

## **A Film Composer's Toolkit: Researching Personal Collections of Italian Composers (PANEL)**

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### Introduction

The surfacing of sources and production files concerning the work of composers, technicians and sound studios that were active in Italian cinema between the 1950s and the 1970s is a relatively recent matter. It is still difficult to track the scope and status of composers' personal collections, because most of these figures – besides notorious exceptions Nino Rota and Ennio Morricone – were overlooked by music historiography in the past decades, unless they displayed clear connections with the highbrow milieu. A more recent trend in musicology has progressively unearthed a variety of sources concerning post-war film music production that now raises issues about their preservation, cataloguing and scholarly analysis.

The first partial mappings of personal collections foster speculations about 'standards' of music production in Italian film industry: even in a circumscribed context such as Cinecittà, sources account for a considerable diversity of approaches, in addition to which we must consider the differing backgrounds of the composers, the scarcity of information concerning the post-production chain, and the dialectics between artisan and industrial production logics.

Our panel seizes the opportunity to compare researches on single collections and to encourage discussions around a set of open questions: Can composing for films in those years in Italy be considered a standardised practice? How did composers relate to notational systems and technological apparatuses in their creative process? What did they consider worth writing down and what did they forego? In which ways did they interact with sound professionals and collaborators? Which stages of the compositional process do written and tape sources refer to? Which issues emerge when confronting archival evidence with the final film?

### **Angelo Francesco Lavagnino's Musical Traces: One-way Journey to the Screen**

Angelo Francesco Lavagnino (1909-1987) was one of the first Italian composers to specialize in film music. Lavagnino's heirs chose to make the composer's personal files accessible in the form of a loan for use contract with a public library: the Biblioteca Luigi Chiarini at Cinecittà. Based on my research experience with the Lavagnino Collection, my paper will present specific sources that testify to the evolution of the composer's working process throughout the 1950s. I will focus on the difference between the empirical attitude characterizing his early collaboration on Orson Welles' *Othello* (1952) and the fully specialized compositional process for the mainstream American, French and Italian co-production *The Naked Maja* (1958), directed by Henry Koster. In this respect I will discuss typologies and functions of Lavagnino's written sources, the development of

synchronization techniques, and the role of his suggestions aimed at sparking the imagination of sound technicians. I will then show how written sources differ greatly from the sonic realization of the cues in the final film, since Lavagnino merely considered them as functional work tools to achieve their definitive shape as recorded tracks.

### **Tapes and Electronic Sources in Gino Marinuzzi Jr.'s Personal Collection**

Gino Marinuzzi Jr. (New York City, 1920 – Rome, 1996) composed music for about 130 films (features, shorts, documentary, and TV productions), between 1949 and 1976. He is considered one of the pioneers of electronic music in Italy, which he integrated in his film scores since 1958. Between 1958 and 1963 he handcrafted a modular synthesizer, the Fonosynth, with which he produced electronic cues for his soundtracks. The composer's personal collection, which is being catalogued at the association Nomus in Milan, features mainly orchestrated manuscript scores and tape reels. My paper will concentrate on the composer's twofold approach to tapes when dealing with electronic cues: on one hand he used tapes as compositional tools to assemble electronic and concrete sound objects in combination with his synthesizer, and on the other, tapes served as storage for sound samples to be reused and recombined in multiple ways according to film needs. I will then expand on the total absence of notebooks or musical sketches from the collection, the lack of written drafts for the electronic tracks, and the composer's habit to overdub his tapes several times: my hypothesis is that Marinuzzi disregarded to keep track of his creative process, which he thought of as a mere functional stage towards the final soundtrack, while he carefully stored the polished versions of his orchestrated scores as the only product worth documenting.

### **Egisto Macchi as Handyman**

Egisto Macchi (Grosseto, 1928 – Montpellier, 1992) is one of the leading composers of Italian avant-garde music, mostly known for his vital role in the creation of institutions like Nuova Consonanza. Nevertheless, throughout his artistic life, Macchi showed an even more surprising commitment to film music. During the 1960s his involvement in film production led him to score hundreds of documentary films, and then, especially during the 1970s, several feature films. Based on the written and recorded sources held in Macchi's personal collections, which were recently donated to the Giorgio Cini Foundation (Venice), I will explore the tools available to reconstruct Macchi's artisanal approach to film composition as a global activity. Firstly, I will discuss what can be deduced about the compositional process from the presence or the absence of manuscript sources and their textual stratifications. Secondly, I will address how scoring and performance practices were mutually conditioned and redefined through Macchi's conception of the soundtrack as a complex, layered and unitary phenomenon, crafted by his work as composer, arranger and conductor.

### **Industry and Craftsmanship in Popular Cinema: The Case of Vasili Kojucharov**

Born in Sofia in 1937, Vasili Kojucharov studied Composition in Moscow with Aram Khachaturian during the 1960s. At the end of the decade, he moved to Italy where he spent the rest of his professional life as a composer, director and teacher. Even though Kojucharov was not a 'big name' in Italian film music production, surveying his personal collection

allows us to catch a glimpse of his work on more than twenty films of different popular genres (spaghetti-western, crime, horror, spy, *commedia sexy*) between 1968 and 1979. Scores, notebooks and tapes – soon to be catalogued and digitized at the association Nomus in Milan – are the starting point to explore his own approach to film music, in a negotiation between aesthetic, cultural and industrial issues. These documents provide a fresh perspective on the fragmented, often artisanal, production processes of Italian popular cinema in those decades, in which industrial and technological modes of production, such as modularity, re-use, editing of pre-recorded sounds, served representational conventions proper to each film genre.

### Closing discussion