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Sardinian composers of contemporary music

ABSTRACT: The meeting point between the school headed by Franco Oppo and the rich traditional music of the island gave birth in Sardinia to an intense flowering in the field of New Music, with a strong feeling of belonging and a constant call for a positive concept of identity. Thus, since the time of Oppo (1935) and his contemporary Vittorio Montis, we come across many composers that differ between each other but are almost always recognizably “Sardinian”.

Oppo has been one of the most interesting figures on the international scene during the last few decades. After his studies in Rome, Venice and Poland in the early 1960s, he remained, by his own choice, in his home territory, sharing his “Sardinian-ness” in a free and dialectic manner with the avant-garde. After formulating his own particular aleatory approach, Oppo reached a turning point halfway through the 1970s: in *Musica per chitarra e quartetto d’archi*, *Praxodia* and, finally, in *Anninnia I*, the meeting point between avant-garde research and the special phonic quality of traditional music became more and more close-knit and organic, at the same time also acting on the founding language structure whilst still remaining under the control of incisive and informed disciplines (during the same period, moreover, he put forward new methodologies of analysis which were also necessary for his teaching). In this sense the most important works are chamber pieces like *Anninnia I* and *II* (1978, 1982), *Attitudu* (1983) and *Sagra* (1985), the theatrical work *Eleonora d’Arborea* (1986), some piano “transcriptions” – the *Three berceuses* (1982), *Gallurese* and *Baroniese* (1989; 1993) – *Trio III* (1994), *Sonata B* for percussion and piano (2005) and the two Concerts for piano and orchestra (1995–97; 2002).

Meanwhile, the foundation of a new Sardinian musical culture was also placed within the social context too, with Oppo’s deep personal engagement. At first Oppo promoted the *Giornate di musica contemporanea* (1977–1978), a weighty international festival, inside the Teatro Lirico of Cagliari, later founding, with some of his students, the *Festival Spaziomusica* (1982). Still an active event, the latter has proved to be a solid structure thanks to which generations of Sardinian composers have been able to promote their music alongside the most famous names of the avant-garde, with also the opportunity of several important conferences. From the earliest days much attention was paid to Scelsi, and, with the backdrop of the presence of Nono, Xenakis and Stockhausen, electronic music also continues to maintain a very active profile on the island. Moreover, three research centres conceived in 1990 by some of Oppo’s students have been very active: *Spaziomusica Ricerca*, *Ricercare* and the *CERM* of Sassari, which in 1992 brought the Sardinian experience to the *36. Ferienkurse für Neue Musik*.

Fabrizio Casti, Antonio Doro, Lucio Garau, Marcello Pusceddu and Giorgio Tedde, together with the younger Ettore Carta and Andrea Saba, who started writing in the 1980s, can be identified as the first and most interesting generation of musicians who grew up studying with Oppo at the Conservatory of Cagliari, while Antonio Lai, the last of his students, specialized in theoretical research, working in Paris.

KEYWORDS. Sardinia, Franco Oppo, Ettore Carta, Fabrizio Casti, Antonio Doro, Lucio Garau, Antonio Lai, Vittorio Montis, Marcello Pusceddu, Andrea Saba, Giorgio Tedde.

1. Introduction

The meeting point between school and tradition gave birth in Sardinia to “a true and proper explosion in the field of contemporary music.”¹ We are talking about the very solid and open school headed by Franco Oppo, who for thirty five years was professor of composition at the Conservatory of Cagliari (1965–2000) and who by his own choice remained in his home territory to continue his career as a “militant” musician (Trudu 2009). Tradition, in this case, refers to the very rich and ancient folk music of the island, in other contexts used as a basis for contamination experiences.²

School and tradition generate a strong feeling of belonging and a constant call for a positive concept of identity, transcending any personal aims.³ In fact, since the time of Oppo (b. 1935) and his contemporary Vittorio Montis (b. 1932), we come across many composers that differ from each other but are almost always recognizably “Sardinian”, that is, up until the young and even younger composers that have grown up with the more recent schools in Cagliari and Sassari, collaborating with skilled performers and active musical institutions. Of very great importance in this sense is the role played by *Festival Spaziomusica*, which Oppo himself founded in 1982, after the *Giornate di Musica Contemporanea* (a rich international festival which he organized inside the *Teatro Lirico* of Cagliari both in 1977 and 1978) had pointed out the risks determined by not being given the opportunity of independence.⁴

The *Festival Spaziomusica*, which in 2011 achieved its 30th edition, has proved to be a solid protection thanks to which generations of Sardinian composers have been able to promote their music collaborating with specialist musicians (first of all the *Ensemble Spaziomusica* which was founded in the same 1982), alongside the most famous names of Italian and international musical avant-garde (from the earliest editions great attention was paid to Giacinto Scelsi, who in the eighties was disregarded almost everywhere else in Italy). It was within a back-

¹ The expression was used by the composer Nicola Sani when discussing “La musica italiana Nuova e Nuovissima” for *CEMAT*, Rome (*Incontri sulla Musica Italiana Contemporanea 2002–2004*). Details regarding Sardinian composers can be found on the same Federazione CEMAT website: <http://www.cematitalia.it> (for some of them individual websites are also available). I am grateful to Amalia Collisani for inviting me to deal with this subject and to Lucio Garau for reading the draft.

² These accomplishments are achieved by well-known jazz musicians such as the genius pianist and accordion player Antonello Salis, as well as the trumpet player Paolo Fresu and the saxophone player Enzo Favata.

³ This concept has been the focus of attention at the conference *Musica e identità sarda*, during the XXIV *Festival Spaziomusica “Omaggio a Franco Oppo”* (2005), which was organized in Cagliari for the 70th anniversary of the composer. On this concept see also Spanu 2006.

