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| Futurist Music |
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| Futurist musicians made music out of worldly sound (including that which may be deemed to be noise), and contributed to the Modernist expansion of aesthetic possibilities. Futurist music serves as an important precedent for the work of later composers, John Cage in particular. Though Francesco Balilla Pratella (1880-1955) was the first composer to associate with the Futurist movement and to outline an aesthetic of Futurist music, he was ultimately superseded by the painter-turned-musician Luigi Russolo (1885-1947), who became most closely associated with the Futurist music stylistic. Russolo proposes an altogether more fundamental rethinking of what Futurist music might be, realising compositions such as *Inno alla Vita* [*Hymn to Life*] (1913), which involve whole-tone scales. In his 1913 manifesto L'arte dei rumori [*The Art of Noises*], Russolo argues that the sounds offered by a symphony orchestra are a poor match for the acoustic force and timbral complexities of a modern city. He proposes to transform noise using newly invented instruments, aestheticizing and spiritualizing it in the process. |
| Though Francesco Balilla Pratella (1880-1955) was the first composer to associate with the Futurist movement and to outline an aesthetic of Futurist music, he was ultimately superseded by the painter-turned-musician Luigi Russolo (1885-1947), who became most closely associated with the Futurist music stylistic.  In his three manifestos written between 1910 and 1912, Pratella echoes F.T. Marinetti’s call to revolutionize art and reject the stultifying effects of *Passéism*. Russolo proposes an altogether more fundamental rethinking of what Futurist music might be, realising compositions such as *Inno alla Vita* [*Hymn to Life*] (1913), which involve whole-tone scales. In his 1913 manifesto L'arte dei rumori [*The Art of Noises*], Russolo argues that the sounds offered by a symphony orchestra are a poor match for the acoustic force and timbral complexities of a modern city. He proposes to transform noise using newly invented instruments, aestheticizing and spiritualizing it in the process.   In collaboration with painter Ugo Piatti, Russolo constructed the *intonarumori* (noise intoners) based on his devised system of enharmonic notation. The *intonarumori* were to constitute the instruments of the new Futurist orchestra, consisting of rectangular, plywood boxes containing motorized mechanics. The operator (musician) could manipulate the unique sounds of the mechanics in terms of pitch by pulling on a lever. The orchestra of *intonarumori* included the exploder, crackler, buzzer, stamper, gurgler, screamer, rustler, whistler, thunderer, and the croaker. Russolo’s compositions for the *intonarumori* include *Risveglio di una città* [*Awakening of a City*] (1913) and *Convegno di automobili e di aeroplani* [*A Meeting of Motorcars and Aeroplanes*] (1913). Russolo’s unique music was played sporadically at Futurist performance events and concerts in Europe over the next decade or so and achieved notoriety, though performances were often met with incomprehension and derision.  In the Russian avant-garde, a notable example of what might be termed Futurist music was a mass concert designed by Arseny Avraamov entitled *The Symphony of Sirens*, which took place in Baku in 1922. Avraamov’s symphony was a grandiose expression of proletarian music-making — music made by and for workers. The symphony featured appropriated instruments of modern technology and industry that workers could perform themselves, such as factory whistles, guns, and modes of transportation.  In making music out of worldly sound (including that which may be deemed to be noise), Futurist music contributed to the Modernist expansion of aesthetic possibilities; it serves as an important precedent for the work of later composers, John Cage in particular. |
| Further reading:  (Avraamov)  (Brown)  (Chessa)  (Pratella)  (Pratella, Manifesto tecnico della musica futurista)  (Pratella, La distruzione della quadratura) |