

BIT ART

**PIETRO GROSSI**



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## The coherent path of Pietro Grossi

Pietro Grossi was trained as a violoncellist and composer. After an extraordinary solo career, he became first-chair violoncellist of the Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino. Towards the end of the 1950's, he began to concentrate his interest on electronic music and, subsequently, to dedicate himself completely to composition and teaching. In the early 1960's, he founded the *Studio di Fonetologia Musicale S 2F M* (Studio of Phonology S 2F M) at Florence's "*Luigi Cherubini*" Music Conservatory where, in fact, he already held a position as the Professor of Violoncello.

During this same period, he was also active as an organizer creating what soon became a historic music festival in a city not particularly given to modernity: *Vita Musicale Contemporanea* (Contemporary Musical Life Association). This festive and never again repeated occasion brought the elite of international musical research to the banks of the River Arno and, for Grossi, these years brought constant change as he moved from traditional to electronic instruments and, in the following decade, to systems of digital synthesis.

The present opportunity offers us the chance to listen to his early instrumental works and to consider the exemplary coherence which characterized his development throughout the following years. His interest was in the sound's vibration in time, a horizontal idea of the use of sound which concentrates our attention at times on simple resonances, at times on sine waves, in the search for sound histograms which, most likely, came from his experience as a violoncellist. In fact, he had a constant tension towards perfect intonation – also in the use of microtones – and a full vibrato in the production of the sound. His rapport with the violoncello tended towards a new objectivity which makes one think of Alfredo Casella, certainly not of the long romantic season during which the instrument was compared to the *vox umana*.

His encounter with electronic music and, later, with the computer, stimulated an exponential growth of his potential while his confrontation with the evolving technological possibilities constantly enraptured him. This brought him, even, to conceive of a listening library electronically elaborating and archiving masterworks of the past, a music deposit for the successive generations.

This utopian vision of interpersonal musical communication did not abandon him in the following years. He conceived of *Home Art*: an interactive event which offered the public the possibility of making music by themselves, in their own home, anticipating the kinds of experiences which, today, are frequent through internet.

The coherence of his poetic vision is in this constant interest in the mystery of sound, its extent and source, but also in the formulation of communicative approaches which create an interactive rapport between production and listening.

Today his first instrumental works acquire a particular interest, because they were coeval with many experiences far distant from Florence such as that of Morton Feldman and, above all, because they demonstrate a conceptual force which was possible only for those few who, in those years, had the courage of a truly anti-academic position.

I fear that pioneers like him are now being overlooked: the same is true of Henry Cowell, of Pierre Henry and many others, but the passage of time will fully restore the great worth of these composers.

Former Life? Before the bit

Art conceived by and for yourself

Improvised

Ephemeral

Beyond someone else's opinion range

It's nice indulging in random numbers

Computer frees us from someone else's genius and enhances ours

We have been catapulted into bit era

Let's free us from the conceptual force of gravity of the past; we need new ideas

And after bit?

## **Biography**

Pietro Grossi (Venice 1917) graduated in cello and composition at Bologna Academy of Music. First-chair violoncellist of the *Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino* since 1936 until '66, he simultaneously carries out a career as concert artist and writes compositions for both orchestral and chamber music. Since 1942 he teaches cello at the *Conservatorio Cherubini* in Florence, position he will hold for 40 years. At the beginning of the '60s, he begins concentrating his interests on electronic music and founds the *Studio di Fologia Musicale (S 2F M)*. In Florence, he sets up the *Vita Musicale Contemporanea* association (1961) and promotes the creation of the electronic music (1965) and musical data processing (1981) chairs, at the local Academy of Music. At the beginning of the '70s, he concentrates his studies and activity on the application of data processing to music, founding the musical Data processing Department at Pisa *CNUCE-CNR*. He also extends his researches into the graphics and to this field along his *HOMEART* ('80s) and *HOMEBOOK* – changeable Publishing – ('90s) Projects. Some of his writings, often aphoristic, synthesize his ideas; his discography witnesses his works in computer music; graphic works are available on Internet. He died in Florence on 21st of February 2002.

## **Discography**

Atmosfera & Elettronica (Lupus, LUS 205)

Elettromusica n. 1 e n. 2 (LEO Records, LR19 e LR20)

GE-115 Computer Concerto (General Electrics, Milan 1968)

Computer Music (Ed.FONOS, TNC 30001/1-2 Milan 1972)

Computer Music (CNUCE/C.N.R CM 00001/2, Pisa 1973)

Computer Music (CNUCE-IEI/C.N.R, Pisa 1978)

Computer Music-Bach/Grossi (AYMA,ABL 30/1-2, Florence 1980)

Paganini al computer (EDI.PAN, PAN NRC 5018, Rome 1982)

Computer Music-Satie, Joplin, Grossi (EDI.PAN, PAN NRC S20-14, Rome 1983)

Sound Life (EDI.PAN, PAN PRC S20-25, Rome 1985)

S 2F M – Musica Programmata (La Musica, LM86-1, 1986)

Computer Music (EDI.PAN, PAN PRC S20-54, Rome 1988)

Computer Music (EDI.PAN CD PAN 3006, Rome 1990)

Computer graphics (CD Museo Ideale Leonardo da Vinci –Vinci, Florence 1994)





ATP 016

BIT ART

DDD

LC-00129

**PIETRO GROSSI****Quartetto - 1957\****per quartetto d'archi*

1	Mosso	05:15
2	Largo	05:31
3	Mosso	04:21

**Quartetto Elisa**

Duccio Beluffi, 1° violino  
 Gabriele Bellu, 2° violino  
 Fabrizio Merlini, viola  
 Giovanni Lippi, violoncello

**Composizione n.5 - 1959\****per tre contrabbassi*

4	I	02:58
5	II	02:44
6	III	01:33

Marco Martelli  
 Marco Mazzinghi  
 Stella Sorgente

**Composizione n.6 - 1960***per quartetto d'archi*

7		10:28
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**Quartetto Elisa****Studio da "Tre pezzi" - 1960***per violoncello solo*

8		02:06
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**Andrea Nannoni****Composizione n.11 - 1961\****per voce e pianoforte*

9		07:49
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**Donatella Debolini**  
**Giancarlo Cardini**

**Composizione n.12 - 1961***per quartetto d'archi*

10		11:53
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**Quartetto Elisa****Create C - 1972***computer music*

11		17:21
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total time 72:30

\* world premiere  
 all tracks are world premiere recording

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