⁴ See Trudu 1977 and 1978. Oppo founded the association *Spaziomusica* with Trudu himself and a number of his other young students: the musicologist Myriam Quaquero and the musicians Enrico Di Felice and Riccardo Leone.

ground of equally stimulating conferences and meetings that *Spaziomusica Ricerca*, the scientific arm of the association *Spaziomusica*, was conceived in 1990.⁵

In both Cagliari (where the *Amici della Musica* offers other opportunities, organizing concerts, festivals and competitions)⁶ and Sassari, the two conservatoires of music offer degrees both in composition and in music and new technologies or audio projects. In particular, electronic music maintains a very active profile in Sardinia, with the backdrop of events such as the presence at *Festival Spaziomusica* of Luigi Nono (1984), Iannis Xenakis (1987) and Karlheinz Stockhausen (1989).⁷ After this there was the very timely opening of a school of electronic music in the Conservatory of Cagliari,⁸ and also the excellent activities of the three research centres dating from 1990: *Spaziomusica Ricerca* (Cagliari), *Ricerca* (Sinnai, Cagliari) and *CERM* (Sassari). In Sassari, where Antonio Doro is the composer of many pieces both for tape and with live electronics, some skilled performers are today in circulation under the guidance of Maria Cristina De Amicis, teacher of electronic music in the conservatoire until 2011. In Cagliari we find the school of Elio Martusciello (who succeeded Nicola Bernardini, Sylviane Sapir, Francesco Giomi, Roberto Doati), the performers-composers Daniele Ledda and Alessandro Olla,⁹ Franco Oppo himself, Fabrizio Casti and Ettore Carta, while Giorgio Tedde, Lucio Garau and Andrea Saba are now working abroad. Moreover, as a result of an initiative by Lucio Garau, still active in Cagliari as an organizer, the *Amici della Musica* promote a special festival dedicated to acousmatic music.

2. Franco Oppo and Vittorio Montis

Franco Oppo (b. 1935, Nuoro) is the most important Sardinian composer and has been one of the most interesting figures on the international scene during the last few decades. Sardinia is a land of extraordinary richness

⁵ The chair at many conferences was Luigi Pestalozza, who wrote about Sardinian composers until 2006. Conference proceedings (Trudu 1987 and 1990) were published as issues of *Quaderni di Musica/Realtà*, related to the journal founded by the musicologist Pestalozza in 1980.

⁶ Sometimes, the *Teatro Lirico* in Cagliari and the *Cooperativa Teatro e/o Musica* in Sassari also deal with contemporary music, giving opportunities to Sardinian musicians and composers.

⁷ Moreover, in 1989 the *Festival Spaziomusica* organized the 8th Meeting about Computer Music, together with the Italian Society of Musical Informatics (Alvise Vidolin president); the conference proceedings listed as Casti and Doro 1989.

⁸ Among the first in Italy, the school of electronic music at the *Conservatorio G. Pierluigi da Palestrina* (Cagliari) was opened thanks to Franco Oppo in 1984; at the *Conservatorio Luigi Canepa* (Sassari) it was opened thanks to Antonio Doro, founder of CERM in 1990.

⁹ Daniele Ledda (b. 1970, Rho), author of many interesting works, is the organizer of the *Rassegna Microonde* (which was started thanks to Roberto Musanti) and of the *Kontakte Festival* (with Elio Martusciello). Alessandro Olla, author of original music for theatre, founded in Cagliari *TiConZero*, a centre of musical and theatrical research, as well as a number of festivals (*microOnde*, *SIGNAL*).

in folk music tradition; however, at first, it produced very few composers: Luigi Canepa (b. 1849-d. 1914), an inspired organizer, teacher and opera composer in Sassari, bridging the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; Stanislaw Silesu (b. 1883-d. 1953), who moved from Iglesias to Paris making himself very well-known in the field of *café-chantant*; Ennio Porrino (b. 1910-d. 1959), who became very famous during the fascist era by virtue of his nationalism based on oleographic use of folk music. The difficult relationship between the young Oppo and Porrino, director of the Conservatory of Cagliari since 1956, was the first sign of deep differences of opinion to which folk music and music in general were subjected, and these increased subsequently in the wake of opposing political ideologies. On the other hand, important influential figures during the years of Oppo's studies in Cagliari were Marcello Abbado (b. 1926), Franco Margola (b. 1908-d. 1992) and Renato Fasano (b. 1902-d. 1979).

Despite the move from his birthplace of Nuoro to Cagliari (1950), Oppo always retained in his memory the melodies that he had heard as a child, and, as a result, his first school composition is a *Fantasia* on folk themes for two pianos. After diplomas in piano, choral music and composition (1958–1960), his specialist studies first as a pianist and later solely as a composer followed, with Gino Gorini and Carlo Zecchi, Giorgio Federico Ghedini (Venice, *Vacanze Musicali*), Virgilio Mortari (Rome, *Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia*) and Goffredo Petrassi (Rome, *Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia*) and lastly with Piotr Perkowski (Warsaw, 1964–1965), thanks to a scholarship which took him to Poland and was of extraordinary benefit to him, even if it took him away from the Italian scene. Following a path that was fairly common to those of his generation, he furthermore studied electronic music with Franco Evangelisti (Rome 1968), after having been invited in 1966 by the *Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik* in Darmstadt (see Lanza 2004, 164).

These are experiences which he divulged in the interview which was issued together with the recording of his *Musiche per pianoforte solo e con strumenti* (2004), confirming his ample profile as a musician and as a man.¹⁰ Oppo especially remembers his excellent piano teachers in Kraków, and his friendship with the well-known conductor Andrzej Markowski and the cello player Krzysztof Okoń, who in Darmstadt (1966) performed his *Concerto per violoncello e orchestra*, actually written for Siegfried Palm (see Trudu 1992, 192–93). In Poland, furthermore, he decided to devote himself exclusively to composition, moving from Kraków to Warsaw for this very reason (later, in his teaching, he would immediately use the treatise *Introduction to composition* by the Polish composer Boguslaw Schäffer).¹¹

¹⁰ Spanu 2004 and 2005; see also Giglio 2011; Mattiotti 2004 and 2005; Milia 2011; Oppo 1999; Trudu 1988, 2005 and 2009. Among the theses, in addition to Milia 2009 and 2010, also Colomo 1998 and Rotili 2004.

¹¹ The lively musical life in Warsaw was very important for the young Sardinian composer (who is mentioned in Schäffer 1975, 277). The Polish context of those years is now well-described in Baculewski 2011.

