Intonarumori
Orchestra of Futurist Noise Intoners
A Performa Commission. Conducted by Luciano Chessa

Friday, January 16, 2015
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Intonarumori
The Orchestra of Futurist Noise Intoners
A Performa Commission
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Friday, January 16, 2015, 7:30 p.m.
Gartner Auditorium, the Cleveland Museum of Art

PROGRAM

Teho Teardo: Oh! (2010)
Gregory Moore: Eight Moments (2013)
Carlo Carrà, Divagazioni Medianiche no. 4, from Guerrapittura (1915)*
Joshua Carro: Her slow gasp (2013) – Premiere
Paolo Buzzi: Pioggia nel pineto antidannunziana (1916)
Carlo Carrà, Divagazioni Medianiche no. 6, from Guerrapittura (1915)*
Christopher Burns: Three Standard Stoppages (2014) – Premiere
Filippo Tommaso Marinetti: Bombardamento di Adrianopoli (1912)*
Luigi Russolo: Fragment from Risveglio di una città (1913)

*Futurist sound poetry

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A Metaphysical Orchestra for the Art of Noises: Researching and Reconstructing the Intonarumori

By Luciano Chessa

In 1913 the Italian painter Luigi Russolo launched a Futurist Manifesto “L’arte dei rumori” (The Art of Noises) with the intention of radically updating the concert music of his time by forcing it to come to terms with a contemporary, noisy, mostly urban sound world.

Abandoning painting and engaging full-time in the activities of instrument building, composing and conducting, Russolo concretely and effectively offered his own revolutionary version of what music in the 20th century should be like.

Russolo’s sound revolution, first ridiculed and loathed, went to be increasingly regarded as seminal, while Russolo’s figure, subject of musicological attention at least from the 1970s on, currently enjoys a considerable cult following.

However, when in 2001 I started working on a doctoral dissertation on Russolo’s aesthetics, I found out to my surprise that the field of music history was still lacking a substantial hermeneutic effort both on the art of noises, and on the noise-intoners instruments (the intonarumori) Russolo built to showcase it.

The pioneeristic archival works published in the mid-70s by Giovanni Lista and Gianfranco Maffina, for the most part based on documents that Russolo’s widow Maria Zanovello preserved and catalogued, had not been followed by any systematic interpretation of Russolo’s actual work on sound. And though in secondary literature the name of Russolo was often dropped, most of the writing on his musical activities had remained anecdotal, while the meaning of such activities had not been investigated in depth.

This state was even more surprising if one considers that plenty of research was being done on Russolo as a painter—especially surprising for the one of us who regards his contribution in the field of music to be more relevant than the one in the field of painting.

This being said, the importance of Russolo’s training as a painter in the context of his philosophical interests and, of course, in the context of his experiments on sound, should not be underestimated. The key to understand his work on music was in fact dependent upon the understanding of what had motivated or, rather, animated, his painting.

My research began by studying Russolo’s creative process *vis-à-vis* early Futurist aesthetics formulations, to which he first took part as a painter. By reviewing the many secondary sources on Futurist art, my attention was caught by research that uncovered influences of occult theories within the Futurist movement.

Chief among them was a seminal article by Germano Celant titled *Futurismo Esoterico*, This article, together...
with portions of Maurizio Calvesi’s volume *Il futurismo: La fusione della vita nell’arte* of 1967, served as a base for all my subsequent findings.

Through these readings, I discovered that under an apparent modernist surface Futurists were interested in occult arts. Following this train of thought, I first realized how Russolo’s work was influenced by Renaissance art and technology as they blended in harmony in the proto-futurist figure of Leonardo da Vinci.

Subsequently, it became clear to me how the whole of Russolo’s work had originated from a genuine interest in the occult, an interest Russolo showed continuously through life, from his earliest canvasses (the 1908 *Autoritratto con teschi*, or the 1910–11 *Autoritratto con doppio eterico*) to his late “classico-moderno” paintings of the 40s.

My first-hand re-examination of Russolo’s writings and work brought to the surface the connection he had found among painting and music, through the way of synesthesia. Russolo and the futurists understood synesthesia in an occult way: as the field of possible arcane interconnections between different sensory fields.

