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3<sup>RD</sup> INTERNATIONAL MEETING  
FOR CHAMBER MUSIC

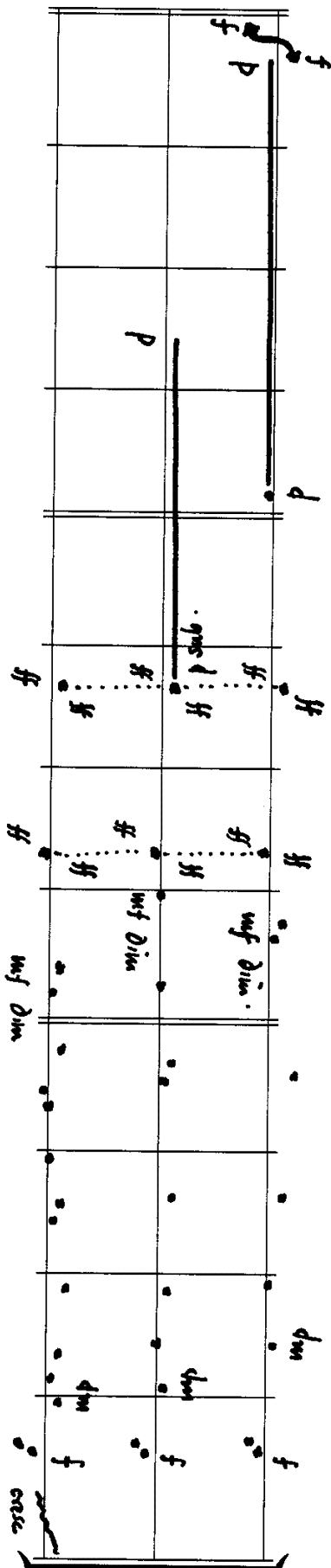
*3.º Encontro Internacional  
para Música de Câmara*

8 - 10 January 2013

Music Department

University of Évora, Portugal

Unidade de Investigação em  
Música e Musicologia (UnIMeM)



**3<sup>RD</sup> INTERNATIONAL MEETING  
FOR CHAMBER MUSIC**

**8 — 10 June 2012**

**Unidade de Investigação em Música e Musicologia - UnIMeM  
University of Évora, Portugal**

**Zoltan Paulinyi (organizer)**

**Title: 3<sup>rd</sup> International Meeting for Chamber Music**

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Score on cover page: Christopher Bochmann's "Homenagem a Leo Brower" (2009).

**EXPEDIENT**

**Director of the Music Department of the University of Évora**

Dr Christopher Bochmann

**Director of UnIMeM of the University of Évora**

Dr Benoît Gibson

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>About the Meeting for Chamber Music</b> .....	
Zoltan Paulinyi (UnIMeM, Portugal; OSTNCS, Brasil).....	9
<b>Sobre o Encontro para Música de Câmara</b> .....	
Zoltan Paulinyi (UnIMeM, Portugal; OSTNCS, Brasil).....	11
<b>TIMETABLE</b> .....	13
<b>Collective document: further actions after the Meeting</b> .....	16
<b>About the Performers / Sobre os intérpretes</b> .....	18
<b>Percussions Duo</b> .....	19
<b>Vivace Trio</b> .....	20
<b>Guitars Quintet</b> .....	22
<b>Artigos / Articles</b> .....	24
<b>A Snapshot of the ‘Pierrot’ Ensemble Today</b> .....	
Dr Christopher Dromey.....	25
<b>Six Pieces for five guitars op.56 B</b> .....	
Apostolos Darlas (Greece).....	41
<b>All-contours sets as structures for Paulinyi's "Sonrotnoc"</b> .....	
Zoltan Paulinyi .....	47
<b>A <i>ugglja</i>: Introductory Notes and Analysis</b> .....	
Marcello Messina .....	59
<b>“Umás Coisas do Coração” – a piece that touch people</b> .....	
Sergio Roberto de Oliveira .....	70
<b>A Versão para Flauta da <i>Fantasia para Saxofone e Pequena Orquestra</i> de Heitor Villa-Lobos</b> .....	
Fernando Pacífico Homem .....	
José Maurício Valle Brandão.....	78
<b>Spatiality in Music: The Spiral as a Metaphor for Musical Form</b> .....	
Zvonimir Nagy .....	98
<b>O idiomatismo instrumental dos <i>Estudos</i> para violão de Camargo Guarnieri: uma comparação com os <i>Estudos</i> de Heitor Villa-Lobos</b> .....	
Marcelo Fernandes Pereira .....	
Edelton Gloeden.....	120

# *A ugghja*: Introductory Notes and Analysis

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**Abstract.** The main purpose of this work is the presentation of a semiotic analysis of my piece *A ugghja* for two violins and piano. The analysis is preceded by a brief introduction to my compositional activity and the main motives behind it, followed by a short section that explains the meaning of the title and briefly mentions the specific events that inspired the composition of this piece.