On his return to Cagliari, Oppo shared his *Sardinian-ness* in a positive free and dialectic manner with the European and Italian avant-garde (moreover, giving up an outstanding position at the Conservatory of Milan). In this way, during the 80s, he was able to attain his goal, which was to reach “the foundation of Sardinian music or at least a Sardinian musical culture that is open to new concepts and to the critical awareness of Sardinian folk heritage itself, and this period gave birth to important events enriching contemporary musical knowledge in our present time” (Pestalozza 1999, 32).¹² After formulating an extraordinary aleatory approach in *Concerto per violoncello e orchestra* (1964) and in other pieces such as *Trio per violino, violoncello e pianoforte* (1968), in which elements of Sardinian music are already given a sporadic but very original importance, Oppo reached a turning point halfway through the 70s. In the pieces of that period the meeting point between avant-garde research and the special phonic quality and the structures of traditional music became more and more close-knit and organic, at the same time also acting on the founding language structure whilst still remaining under the control of incisive and informed disciplines.

During the same period Oppo sets forward new methodologies of musical analysis which are also necessary for very real didactic needs relating to his teaching, sketching out a *Theory of units of articulation*. This was proposed for the first time as a conceptual about-turn as compared to applied modern linguistics and it provides a total formulization of the musical linear model, or at least, that is to say, its representation in terms of a sequence of elements, or *segments* (Oppo 1984).¹³

The prevalence of cultural dualism between atonality and popular strophic patterns, a central factor in music which comprises “identities which intersect” (Oppo 2005), took place around 1976 with the discovery of a new and unexpected structural convergence between the *raison d'être* of Sardinian folk music and that of contemporary western music. *Musica per chitarra e quartetto d'archi* (1975), *Praxodia I and II* (1976, 1978), *Anninnia I* (1978) are in this sense the most important works (Oppo 1979; Trudu 1980). During this triptic, through modification of systems linked to the modern science of language (which are always associated with experimentation in new instrumental techniques), we arrive at the notion of a direct assimilation of the folk structure, which contains musical tracts of a short duration (two or three notes at a time), treated as a perspective combination of *microvariants*, giving us a result of unique and very actual Sardinian sound (Pestalozza 1994, 34).¹⁴

¹² See also Pestalozza 2002, 449–450, 457, 433, 444.

¹³ A new, more complete statement of this theory (first in Oppo 1979 and Trudu 1980a; then mentioned in Annibaldi 1990, x, xii, xx and Lai 2002, 28) is due to be published as a treatise. As a scholar, Oppo has been a guest at many conferences concerning new music and computer music, in Italy, Germany, South America, Japan.

¹⁴ It would be incorrect to associate this concept with minimalist aesthetics, and in any case it is a minimalism totally unlike the American one. The basic folk Sardinian structure is examined in Sassu 1994.

The result can also be a cross between identity and alienation in compositions such as *Anninnia* and other transcriptions, both for piano – the intimistic *Tre berceuses* (1982), the daring *North Sardinian Dance* (1984) – and for piano duet-four hands: *Gallurese* (1989) and *Baroniese* (1993), which are two difficult dances based on a process of “delinearization” in which the original brief melodies are spread apart through the amplification of the intervals, with semitones enlarged to diminished ninths and the consequent projection of the sound in different octaves of the keyboard, while other distorted and accessorial notes contribute to this effect, bringing to mind the typical imbalance of folk songs (Milia 2011, 78–79).¹⁵

The search for new timbres continues in *Attitudu per fagotto e quartetto d'archi* (1983), in which the microintervals in the bassoon part stand out above the characteristic sonorities of the Sardinian music. These are reproduced thanks to various bow positions for the four stringed instruments, which have already been used in an amazing way in *Musica per chitarra e quartetto d'archi*; the research goes on in *Sagra per oboe, due violini e viola* (1985) and in *Variazioni su temi popolari per launeddas e live electronics* (1992), which started out originally from a peculiar project about the *launeddas*, the most famous Sardinian folk instrument, composed with the collaboration of Alvisè Vidolin for the performance in Darmstadt.¹⁶ The experimentation with new instrumental techniques, such as the aleatory mixing of sound which occurs in *Riverberazioni per violoncello e pianoforte* (1974), and the fluctuations of timbre in *Amplify* for two amplified stringed instruments (1976), continues to evolve, right from the *Concerto per pianoforte e orchestra* (1995–1996), in which the piano is given control of the sonority parameters, up to the time of the study in resonance *Sonata B per pianoforte e percussione* (2005).

Praxodia (1976) is a theatrical work that is unusual in every way, also as a stage production (*Praxodia II*, 1978), and can be pointed to as an achievement in the effort to combine music and text.¹⁷ After the first innovative and personal experience (*Lamento dal Salmo XIII*, 1962), during several intermediate phases, the music's non-interference in the textual structure gives rise to a new conception in which the structure of the text in every aspect determines that of the music, with the use of an “autoanalytical” notation which makes the performer

¹⁵ *Gallurese* is based on a piece for *launeddas* collected in the field by the Danish ethnomusicologist A.F.W. Bentzon (2002); *Baroniese* originates from a dance still widespread in central Sardinia, collected in the field by the same composer, who thoroughly studied *launeddas* in a specific project for ISRE, Nuoro (Oppo 1994). The *Tre berceuses* are based on three *anninnias* (lullabies) collected in the field by the ethnomusicologist Pietro Sassu (all of them recorded on CD in Carpitella, Sassu and Sole 2010, first on LP in 1973).

¹⁶ The live electronics complements the nature of this instrument which has a penetrating sound but lacks dynamic range, allowing for the performer's own contribution within a predictable and well-defined background of variation.