His notion of synesthesia was derived from a specific late 19th-century branding of occult arts: Theosophy. Russolo and his Futurist comrades had likely absorbed Theosophy through their fascination for late 19th-century French thought, and in particular for French Symbolism, an art movement that had inspired Futurism since the start. All early Futurism soaked in Symbolism. As a result, all early Futurism soaked in the occult via Theosophy, and the keyword was synesthesia.

If one looks at Futurism’s earliest members, to begin from the founder of the movement, Marinetti, pretty much all these artists and intellectuals had one way or another flirted with Symbolism before turning to Futurism. Marinetti’s own poetry in French is surely inspired by Symbolist poetry, while early Boccioni or Russolo’s painting presents themes commonly found in Symbolist painting.

How did these occult interests influence Russolo’s art of noises? I believe that the art of noises can be read as a process of conjuring the spirits articulated in two phases: in the first phase the noise become spiritualized, and in a second phase, spirits materialize. I argued that Russolo first painted the process in 1911–12 in the large canvas titled *La musica*, and subsequently put this process into practice a year later by formulating the art of noises and by building the intonarumori.

A mere glance at *La musica* should be enough to convince us that we are in front of a highly symbolic work. *La musica* is a work clearly soaking in theosophical doctrine, and in particular in that eminently synesthetical theory of sound forms first introduced by Charles Leadbeater in 1904 as an expansion of his and Annie Besant’s better-known theory of *thought forms*.

At a deeper hermeneutical level, the painting shows a performer/medium in a trance-like state, and thus able to evoke spirits and to produce materializations of *thought* and *sound forms*. The restless masks in the painting, showing a full range of facial expressions, I identified as figurative materializations of *thought forms*, as well as a key concept in early futurist painting: “stati d’animo” (states of mind). The sinuous blue ribbon that occupies a significant portion of the painting I identified as Russolo’s own representation of the appropriate *sound form* for a sound source that Russolo would have defined as *enharmonic*, i.e. a sound source that moves continuously across the pitch-space in gliding glissando, uncorrupted by any sense of intervallic subdivision.

The art of noises, which Russolo formulated a year later, and the intonarumori orchestra he constructed to concretely realize it, could also be read within this same occult frame of reference. Russolo’s occult persuasion led me to understand the intonarumori not merely as cleverly engineered musical instruments but rather as philosophical instruments, and thus as part of an illustrious tradition.
whose lineage dates back to Pythagoras and his experiments on the monochord.

The intonarumori, also essentially monochords, first generate noise, as raw matter. Thanks to the lever interface, this raw matter is then spiritualized as it is first tuned, and then made it exist, beyond any tone divisions, in the fluid “enharmonic” space. By producing glissandos, the intonarumori proves that pitch is an infinitely divisible quantity, and therefore that pitch-space is continuous. Russolo called this gliding feature of the intonarumori “dynamic continuity”.9

Though the word “intonarumori” can be used both in the singular and in the plural, Russolo didn’t think of the intonarumori as an individual instrument, an individual sound module. He was committed to produce an orchestra, which, as a whole, could synthesize the totality of available noises of the natural and the mechanical world.

Having introduced a taxonomy of such noises in the Art of Noises Manifesto, in the summer 1913 he proceeded to build the instruments that could produce them all. The intonarumori orchestra had for Russolo the purpose of re-creating the world through its sounds: first as a simultaneous chaos and then—thanks to the energy and ability of a conductor/medium—as a substantial unity. When the conductor/medium reached the point of supreme inspiration, spirits of the dead could be conjured, awaken, and even materialize.

The principle of materialization/awakening, omnipresent in theosophical doctrine, is found in the work of Marinetti and other futurists, including Ardengo Soffici, Boccioni, and of course Russolo. And far-fetched as my above reading of the art of noises’ intention may seem, it is corroborated by a coeval futurist source by Futurist Paolo Buzzi, who often explained Russolo’s art of noises precisely as an occult operation of conjuring spirits: first in a brief 1919 text titled “Russolo ferito” (Russolo wounded), then in a poem titled Russo, likely written in 1919 but published in the 1922 collection titled Poema dei Quaran’t’anni, and finally in his 1924 novel, La cavalcata delle vertigini.10

Expanding the reading of the art of noises as a process of conjuring expressed in the 1919 texts, La cavalcata delle vertigini features Russolo, under the name of Marzio, as the main character, and includes a full chapter on Russolo/Marzio conducting/conjuring.