**Keywords:** semiotic analysis composition ugghja

## 1. Introduction

As a composer/researcher I explore ways of contributing to the expression of specific instances of dissent. In particular, I look at the recent emergence of Sicilian and Southern Italian protest movements<sup>1</sup>, which question the official narratives of Italian history/politics, denounce the gap in income and employment rate between the north and the south of the country, and in many cases invoke the concession of more local autonomy or even total independence from the central state.

I employ various different strategies in order to obtain this:

- In a series of pieces, written mainly for medium to large ensembles, macro-structural elements are used to highlight politico-economic, cultural and/or historical patterns in order to criticise them. My orchestral work *U mpastu*<sup>2</sup> is an example of such pieces.
- In a group of vocal pieces the lyrics are deliberately re-organised in order to twist the meaning of the original text and adapt it to the message that is

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<sup>1</sup> A good introduction to these movements is offered by Patruno (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Recording available at <https://soundcloud.com/marcello-messina/u-mpastu>

intended to be sent through. My song cycle *Circling round my flesh*<sup>3</sup>, with lyrics by English poet John Whale, belongs to this group of pieces.

- In another group of pieces microstructural elements are combined together in order to form larger structures – the very act of construction involved in this process is meant to convey a utopian meaning. *A ugghja* belongs to this last group of pieces.

In the section 2 I will explain the title of the piece, giving some indications about the motives behind its composition. In the section 3 I will carry out a semiotic analysis of the piece, in order to give an idea of how I work. Before proceeding to the next section, it is important to clarify three points:

- The analysis does not always follow the same methods employed for composing the piece; this means it can potentially reveal some important elements I was not aware of when composing the piece, while at the same time it could overlook other features that were relevant at the time of composing the piece.
- A full analysis of the piece is not among the purposes of this work, and there will be considerable parts of the score which will not be included in the analysis.
- Provided that the analysis is the central purpose of this work, this section and the next may not appear immediately relevant. However, I chose to reveal the motives behind the composition of this and other pieces: this is mainly due to reasons of personal and intellectual integrity.

## 2. The title

*A ugghja* literally means ‘the needle’ in Sicilian [the word *ugghja* can also be spelled as *ugghia*, *avugghia*, *augghia*, *agugghia*, etc.]

The piece is inspired by the struggle for Sicily’s Independence/Autonomy, hence the metaphor of the needle which is meant to refer to a constant, relentless work of sewing pieces together, gathering people and making them conscious of their identity.

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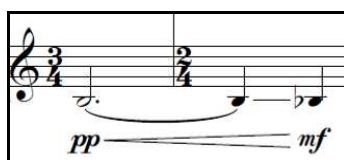
<sup>3</sup> Recording available at <https://soundcloud.com/marcello-messina/circling-round-my-flesh>

On the other hand, telling a *fàula r'a ugghja* [‘the tale of the needle’] essentially means repeating the same lies again and again in order to distract people from more serious issues – in this sense the title refers specifically to recent events in Italian and Sicilian politics, such as the attacks against the Island’s Autonomy Statute perpetrated by the mainland press and parties<sup>4</sup>, and the recent campaigns towards the Sicilian Regional Elections [28 October 2012], characterised by the hegemony of said mainland parties, and by promises, by the local exponents of these parties, of more autonomy<sup>5</sup>. From my point of view, in a situation like this, the Island’s autonomy is instrumentalised either to gain consensus locally or to point the national public opinion towards an easy scapegoat, with the result that the public is distracted from the fact that the Statute has never been fully applied<sup>6</sup>, preventing the Island from benefitting from a real and complete autonomy.