¹⁷ *Praxodia*, a prize-winning work, first performed in Warsaw (1976), has been transcribed in a normal notation by Francesca Deriu, at the Conservatory of Sassari. Oppo's notation is examined in Villa-Rojo 2003, 88–89, 117, 122, 162–163, 170, 197, 381.

aware of the creative process (Oppo 1979). The voice – the topic of two essays: Oppo 1992 and 2001 – remains the protagonist in works such as *Como en los sueños* (1989) and *Tetrafonie* (for twelve vocal soloists, 1998–99), as well as in a larger theatrical work, *Eleonora d'Arborea* (1986), on a text by the Sardinian writer Giuseppe Dessì (Trudu 2010). In addition to electronic and film music (*Intorno all'isola* 1983, *Quadri di guerra* 1984, *Le cerniere* 1985, *Anafore e cicli elettronici* 1988), several works for chamber ensemble follow until the 90s: *Figure instabili* (1989), *Musica per 11 strumenti ad arco* (1992), *Concetti fluidi* (1997), *Alcune verità indimostrabili* (2004), as well as *40 Melodie popolari polacche* (1989–1993), *3 Melodie popolari polacche* (1990–1993), *Polski Walc* (1996) and the more recent *Taxim* (2003). In a normal notation but always in a very personal and mature style, the last works are both symphonic (*Uno spettro si aggirava per l'Europa* 1999–2000, *Concerto n. 2 per pianoforte e orchestra* 2002, *Concerto per flauto e orchestra d'archi* 2006) and for piano (*Bagattelle* 2001 and *Aforismi* 2002–2008) and other solo instruments (*Gamme per clarinetto* 2002, *Capriccio per violoncello* 2003, *Ditirambo per violino* 2006, *Con-sonanti per clarinetto in Si bemolle* 2008).¹⁸

As well as Oppo, in a clear synergy, the figure of Vittorio Montis (b. 1932, Turri) is another point of reference. He is a musician who is far from being famous, but is very enthusiastic and also takes part in research. Born in the countryside, he also soon moved to Cagliari to study both composition and band orchestration. The friendship between him and Oppo was born from the sharing of ideas and aspirations during the restricted limitations of the 1950s. In his school of harmony and counterpoint at the Conservatory of Cagliari (1970–1999), generations of musicians received their musical education, among whom many moved straight to Oppo's class to complete their course in composition. Montis's productivity mainly branches out from research in folk music and in percussion instruments. The first of these, carried out with strict fidelity to the oral tradition in Sardinia and also summarized in the form of annotations and articles, achieved its goal in the new and simple added features which form a background for the ancient folk songs – such as the passages for magnetic tape in *Cuncordu de Orosei* (1997) – or in pieces such as *Filonzana* (1984), which had its origin in the different popular meanings of this term (a musical form as well as the fragile spider's web).

The study of developments in new techniques, timbres, and expressive performing methods, specifically in percussion instruments, took place with greater intensity between 1990 and 1992, thanks to the stimulating environment of the *CERM* of Sassari, where Montis was a scientific research fellow, and it also involved the collaboration of the percussionist Roberto Pellegrini, from Cagliari. The most important results of that research were made public in 1992 at the

¹⁸ Oppo's works, often prize-winning but only published in part (Edipan, Ricordi, Ars publica), have been performed at many festivals all around Europe, America and Japan.

Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt, where Montis had already been a guest lecturer and composer. Many works were developed at this stage, starting with *De sonantibus* (1990): they are principally based on the use of other percussion instruments, such as mallets, to create new sounds through the interaction between materials (Montis and Pellegrini 1994). The close attention paid to percussion instruments using a robust way of writing continued until *Dialogo 52: Jingle sul nome Franco* (2005), which was dedicated to Oppo and contributed to enriching the repertoire of the Duo Duel from Sassari (Andrea Bini, percussion; Francesca Deriu, piano).

In *Ricercare a tre* (1992), the principle of pitch extension is achieved not only with new instrumental techniques and new means of producing sounds, but also with electroacoustic techniques of sonority, which aids the piano to achieve a new identity. *Symbios* (1993) explores sound as an entity with its own life-cycle;¹⁹ in *Hypertext* (1996) a similar principle is transferred to the text, through the infinite potential proliferation of a page: in this piece, three sound blocks – acoustic instruments, synthetic sounds, live electronics – are conceived as parts in their own right, and yet interdependent. In some other pieces the sound is proposed to create a space which contains themes varying in elaborateness, ending up as a fusion of the whole work (*Trifonia-Triangoli-Cerchi-Conoprismaedri*, 1987). On the other hand, in *I-Es-Se-o* (1986) sound is treated as an entity capable of organizing itself into structures that are comparable to those of the psyche and similar in concept to the warm humanity which is evident in the memorial to the composer's brother and the many soldiers who died in Russia (*Le grida dei silenzi*, 2001), and which sometimes has the characteristic of a strong religious feeling (*Lodate il Signore nel suo santuario: Salmo 150*, 2000).²⁰

3. Pusceddu, Doro, Casti, Tedde, Garau, Saba: “a group of Sardinian musicians who chose composition as their own unique profession”

The teaching of Franco Oppo in a Sardinian Conservatory – Antonio Doro says – is in reality the factor which more than any other gave birth to the formation of a group of Sardinian musicians who chose composition as their own unique profession. The rich and ample discussion which came out during his lessons made music a subject relevant to the most advanced issues of contemporary culture, and, at the same time, it showed

¹⁹ *Symbios* was conceived with the collaboration of the double bass player Fernando Grillo, at *Spaziomusica Ricerca* (Cagliari), from a MARS prototype from IRIS (Paliano, Frosinone).

²⁰ Published by Edipan, and often performed at the *Festival Spaziomusica*, Montis's works have been performed at other important festivals and broadcast in Italy as well as abroad. Monti is also one of the authors of *Ballos* (2000), a book about Sardinian traditional music.

music's *ethic* dimension, and how it is directed to comprehension and transformation of the social and human reality (in Spanu 2004, 37).²¹

Pusceddu, Doro, Casti, Tedde and Garau, born between 1956 and 1960, together with Saba, born in 1964, even though they had strong and very different personalities, identify themselves as the first and most interesting generation of musicians who studied at the *Corso di Nuova Didattica della Composizione*, the school of experimental composition conceived by Oppo in 1976. They graduated between 1986 and 1990 and they first started writing during the first years of the 1980s. Like other Italian composers, “they make their own material and techniques in new music during the century, to develop and transform them in a multiplicity of composing tendencies which are completely novel, and this marks them as separate from those who, on the other hand [...], use them for post-modern poetics” (Pestalozza 2002, 454).

