

Dialogues Artistic Research Enhancing (DARE) 13-15 May 2025 Rome

Notes

Apollonian Hymn

I would like to introduce you to my research project through the four voice madrigal *O Phebo, O Sole, universal Natura*: an Apollonian Hymn dedicated to the Sun by the alchemist, occultist and poet Francesco Maria Santinelli.

The Magician

You will feel very disappointed now if I would tell you that this polyphonic piece is the result of a ludic experiment of mine. With this project I embraced the infamous profession of forgers. Forgeries act like a magical mirror, materializing our deepest historical fantasies in timeless artefacts.

The Forger's Art

From the very beginning of the Early Music movement, musicians and scholars have been fluctuating between the boundaries of the actual and the imaginary.

A Whirlpool of Imaginary Sounds aims to consider the power of fiction and falsity as a legitimate form of knowledge. Furthermore, the paradoxes of forgeries liberate art works from their cultural aura, restoring their intrinsic aesthetic value.

The Wheel of Fortune

But how to achieve a successful forgery, while freeing ourselves from built-in biases of performance, style and composition? Here come to our rescue ingenious devices of wonder: procedures, algorithms and objects able to generate music with an agency of their own. Once the underlying elements of style are sublimated, like the alchemist of old would do in their secret laboratory, we can recombine and transform them into seemingly infinite new shapes, by accurately interpreting charts, wheels, tables, card decks and dice.

Musica ex machina

Inspired by Renaissance thinkers like Giulio Camillo, Francesco Patrizi and Orazio Toscanella, the Whirlpool of Imaginary Sounds aims for a dialectic emulative approach towards the work of our forerunners. Under these assumptions, our heritage suddenly becomes a fruitful inspiration for new art, where ancients and moderns finally share the floor as equals.

The Hierophant

I believe that the key to reclaim art as a symbol, embedding a coexisting plurality of worlds inside of it, is to get inspiration from proto-scientific thought, such as alchemy, occultism, astrology and the

craft of artificial languages. The scope of these disciplines was not to achieve an uncontroversial truth, but to embrace the ambiguity of the world that surrounds us.

Clavis universalis

Under their axioms, the experience of wonder, in the natural as well as in the artificial, is able to unleash incommensurable knowledge that can be understood only through the powerful metaphoric language of poetry, music and emblems.

The Hanged Man

All my musical projects as artistic director have focused on reclaiming forgotten people. Transgressive figures, losers of the gambling game of history. Their ideas do resonate with me, and our modern society, but their voices are soundless echoes from afar.

Accademia degli Incompresi

Inspired by artists experimenting between the boundaries of fact and fiction in order to pursue their political agenda, I decided to found an imaginary academy of thinkers. Men and women whose place in history should be reconsidered. The daring and poignant texts of the members of the *Accademia degli Incompresi* will populate imaginary madrigal books with their powerful lyrics. Like the lunar swans encountered by Astolfo in his quest for recovering Orlando's lost wisdom, my infamous forgeries aim to save the fragile legacy of the academy through madrigals that never were.

The Lovers

Games have been an integral part of academic, salon and courtly life during the 16th and 17th centuries. The various collections of *Trattenimenti*, *Veglie* and *Giuochi* describe several games of wit and chance, not too dissimilar from our modern role-playing, and board games.

Serio ludere

In order to reconsider the role of audience, performer, and composer in the 21st century Early Music landscape, the Whirlpool of Imaginary Sounds aims to develop a methodology inspired by game studies and design, as well as proto-scientific thought. Within the magic circle of a game, human and non-human agents participate together in the artistic process, unable to always be in charge and control of the situation. Constraints and unexpected paths are what make games so appealing to us, after all.

The World

Another cornerstone of the project is openness. A Whirlpool of Imaginary Sounds values more systems rather than objects.

Madrigale aperto

As in Umberto Eco's *Opera Aperta*, a system is a set of rules and procedures, an imaginary world in itself, able to generate a new outcome every time we interact with it. This sort of entity is less tangible, but I believe will be the defining artistic form of our century. We are already surrounded by

systems in our daily lives after all: software programs, games and several experimental arts inspired by biology and artificial machines are already part of our *system literacy*.

The Chariot

I wish to conclude this presentation by pointing out that the premise behind a doctorate, even an artistic one, is that it should be a personal journey: I disagree. The choice of vocal polyphony as practical playground forces me to embrace a more collaborative vision of the research process, even a doctorate degree. The other, either a set of rules or another human being, encourage us to think differently, allowing us to take unforeseen paths.

A Musical Transmutation

The Whirlpool of Imaginary Sounds wishes to establish EMuLa (Early Music Laboratory), a critical space for like-minded artists and researchers willing to reconsider our relation with our musical past and the current paradigm of concert performance. Like during a game night between friends, this will be a safe space for failure, experimentation and exchange where the rule of the game are part of the whole, and thus subjected to inevitable changes.