

Playlist by Alessio Elia for Müpa (Palace of Arts) – CAFe, Contemporary Arts Festival Budapest 2017

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Listen to the iPod of the award-winning composer!

From the incorrectly titled Eurovision song to the Italian punk.

The name of Alessio Elia became known to the Hungarian public in Autumn 2013 when he won the UMZF competition for young composers. The composer born in Rome, who for 13 years now considers his home Budapest – whose composition will be performed at the special concert “Human Machine” - the sound of the machines – has sent us a list that gives an excellent profile of the past decades of music (especially, but not exclusively) Italian: a journey from Nirvana to Mozart, from Scala di Milano to the score of György Ligeti, which needs to be corrected, from the elegant Paolo da Firenze to the Italian punk group singing about acids...

1) Mia Martini: “Gli uomini non cambiano”.

My favorite female timbre ever, strong, biting, powerful and melancholic at the same time. She had something truly special in her soul. If she would have been alive, I would have certainly written a song for her.

2) Nirvana: “Smells Like Teen Spirit”.

A great example of musical form. Every detail of the construction is just perfect.

3) Grignani: “La mia storia tra le dita”.

Considered among the 10 most beautiful Italian songs, it was a great success in the 90’s, still one of the most known songs. It is a song strongly tied to the memory of my adolescence.

4) Fausto Romitelli: “An Index of Metals: VII. Drowninggirls III”.

In my opinion the best composer of the second half of XX century, together with György Ligeti: same high quality of imagination. Romitelli focused a lot on the different textures of sound, creating incomparable timbres, one aspect that is also crucial in my musical research.

5) Luigi Tenco: “Vedrai, vedrai”.

Tenco was a prolific songwriter, despite he died very young (at the age of 28), in not clear circumstances.

He defined himself “composer” and not “songwriter”, and I think his feeling for melody was truly original. This song is dedicated to his mother and tells about a promise to have a better future. It is a song for all the dreamers. I was used to listen to it in the first period I was living in Budapest.

6) Vincenzo Bellini: “Norma: Act 2: Deh, non volerli vittime”. Maria Callas.

The very special voice of Callas, in which each note has a different color, performing one of the most beautiful melodies ever written, from an Opera that I consider as one of the highest expressions of this genre. This interpretation is with La Scala di Milano, the best Orchestra in Italy, musicians I always dreamed about to work with. And dreams exist to become true: my *Octet* for winds has been recently recorded by I Solisti della Scala, conducted by Andrea Vitello, a very intense experience. The Cd will be soon released...

7) Alvaro Amici: “Barcarolo Romano”.

Probably the most famous “stornello romano” (a type of poetry in music, typical of the city of Rome), telling the sad story of a boatman and his lover who was found dead by him while rowing on Tevere, the river of Rome. The fact I included it here means to me a proof of the ambivalent approach I have towards the city in which I grow up: a feeling that is a mixture of admiration and blame.

8) Robert Downey Jr.: “Man like me”.

Most of people don't know that he is also a songwriter, not just an actor. I really like this piece, especially the harmonies and the timbre of his voice.

9) Mozart: “Adagio” from “Gran partita”.

Doubtless the greatest composer ever. His output was incredibly outstanding. This piece is truly from another dimension of life, as many others of him. If there is something that gives me a thrill, this is definitely the case!

10) Venditti: “Notte prima degli esami”.

A cult song in Italy since the 80's, for those who are going to do the final exam at the high school (the song is about this). I remember while I was preparing that exam I sang it a lot.

Venditti is one of the most famous songwriter in Italy, and actually he started his career in Hungary in the 70's in a duo with Francesco De Gregori, another milestone of the pop music in Italy.

11) Machaut: “Missa de Notre Dame: II Kyrie”. Andrew Parrot, conductor

I truly like the acoustical result coming from the type of tuning system employed in this piece. This gave me the idea to emphasize the specific features of different tuning systems, and superimposing them in a process I named “Polysystemism”. An example of this way of writing is the piece *Traces from Nowhere* which will be heard at the CAFE Festival performed by Impronta Ensemble conducted by Andreas Luca Beraldo, an artist with whom I share the research for a phenomenic approach to music.

12) Franco Battiato: “Shock in my Town”.

A picture of society between the centuries XX and XXI. This piece, written in 1998, is not only describing the fall of social behaviors into hebetude and use of drugs but it also a prophetic vision of the days we live today, ruled by “neo-primitives, loutish cybernetic lords of the rings, pride of the madhouses” (neo-primitivi, rozzi cibernetici signori degli anelli, orgoglio dei manicomi).

The text of Battiato's songs, (this also), are usually co-written with the philosopher Manlio Sgalambro who recently died (2014).

13) Lucio Battisti: “La luce dell'est”.

This was a song I was used to sing with my friends at the time of the high school when we made picnics at Circo Massimo or in some roman villas and parks, in the good company of a guitar.

14) Domenico Modugno: “Vecchio frack”.

This was the favorite song of my beloved father. Modugno is much more known internationally for “Nel blu dipinto di blu” (improperly named “Volare”). The text of “Vecchio frack” is quite poetical and melancholic telling the story of an elegant man who takes leave of the world saying hello to all the things he met during a nocturnal walk.

15) Rino Gaetano: “Berta filava”.

A songwriter who died at the age of 30 in a strange car accident. In his songs we find bizarre nonsense texts that have been recently decoded and reinterpreted as a denunciation of secrets regarding some dark events of recent Italian history. Quite interesting thing...

16) Prozac +: “Acida”.

Probably the most famous punk band in Italy (they ended working together in 2006). It is a song about the effects of drugs who are sold at discos, which Italians named “acidi” (acids). With the same term (acido) we refer to people who are peevish, grumpy and at the same time to those who take “acidi”. I like the simple but nice arrangement of the piece and its sonorities.

17) György Ligeti: “Hamburgisches Konzert. Hymnus”.

The last movement of the Horn Concerto is the last thing completed by this great composer. The whole Concerto was the subject of my PhD thesis in History, Science and Techniques of Music. During the research I did at the Sacher Foundation, I found out other two incomplete Movements of this work, which were never performed. At the same time I found that the published score has, through all the movements, thousands of mistakes therefore we basically never heard a correct performance of it.

I think it is time to make a revision...

18) Anders Hillborg: “...lontana in sonno...”. Anne Sofie von Otter, soprano.

An example of original and very communicative music, in which the beauty of melodies and colors are set into a solid architectural structure. Some harmonic references to Ligeti don't affect the personal research of the composer.

19) Anders Hillborg: “Beast sampler”.

I think this piece is the closer result I know of music thought as a perceptive phenomenon (an aspect I also look for in my music).

Despite some simplifications the result is truly impressive.

20) Paolo da Firenze: “Era Venus”. Malapunica Ensemble.

I think he should be considered among the greatest composers who had a significant role in the history of music. The beauty, complex originality and high quality of his compositional technique make him a unique voice in the development of art music. He was my reference point when I wrote the *Voynich Lied*, a piece based on the Voynich manuscript, a codex carbon-dated to the early 15th century (1404–1438) written in an unknown script. This piece was performed during the ArTRIUM Concert Series of the Hungarian National Radio in 2016, performed by the beautiful voice of **Adrienne Miksch** with the concert player **Krisztina Fejes** at piano.

I wished to have in *Voynich Lied* a reference to *ars subtilior*, a musical style characterized by rhythmical and notational complexity, that established itself at the end of the fourteenth century in France, Italy and Spain, and I think Paolo da Firenze was the greatest example of it.

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