A strong instinctiveness appears in the production of Marcello Pusceddu (b. 1956, Cagliari), a composer with a natural capacity for communication in music, which makes him feel, at times, close to more immediate expressive forms, even within the unique frame of Sardinian tradition itself. The success of *Missa Eulaliae* for soli, instrumental ensemble and live electronics (2004) is very significant. The ample score, with the usual five parts, is characterized by a “chaotic interaction between voices, instruments and electronics with reiteration of patterns and composing techniques of the fourteenth century, like sacred polyphony, and also Sardinian choral music” (M. Pusceddu). In *Cuncordia* (1991), a large-scale religious fresco which received the *Concorso “Ennio Porrino”* award, Sardinian sacred choral singing was already showing its presence with particular reference to *Su Concordu miserere*, which is the most important example of the rich vocal tradition from Santulussurgiu in Logudoro (Mattiotti 2005, 12). On the other hand, in *Paristoria* (1997), the oral tradition based in the region of Logudoro can be seen as a novel usage of dramaturgical elements from the Greek tragedy. In the remaining vocal works, different poetical connotations can be found: *Nocturno exquemático* (1986) is based on expressive structural parallels with the García Lorca poem; *Un grand sommeil noir* (1993) stresses the feeling of emptiness present in the Verlaine poem, an emptiness also represented in *Je suis* for viola, tape and live electronics (1996).

Pusceddu's musical production started with works for small instrumental ensembles, with a clear reference to the minimalist composing technique, but just on an epidermic level and only concerning aspects of the rhythm. The point of departure evolves constantly through rhythmic, melodic and metric microvariations, generating a *continuum* which moves toward fluctuation (i.e. *Mikrós*, 1987). During the 90s Pusceddu explores the use of larger ensembles in remarkable pieces such as *Nel silenzio, languida-mente* (1992), *Tokau* (2000), inspired by the Or-

²¹ The sacred texts at Oppo's course were made up of Arnold Schönberg's manuals (harmony), Umberto Eco (general semiotics) and Boguslaw Schäffer (composition).

thodox tradition from Moldavian monasteries, and *Quinpiàn* (1998). Among his most recent compositions we find both instrumental pieces (until *Dusu* for piano and percussion and *Duoso* for piano four-hands, 2011) and evocative vocal pieces such as *Die segunda* (2005), in which the voice is treated in a new way, but still with a constant reference to oral tradition as Renaissance polyphony. Music by Pusceddu, who was for the second time president of the association *Spaziomusica* from 2005 to 2011, is regularly presented in Cagliari and widely appreciated at several international festivals in Europe, Mexico, Japan.

Antonio Doro (b. 1958, Sassari) – the first one of those who graduated at the new school of Oppo – acquired, to start with, from his musical education, a sense of the value of awareness, which is fundamental for a composer who “right from the start, paid attention to the logical-mathematical and philosophical aspects of composition, as a part of his search for *meaningfulness* in the historical and human sense of the music” (Pestalozza 2002, 456). Moreover, Doro also expressed this awareness in different writings about theory and methodology of composition.²² We see in his work the broadening of techniques regarding composition of the minimal sections of musical discourse, which is a constant, along with experimentation of micropolyphonic and microcanonic techniques: a process which is founded on a rigorous theory of composition, with attention concentrated more and more on musical structures closely linked to the true Sardinian identity. It was *Praxodia* from Oppo which revealed the possibility of taking on patterns from ethnic Sardinian music, through “a refined *ars combinatoria* based on the phonetic recurrences of the text” (Doro 2001, 103). For example in *A vy (...) – Ma noi potremmo? Canoni da Velimir Chlěbnikov e Vladimir Majakovskij*, for tape recorder (1996, rev. 2000), which grew up through the experiences with Alvisè Vidolin in Venice, then in the *Centro di Sonologia Computazionale* of the University of Padova, and finally in the *CERM* (Sassari), founded in 1990 together with Giancarlo Grandi; subsequently results were presented in 1992 at *Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik* in Darmstadt, where Doro had already been a student (Favaro 1994). In the context of a secular sacrality, rooted both in the disconnected forms of Sardinian funeral laments and in 16th century polyphony, *A vy* develops along micropolyphonic lines in canon, which are formed by textual phonemes and by transformation of instrumental sounds and by other chaotic sonorities, the latter based on ideas of the ethnomusicologist Pietro Sassu, from the sonorous sculptures by Pinuccio Sciola.

In the stage production *di bandiere di occhi di cuori...* (1989, rev. 2001), a work related to the concept of revolution, Doro discovers the principle of *micro-variants*, which were also explored in subsequent compositions as a profound link between the music of oral tradition and avant-garde research, with the use of the

²² Teaching at the Conservatory of Sassari, Doro has been dealing in detail with the theory of composition since 1994. His works have been performed in Cagliari, Sassari, Milano, Torino, Lewisburg, Darmstadt, Madrid, Lyon, Montreal, Bourges, Odessa.

human voice with all its potentialities. In *Sei la vita e la morte* for soprano (1985–1986; from Cesare Pavese), he uses free phonemes and sequential elements which overlap each other (“polyphonic metaphor”). Other works follow this pattern, most of them combined with lyrics of Russian poems: *Variazioni su «Djamila Boupachà»* (1997, for Luigi Pestalozza) and *Luigi Nono gewidmet, Variazioni II su «Djamila Boupachà»* (1998–1999). In these pieces the use of vocality by Nono is seen together with an archaic Sardinian feminine monody (in particular in the *ninna nanna* and funeral lament).

Among the last compositions, *Tre studi da «Erkenntnistöne»* for percussion and piano *suoni-risonanze* (2005) are dedicated to Oppo on his seventieth birthday. Doro is now paying particular attention to the subtleties of intervals in the piano writing, first experienced in *di pacata dolcezza, di calma... di strappi laceranti* (1987–1989), with different ways of musical *rewriting* of aleatory pitch-tables that are generated through a system already designed to help composition (the neutral material is, here, in its essence, analysed, always looking for *isomorfismi* which can be used in order to construct meaning, *grammaticality*, expressiveness). In this piece, written for Riccardo Leone and also performed by Oscar Pizzo, we already can find the suspension between determination and indeterminacy which is linked to a concept of form based on a peculiar *discontinuity principle*. This concept of form has led to enhancing techniques of composition of minimum traits in structures characterized by *instability* and *uncertainty*, up until the last four variation-studies (2004–10), both for piano and for piano duet, related to the *attitudu* (the ritual lamentation of the communities of Sardinia), in which the particular setting out of the score is intended to represent the idea of a music that is subjected to the instability of linear and low correlation of chains of sounds.