### 3. Analysis<sup>7</sup>

#### 3.1 Violin 1 and Violin 2

The piece opens with a long B in the violin 2 part, which then is tied to a downward glissando over one semitone in the following bar. I will call this pattern  $\alpha$ .



Ex. 1: the first occurrence of pattern  $\alpha$  in bb. 1-2

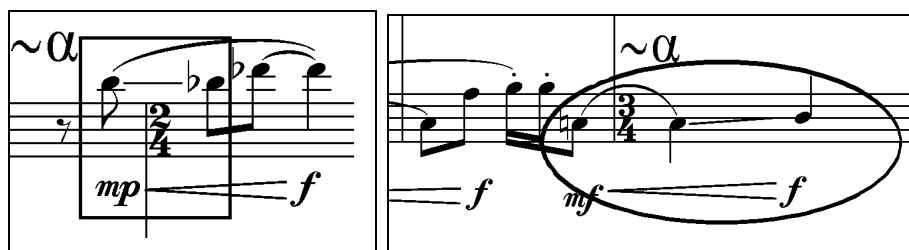
Pattern  $\alpha$  reappears in different forms in bars 7-8 (violin 1), bars 14-15 (violin 2), bars 15-16 (violin 1) bars 37-39 (violin 1), bars 47-48 (violin 2), bars 48-49 (violin 1), bars 69-73 (violin 1). I will also call  $\sim\alpha$  other figures which resemble pattern  $\alpha$ :

<sup>4</sup> Examples of these attacks are Vv. Aa. (2012) and Indini (2012). The arguments of the pro-Statute faction are summarized, for instance, in Coppola (2012)

<sup>5</sup> See for example Condorelli (2012) and Sardo (2012).

<sup>6</sup> On the non-application of the Sicilian Autonomy Statute, see Mignemi (1980) and Costa (2009).

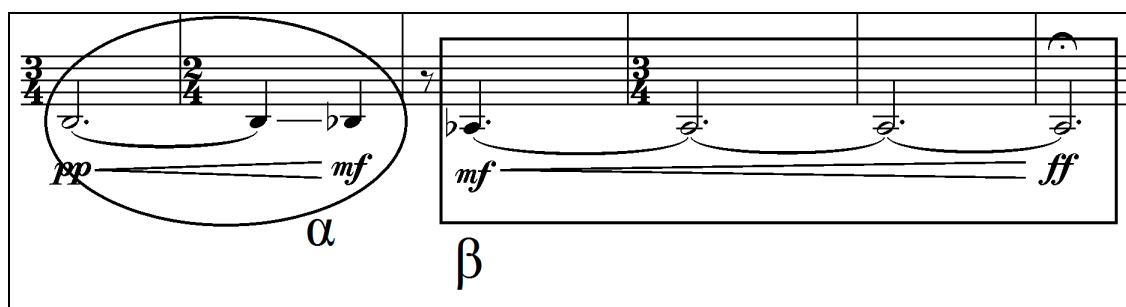
<sup>7</sup> See also Nattiez (1980 and 1990) and Messina (2011).



Ex. 3: ~ $\alpha$  in bb. 35-36 (violin 2)

Ex. 2: ~ $\alpha$  in bb. 26-27 (violin 1)

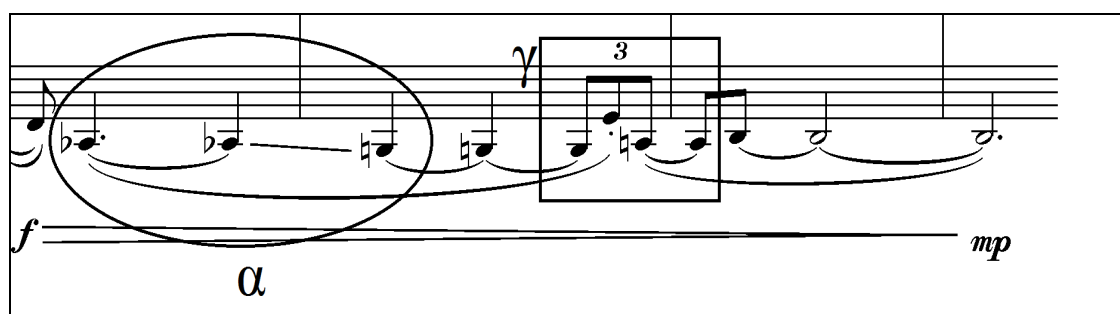
The first occurrence of  $\alpha$  is followed, in bar 3, by a long A flat as shown in example 2. I will call this very simple pattern  $\beta$ :



Ex. 4: bb. 1-6 (violin 2)

Pattern  $\beta$  appears in a very similar form in bars 29-30 (violin 1). Other occurrences of  $\beta$  will be discussed below.

