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***MUSICA FUTURISTA – THE ART OF NOISES. MUSIC AND
WORDS FROM THE ITALIAN FUTURIST MOVEMENT
1909–1935, INCLUDING ORIGINAL RECORDINGS BY
MARINETTI/RUSSOLO/PRAVELLA
(SALON LTMCD 2401, 2006)***²

The compact disc *Musica futurista – The Art of Noises*, a release by a newly established Salon ‘sublabel’ under the British house LTM, specialized in releases dedicated to the avant-garde researches in the realm of sound, as well as to avant-garde artists in general, is on the track of such a direction thanks exactly to the concept of its structure: to the combination of the original recordings of speeches/lectures/spoken poetry of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, original samples of Luigi Russolo’s intonarumori, again Marinetti’s ‘musical syntheses’ and ‘radio-art syntheses’, and music penned by the Futurist composers and composers affiliated with Futurism, interpreted and recorded in a somewhat less distant past (during the 1970’s). For the releases of such kind, the accompanying booklet is naturally of utmost importance, and we decided that a few words about it, more precisely about its author, would occupy the beginning of the presentation

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of this release, which we acquired during the visit to the exceptional exhibition *Futurism*, put on last summer in the Tate Modern Gallery in London.

The author of the accompanying booklet text, and apparently the 'selector' of the material, is a certain James Hayward, but in fact James Nice (the fact that the author uses a pseudonym has an irresistible 'aroma' of the first decades of the last century), a British historian of military and modern art. Hence we are not surprised by Hayward's interest in the Futurists, which in this release is primarily, but not exclusively, directed towards those Futuristic 'intonations' that are related to war and military conflicts. Apart from those, there are at least three more intriguing 'illuminations' of Futurism. One points to the relationships with the French interwar music, with Erik Satie and 'Les Six', and with Cocteauesque aesthetics of the circus, music hall, ragtime and jazz. In its immediate vicinity, and again in the vicinity of war, there is the fascination of machines and urban life, while the third illumination turns out as extremely valuable in the context of the Futurist comprehension of sound and working with sound. Finally, Marinetti's public appearances, which as a subtle (if such an adjective is appropriate for Marinetti at all) common thread shapes the whole release thematically, hence dramaturgically as well, and can be included in Futuristic workings with sound without much room for argument.

Although Marinetti recorded *Definizione di futurismo* (track 1) in 1924, the recording apparently fully resounds in keeping with the pre-war years, when Futurism was taking shape and when Marinetti's public appearances provoked tumultuous disapproval. Maybe even the Fascistic 'intonations' of Futurism gained more strength, while the idea on the role of sound in the 'Futurist battle against tradition' reached its full realization in Marinetti's performing practice in 'Il Battaglia di Adrianopoli' (track 5) and in 'Il Battaglia di Tripoli' (track 21, 'Parole in Liberta'). Marinetti's work with onomatopoeic valeurs of war-machine sounds and sounds of syllables, consonants and vocals brings his 'liberated words' closer to music, and the same procedures will 'liberate' them 'on paper', in the domain of typography.

It may be a paradox, but the author of the first manifesto of the Futurist composers, Francesco Balila Pratella, somehow had less success in breaking free from conventions of musical representation and the influences of Stravinsky, Bartók, Satie and the French Impressionists in the piano cycle 'La Guerra' (tracks 2-4: *L'Aspettazione, La Battaglia, La Vittoria*).

Definitely more successful was the author of 'L'arte dei rumori', Luigi Russolo, whose composition 'Risveglio di una Città' (track 6) on this release was deftly merged with samples of some of the intonarumori (tracks 6-10: *gorgogliatore, ronzatore, ululatore, crepitatore*), hence the listener can discern various textural layers and reconstruct Russolo's procedures (there is a fragment of the score on the booklet's back cover). Usual for the modernist conception of the new sound

and the technology of its conquest is the adaptation of the *intonarumori* to the usual procedures of traditional musical practices, which is the case in 'Corale' and 'Serenata' (tracks 11–12) by Russolo's younger brother, Antonio Russolo.

A special curiosity in the parallel research of sound and word is the recording of 'Sintesi Musicali Futuristiche' (track 13) in the joint performance by Marinetti and Aldo Guintini, a composer and pianist. Interdisciplinary researches, characteristic both of the Futurists and their other 'comrades-in-arms', here are realized through musical interpretations of certain phenomena and objects 'acted out' in Marinetti's expression. Although not always far from the conventions of musical representation (e.g. 'the sea'), the syntheses of the phenomena, such as 'the festival of engines' or 'simultaneous battle of earth, sea and sky', point to the mature modernist procedures of piano music by the Futurist composers.

The additional 'treat' for every researcher of Futurism are Marinetti's radio-art syntheses ('Cinque Sintesi Radiofoniche', track 23), made in the same year as his 'Futurist Manifesto of the Radio' (1933). Not only that Marinetti completely 'mastered' radio-art, but it seems that the way he 'operated' with silence entered the domain of proto-conceptual art.

Aldo Giuntini is also the author of one of this release's most successful examples of the relationship with French Neoclassicism: the piece 'The India Rubber Man', track 14. However, the most impressive is the contribution by Alfredo Casella, a composer otherwise not too affiliated with the Futurists. Still, in 1918 he wrote piano pieces for Fortunato Depero's 'I Balli Plastici', pieces which are in fact the Italian version of Sergei Prokofiev's 'Sarcasms'. 'Pupazzetti' (track 20) thus opens possibilities for various readings of Casella's work and his attitude towards the Parisian interwar scene. Close to popular music is 'Danza della Scimmie' (track 19) by Franco Casavola, particularly interesting for us having in mind the Zenitist 'contempt' for shimmy.

Not particularly impressive, but still important for thinking about the multimedia sphere of Futurism, are the composition of Silvio Mix, 'Two Preludes from *Gli Stati D'animo*' and 'Profilo sintetico – musicale di F. T. Marinetti' (tracks 16–17).

Although not always equally exciting, impressive and high-quality music-wise (especially in the case of 'Futurist Caprice' by Matty Malneck and Frank Signorelli, track 22), the release *Musica futurista – The Art of Noises* is in fact a real document about music and sounds produced by the Futurist composers or composers affiliated with Futurism in various ways. What is particularly important for music researchers is the fact that the release presents some less known authors, but it is also a valuable testimony as to how the Futurists experienced music and sound.

Translated by Goran Kapetanović