Though not directly and literally, the deeper understanding of the art of noises as an ambitious metaphysical operation was the fundamental principle that guided my reconstruction of the intonarumori orchestra. This reconstruction was possible thanks to a commission I received from RoseLee Goldberg of Performa, New York City’s Biennial of Performance Arts11.

For Performa 2009 I ended up producing the first complete modern reconstruction ever attempted of Russolo’s earliest (and lost) intonarumori orchestra. The model for my reconstruction was in fact the orchestra of 16 intonarumori which was first unveiled on August 11, 1913 at a press concert that took place in Marinetti’s Casa Rossa, the Milanese headquarters of the Futurist Movement, this orchestra had disappeared in WWII during the German Retreat.

When I began working on my reconstruction, a few reconstruction projects had already been produced. Among them, the main one, by Pietro Verardo and Mario Abate, was originally commissioned by the 1977 Venice Biennale. Verardo was the first to try to reconstruct some of Russolo’s intonarumori to the extent of what the available patent could allow. Obviously, I felt that I needed to produce something other than what had been available: I was in search of an identity, as well as a unifying concept for my reconstruction project.

The intention to rebuild the entire first orchestra did not come to me right away. As I started thinking about it, it became clear that what I really wanted to do was to build a set of instruments that could allow me to perform Russolo’s fragment from Risveglio di una città—a 1913 fragment that first appeared in the Futurist periodical Lacerba in 1914, and
had not been heard live in almost a hundred years—as close as possible to the original score.\textsuperscript{12}

At the time I begin the work on the reconstruction, no intonarumori ensembles could perform that piece live. And since I knew from the start that I wanted to rebuild the intonarumori to use them in live performances, the score for the Risveglio di una città score became my guiding model.

* * *

When Performa contacted me in 2008, I had been working on Russolo for about seven years. My work up to that point was mostly theoretical, as I had investigated Russolo’s aesthetics for my doctoral dissertation, entirely on Russolo’s art of noises\textsuperscript{13}.

Among the information I gathered to support my argument, there were Russolo’s patents and patent drawings for the intonarumori. Since Russolo did not patented each single instrument, but only the basic intonarumori mechanism, these drawings were only helpful to an extent. However, plenty of information could still be derived by them. More importantly, thanks to my above-mentioned research, I felt I had a grasp on what Russolo desired to achieve when he decided to build the intonarumori\textsuperscript{14}.

In December 2008 I contacted musical instrument builder Keith Cary, a friend of a friend living in Winters, California. I asked him if he wanted to help me with this project by first building a prototype. The prototype turned out to be an ululatore medio, which is, among Russolo’s intonarumori, the most straightforward to build, as it is the one that most directly relates to the patent drawing.

Once the prototype was built, I had to confront a very difficult question: how to reconstruct the other fifteen instruments, many of which I knew to be considerably different from the one basic mechanism Russolo presented in the patent. I began to gather all the evidence I could possibly find. Beside the patents, there were Russolo’s own writings: articles and books, his charts with the ranges of the instruments, writing by Futurists and their associates, reviews, etc.

Some valuable help came from photographs showing the outside of the instruments. Possibly the most useful are two images taken in July 1913 at Russolo’s studio in Milan. These are the famous photographs of Russolo and his assistant Ugo Piatti surrounded by sixteen instruments.

These two images were extremely important for my reconstruction. They show the very orchestra of sixteen intonarumori I planned to reconstruct, the one unveiled at the August 1913 press concert. Since the instruments shown in the photos are still under construction and stacked all over the room, a number of useful details not seen in later photographs can be observed: the position of the cranks in relation to the levers; the position of the cones; construction tools over a table, etc.

Also useful were the photographs of live performances: some from the London concerts Russolo conducted in June 1914, some from the Paris concerts of 1921, etc: all these photographs show the outside of the intonarumori. And one single photograph of the inside of one of the intonarumori, the Ronzatore likely taken in 1914, was decisive.

This photograph shows the insides of an instrument endowed with an electric motor. We know that Russolo’s first intonarumori orchestra contained sixteen instruments, ten of which were hand-cranked and thus not powered with electricity; six were electric. In fact a first distinction that can be made about the intonarumori is precisely that: manual and electrically powered.

