

INTERVIEW WITH FABRIZIO GARAU THE NEW NOISE, JULY 2018

FG: "Immediata" is the title of one of your orchestral compositions (I've listened to it) and is the name of your label. The word "Immediata" has Latin origins, so my brain automatically translates it with "things with nothing in between me and them". Maybe for some people "immediate" means "quick" or "very near". For me it means "no filter", "no masks", "no makeup". What does it mean for you?

AP: For me it means not over-thought, but at the same time very careful and precise. Also I like very much your translation of 'things with nothing in between me and them', because this is how I try to make music. I try not to interfere with or lie to the sound.

In the context of the orchestral piece, I thought it could mean 'plural or simultaneous immediates'. That piece was about trying to find the ultimate combination of written composition, improvised thinking and electro-acoustic space in the one rendering. It didn't quite work on that level obviously, but due to my experiences writing it, using the name of the piece for the label was a decision to claim the name back. The orchestra mostly hated it, and I decided at that point that I have to do things another way, to re-prioritize my musical thinking, to compose and think differently.

FG: You said that you try not to lie to the sound. Aluk Todolo (one of my favorite bands of the 2000s) defined themselves as "Servants of The Music". Also other bands and artists consider Music as an entity and see themselves like a channel: this year, talking about their album "Kenosis" (check it out), Massimo Pupillo from Zu and Stefano Pilia from In Zaire said: "This is music that is simply passed through us". Did you ever felt this kind of mysticism? I'm not sure that you consider "being immediate" some sort of magic power...

AP: I'm not involved with magic or mysticism per se, although when some musical events or constellations happen, in high-level improvisation for example, they certainly can have a magical or uncanny feeling that is beyond chance. I do wonder about the origins of this. While composing, when ideas come or revelations happen, it's also sometimes hard to believe it's just a combination of luck and intellect. I find however it's best not to articulate, as mystery can also be motivation, and it's pleasantly addictive.

I agree with Massimo and Stefano (both friends of mine): I do definitely consider myself to be in service to music, not to myself. I don't want to be dramatic, but music has provided me with a life, and that is a gift that comes with responsibilities. Cecil Taylor once said 'everything you do affects your playing', and really, I've found this to be true. I can't do commercial work for example, or play on sessions for something that I don't believe in, because that stuff can be poisonous. It affects my real work and thinking in very insidious ways. I believe in surviving from my craft and being a smart business person, but I don't believe in consciously contributing to poor music practice to do so.

FG: We talked about being in service to Music; you also quoted Cecil Taylor and you talked about your need to be an independent artist: all these three topics bring my mind to

“Blood Stretched Out”. I was in Gradisca (Gorizia) seeing you performing it live in 2017: in some moments the physical intensity of your performance made me think about hardcore and metal bands; in some other moments the piano was so fast and hypnotic that I started to perceive it like it was some sort of texture, and this happens to me also when I listen to the tremolo riffs of black metal. Of course, you did not start composing “Blood Stretched Out” thinking about Mayhem or Emperor... Why did you decide to write your first solo piano album in ten years?

AP: I certainly have a curiosity about metal and hardcore, although I would never profess to know anything deep about it on a true fan level. Certainly working with O'Malley and Patton have opened me up to ways of thinking that I wouldn't have otherwise engaged with, which I guess is the point about working with anyone. The biggest influence on me in that field though is Max Kohane from our piano-grindcore duo [PIVIXKI](#). He taught me so much, not just about grindcore but loads about beat-making. With Max I learnt how to play really fast, because, well, I had to keep up with the best grindcore drummer in Melbourne.

A few years later PIVIXKI went on hiatus I was asked by Lampo in Chicago to go over and [present a new piano solo in 2014](#). While preparing for that show, I stumbled on this technique that if I played really fast on one note with a certain touch, all of this amazing overtone/psychoacoustic stuff started to happen, especially if I modulated the speed of the tremolo. Also then it stops sounding like a piano, which is very interesting to me. I just worked with that idea in multiple ways, which became *Blood Stretched Out*. Even though it's not prepared piano, it's kind of an extension of *Chasms*, because different parts of the piece are focused on different registers, exploring different harmonic fields psycho-acoustically.

Blood Stretched Out was a real moment for me personally, because I realized music didn't have to be this other thing, an intellectual construct. It could be about physicality, experience and enjoyment, and be harmonically interesting without being needlessly dissonant, or relying on clichés. Being piano, it was important to me to get right, because that's where I started as a musician, so I worked really hard on it for years before recording, playing it live a lot around Europe and Australia, refining the overall structure and content in performance. After three years, I actually spent a lot of money trying to get a good studio recording, and it totally failed. I realized it had to be live, and fortunately when I played it in Geneva, I felt like I got both a good take and a good recording.

