La Fantarca", un'opera di Roman Vlad: satira del 2000', *Radiocorriere*, XLV/22, 1968, p. 99. For more on Vlad's work in film, television and theatre, see Franco Carlo Ricci, 'La musica di Roman Vlad per il cinema, la televisione e il teatro', *Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana*, 4, 2008, pp. 499–522.
- 20 Roman Vlad, 'È possibile un'opera da film?', *Il Diapason*, II/12, 1951, pp. 13–16: 14.
- 21 'When, about a year ago, the television executives asked me to propose a subject for such an opera, I myself chose the story called *La Fantarca*, by Giuseppe Berto, and asked Berto to create a libretto for the television opera that I had in mind [Quando, circa un anno fa, i dirigenti della televisione mi chiesero di proporre un soggetto per una tale opera, io stesso scelsi il racconto intitolato *La Fantarca*, di Giuseppe Berto, e domandai a Berto di trarne un

- libretto per l'opera televisiva che avevo in mente di fare]'. Vlad also describes the opera here as 'specifically conceived for television [concepita espressamente per la televisione]'. Roman Vlad, televised introduction to *La Fantarca*, broadcast 1 June 1968.
- 22 As there is no definitive or commercially released version of this broadcast, approximate timings in this article are calculated from the beginning of the title sequence, which appeared just after Vlad's spoken introduction in the original broadcast. I viewed *La Fantarca* in an archival copy available in Associazione NoMus (Milano), Archivio dello Studio di Fonologia, Video 027. At the time of writing, the opera can also be viewed in full on YouTube in the US, albeit without Vlad's spoken introduction.
- 23 Vlad, televised introduction to *La Fantarca*.
- 24 'Coro: Son la macchina di pace se prevale un potenziale; sol di guerra son capace per la morte universale. / Voce del Triangolo: Moriranno i mammiferi. / Voce del Quadrato: Moriranno anche gli insetti. / Voce del Triangolo: Moriranno i rettili. / Voce del Quadrato: Moriranno anche gli anfibi. / Voce del Triangolo: Moriranno i pesci. / Voce del Quadrato: Moriranno anche i microbi. / Voce del Triangolo: Moriranno i virus. / Voci del Triangolo e del Quadrato: Morirai anche tu'. Roman Vlad, *La Fantarca*, dir. by Vittorio Cottafavi (1966).
- 25 Vlad was familiar with *The Flood* and its nuclear underpinnings, and he analysed the work in the 1967 English-language update to his book *Stravinsky*, London: Oxford University Press, 1967, pp. 234–245. For more on *The Flood*, its allegorical reference to nuclear destruction, and George Balanchine's choreography for the piece, see Charles Joseph, *Stravinsky and Balanchine: A Journey of Invention*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002, pp. 277–290.
- 26 Roman Vlad, *Ricerca elettronica*, Milano: Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, 1962, SZ 5935.
- 27 Vlad did not publish a score for *La Fantarca*, and no known materials regarding the piece's electronic composition are available in Archivio dello Studio di Fonologia (Milano). All listed electronic effects are based on my aural analysis and on comments by Vlad cited below, as well as brief indications in the performance score in FRV, fasc. *La Fantarca*.
- 28 See Antonio Rodà, 'Evolution of the Technical Means of the Studio di Fonologia', in: *The Studio di Fonologia: A Musical Journey, 1954–1983; Update 2008–2012*, ed. by Maria Maddalena Novati and John Dack, Milano: Ricordi, 2012, pp. 33–81.
- 29 'Oltre agli uomini, volevo far cantare anche le bestie e, a tal fine, ho fatto registrare latrati di cani, miagolii di gatti, nitriti di cavalli, belati di pecore, ruggiti di leoni e di tigri, barriti di elefanti e versi di uccelli, e con i mezzi della tecnologia elettronica ho portato ogni suono bestiale al livello delle frequenze che definiscono le diverse note del nostro sistema musicale. E con queste note "addomesticate" ho montato una trama corale. Esempio di musica concreta elaborata elettronicamente'. Roman Vlad, *Vivere la musica*, p. 225. Vlad also explains this technique in his televised introduction.
- 30 'It should be clear that the use of electronic means can only be declared aesthetically legitimate when it leads to the formulation of sonic figures with autonomous meaning, that is, not linked to a merely practical functionality [Dovrebbe essere chiaro che l'uso di mezzi elettronici può dichiararsi esteticamente legittimo solo quando esso porta alla formulazione di figure sonore dal significato autonomo, cioè non legato ad un funzionalità meramente pratica]'. Roman Vlad, 'Introduzione al ciclo di musiche elettroniche [...]', p. 5.