

Hidden in Plain Sight, the music of Trophies

Alessandro Bosetti - voice, electronics, text-sound composition

Audrey Chen - voice, cello

Christian Kesten - voice

Kenta Nagai - fretless guitar, shamisen

Morten J. Olsen - drums

In a passage of his piano composition Humoreske Op. 20 Robert Schumann added an "innere stimme" , a third melodic line between the right and the left hand ones that is not to be played.

The interpreter is supposed to simply sing this melody in his mind while his hands are playing the other two lines. This introduces the haunting presence of a missing object inside the musical discourse.

Trophies music reverses this process by making looped vocal lines - at first so unavoidably evident - virtually unnoticeable after prolonged listening. Spoken/ sung phrases are repeated over and over by three vocalists and embedded in a musical texture created by drums, fretless guitar and electronics. While the hidden melody of Schumann piece start appearing as a ghost - or at least as a negative, absent, presence - the looped phrases in Trophies disappear from the listener's perception after a while. They become hidden in plain sight and vanish altogether after repeated listening.

On one side Shumann's inner melody is present only in absence, and as an absent object it cannot be perceived. The composer plays further with this paradox by not adding the inner melody in a second repetition of the same passage suggesting a double negation, the absence of the absent object. On the other side the spoken and repeated melodies of Trophies do not disappear in order to make room for the background to emerge. They rather keep existing as devoid, negative musical objects. They exist as mist, or clouds of vacuum.

Central to the music of trophies is the voice or a multitude of voices. A type of voices bordering song and speech but not embracing either one of those practices completely.

A voice could be defined as *a sticking out, ever-sharp, contrasted, willful*

and somehow agitated object appearing in our field of perception.

Far from being just "what comes out from the mouth" or the matter of speech and singing, the notion of voice has a much broader nature. We often refer to voices of nature, voices of the dead, even voices of objects. As something that sticks out I imagine the voice as the only sharp figure in a blurred, out of focus photography.

The voices of Trophies, due to their excessive attributes, their redundancy generated by repetition, stop sticking out and start "sticking in". They disappear, sink and implode into being blurry and absent objects. Invisible although placed right in front of the listeners face thus becoming anti-voices, strings of sound and meaning weaved into each other until they melt and disappear.

Text materials used in this band are *my song*. They had been written by me in order to tell a story. It's a story of life and death. Not life OR death but life 'AND' death since both are present at the same time. Life and death are what dubbing is all about. The voice and its double, the living and its zombi replicant walking side by side, performing the same gesture in astonishing precision. Those texts sound like collages but they are not. They sound like unimportant matter and in-fact they are unimportant unless you know the context. They are coming from my *innere stimme*, the hidden self willing to sing that has been so mortified so often in years of strategies of mediation and translation in sound art. Thinking of projects like Arcoparlante and African Feedback and The Listeners among many other. To just say that in the cheesiest way Trophies texts come from my heart and just evaporate in front of your face as a listener and our faces as performers.

The band first assembled this repertoire in march 2009 in Venice. We had several days of many hours long rehearsals and memorization. In this occasion I remember experiencing the movement of my mouth and lips and throath as seen from outside my body. I would leave the body and wonder around the stage and then turn back to see my mouth go on automatically. It would articulate those phrases and melodies over and over by itself. In that moment my perception of music was focused on something between my mouths and my voice.

The speech melody of those recordings had been carefully transcribed from casual recordings, mostly made on skype or during phone conversation where Audrey Chen or Christian Kesten would read the texts i wrote. Those phrases became like little fragments of attitude as seen through a magnifying glass, a crystallization of pitch by mean of repetition. The rhythmical structure is generated by the same strings of casual speech. There is no pulse, no "one" beat, no metric. Nevertheless rhythmic determination is all pervading. Ever present element in Trophies music is the dubbing of the speech melody by a pre recorded electric piano line. This acts as a raga machine, often used by indian classical music players. Around this frame all the music is played live in a ecstatic exercise of unison, one of the great secret weapons and paradoxes - perfect unison is virtually unachievable by human players - of music.

A fragment of text reads : *exclusive pleasure. related to jam, stamps and cherries. just words, over and over.* It could be paraphrased as *exclusive torment, related to something we forgot (or simply disappeared),no need to add anything.*

Texts and ideas proliferate and sprawl through transformation, translation, distortion, copulation, reverberation and reflexion. In Trophies music everything just stays the same and by mean of staying the same it just disappears.

Alessandro Bosetti, Berlin 2009