The attention to detail paid to the formal and theoretical aspects of music is also present in the work of Fabrizio Casti (b. 1960, Guspini), whose musical education includes studies with Alvisé Vidolin in Venice and research at CSC (University of Padova), work which he has carried on in *Spaziomusica Ricerca*, the centre he founded in 1990. His career started with the theoretical studies and interaction between different disciplines, with works such as *Chama (b)* – where the definition of sonorous structures is mapped out with geometrical concepts – *Táksis* (1986) and *Pyknon* (1986–1987), based on the same procedures which allowed the generation of musical structures, starting from others which were already conceived, and also *Le Rovine circolari* for piano and live electronics (1988–1990). Moving on to research of a fusion between the two expressive worlds of music and poetry, Casti started to become gradually more sensitive to the human factors, making this “a special characteristic of his own work”, empowering the music “to the point of re-expression and strengthening the links between human beings and the living world in order to conquer something which goes beyond our own ego” (Pestalozza 2002, 456). The most important pieces in this sense are *Sospinti oltre* for violin (1997), *Di salmastro e di terra* for twelve choral voices (1990), *Hai un*

sangue, un respiro for voice, string trio and live electronics (1992), based in a very personal way on Pavese's poems (Mattietti 2005, 11).

The large number of works by Casti, often performed at *Festival Spaziomusica*, of which he has been president since 2012,²³ is written for various instrumental ensembles. Individual instruments are exposed to a very exacting research in timbre through many works such as *Sottili di luce* for violin (1994) and *Morbide aure dell'aria* for flute (1996). Even larger ensembles are utilized in *Sospinti oltre le mura* (1995), *Parabola di un visionario* (2001), *L'ottavo Cielo* for piano and orchestra (1994), *Come ad attraversare gli intervalli dell'aria* for narrator and string orchestra (1998). *Le Rovine* (conceived in *CERM*, Sassari), *Sottili di luce* and *Khroai* were performed as a world *première* at *Ferienkurse für Neue Musik* in Darmstadt, where in 1992 and 1994 Casti was invited to take part in the *Komponisten-Forum*.²⁴ Devising the musical festivals *Music in Touch* and *Dark Project*, during recent years he has been dealing with more and more horizons of multimedia (*Duel* for 2 percussionists and live electronics, *Pugni di cielo e Parabola di un visionario II* for 100 performers).

A comprehensive scientific education, with a degree in physics, is an extra factor in the education of Giorgio Tedde (b. 1958, Cagliari), who completed his studies in electronic music and composition at the *Musikhochschule* in Basel, and who chose to remain in Switzerland (he still lives in Lugano): a result of his two-tiered education is his interest in aspects of sound quality and acoustics in a new form of musical writing, as well as his research into musical listening.²⁵

From the beginning he has been exploring the technical and expressive boundaries of instruments, in particular those of the wind section. In 1983 *Spectra* introduces a new universe of sound for the flute, thanks to the use of harmonics and modern techniques of timbre production. *Pulstar* for oboe and string trio (1986) develops the dialectics between pulsation and light, while *Difania* (1988) explores properties of the flute and clarinet. In the meantime such experimentation involves

²³ Teacher at the Conservatory of Cagliari, Casti has been for many years both president of *Spaziomusica Ricerca* and vice-president of *Festival Spaziomusica*. Published and recorded by different publishers, Casti's works were often performed in Italy, and at many other festivals, including those in Warsaw, Japan and America; see the composer's website: <http://www.myspace.com/fabriziocasti>.

²⁴ Among their accomplished performers are Irvine Arditti, Carin Levine, Oscar Pizzo, Kirk Brundage, Marco Rogliano, Isabelle Soccoja, Astorre Ferrari, Arditti Trio.

²⁵ In first years of the 90s, Tedde was exploring electronic music within *Ricerca* in Sinnai (Cagliari), the centre which he founded together with Lucio Garau. He first went to Switzerland thanks to the help of *Ricerca* and to a scholarship financed by *Regione Sardegna* (1991–1993). He was the first of his group to emigrate, finding more opportunities in the European context. Tedde has been a guest at many conferences, speaking about aleatory notation in Norwich 1988 (Tedde 1991), musical listening and communication (L'Aja 1986; Darmstadt 1992; Cuenca 1992). See also Tedde 1987 (PDF available on his website: <http://www.tedde.net/tedde/giorgio/index.htm>).

piano (*Gamme*, 1984), harp (*Griffade*, 1991), guitar (*Tap*, 1997), viola (*Violissimo*, 2004) and violin (*Violinissimo*, 2004).

The next step was the exploration of the voice. A musical framework of a performance, *Heroes* (1988) breaks down the basic audio material (a vocal declamation) in its final constituents, made up of single actions of the vocal chords, showing that both acoustic rhythmical and detached vocal material can change itself, modulating with the continuity of the voice and also that “the critical instability between the two complementary perceptions (figures-impulses/background-sound)” could bring life “to some acoustic illusions which are comparable to the graphic effects of, for instance, the drawings of Escher” (G. Tedde). A complete expressive work of research about voices, *Vox* (1992) combines contemporary language with the uniqueness of the Sardinian tradition, leaving the voice to express human emotions with all its own strengths (Mattietti 2005, 13). On the other hand, *Aqua* for orchestra (1987) marks an achievement in the study of notation, resulting in a very personal semi-aleatory writing (the aleatory music notation being examined in Tedde 1991). If *Aqua* traces a dynamic arc which reproduces the sound of water in its different manifestations, then *Viola* (1990) is a result of experimentation which represents the association of colour with a musical composition. During the last few years Tedde has preferred to emphasise the link with other forms of contemporary art and dance. A musician of wide ranging and international interests, he has devoted a work to the sonorous world of Australian traditional culture and is now trying ancient styles of sonority or instruments like the bandoneon (*Iraqi maqam trio*, 2005; *Dolore*, 2006).²⁶