Having a sense of how both typologies looked was very important for the purpose of reconstructing them: from the patent I could find out more or less how the cranked instrument looked; from the Ronzatore’s photo, I could have a sense of how one of the electric instrument looked inside. This knowledge I could apply to other electric instruments.

We don’t have photographs of the insides of all the other instruments, unfortunately. This would have made the
reconstruction of the whole set much easier, and likely a
copia of it would have been completed much before I did.

Among the evidence I gathered in the reconstruction
process, there was also information related to previous
intonarumori reconstructions, all of which had been partial
reconstructions. The first one—made, as I mentioned
before, for the 1977 Venice Biennale—was surely the most
useful of them all.

Pietro Verardo worked with first-hand documentation
from the very beginning, and spent decades perfecting
his instruments, carefully selecting the materials, etc. I was
able to visit his studio with composer and Radio personality
Robert Worby and a crew from the British BBC in the sum-
mer of 2009. There were nine instruments in the studio, and
I was able to play some of them.

The other reconstructions I knew of (one done in Japan,
one in the Netherlands, etc.), were far more limited in
scope, and included only a few hand-cranked instruments
that more closely resemble the instrument featured in the
patent. Regardless, getting as much information on these
erlier reconstruction projects surely helped my own task.

If it is true that my understanding of Russolo’s aesthet-
cics fueled my reconstruction, it is also true that, having
been in charge of a reconstruction project and thus ben-
efiting from the opportunity to concentrate intensely on
minute construction details, ended up influencing back my
understanding of Russolo’s aesthetics.

Luigi Russolo’s eclectic personality, constantly oscillat-
ing between the sphere of the theoretical and the one of
the practical, may have been very pleased by this process.

This essay was commissioned by the Fondazione Prada
for the catalog of the exhibit “Art or Sound”, curated by
Germano Celant in 2013.

NOTES
1 I would like to thank Todd Lerew
for the help in reviewing this pres-
cent article.
2 Luciano Chessa, “Luigi Russolo
and the Occult” (PhD dissertation,
University of California, Davis),
2004.
3 Giovanni Lista, “Russolo, pein-
ture et bruitisme,” in Luigi Russolo,
L’art des bruits (Lausanne: l’Age
d’Homme, 1975); Gianfranco
Maffina, Luigi Russolo e l’Arte dei
rumori: Con tutti gli scritti musicali
(Turin: Martano, 1978).
4 Germano Celant, “Futurismo
esoterico,” Il verri 15, nos. 33-34
(October 1970).
5 Maurizio Calvesi, Il futuroismo: La
fusione della vita nell’arte (Milan:
Fratelli Fabbri Editori, 1967).
6 It can well be argued that the
very foundational act of Futurism,
Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s 1909
manifesto in Le Figaro, had as a
model not much Karl Marx’s 1848
Communist manifesto, but rather
Jean Moréas’ Symbolist manifesto,
also published in Le Figaro, in
1886
7 For a detailed explanation of this
process, see Luciano Chessa, Luigi
Russolo Futurist. Noise, Visual
Arts, and the Occult. (Berkeley:
University of California Press
2012), chapters 7, 8, and 11.
8 Charles Webster Leadbeater,
“L’aspect occulte de la mu-
sique,” in Le Lotus Bleu: la revue
théosophique: vol. 15 (1904).
9 Luigi Russolo, L’arte dei rumori
(Milan: Edizioni Futuriste di Poesia
1913)
10 See Luciano Chessa, Luigi
Russolo Futurist. Noise, Visual
Arts, and the Occult. (Berkeley:
University of California Press
11 For the 2009 edition of the
Biennials, RoseLee Goldberg chose
the Futurist manifestos as the
curatorial theme to unify the over
one hundred events that made up
the impressive program of the
Biennals. Thanks to a suggestion
of a friend of mine, Tom Welsh,
Performa’s General Manager Esa
Nickle contacted me in 2008 and
asked if I could reconstruct
Russolo’s Intonarumori.
12 Luigi Russolo, “Grafia enarmoni-
ca per gl’intonarumori futuristi,”
Lacerba (March 1, 1914).
13 The dissertation then became
my UC Press book titled “Luigi
Russolo, Futurist.”
14 The year 2008 was the perfect
time for me to switch to a more
hands-on research approach, and
to direct my interest from aesthet-
cics to instrument construction.
Additionally, I filed my dissertation
at UC Davis in 2004, and then
for a while I was working on
other directions (writing on Italian
composer Giacinto Scelsi, for in-
stance and other related aspects).
2008—about four years after put-
ting the dissertation aside—was a
good time to return to Russolo.
15 After this experience, I was
able to return to the draft of my
“Luigi Russolo, Futurist” with a
newfound enthusiasm, and with
a newfound understanding. The
experience guided me to the
completion of the book in 2012.
NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Teho Teardo: Oh!
Oh! is a conversation between a diabolic bear and a deer who pretends to be a trunk. They can’t say much to each other and their silence is framed in those cage-like perspectives Bacon used to draw around his figures. But both the bear and the deer don’t know anything about 20th-century painting. Next we hear the broken voice. It belongs to Iris. She tells us the story of a pregnant lady who is about to die in an ambulance while giving birth to a baby girl, but she is saved by the prompt intervention of a doctor, who decides to perform a caesarean section. That voice always breaks up while telling those stories, and time breaks up too. It gets dark, and while we are listening to this story, we are turning into fireflies.

