**Togni, Camillo** (1922 - 1993)

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Camillo Togni was an Italian composer, aesthetician and pianist. Launching a career in the midst of the chaos of WWII, he played his part in the trends and polemics that emerged from Italian art music in the late 1940s, but his prominence faded into the 1960s as Italian musical modernism diversified.

A precocious talent from an early age, Togni left his hometown of Brescia aged 17, on the outbreak of war, to commence study with a string of artistic luminaries: Alfredo Casella (1883-1947) for composition, Luigi Rognoni (1913-1986) for aesthetics and Benedetto Michelangeli (1920-1995) for piano. Togni’s career subsequently thrived in the heady atmosphere of post-war crisis that beset Italian music in the late forties, and he was a veteran of the numerous conferences and congresses accompanying the quasi-evangelical turn towards serialism and other high-modernist compositional techniques in Italy during this period. An early adopter of serialism (for instance, in the ‘Variazioni’ of 1945-6), Togni demonstrated a rigorous adherence to the method combined with a block-like approach to musical texture, similar in substance to Stravinskian serial efforts and the later work of Luigi Dallapiccola (1904-1975).

In the late 40s, Milan acted as a centre for much of Italian artistic modernism, and Togni took a central role in hosting there the ‘First International Conference on Dodecaphony’, with its typical mix of conference papers, position statements, intense midnight performances of serial music, and political intrigues (one composer resigned from the organizing committee over accusations of socialist realism). Togni’s *Tre Preludi per Piano* were performed in a concert featuring works by Schoenberg, Krenek, and various other Viennese apostles. In the 1950s, the locus of influence for Italian modernism moved to the Darmstadt Ferienkurse, where for a time Togni ranked alongside Bruno Maderna and Luigi Nono in a trinity of young Italians unafraid to challenge the dominance of Boulez and Stockhausen. However Togni’s light quickly faded in the 1960s, and possessing none of the versatility of Luciano Berio, the inventiveness of Maderna, or the concentrated briliance of Nono, he found himself increasingly isolated from progressive European trends; his last visit to Darmstadt was in 1957.

Figuratively, Togni stands in the space between artists that produce, and those that are produced by, their time. Whilst his impeccable Italian idealism (clear from the subject of his 1948 doctoral thesis, ‘The Aesthetics of Croce and the problem of musical interpretation’) and his settings of Jean-Paul Sartre put him at the vanguard of Italian musician-philosophers, his other major non-musical influence was Georg Trakl (he set both Sartre and Trakl to music a number of times), marking his later music with an intense, perhaps dated, expressionist hue.

Select Works

Prima serenata (1940) for piano

Variazioni for piano and orchestra (1945–46

Tre capricci, for piano (1954–57)

Helian di Trakl, (1955)

Gesang zur Nacht, Recitativo for tape (1961)

Rondeaux per dieci, Quarto Capriccio, for piano (1969)

Blaubart, lyric opera (1972-75)

Quasi una serenata, for guitar (1979)

Barrabas, lyric opera (1981-85)

Sesto Capriccio, for piano (1991)

Select Bibliography

Togni, Camillo. *Carteggi e Scritti di Camillo Togni sul Novecento Italiano*. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2001.

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Togni, Camillo (2004) *Domani L’aurora* ed. Paulo de Assis. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore.

Vlad, Roman (1955) Modernità e Tradizione nella Musica Contemporanea. Turin: Saggi.

Stable URL to a photo of Togni:

http://www.cini.it/collezioni/i-fondi-et/musica/camillo-togni