Lucio Garau (b. 1959, Cagliari), a versatile experimental composer, also well-known as a pianist and an acousmatic performer, lives today in Palermo teaching at the Conservatory. He nonetheless maintains a strong connection with Sardinian culture and Sardinia, also as the artistic director of the association Amici della Musica of Cagliari. His research work concerning the issues of interpretation and environment is particularly rich and innovative, and the latter of these is especially relevant from a historical point of view, also with regard to musical reproduction, paying particular attention to the technical aspects of sound production. Starting from this point, he devoted himself to Renaissance and Baroque music (he is also a harpsichordist) and to organology and ethnomusicology. He approached Sardinian musical heritage from a theoretical point of view, using recordings made in the field and in the studio. Founder in 1990 of the *Ricerca* together with Giorgio Tedde, he has continuously deepened his interest in electronic music, also with regard to his personal definition of the concept of interpretation, as well as that of multimedial communication techniques, taking different historical or

²⁶ Tedde’s compositions, performed since 1983 at Festival Spaziomusica and at festivals like *World Music Days* and the *Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt*, have been awarded prizes and performed by Pierre-Yves Artaud, Kees Boeke, Ciro Scarponi, Massimiliano Damerini, Antonio Politano, Arditti Quartet, Sinfonia Varsovia, Hilliard Ensemble.

ethnic environments into account in combination with other expressive tools such as gesture and movement.

His works, which are characterized by new techniques, include, as well as acousmatic compositions (up to *Qimbe*, 2006 and a commission received in 2008 from the *Groupe de Recherche Musicale*, Paris), pieces with traditional orchestration – including *Concerto per fisarmonica e piccola orchestra* (2004), *Concerto per clavicembalo e jazz band* (2007) and *Concertino per pianoforte e ensemble* (2011) – or others where traditional instruments are used in a dialectic way alongside electronic ones. Together with the *MiniM Ensemble*, which he founded in 1991, he presented for the first time in 1994 a performance based entirely on his own compositions. In 1996 he compiled the production of *Voci*, which uses sampling to carry out the interaction between the principal genres of Sardinian vocal music, and *Voyage*, a performance based on the motion of sound which experiments with the use of a small train circling around the audience in order to simulate a system of sound spacialization. The concert *BE-BOP*, which was another important step in his personal musical journey, is, on the other hand, a result of his innovative reflections on the specific relationship between improvisation and the score (during the same period, in 1998, he was composer in residence at the *GMVL* in Lyon). With the *MiniM Ensemble* he also performed *Pinocchio notturno* for chamber ensemble and a toy piano (2005). At this stage he had his first theatre experiences (*Studio su Kafka e Beckett* 2000, *Relazioni* 2001, *Colpevole* 2003), and is presently writing an opera about the myth of Orpheus. In 2001 he was commissioned by the Biennale of Venice to write a composition for piano solo, *Tre invenzioni a tre parti*. The year 2003 saw the appearance of two works inspired by the birth of his daughter: *Aurora*, for female choir and a bass instrument, and *Aurora nel mare*, performed by the San Remo Symphony Orchestra. Among the works related to the traditional Sardinian music in a more evident way are the captivating *Principe* (1995) for percussion and *Ballu* for piano (1997). Garau also wrote and performed his music in collaboration with important soloists and performer-composers.²⁷

One of the winners of the competition *Quarant'anni nel 2000* (Federazione CEMAT), with the strong piece *Sonu iscravatu*,²⁸ the younger Andrea Saba (b. 1964, Cagliari) graduated alongside Lucio Garau in 1990. He also studied electronic music with Nicola Bernardini and Roberto Doati. He concentrated on composition after nurturing his interest both in band conducting and in classical guitar (from 1999, *24mila corde* is a score for a large ensemble of guitars).

²⁷ Among them Steven Schick, Fernando Grillo, Kees Boeke, Daniel Kientzy, Andrea Padova, Antonio Politano, Claudio Jacomucci, Francesco Libetta, Françoise Rivalland, Ulrich Krieger, Mieko Kanno, Marco Pavin, James Clappertone and, from Cagliari, Roberto Pellegrini; the percussionist Andrea Bini (2006) and the pianist Mario Carraro (2006) wrote about *Principe e Ballu*. For details see the composer's website: <http://www.luciogarau.it>.

²⁸ The "raucous sound" is the vocal style which is completely contrived by Sardinian performers of *canto a tenore*.

Saba's personality already stood out from his first works, which were mostly commissioned by *Festival Spaziomusica: Scie* (1992), from research conducted together with the trumpet player Giorgio Baggiani (Mattiotti 2005, 13); *Toccata per arpa* (1993); *Promenade* (1993), born from a memory of passing bands, which is like a junction between the tradition of band and contemporary music. *Unità di tempo* (1996) explores the boundaries between units of time and their relationships with numbers, while in *Cum grano vocis* (1997) small voice fragments, taken from recordings of *canti a tenore* which are perceived in different manner depending on frequencies, slowly modulate towards sonorities moving towards the singing style of the traditional *Cuncordu de Orosei*.²⁹ Saba worked for *Spaziomusica Ricerca*, but he also now works far from Sardinia: he lives in Bologna and teaches band orchestration at the Conservatory of Parma.

4. Other composers of the generations of the 1950s and the 1960s

Despite the fact that he spent almost his entire life in Milan, Gabriele Manca (b. 1957, Sassari) kept a strong bond with Sardinia. Highly valued for his personality, he studied with Giacomo Manzoni and Bruno Canino at the Conservatory of Milan, where he is now professor of harmony and counterpoint.