Composer, musician and sound designer interested in developing the integration of electronic and acoustic sounds, Teho Teardo has collaborated with artists such as Blixa Bargeld (Einsturzende Neubauten), Graham Lewis (Wire), Colin Newman (Wire), Girls Against Boys, Cop Shoot Cop, Lydia Lunch, Alexander Balanescu, Graham Lewis (Wire), Mick Harris, Societas Raffaello Sanzio, Mario Brunello, Jim Thirwell and many others. UK label Expanding Records released the album Soundtrack Works 2004–2008 (2010), a selective compilation of Teardo’s music which has won him many major awards and much critical acclaim. The album includes incidental music from the international hit and Cannes Jury Prize–winning film Il Divo (directed and written by Paolo Sorrentino) for which he also won the Ennio Morricone prize at the Italian film festival. Ennio Morricone himself presented the prize to Teho and the Il Divo soundtrack went on to win the David di Donatello prize, one of the most important prizes for music in Italian cinema. Currently he is involved in an adaptation of Voyage au bout de la nuit, after Céline, a work he realized with actor Elio Germano.

Gregory Moore: Eight Moments (2013)
“Eight Moments” began as a salute to Solfeggio, the classic “Do Re Mi ...” method for musicians to learn and internalize the pitches of the musical scales. Working with this material, I gradually discovered that after years of study and professional work in music, I may have learned to work with scales, but somehow never came to understand them for what they truly are: the unification of an entire spectrum of musical color, indeed the rainbow of sound. I believe that Russolo realized this for himself just as the motorcar, aeroplane, and the train were fulfilling humanity’s quest for knowing and integrating time with space. One hundred years later, we’re doing the same thing all over again, trying to integrate ourselves with cell phones and the internet. Yet, perhaps we know no more than Russolo ever did. Maybe we can try again with the rainbow of music.

Gregorey Moore was born in the San Francisco Bay Area. He has studied with Terry Riley, George Lakoff, David Rosenboom, and Michael Fink. For several years he collaborated with Luciano Chessa, Richard Peddicord, and many of the other finest musicians in Northern California. For 17 years he owned and produced concerts at Maybeck Studio in Berkeley, California. His favorite experience there was switching off the microphone whenever Marian McPartland was about to use ... um ... inappropriate language.

Joshua Carro: Her slow gasp
Her slow gasp is an attempt to come to a fundamental point of noise composition. Seeing a correlation with the sound of the human voice and the creation of these instruments, I felt it was important to represent a model of the human voice to be interpreted by the Intonarumori Orchestra. The score is a spectrum graph of a female voice gasping for air in a very constricted way. A sound that may represent our current state.
Joshua Michael Carro (b. 1982) is a sound, visual, and performing artist who is interested in simple materials, complex sound processing, and long durations. Based in Los Angeles, Carro started a disciplined practice in percussion at an early age and became obsessed with metal, jazz, percussion, electronic music, and experimental music composition. This would later lead him to study music with Ulrich Krieger (Sonic Youth, Metal Machine Trio, Lou Reed), Wolfgang Von Schweinitz (leading figure of just intonation and music composition at CalArts), and Shri Swapan Chaudhuri (world class tabla maestro and Chair of World Music at CalArts). Carro has performed in countless recitals, concerts, and recordings across the U.S., Canada, and Europe with sound work performances and commissions by UC Berkeley Cellist Ensemble, Wild Rumpus (San Francisco), What’s Next? Ensemble, Now Hear Ensemble, Fire Trio, Susan Allen (CalArts), William Powell (CalArts), and C.P.E. (ASU). As a recording artist, Carro has recorded his and others works at Capitol Records, T.V. Stand Studios and has released over 20 electro-acoustic albums on labels including: H.L.M. (France), Somehow Recordings (London), Vent (U.K.) Ephem-Aural (New York) with reviews by Silent Ballet, Kultur Industrialna (Poland), Norman Records, and Linus Records (Japan).