FG: I agree with you. Extreme often means exploratory. Grindcore is special, because it opens many doors: it has probably birthed all the extreme metal around. You have also worked with the opposite side of extreme metal (but is it really the opposite side?): Stephen O' Malley, master of slowness. [We know him very well](#). You talked about physicality and about looking for specific registers, and he possess both things. What else convinced you to work with him and rework your performance *Instants Chavirés* in that dreamy way (God bless tape machines)?

AP: Stephen was somehow always around during some of my most formative musical

years (the 2000s). He came to Australia a lot during that time because of his projects with Oren Ambarchi, thus I saw a lot of his concerts in Melbourne with Sunn O))), KTL and also some special, one-off things. His partner Gisèle Vienne, an incredible choreographer and conceptualist, is also a very old friend of mine. She supported my work very early on and was always a very generous host in Paris when I was there. Thus we had common friends and interests, so it just ended up happening very naturally.

Our original idea was to do a concert together with the massive pipe organ at Melbourne town hall (the biggest organ in the southern hemisphere, with a 64 ft bass pipe!), but it didn't work out. Then the same year, I had a bunch of concerts in Europe and invited Stephen to play a small, low-key gig with me at Instants. The gig itself was quite special, and very strange, but of course we didn't really get a clean recording because the stage is small and Stephen's amps were right next to my piano. We never played again, but this multitrack was sitting around for years, and it was always in the back of my mind to do something because I could sense something unique in it.

I was living in Sydney in 2016, and I needed to find something to do. One day I just hooked up the Instants recordings to my Revox, and started creating musique concrète out of the files. This process revealed some results that pushed me personally into areas I don't normally go into. I kept going with it, working on it most days for about 2 months, pulling it together in post-production, and it ended up being something. I sent it to Stephen and he really liked it, so we put it out.

As many people have pointed out, it's not something that you would expect from either he or I, which is what is interesting about it, but it also means it's a kind of success. It's always a success in music when you can escape yourself.

FG: You mentioned the Revox. We find it also in "Immediata". Above all, we find it in "Good Times In The End Times" by the Astral Colonels aka Anthony Pateras and Valerio Tricoli, an incredible and probably overlooked/underrated record, very otherworldly. We wrote an article about Valerio's works and [interviewed him](#). I think that is a good article, but I'm not satisfied with Valerio's answer about the Revox (maybe he did not want to tell us his secrets). Why are you interested in this analog instrument? Listening to your records and Valerio's records, it seems like an automatic ghost-maker...

AP: All I can say is the Revox provides a very tactile form of sound manipulation and instant composition, thus is a great antidote to the majority of poorly conceived tools that big tech try to sell to musicians. It's also very flexible and otherworldly, as you say, with a very distinct and unique sound.

I guess I like to spend as less time as possible in front of a computer while creating, that's why I prefer analogue synthesizers, the Revox, piano and other keyboards like pipe organs to make things. I also don't like to hear the sound of the software. I prefer to work with acoustical reality rather than simulation, and the Revox provides that situation. I think when the interface dictates the composition, as opposed to the other way around like with something such as Ableton, you instantly have a problem. Although you hear

the Revox 'tone', it has endless versatility within a very simple framework. It's a very generous machine in that way.

Valerio and I are both greatly indebted to Jérôme Noetinger (Cellule d'Intervention Metamkine) for discovering the instrumental capabilities of the Revox in live performance, and pioneering a way towards a very sophisticated form of live musique concrète. There are lots of people using it now because of him, but he is really the original virtuoso; the Paganini of tape! Like any great instrumentalist, he's practiced for years. I think that's what a lot of people don't realize about electronic music in general: it takes practice, along with patience and a lot of disciplined listening. Above all, it takes time.

FG: Thank you for this answer. I prefer to talk about your work as a musician/composer, as we did. But now you intrigued me with your considerations about Ableton and softwares. Today many people make music this way, from the young guy in his bedroom to the Big Name who plays in every electronic music festival. Of course, you are not a luddite or a conservative, but it seems that you see pros and cons in the use of software. Is the risk maybe to sound all the same?

AP: Generally speaking, you have to remember that all of this stuff is designed by a corporate entity. They are there to make things easy, which good music often isn't, and their motivations are not creatively driven, they are profit driven. So when you use prefabricated creative environments, this is the situation you are working in, and that can influence your decisions at the ground level. If you're not conscious of that, it can be problematic, because your musical perspective can be influenced by it. Additionally I don't think good music comes out of buying new stuff all of the time. I think it's more important to get really good with what you have, then look for what you need as a result of where your work is going. The industry puts it the wrong way around.

But yes, I'm not a luddite at all, because I'm sure somewhere there is amazing music made with some of this stuff. For example I'm sure a lot of great hip-hop and footwork is made with software sequencers and samplers (as always, today African-American music culture remains light years ahead). Certainly in electronic or experimental or left-field dance music though, it gets lazy very quickly, and the tropes guide the mind. I used to get upset about it, but now I just try to ignore it and concentrate on my work.

