

Into Project

In <http://www.i-n-t-o.de/en/komp-lucia-ronchetti.html>

By Heike Hoffmann

July 2008

On *Rumori da Monumenti*

EN

*Anatra al Sal?* What, might you ask, has salted duck got to do with contemporary music? This is, in fact, one of the most enjoyable musical works of the last ten years, as humor is something not often found in contemporary music. Displaying great virtuosity this cooking show for six voices was composed by a woman and an Italian woman at that. She drew her inspiration not only from this duck recipe but also from the tradition of *madrigale rappresentativo* as cultivated in Italy in the 16th century. The argument as to the right sauce is presented with five-voices and lyrics based on one sole vowel, the singers having to chew vowels and spit consonants, eating loudly and burping entertainingly. The work has now become a long-standing success in the repertory of the Neue Vokalsolisten Stuttgart with whom Lucia Ronchetti particularly enjoys working. She has already written several works for this ensemble, also including *Pinocchio, una storia parallela* for four male voices. This work produced during her one-year residency in Berlin at the invitation of Germany's academic exchange body DAAD is the tragicomic counterpart to *Anatra al Sal*. And here, too, we see strong theatrical impact without scenery very much stemming from the agogic accent and rhetoric treatment of the singing voices. Her *Pinocchio* is based on an adaptation of Collodi's text by Giorgio Manganelli which, while leaving the plot untouched, plays with abrupt scene changes and roles within roles, which in itself has a strong theatrical component.

In 2006 she won the first prize of the NRW-Fonds' "Experimental Music Theater" initiative for the promotion of contemporary music theater productions that reappraise and experimentally explore the interdependence of language, music and space. Arising as a collective development process over several months was her second chamber opera *Der Sonne entgegen* (Towards the Sun), an experimental excursion into the topic of rootlessness and migration in which simultaneity becomes a symbol of extensive social crisis. Ronchetti works with 14 singers, a limited range of instruments, and electronics. The composer demands particularly great performances from her solo singers: multi-voiced a-capella is used here as well as highly virtuoso vocal techniques.

Even if passionate, experimental treatment of music theatrical forms has been the focus of her interest over the past few years, Ronchetti's catalog of works in fact comprises all musical genres from solo pieces and chamber music through to orchestral works as well as pieces for radio. However, she always uses electro-acoustic media. She acquired the skills for her masterful use of electronics during a one-year period of study at the IRCAM in Paris after completing her studies under Gérard Grisey and acquiring a doctorate at the Sorbonne. Prior to this she studied in Rome under Salvatore Sciarrino also attending courses given by Sylvano Busotti.

Lucia Ronchetti is driven by an insatiable curiosity, always in search of things not seen or heard before. She sees the opportunities she had through various scholarships to live in various different countries as hugely enriching, spending time in France and the USA in addition to repeated stays in Germany. To be precise in Berlin – which she sees as an ideal place for artistic work. And this is, in fact, where she has a second home that she visits as often as the teaching obligations of her composition and counterpoint post at the Salerno Conservatory allow.

Although she had never been to Johannesburg before, her trip there in February 2008 took her to a familiar city. During her stay at the academy Schloss Solitude she had met South African writer Ivan Vladislavic. From his stories and novels she already had a fictitious image of this metropolis which was initially confirmed on her arrival: a monstrous, polluted, parasitic, loud, multi-cultural and violent city. The surprise she encounters here are the Joburgers themselves – wonderfully communicative people, dreamers and idealists who manage to keep their good humor in this extreme environment and still believe in the future. No sooner than she arrives does she make contact with numerous artists who help her explore the mega-city that is Johannesburg. She employs two local sound engineers and an anthropologist who help her record the different sounds of the city and – as they are black – they give her access to areas white foreigners would otherwise be unable to enter. Lucia Ronchetti loves adventure and boasts seemingly inexhaustible energy. What she sees, hears and experiences could fill the pages of many books. Back in Rome she works on her project, eleven fragments for voice and ensemble; at the same time, recordings are made with a South African actor in Johannesburg which she wants to use in this work. These recordings are supervised by Minky Schlesinger, wife of writer and friend Ivan Vladislavic, whom she has to thank for her first contact with the city.

Heike Hoffmann/June 2008