Program note not available.

Paolo Buzzi: Pioggia nel pineto antidannunziana
This brief piece was first published by Futurist poet Paolo Buzzi in one of the 1916 issues of the Periodical L’Italia Futurista. It was intended as a ferocious parody of Italian poet Gabriele D’Annunzio’s immensely famous poem La pioggia nel pineto from the collection Alcyone (1903), was a perfect embodiment of D’Annunzio’s Decadent, languorous, hyper-classical aesthetics. For a Futurist it was thus about the most perfect target they could dream of.

Buzzi’s piece is written in the style of the Futurist Words in Freedom, and presents graphically to the reader a text requesting a specific intonarumori accompaniment, and even some hints at staff notation.

Having rediscovered this work during my research on Russolo, I read it as an early example of graphic score, and I soon realized this version, diplomatically, from the only existing source.

Pioggia nel pineto antidannunziana constitutes an important historical addition to the intonarumori repertoire: it is one of a very rare works for intonaumori being composed in the first—and most progressive—phase of Italian Futurism. (Luciano Chessa)

Paolo Buzzi
FUTURISTA

—Paolo Buzzi (1916)

Christopher Burns: Three Standard Stoppages
Dedicated to Luciano Chessa, Three Standard Stoppages proposes three distinct ways of measuring the passage of time. At the same time, it stages a series of encounters between a pair of turn-of-the-century technologies—inviting comparisons regarding the ways in which we and our
Christopher Burns is a composer and improviser developing innovative approaches to musical architecture. His work emphasizes trajectory, layering and intercutting a variety of audible processes to create intricate forms. The experience of density is also crucial to his music: his compositions often incorporate materials which pass by too quickly to be grasped in their entirety, and present complex braids of simultaneous textures and lines.

Christopher’s work as a music technology researcher shapes his work in both instrumental chamber music and electroacoustic sound. He writes improvisation software incorporating a variety of unusual user interfaces for musical performance, and exploring the application and control of feedback for complex and unpredictable sonic behavior. In the instrumental domain, he uses algorithmic procedures to create distinctive pitch and rhythmic structures and elaborate them through time. Christopher is also an avid archaeologist of electroacoustic music, creating and performing new digital realizations of music by Cage, Ligeti, Lucier, Stockhausen, and others. His recording of Luigi Nono’s La Lontananza Nostalgica Utopica Futura with violinist Miranda Cuckson was named a “Best Classical Recording of 2012” by the New York Times.

A committed educator, Christopher teaches music composition and technology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Previously, he served as the Technical Director of the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA) at Stanford University, after completing a doctorate in composition there in 2003. He has studied composition with Brian Ferneyhough, Jonathan Harvey, Jonathan Berger, Michael Tenzer, and Jan Radzynski.


I’ve been interested in William Beckford’s Vathek for so long now that I am not even sure why I started liking it so much. It may be the wickedness.

Since I first read it in the mid-90s—encountered via Borges while I was a composition student at Bologna’s Conservatory—William Beckford’s 1792 Gothic/Exotic novella on the arrogant and ambitious Caliph who attempts to build the tallest tower on Earth always felt operatic to me. This is the first section I have written for my Vathek opera, which I am planning to score for the Orchestra of Futurist Noise Intoners plus a 16-piece chamber orchestra and voices. Being this one of the most gruesome spots in the whole plot, it seemed well suited for an intonarumori treatment, to maximize its brutality. Enjoy!