FG: Yes, this reminds me the first decade of this century, especially the so called "post-metal" genre. Many young bands were obsessed with gear (pedals, effects, amplifiers). These bands wanted absolutely to discover every single piece of gear used by "affirmed" / "established" groups, believing that there was a secret pedal that was magically transforming donkeys into artists. Then comes Bill Orcutt without shoes, playing an acoustic guitar and kicking their asses... You explored the sound of many different instruments: piano, organ, strings, percussions, electronics. I don't know many people capable to do that. On what are you focusing now?

AP: I'm producing, recording and mixing more. I'm trying to attain creative autonomy

over all aspects of the creative process, which is a whole other skill set that is essentially like learning another instrument. By running Immediata, I've found it very satisfying to oversee things from beginning to end. I also think it's important to try and create a discourse around this music which isn't compromised by fashion or market trends. That's why I did the booklet interviews with Immediata and will continue with Off Compass.

Off Compass, which I will run with Erkki Veltheim, will release music from other people, not just my own. There's a lot of great music being made in Australia, but specifically in Melbourne right now. It's always been a music city but traditionally, very little has happened in terms of international documentation. In Melbourne, thanks to the ongoing activities of the Inland Concert Series and Make It Up Club, a lot of very personal musical languages are being developed.

Additionally, after living 6 years in Europe, I've found the interesting thing about Australia in general is that communities cross-pollinate more. People who play classical music can actually improvise, some improvisers are very competent with electro-acoustic materials, electronic musicians don't have weird hang-ups about working with instrumentalists, and so on. In France for example, this situation is very rare. In Berlin where I've lived, it tries to happen, but I feel the city is too suffocated by its own cultural importance (like Paris or London). Australia doesn't have the same weight of cultural history; we are the bastard child of Europe and the USA, situated in Asia, and can freely play with the best aspects of those cultures. Because of our youth and geography, we are constantly in the process of creating an artistic identity and thus cannot afford the complacency of our European counterparts.

FG: So you gave me an assist. You released two records with Erkki Veltheim. You and Veltheim are also North On North with Scott Tinkler. And he participated to the Tētēma project. Your two collaborative records seem to me an effort to create a new sound merging your instruments (pipe organ and electric violin in one case, piano and violin in the other). I find also similarities with “Blood Stretched Out”, because there is a metamorphosis during these pieces. How did you meet Veltheim? Why this close collaboration?

AP: We met in Melbourne, I think at a gig around 2000. We first worked together around then on a short film by Eron Sheean I did the music for called [BING](#). I was also running a concert series at the time called Articulating Space (2000-2006) and he also played there a lot. We then had an ensemble together with a group of friends called [Twitch](#), which was this really weird contemporary music / absurdist theatre hybrid that was seriously one of the best things I was ever involved in.

He then played a lot of my music, chamber pieces, film scores, all for which I've been very fortunate to have him around for. He's taught me a lot about what I know in regards to writing for strings, for example. Interestingly, when we tried to actually make our own music in duo for the first time, it didn't work! Very strange. We had to really search hard to find something that functioned and was our own. It made us both confront a really interesting problem, which is: what can you do with classical instrumental technique and

sound like yourself? Not somehow referencing the so-called 'canon' or any free improv that has happened before, but actually finding something for ourselves. And since we went through that together, I guess we've been able to adapt that question to loads of different contexts: tetema, north of north, our duo, our Another Other project with Natasha Anderson and Sabina Maselli.

The thing you have to understand about Erkki is that he is amazing technician. Most musicians I respect understand sound on some kind of deep level, however Erkki really knows how things work across the board in regards to rhythm, timbre, pitch and dynamics. I don't know anyone with that kind of creative diversity: he is a human skeleton key. If you spend enough time with someone like that, hopefully you learn something from them, and I try to keep people I learn from close, because I almost always feel like a beginner.

FG: You'll be in Italy in September. It seems that you will play with eRikm in Florence, alone in Bologna and also near my city (precisely: at San Pietro al Natisone). Since you are very eclectic, what should we expect from these gigs?

AP: The [duo with eRikm](#) is a very evocative and physical form of live musique concrete using hardware, no software. We did a tour earlier this year and developed quite a strong interaction involving pre-established materials that can be reconfigured in various live permutations. We're both developing new sounds for the show in Firenze and it'll be our last show together in a while.

For Free Music Impulse, it will be the premiere of my new solo electronic set. I'm trying to develop something which I can do solo that doesn't remain where I started as a musician. So to combat this, I want to find a new solo practice, and the gig in San Pietro al Natisone will be the first attempt at that.

The gig in Bologna is for Hypnomachia, an all-night event at Raum. I'm thinking of doing a combination of what I do at Free Music Impulse plus extended sections of immersive psychoacoustic stuff. It's a huge challenge but it will be my last show in Europe for at least 8 months, so it's a good way to go out.