From Sassari, one can also mention Giancarlo Grandi (b. 1960). A student of Vittorio Montis, he obtained his diploma with Franco Oppo and specialized in choir conducting. Starting with electronic music studies with Nicola Bernardini and Roberto Doati, and different training periods in Freiburg and Darmstadt, in 1990 he co-founded the *CERM*. In his compositions he pursues the study and the application of new instrumental techniques (*Splitting*, 1989) and he often integrates the electroacoustic elements (*Studio per strumenti a fiato e live electronics*, 1992; *Sembianze*, 1998). He uses the acoustic aspects of the Sardinian tradition of the *canto a tenore* both in works for tape (*Dae sas voches*, 1997) and acoustic ones (*Aforisma*, 2005).³⁰

At the cutting-edge of research music, Gabriele Verdinelli (b. 1960, Sassari) followed different routes in his musical path, as did successfully both Stefano Garau (b. 1961, Sassari) and Battista Giordano (b. 1958, Nuoro). A prizewinner of the competition *Scrivere in Jazz*,³¹ Verdinelli is a bright performer both of

²⁹ Also *L'urlo* (1998); *Preghiera e tortura* (2000), text taken from Sigismondo Arquer, an intellectual from Cagliari who was condemned by the Inquisition; *Esquisse* (2001); *Vite a viola con spalla* (2005) and some more recent audio-video works such as *oh Pellegrino: Pranzo acusmatico in tre portate* (2007) and *Richiami* (2010). See the composer's website: <http://www.andreasaba.com>.

³⁰ See Grandi's website: <http://www.webalice.it/giancarlograndi>.

³¹ In 2006 Stefano Garau won an award at the ninth edition of the same important competition in Sassari with the very refined sonority of *Anninnia*.

contemporary and early music. He preferred to explore alternatives to the composition studies with Franco Oppo, choosing to maintain more freedom compared to that school, which at the end of the 1970s was a somewhat too restricting course. Yet he explored avant-garde music by studying different scores in order to conduct them and also by studying with Franco Donatoni and Ennio Morricone in Siena. After starting out as a self-taught musician, he defined his own eclectic style with a tendency to musical caricature, often with reliance on the Sardinian tradition, giving life to a repertoire which was definitely unconventional, at least up to *Jazz Te Deum* (1997), a multiform oratorio which was conceived in collaboration with Bruno Tommaso and Giorgio Gaslini (text by Pietro Sassu). Moreover, he wrote the music for the stage performance of *Eleonora d'Arborea* by Giuseppe Dessì (2002) and other works featuring famous personalities from Sardinian art and culture. He writes music fluently for the pop singer Donatella Rettore as well as for *Festival Spaziomusica (Nodas)*, for sax quartet, is dedicated to Franco Oppo on the occasion of his anniversary in 2005).

The very active conductor and composer Ettore Carta (b. 1962, Cagliari) completed his diploma with Franco Oppo and carried out further studies with Franco Donatoni at the *Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia* in Rome (among his first works, *Liber signatus* for choir and *Sabbie* for 11 instruments were both performed at the Academy, in 1990–1991). Winner in 1991 of the scholarship for composers financed by *Regione Sardegna*, he studied electronic music with Nicola Bernardini, working as technical director of *Spaziomusica Ricerca*. As a conductor, he studied in Cagliari with Angelo Guaragna and specialized abroad with many renowned musicians, also, in the end, founding his own orchestras in Sardinia.³²

5. The generation of the 1970s

With Antonio Lai (Cagliari, b. 1970), the musical experience that matured in Sardinia thanks to Franco Oppo made a prestigious entry in Paris. Lai has been teaching musical analysis at the Conservatoire of Clichy and since 1998 he has been a professor at the University of Paris 8, where, subsequent to studying philosophy at the University of Cagliari, he obtained a PhD in musicology (Lai 2000). With his *String Quartet* he won third prize in the competition *Jurgen-son* in Russia, yet his work as a researcher in the realm of music semiotics is the most intense of these activities, and he has published material which gives new analysis perspectives based on the model put forward by the theory of scientific

³² Carta also writes in periodicals and participates in conferences and radio programs, organizing events of music and multimedia. Belonging to the same generation, Irene Olla and Eugenio Milia also took their degrees under the guidance of Franco Oppo.

progress by Thomas Kuhn (1970), including the lengthy *Genèse et révolutions des langages musicaux* (2002).

Recently in Italy, much attention has been paid to Christian Cassinelli (b. 1979, Cagliari), who is also a pianist working in the field of chamber music. Author of many arrangements as a self-taught musician, since 1999 he has studied composition at the Conservatory of Cagliari with Gianluigi Mattiotti. Points of influence on his writing style, completely distinct from evoking *Sardinian-ness*, are Debussy, Ravel, Dallapiccola, Berio (but also Thomas Adès, Kaija Saariaho e Tapio Tuomela). He made his debut with *Sleep* (2001, text from James Joyce), followed by the *Salon Suite* and the Lied *The Inquiet* (performed at *Festival Spaziomusica* 2003). In 2004 he won the competition run by the monthly *Il giornale della musica*: the prizewinning *Rosario* is a “dodecafonic, descriptive piece, with a style which is cinematographic in a certain way” (Trudu 2005), which was performed in 2005 in Turin by the RAI National Symphonic Orchestra (Roberto Abbado conductor). In the same year Cassinelli also composed the *Concerto per violoncello e orchestra* for the *Teatro Lirico* of Cagliari, which is based on the use of different kinds of materials (octophonic and esathonalic scales, dodecaphonic series) and stresses the *concertante* dialectics. His contacts include well-known composers such as Louis Andriessen, Azio Corghi, Ivan Fedele, Luca Francesconi, Luca Lombardi, and his work was present both at the *Biennale* in Venice and at the *Settimane musicali di Stresa e del Lago Maggiore (Diatomee, for orchestra, 2006)*.

Other composers who matured at the Conservatory of Cagliari have made their talent known in other competitions.³³ In particular, Fabrizio Marchionni (b. 1976), a versatile young musician,³⁴ is successful in uniting Sardinian and western tradition especially in organ music, and he performs his own interesting compositions on the compact disc *Cannas in Cuntzertu* (2002) and *Cantadas de Sardigna* (2006). In Sassari Giovanna Dongu (b. 1974), also an active pianist, is a fine composer of piano music for children.

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³³ Roberto Balistreri, Francesco Bianco, Federico Cherchi, Stefano Ferrari, Andrea Laconi, Marcello Liverani, Francesco Marceddu, Fabio Monni, Matteo Martis.

³⁴ Winner of many competitions and scholarships throughout Italy, Fabrizio Marchionni, also a student of Vittorio Montis, graduated in composition, piano, organ and harpsichord. His prizewinning *Attitudu*, for organ, has been published by Armelin.

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