As a composer, conductor, pianist, and musical saw/Vietnamese dan bau soloist, Luciano Chessa has been active in Europe, the U.S., Australia, and South America. Recent compositions include Set and Setting, a San Francisco Contemporary Music Players commission premiered by Steven Schick and the SFCMP in February 2014 at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco; LIGHTEST, a SFMOMA commission presented in November 2013 at the SF Columbarium; Squeeze! Squeeze! Squeeze!, a large-scale work written for the quartotone vibe/quartotone electric guitar duo The Living Earth Show; A Heavenly Act, an opera with original video by Kalup Linzy commissioned by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and premiered by Nicole Paiement and the Ensemble Parallèle.

Chessa is the author of Luigi Russolo Futurist. Noise, Visual Arts, and the Occult, the first monograph ever to be dedicated to the Futurist Russolo and his Art of Noises, out on University of California Press in 2012 to critical acclaim. Chessa’s Futurist expertise has resulted in an invitation by the New York-based Biennial of the Arts Performa to direct the first reconstruction project
of Russolo’s earliest intonarumori orchestra, and to curate concerts of music specifically commissioned for this project. This production was hailed by the New York Times as one of the best events in the arts of 2009 and is now touring internationally. In March 2011, the Orchestra of Futurist Noise Intoners was presented in a sold-out concert by Berliner Festspiele-Maerzmusik Festival. In December 2011 Chessa conducted the project with the New World Symphony in their new Frank Gehry–designed Concert Hall as part of a Performa-produced event to celebrate 10 years of Art Basel | Miami Beach; the performance included the world premiere of Lee Ranaldo’s It All Begins Now (Whose Streets? Our Streets!). In May 2013 he presented at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires a series of events to celebrate the Centennial of Russolo’s Art of Noises. A double LP dedicated to the Orchestra of Futurist Noise Intoners and documenting the first phase of this project has been released on the Belgian label Sub Rosa in November 2013. In December 2013 Chessa conducted the Orchestra of Futurist Noise Intoners to a sold-out crowd at the RedCat in Los Angeles.

Additionally, Luciano Chessa has been performing Futurist sound poetry for well over 10 years. His reading of Italian poetry to accompany a performance of the Grammy Award Nominated New Century Chamber Orchestra in San Francisco’s Herbst Theater in 2000 was granted with enthusiastic reviews in the San Francisco press, and in 2001 he has given the modern premiere of Francesco Cangiullo’s explosive Futurist sound poems Piedigrotta and Serata in onore di Yvonne, subsequently presenting them in several countries all over the world.

In June 2014 Chessa performed three concerts with Futurist Sound Poetry at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, as part of the retrospective exhibit on Italian Futurism; his voice reading Marinetti’s Manifesto and Poetry to accompany Jen Sachs’ videos is to be experienced by all exhibit visitors, from February to September 2014.

Luciano Chessa holds a D.M.A. in Piano performance and a M.A. in Composition from the G.B. Martini Conservatory of Music in Bologna, Italy, a M.A. magna cum laude in History of Medieval Music from the University of Bologna, and a Ph.D. in Musicology and Music Criticism from the University of California at Davis. Chessa taught, lectured and talked at various institutions including St. John’s College of Oxford, UK, Columbia University, Harvard University, Sydney’s and Melbourne’s Conservatories and Universities, the Conservatory of Music in Bologna, UC Davis, UC Berkeley, Stanford University, and EMPAC in the campus of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He has been interviewed by the CBS (KPIX/KBHK) television channel as an expert on Italian 1990s hip-hop, and twice by the BBC as Luigi Russolo’s foremost scholar. His work has been featured in Artforum, Architectural Digest, Art in America, in the Italian issue of Marie Claire, and in the September 2010 issue of Vogue Italia; a short documentary on his work has been broadcasted by Rai World in April 2014, and he has appeared in Peter Esmonde’s documentary on Ellen Fullman, 5 Variations on a Long String (2010). Luciano Chessa teaches at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, serves in the Advisory Board of TACET, the international research publication dedicated to Experimental Music from the Université Paris 1 - Panthéon-Sorbonne, is a member of the Steering Committee of the SF Electronic Music Festival, and collaborates with SF’s Italian Cultural Institute. His music is published by Edizioni Carrara and by Rai Trade, the Italian National Broadcast Channels’ music publishing company.
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Karel Paukert
Sunday, January 25, 2:00 p.m.
Gartner Auditorium

In honor of his 80th birthday, curator of musical arts
emiritus returns to the museum and the McMyler Memorial
Organ to perform Olivier Messiaen’s *La Nativité du Seigneur.*
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