I will now focus on the third occurrence of pattern  $\alpha$ , in bar 14 (violin 2), which is followed by a figure which I will call  $\gamma$ :



Ex. 5: bb. 14-17 (violin 2)

Pattern  $\gamma$  appears again in bars 34 (violin 1), 45 (violin 1), 48-49 (violin 2), 62-63 (violin 2). The occurrence of  $\gamma$  in bar 45 is preceded, in bar 42, by the occurrence of



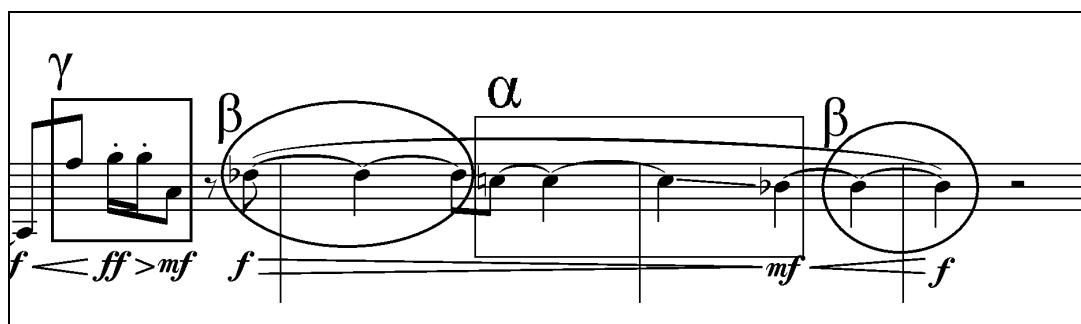
another pattern, which I will call  $\delta$ . Another occurrence of pattern  $\delta$  also follows  $\gamma$  in bar 46:

Ex. 6: bb. 42-47 (violin 1)

I will now compare the last three examples: the long B in bars 16-17 (example 3), the C in bars 43-44 and the B flat in bars 45-47 (example 4) can be all assimilated to pattern  $\beta$ . Arguably, the B that links  $\alpha$  to  $\gamma$  in bar 15 could be also assimilated to  $\beta$ :

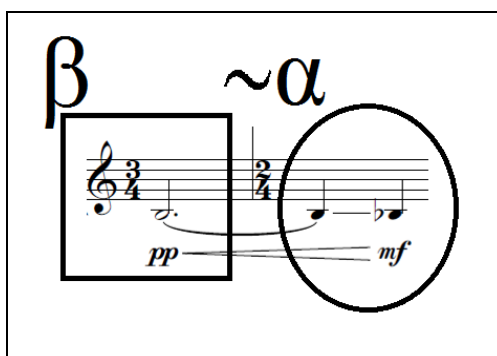
Ex. 7: comparison between bb. 1-6 (violin 2), bb.14-17 (violin 2) and bb. 42-47 (violin 1)

Similarly, other occurrences of pattern  $\beta$  appear between bar 14 and bar 17 (violin 1):



Ex. 8: bb.14-17 (violin 1)

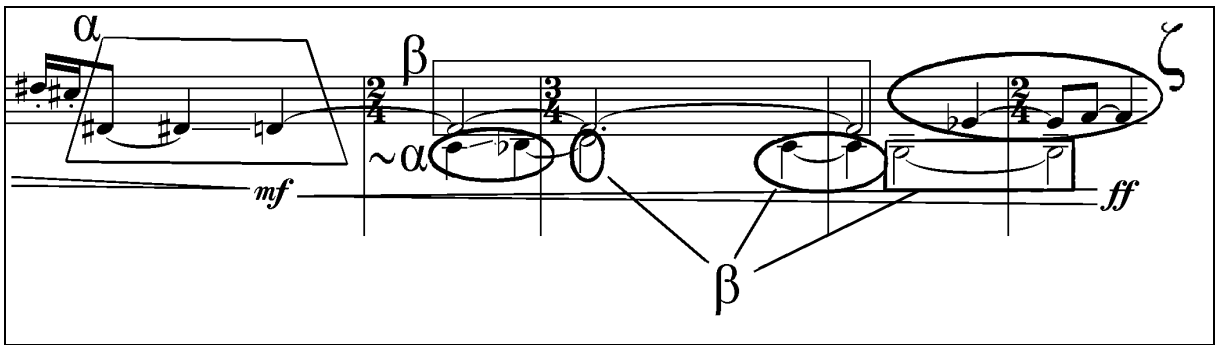
In light of the previous considerations on patterns  $\alpha$ ,  $\sim\alpha$  and  $\beta$ , I could also argue that  $\alpha = \beta + \sim\alpha$  as shown below:



Ex. 9: bb. 1-2 (violin 2) - alternative segmentation of  $\alpha$

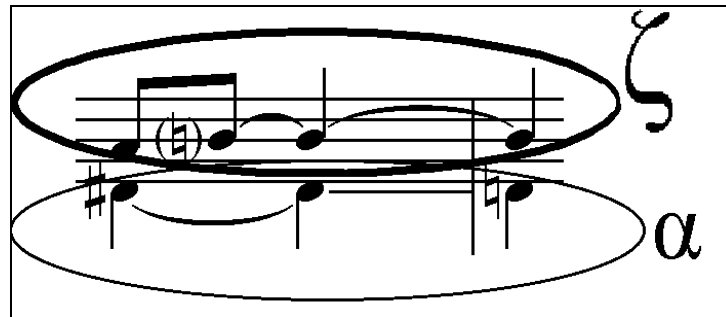
However, I will keep describing the above patterns as  $\alpha$  when they occur together in this order.

I will now focus on bars 37-41 (violin 1): in bar 37, after the first two semiquavers, pattern  $\alpha$  reoccurs, followed by  $\beta$  in bars 38-40 – in bar 38 a lower voice appears, in which  $\sim\alpha$  occurs, followed by three appearances of pattern  $\beta$  in bars 41. Going back to voice 1, in bars 40-41 a pattern occurs, which I will call  $\zeta$ :



Ex. 10: bb. 37-41 (violin 1)

Pattern ζ had already appeared in voice 1 in bars 7-8 (violin 2), above an occurrence of α in voice 2 :

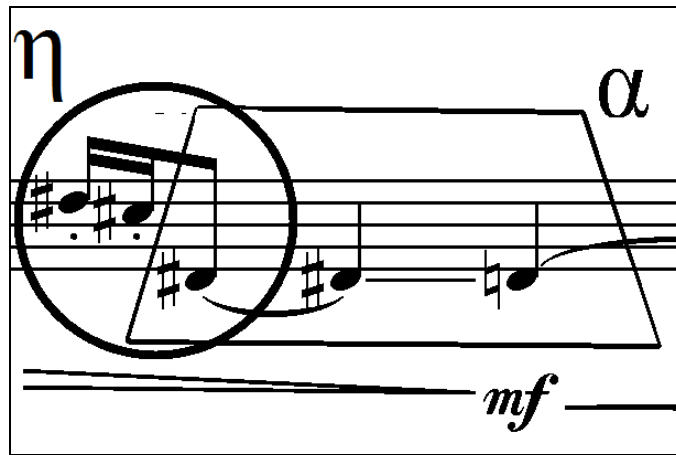


Ex. 11: bb. 7-8 (violin 1)

Other occurrences of ζ appear in bars 11 (violin 2), bars 19-20 (violin 1), bars 59-61 (violin 2), bars 65-68 and 68-69 (violin 2).

### 3.2 Piano

In the previous subsection I have mentioned the two semiquavers that precede the occurrence of α in bar 37 (violin 1). They form, together with the following quaver, a pattern that repeatedly occurs in the piano part as well. I will call this pattern η:



Ex. 12: pattern η in b. 37 (violin 1)

Pattern η is one of the very few patterns that appears both in the piano part and in one of the violins parts. Pattern η appears in the piano part in bars 3, 15, 24, 43, 48 and 69.



Ex. 13: pattern η in b. 15 (piano)

Bar 42 (violin 1) also contains a pattern that is found in the piano part: I will call it pattern θ. Pattern θ appears only twice in the score: in the aforementioned bar 42 (violin 1) and in bar 46 (piano):



Ex. 14: pattern θ in b. 42 (violin 1)

The image shows a musical score for piano. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in 3/4 time and contains a whole note chord with a dynamic marking of *mf* and a hairpin. The bottom staff is also in 3/4 time and contains a sequence of notes, with a dashed line indicating an octave below (8vb) and a boxed-in section of notes.

Ex. 15: pattern  $\theta$  in b. 46 (piano)

A complete analysis of the patterns in the piano part is not among the purposes of this work; however, I will briefly focus on the wider context around bar 46, from bar 42 to bar 47. Bar 42 opens with  $\eta$  in the left hand, whereas the chord in the right hand can be identified as a recurring pattern throughout the piano part, which I will call  $\lambda$ . Pattern  $\lambda$  appears also in bars 2, 4, 14, 15, 16, 28, 33-34, 47, 48, 49, 55-56, 69-70 and 72.

Bar 43 opens with two bichords of the length of a quaver each, notated across the piano staff, and followed by a third bichord in the right hand, which continues in the following bar. Each of the single components of this figure could be compared to other significant bichords found repeatedly on the score; for reasons of simplicity, I will focus on the whole figure and call it pattern  $\mu$  – this pattern appears also in bar 26.

Bars 44-45 (right hand) open with the prolongation of the last bichord of  $\mu$ , followed by a figure that I will call pattern  $\nu$ , and that appears also in bars 34. Bar 45 (left hand) contains, as shown above, pattern  $\theta$ .

Bar 47 presents an occurrence of pattern  $\lambda$  in the right hand, preceded by a bichord, which is very similar to the bichord that opens pattern  $\mu$ . This bichord appears repeatedly in the score, and I will call it  $\pi$ . The combination  $\pi + \lambda$  is also very frequent throughout the piano part, and it could be considered an independent pattern, which I

will call  $\omega$ . The bichord in bar 45 (left hand) and the one in bars 46-47 (left hand) can be also found elsewhere in the score – I will call them  $\sigma$  and  $\xi$  respectively.

The image shows a musical score for piano, measures 42-47. The score is written on two staves, treble and bass clef. Various musical elements are highlighted with boxes and circles, and labeled with Greek letters:  $\lambda$ ,  $\mu$ ,  $\nu$ ,  $\omega$ ,  $\pi$ ,  $\eta$ ,  $\sigma$ ,  $\theta$ , and  $\xi$ . Dynamics markings include  $mf$  and  $f$ . A  $8^{vb}$  marking is present in the bass staff. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

Ex. 16: an overview of bb. 42-47 (piano)

#### 4. Conclusion

The main purpose of the analysis carried out in section 3 was offering an overview on the way I work. Although the analysis does not include some considerable parts of the score, I believe it succeeds in covering the most significant points and giving an exhaustive idea of my piece. In addition to the analysis, the introductory notes included in the first two sections of this paper can help provide further clarification on the piece.

#### Acknowledgments

*A ughhja* is dedicated to Teresa Di Somma. Many thanks to Maria Luís Garcia, Eduardo Silva Ferreira and Cláudia Santos Anjos (Vivace Trio) for premiering the piece, and to Zoltan Paulinyi for organising this event.

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## Short biography about the author



Marcello Messina is a Sicilian composer based in Leeds, UK. He has been taught by Mic Spencer, Ewan Stefani, Stefano Bonilauri and Adam Fergler. His music has been performed by Icarus Ensemble, Trio Atem, Giacomo Baldelli, Sarah Leonard with Jonathan Goosing and Colin Blamey (Hull Sinfonietta/Portumnus Ensemble), ThingNY, Red Note Ensemble, Mikroblech, Sandra Stojanović, LSTwo, Lauren Redhead, LUUMS Symphony Orchestra, Clare McCaldin with Ian Shaw, Markee Rambo-Hood with Peter Nicholson, and many others.

In 2011, he was selected for the European Composers' Professional Development Programme, a project that culminated in the premiere of his piece *I supikkjarì* in the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival 2011: the piece was performed by the Icarus Ensemble and published by the University of York Music Press in 2012.

He has been involved in organising concerts and events for the Forum of Composers and Musicians (FOCAM) since 2009, and is a member of the Ursprung Collective, a spoken poetry and music project based in Brooklyn, NY.